THE FAILURE AND RECOVERY OF SOCIAL CRITICISM IN THE SCOTTISH CHURCH 1830 - 1950

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TO

MY PARENTS

MY WIFE
MARGARET

AND

MY TWO SCOTTISH-BORN DAUGHTERS
FIONA AND SHEILA

PREFACE

Since a thorough definition of the scope and aim of this study is outlined in chapter one of the introduction, there is little need to add more than a brief word here about the general plan of the work, the sources used, and the acknowledgments due those who assisted in the preparation of these pages.

Although the prophetic failure of the Scottish Church throughout most of the last century is relatively well known, little attempt has ever been made to discover, through a detailed study of 19th century Scottish history, the basic factors -- both sociological and theological -- which caused this tragic failure. This present study is, in part, an attempt to ascertain what those factors were; how they militated against the exercize of any genuine social criticism; and how their modification or removal towards the end of the century made possible a recovery of such criticism in the twentieth century. As somewhat of a sub-theme, this study also attempts to discover what the effects of the Church's prophetic failure were upon her efforts to make a vital and relevant Christian impact upon 19th century industrial society. In particular, an endeavour is made to shed some light on the vexing question of how far this failure was responsible for the widespread alienation of the working classes from the Church.

After two brief introductory chapters, part two of this work examines in considerable detail the 'mind of the Church' in the critical years 1830-1850, in order to determine the exact extent, causes and effects of the Church's prophetic silence. Part three, the final section of the work, covering three distinct periods totalling a complete century, is concerned to examine the long process

involved in the gradual development and recovery of prophetic social criticism in the Church. In the first of these periods -- 1850-1880 -- although the prophetic failure continued, changes were slowly taking place in the Church's social thought which had important future implications; in the 1880-1900 period there appeared the first signs of a prophetic awakening among socially-advanced churchmen; and in the last period -- 1900-1950 -- this awakening among individual churchmen spread rapidly until social criticism soon became a feature of the activity of the whole Church acting in her corporate capacity.

The main sources for this study are the official church documents, especially General Assembly and Synod records; church periodicals, both official and unofficial; and works by representative individual churchmen. Since this study is concerned with the corporate 'mind of the Church' rather than the views of individuals, the data provided by the official church documents is the most authoritative. Due to the social passivity of the church courts in the 19th century, however, little data is available from this source before the turn of the century. Consequently, chapters 3 to 8 rely largely upon the wealth of material available in the many contemporary church periodicals, and, to a lesser extent, upon the writings of representative churchmen. Only chapter 9, which deals with the Church's social thought in the present century, relies almost entirely on the official Assembly documents in seeking to determine the 'mind of the Church'.

It only remains now to express my thanks to those who assisted in any way in the preparation of this thesis. I am especially grateful for the invaluable help received from my three advisers, Professor Wm. S. Tindal, Professor John McIntyre, and Mr. W. H. Marwick, who at every stage of my work offered me wise advice and guidance. I wish also to acknowledge the kindness and courtesy shown me at all times by the members of the staff of New College Library, the National Library of

Scotland, and the Scottish section of the Central Public Library. My thanks are also due to Knox College, Toronto, for the scholarship which first set me thinking about the possibility of undertaking post-graduate work, and to the University of Edinburgh for the studentship which proved of great assistance during the third year of my work.

Lastly, I wish to thank Mrs. Beth McAvoy who kindly typed a large section of the first draft manuscript, and especially Mrs. Joyce Newell who typed much of the first draft, and who has so ably typed all of this final manuscript.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

THE SCOPE AND AIM OF STUDY

On June 3rd, 1846, Thomas Chalmers, the greatest Scottish churchman of his day, probably the greatest since John Knox, delivered the address at the laying of the foundation-stone of the new Free Church College in Edinburgh. On that day in the middle of the 'forties' -- after a decade of appalling misery and want for great masses of the labouring population, and in a year when tens of thousands of poor Highlanders were suffering from starvation -- those assembled at the head of the Mound, including many of the working classes, heard him declare:

> "We leave to others the passions and the politics of this world; and nothing will ever be taught, I trust, in any of our halls, which shall have the remotest tendency to disturb the existing order of things, or to confound the ranks and distinctions which now obtain in society. But there is one equality between man and man which will be strenuously taught -- the essential equality of human souls; and that in the highest count and reckoning of eternity, the souls of the poorest of nature's children -- the raggedest boy who runs along the pavement, is of like estimation in the eyes of heaven with that of the greatest and noblest of our land."[1]

Continuing his address, Chalmers defended the existing pyramidal social structure of society with the monarchy and aristocracy perched 'upon its summit', the other privileged and 'respectable' classes immediately below, with a gradual widening in the descent downwards to the great masses at the base of the pyramid -- 'the mighty host who swarm upon its surface'. He expressed a

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1. The Witness, June 6, 1846, p. 2.

desire for the elevation of those at the base, but not by claiming for them the privileges of, or equality with those above them, but by lifting the whole base, with superstructure intact a little higher:

> "Let kings retain their sceptres, and nobles their coronets -- what we want is a more elevated ground floor for our general population, and this without derangement to the upper stories of the social and political edifice."[1]

Thus spoke the most representative churchman of his day -- the man who, more than any other, concerned himself with the moral and social well-being of the people. Such was the social outlook of the Church in the first half of the 19th century.

Observe, now, the Scottish Church a century later -- in the critical war years of the 'forties'. On the spot where Chalmers spoke stands New College and the adjoining Assembly Hall. Chalmers in his address had expressed the hope that nothing would ever be taught in the buildings to be erected which would 'have the remotest tendency to disturb the existing order of things, or to confound the ranks and distinctions which now obtain in society'. Now almost exactly a century later, the General Assembly of the re-united Church of Scotland, meeting in the Assembly Hall, gave its blessing to what some have considered to be among the most radical church pronouncements ever made on the social order. Acting upon recommendations from a special Commission,[2] the Assembly in 1944 in criticizing the existing social and economic order, went so far as to declare that:

> "The corporate well-being and individual initiative can be furthered only by a greater measure of common control of the main means of production. They remind all members of the Church that it is an obligation of their

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1. Ibid.

2. Called 'The Commission for the Interpretation of God's Will in the Present Crisis'. It issued 5 Reports from 1941 to 1945. In view of Chalmers' hopes that nothing 'subversive' of the existing social order would ever be taught in the College, it is ironical that the convener of this very remarkable Commission was John Baillie, a professor at New College. So extensive was his contribution to the work of the Commission that it was popularly referred to as 'The Baillie Commission'.

> faith to take seriously their political responsibility in the discussion and settlement of these questions."[1]

This conclusion was reached only after a long period of detailed analysis and study of the existing social and economic structure by the Commission. The 1942 Report had confessed the failure of the Church in the past to be supremely concerned about social justice;[2] it noted and condemned a long series of 'defects in the present industrial order',[3] and called for an end to the present extreme inequalities in the possession of wealth, greater equality of opportunity for education, and asserted the right of all to lead a socially useful life and to have a living wage.[4] The 1944 Report confirmed and elaborated upon the earlier findings of the Commission, criticizing especially what it called 'the tyranny of private interests' by which it meant the existing concentration of economic power in the hands of those who are not responsible to the community as a whole for its exercize.[5]

Thus spoke the Church a century after Chalmers spoke. We are not presently concerned with the accuracy or validity of the Reports' criticism of the existing order. What is significant in them, compared to the social outlook of Chalmers and the 19th century generally, is the existence of what may be called prophetic social criticism -- the awareness that every aspect of human activity stands under the criticism of the Gospel; that the

> "Christian faith claims in the last resort to dominate the whole of life instead of being one department of it alongside others, and that all departments must in the last resort acknowledge their subordination to the Chief End of Man."[6]

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1. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1944, pp. 590 and 607.
2. God's Will for Church and Nation, 1942 Report, pp. 34 and 49.
3. Ibid., pp. 58-9.
4. Ibid., p. 63.
5. Ibid., 1944 Report, pp. 157 ff.
6. Ibid., 1942 Report, p. 40.

Using these two contrasting expressions of Christian social outlook in Scotland, the one characteristic of the 19th century, the other of the 20th century, it is now possible to indicate that the scope and aim of the present study is to examine critically the change in the Scottish Church's[1] social witness in the intervening century, or to be more precise, from approximately 1830 to the middle of the present century. In particular, it is with the gradual recovery of what we have called prophetic social criticism that the study will deal.

It is essential at the outset to understand exactly what is meant by Christian social criticism. This study will not be a survey of the Church's activity in what today is usually called social work or social service. There is an important distinction between social service and social criticism, for each represents quite clearly defined and different kinds of Christian activity. In modern-day terms, social service embraces the Church's ministry for the relief of human misery and misfortune (e.g. homes for the aged and for homeless or wayward youths, hospitals, settlements, providing food and shelter for the destitute, etc.). Social criticism embraces the efforts of the Church to influence and transform social and economic conditions so that they will better serve human needs and uplift community and national life. It seeks to get at the root of the

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1. The remarkable strength of Scottish Presbyterianism, and the pervasive influence it has had on the life and culture of the Scottish people and nation generally, has been such that in considering the Christian Church's relationship to the social and economic order in Scotland in the past 130 years, little can be gained by examining the role of other branches of the Church. With one exception, the latter are so small that the possibility of any national influence is extremely limited. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, though significant and growing in size, her national influence, to date at least, has been slight. This is probably because her influence is largely limited to those of Irish background, and because her strength is not distributed nationally but is heavily concentrated in the industrial west and in parts of the Highlands. Here, and throughout this study, therefore, the term Scottish Church will refer only to those churches which presently comprise the Church of Scotland (i.e. the Secession and Relief Church from 1830 to 1847; the United Presbyterian Church from 1847 to 1900; the Free Church from 1843 to 1900; the United Free Church from 1900 to 1929; the Established Church from 1830 through the re-union in 1929, to date).

difficulty (e.g. unemployment, poverty, housing and social welfare conditions, labour-management relations, etc.)[1] Social service, we might say, furnishes ambulances and hospitals for victims of disaster at the foot of the social and economic precipice; social criticism asks why a precipice lies across the path of so many millions of human beings and seeks to bridge the chasm by demanding social justice, and economic opportunity and security.

The demand laid upon the Church to maintain a constant criticism of the whole life of man and society flows from the very nature of the Gospel. Social criticism is firmly rooted in the biblical and theological understanding of God's past and present activity in the world. In Jesus Christ, God has revealed His will and purpose for the whole of the created order. The Church's responsibility to engage in social criticism derives from the basic conviction that God has revealed in Christ not only a saving way of life for individuals but also His will for the right ordering of society. Jesus Christ is Lord, Lord of every Christian, Lord of His Church, but also Lord of the world. As sovereign Lord, all of life must be brought under His rule and be made conformable to His will. A truly biblically oriented faith, therefore, must regard "no law, no economic system, no group, no nation, and no church as infallible or immune from criticism and the need of transformation in the hands of God."[2] This prophetic understanding of the Christian faith clearly "implies a radical criticism of every aspect of human life and society. Prophetic religion has, thus, a kind of built-in principle of social criticism."[3]

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1. In the Church of Scotland, the present day distinction between these two forms of Christian activity can be seen generally in the separate work of the Board of Social and Moral Welfare on the one hand, and the Church and Nation Committee on the other.

2. A. T. Rasmussen, Christian Social Ethics: Exerting Christian Influence, p. 59.

3. John A. Hutchison, ed., Christian Faith and Social Action, p. 6.

Though the Church has at times in the past avoided the burden of her prophetic task, in so doing she has proved unfaithful to her Lord, for it is only through a faithful and obedient Church that Christ manifests His lordship over society. She is the instrument chosen and appointed by Christ 'to overcome the world'. Because, in carrying out her prophetic office the Church brings a 'Divine Word' to bear upon society, a 'Word from beyond', it is both natural and unavoidable that a constant tension must exist between the Church and society, between God's will for society and the actual state of any given society. Indeed, "if no tension exists either the society is regenerate or the Church is conformed".[1]

This is not to suggest that the Church, in seeking to fulfil her prophetic task, receives in a special and mysterious fashion some clear-cut revelation of the will of God directly applicable to the social order. Ascertaining the 'mind of Christ' in relation to the complex problems of social and economic life is in no sense an easy task. The Church as an institution is embedded in her social and cultural setting, and both consciously and unconsciously she assimilates values and ideas, habits of thought and action from that setting. The danger inherent in such inevitable cultural involvement is that the Church will be too much 'conformed to this world'; that she will be a mere reflection of society, rather than the source of a profound critique of it. But the Church is more than a sociological entity.[2] She is also a divine society -- the body of Christ. To be conscious of this fact in the midst of her tendency to social conformity, helps the Church to understand why she constantly needs to be judged, why she needs daily repentence, and why justification by faith is a continuing experience. Only

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1. The Church and Society, Report of the World Council of Churches, p. 6, quoted in G. Thomas, The Christian Heritage in Politics, p. 19.

2. Necessarily, however, the Church is subject to investigation only as an historical and sociological institution. In this study, in seeking to ascertain the social outlook of the Church, it is, as far as possible, the corporate mind of the Church, rather than the views of individual Christians with which we are concerned.

as she herself stands under the criticism of the Gospel can the Church transcend the culture in which she is involved; only as she constantly seeks to cleanse her own life and outlook bringing it more and more into conformity with the 'mind of Christ' can she bring the clear and distinctive Word of the Gospel to bear on society.

Therefore, the Church dares to influence society through Christian social criticism only as she struggles to live under the sovereignty of God and humbly submits herself to His judgment. Even then her most deeply inspired decisions and her most conscientously prepared pronouncements will not be free from hidden and unexamined biases, pre-conceptions and distortions, nor reflect the full will of God. But the Church engages in her prophetic calling and takes action on great social and moral questions not because of the certain inerrancy of her pronouncements nor because of the mighty successes that she is sure to achieve, but because she knows God's love for the world and is compelled to express it in concrete terms. It is not required of the Church that she be either infallible or successful, it is only required that she be faithful.

It is, therefore, with the Scottish Church's awareness of, and faithfulness to her prophetic task in society that this study is concerned. Clearly, by thus limiting the area of concern of this critical investigation, there are many aspects of the Church's social witness in Scotland which fall outside its scope. For example, almost all the social questions to which the Churches in the 19th century devoted so much attention, such as temperance reform, sabbath observance, 'social purity', etc., have been largely ignored because they are essentially personal rather than social. Their advocacy implies no basic criticism of society but seeks primarily to change the morals and habits of individuals. Indeed, only too often in the past this type of social concern amounted to an evasion of genuine social criticism by implying that the sins and evils of society were entirely due to the character weakness and moral faults rather than any shortcoming in the

social and economic order. The cure was to change the individual, not change society.

This is not to suggest, of course, that personal ethics are not important, or that society cannot be reformed by changing individuals. But it does mean that individual reform alone is not adequate. This is particularly true in the kind of impersonal industrial society which gradually arose in the period with which this study deals. Any adequate doctrine of sin should make it clear that evil is firmly embedded in the institutions and structures of society as well as rooted in the human heart, and, therefore, complex social evils cannot be eradicated by simply modifying the motivations and practices of individuals. The most serious weakness in so much of the ethical thought of the Church in the past has undoubtedly been "the false confidence in the power of 'right individual conduct' to produce just social structures".[1]

Another area of the Scottish Church's social concern is the work which was carried out on behalf of the poor until almost the middle of the last century; the responsibility in the field of national education until 1872; and the organized social service work which began shortly after the turn of the century. These likewise, for reasons already stated, this study makes no effort to assess except insofar as they indirectly shed light on the Church's prophetic consciousness. So also concerning theology. Theological movements current within the period under study are only dealt with insofar as they assist in explaining the social outlook of the Church at any given time.

Since the period to be covered in this critical investigation is such a long one -- spanning 120 years, from 1830 to 1950 -- it has been impossible to sketch in more than the barest background of historical data at any particular period or concerning any particular event. Thus this is in no sense a 'history' of the

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1. Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 8.

Scottish Church. Only where historical background is necessary to a right understanding of a particular happening has it been mentioned and no attempt has been made to include generally known historical events. Rather it partakes of the nature of a survey touching only on the most significant events, movements and changes of the time which shed light on the Church's prophetic awareness.

The year 1830[1] has been chosen as the beginning of the study because it was not until approximately that time that the social, political and economic effects of the Industrial Revolution began to make themselves felt in a significant way.[2] From that date on the old order rapidly gave place to a new and very different one.

It has been said that "owing to the mechanization of life, man has changed more in the last hundred years than in the previous thousand".[3] How did the Church react to the far-reaching movements and events and changes which so greatly affected the nation's life? For example, the political reform movement in the 19th century leading gradually within a century to full political democracy; the rapid concentration of masses of people in large cities with the resulting overcrowding, bad sanitation and appalling housing conditions; the early reign of the classical economic theory of 'laissez-faire' followed towards the end of the century by the weakening of faith in individualism, the rise of socialism and increased state intervention in economic life, and more recently the development of the welfare state; the early attempts to regulate the factory system with its

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1. Henry Hamilton in The Industrial Revolution in Scotland, p. 1, regards the year 1830 both as the end of the first stage of the Industrial Revolution by which time small capitalist enterprise had developed, and the beginning of the second stage when large-scale heavy industry was to gain the ascendancy.

2. The decisive year of 1843 may seem to be a more significant date in Scottish Church history to begin, but by commencing in 1830, the social outlook of the still strong and united Church of Scotland can be investigated in the critical decade of political and economic change in the 1830's and early 40's.

3. G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p. 97.

harmful working conditions and long hours, and in the mines, the employment of women and children; the rise of the working class movements with their demand for economic justice through industrial action; the Highland clearances which continued until almost the end of the 19th century; the recurring business cycles with their alternating times of economic prosperity and over-speculation, followed by economic depression with widespread unemployment and hardship; the weight of pauperism, side by side increasing personal wealth and economic power for the few throughout most of the century, with resulting intensification of class conflict and the hardening of the class system by the turn of the century.

These are examples of some of the key social, political and economic issues and movements of the period. These, and those like them, have affected and altered, for good or ill, the whole life of the Scottish people and nation in the past century. How did the Church react to them and seek to deal with them? The answer to this question reveals the extent to which she has carried out her prophetic task in society; the extent to which she has been obedient to that commission to speak with authority the Word of God for the right ordering of the whole of human affairs; the extent to which she has been faithful to the very Gospel itself.

Finally, though the main narrative runs from 1830 to 1950, the situation at the beginning of this period is best understood by a brief preliminary sketch of the Church's traditional attitude to the social and economic order from her earliest days up to the emergence of the Industrial Revolution.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL ORDER PRIOR TO THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

There are many persons in present-day society, among them many professing Christians and active church-goers, who view with suspicion and disfavour the modern revival of the Church's concern for social, political and economic life. Not only do they object to much that the Church has to say in these areas, but, more fundamentally, they question the very right of the Church to make her voice heard on such matters. Advocates of this position often appeal to history to demonstrate that the Church has always left these 'secular' affairs outside her concern. By pointing to the dominant attitude of the Church in the last two centuries -- a period when the Church virtually abdicated her prophetic task -- it is a simple matter for them to assume that such has been the historic Christian position from New Testament times. Therefore, they conclude that insofar as the Church today does seek to criticize and influence the social and economic order, she capitulates to a modern innovation and departs from her true and proper sphere.

This prevalent view, however, is diametrically opposed to any accurate reading of the history of the Church. As we shall see, the Church's present awareness of her responsibility toward the social and economic order is not a modern innovation; rather it is the loss of virtually all sense of such responsibility through most of the 18th and 19th centuries that marks the innovation. The present concern is not a new departure; it is a recovery of that which was lost for almost two centuries. It is not something new which has been added in this century; it is a recovery of an integral and essential part of the Church's

total witness. "Such recoveries", says William Temple, "always seem like sheer innovations to those who are ignorant of history."[1]

Christian responsibility for society has been recognized throughout the history of the Church. In the Bible, it is rooted in the teachings of the prophets of Israel where the responsibility for social justice in national life is everywhere evident; it grows inevitably out of the teachings of Christ which expressed God's concern for the victims of social institutions and which severely criticized forms of special privilege.

It is true, of course, that the Church in her earliest years looked for the imminent end of the present age of history through the early return of Christ, and that such an expectation made political issues, or the possibility of changes in the structure of society, appear relatively unimportant. However, this primitive eschatology prevailed for only a short time. It is also true that the minority status of the Church in the first three centuries of her existence made it impossible for her to directly criticize contemporary social, political and economic structures and institutions. "The primitive Church was a handful of people quite unable to influence the Jewish State, let alone the Roman Empire."[2] But this does not mean the Church was indifferent to society and its effect on Christian life and conduct. Throughout this period the Church never ceased to test and measure society by Christian standards. However, it does mean that since she had not the influence to directly affect or change those aspects of society which were incompatible with Christianity, the Church's opposition to them could only be expressed finally through her willingness to submit to persecution and martyrdom.

In the first three centuries of the Church's existence, therefore, the scope, extent, and effectiveness of Christian social concern was severely limited, due, however, not to the Church's own neglect or failure, but to her minority status.

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1. William Temple, Christianity and the Social Order, p. 36.

2. Ibid., p. 37.

Thus her social witness necessarily took a quite different and less direct form than was possible in later centuries of her history. In sociological terms, the early Christian Church was not technically a church, but rather a sect,[1] and thus her social witness was conditioned by this fact.[2]

Following the conversion of Constantine in 312 A. D. and the rapid transformation of Christianity from a small sectarian religion to the official faith of the empire, the Church entered upon an entirely new era in her relationship to the state -- an era filled with new opportunities but also with new dangers. Having received political recognition, she could now embark on a new mission to subject the empire to the influences of Christianity. Now, for the first time, the Church had the opportunity to bring her influence to bear on the whole corporate life of society.

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1. In terms first made famous by Ernst Troeltsch in his monumental work, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, a church is a religious organization which seeks to be inclusive and comprehensive in its relationship to society. While often itself being strongly influenced by society, a church nevertheless, because of its dominant position, can, through its individual members and corporate decisions and actions, bring its influence to bear upon social, political and economic life. A sect, on the other hand, is a small, exclusive, minority group without social or political power or influence. Being unable itself to influence or transform contemporary life directly, it can only witness against evils in society through the radical rejection of them by individual members of the sect.

2. In view of the basic difference between the status of the Church in these early centuries and that which thereafter obtained in Europe generally, including Scotland right up to the present day, it was, and is, quite erroneous for the later Church to regard this early period as providing a normative standard for Christian social action, or appealing to it as a universally valid or relevant guide for the Church's contemporary attitude to the social and economic order. The absence in Jesus' teaching of any direct criticism of social, political and economic structures and institutions, and the similar silence on the part of the early Church in the first centuries, was constantly appealed to by the Scottish Church through the greater part of the 19th century to justify her social passivity and her uncritical acceptance of the existing order of society. But the fact that Christ himself and the early Christians were a subject people, without political power and responsibility, means that their particular social witness gives little direct, specific guidance to the Church in later times. As John Bennett has rightly stressed, there is little in the teaching of the early Church dealing with social and political life which is directly relevant to the later situation of the Church "in which Christians do not expect the world to end tomorrow, in which changes are possible, and in which Churches and Christians have influence in varying

Initially progress was slow. The task before the Church was a formidable one. The empire was already declining and economic life was in chaotic state. When the actual fall of the empire came, it presented the Church with an even more staggering undertaking, namely, that of 'christianizing' the barbarians, not in name only, but by destroying deeply rooted pagan notions and practices. This gigantic task, together with the responsibility for preserving the great learning and culture of the past, was to occupy the energy of the Church for several centuries.

We are not concerned here with the manner in which the medieval Church set about her social task, nor with the relative degree of success achieved. It is enough to note that increasingly during the centuries which followed the Church sought to influence and control the social, political and economic life of medieval civilization.

By the period of the middle ages (about 1000 - 1500 A.D.), the Church had so come to dominate all aspects of contemporary life that medieval society in these years was regarded as a 'corpus Christianum' -- a homogeneous Christian civilization. In this period of her greatest power in Europe, the Church had an elaborate pattern within which all elements of society were organized. Politics, economics, art, education -- all were directly dependent upon the Church and subject to her regulation and control. The Church was virtually all-inclusive; everyone in western Europe was regarded as subject to her discipline.

While this medieval synthesis was misdirected in many of its manifestations,

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degrees on public opinion, on social structures and on political policies." (The Christian as Citizen, p. 20). Christian obedience in relation to social, political and economic life can never be rigidly or statically defined. It must derive ultimately from the Christian revelation as a whole; from the translation of essential, living, biblical convictions and commands into terms appropriate to the contemporary situation of the Church and of society.

and had many drawbacks both for the Church and for culture,[1] yet it did represent the most serious attempt ever made on a universal scale to subject every phase of life and every activity of the time, social, political and economic,[2] as well as religious, to the influence of Christian social teaching.

With the coming of the Reformation in the 16th century, many areas of Europe threw off the papal allegiance, thereby undermining the authoritative structure of Christendom through which the Church had maintained control over medieval civilization. Yet the great Reformers did not break with the medieval Church's sense of responsibility for the whole life of society. They would have been appalled at any suggestion that the new freedom from the control of Rome, or their fresh emphasis upon the personal responsibility of each individual before God both on matters of faith and ethics, would lead to any lessening of the Church's corporate efforts to regulate social, political and economic life.

Nor did any significant diminution of the Church's concern take place in the first decades of the Reformation. Luther, the most conservative of the Reformers in his political and economic theory, defended the traditional medieval controls on economic life such as the just price and the ban on usury, as the best means of preserving the Church's influence in economic life among nations now ruled by 'godly princes'.

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1. This type of 'compulsory' Christianity based on a rigidly authoritarian structure not only curtailed unduly the free growth and expression of culture, but was in itself completely foreign to the essential spirit of the Christian faith. Moreover, the effort to 'baptize' the whole life of the community inevitably tended to identify Christianity and the Church too closely with culture and led to a toleration of too much that was unjust in society, particularly the class structure of the feudal system. Yet even here in the feudal system were embodied many essentially valid principles which were a noteworthy advance on the previously chaotic state of social life. Men felt they belonged to a unified and purposeful society, where each individual had an essential place within which he could find contentment and security. In such a system, "there was no recognition of irresponsible power, such as may now be wielded by the inheritors of great wealth, either in land or industrial shares." (William Temple, op. cit., p. 80).

2. In the middle ages, in the field of economics, there was little inclination to distinguish between economic theory and ethics, and since virtually all

Calvin was equally insistent that, in spite of the loss of the central authority of Rome, the ideal of a unified society, the 'corpus Christianum' should remain. He had a more positive and dynamic sense of the role of the state in regulating society than did the medieval Church. For Calvin, "the state should serve the Church after the manner of the kings of Israel, and public life should be controlled by the ministers after the manner of the prophets."[1] Troeltsch, in the study already referred to, considers Calvin's community at Geneva to have been more comprehensive in its social influence than any Europe had yet seen. He describes Calvinism as:

> " 'Christian Socialism' in the sense that it moulded in a corporate way the whole life in the State and in Society, in the Family, and in the economic sphere, in public and in private, in accordance with Christian standards. It took care that every individual member should receive his appointed share of the natural and spiritual possessions of the community, while at the same time it sought to make the whole of Society, down to the smallest detail, a real expression of the royal dominion of Christ."[2]

This was the society that John Knox so admired when he was in Geneva and which he later sought to reproduce on a national scale in Scotland. As we shall see, it was into this Calvinist social tradition that Scotland was to enter.

In one important respect, namely, the relaxation on the prohibition of usury, Calvin differed from Luther and the medieval Church. Nevertheless, though he made allowance for a certain moderate rate of interest under certain conditions, this must not be interpreted to mean, as some have done, that Calvin sought to

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theorists were clergy, the Church was able, through most of this period, to maintain a firm control over economic theory, and to a lesser, but significant extent, over economic practice. The Church's economic teaching was in terms of the just wage and just price, and particularly in the prohibition of usury.

1. Roland H. Bainton, "Ernst Troeltsch - Thirty Years After," Theology Today, April 1951, p. 87.

2. E. Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, vol. 2, p. 622.

relax the Church's control over economic activity. We need not enter here into the familiar controversy over the relationship between capitalism and the Protestant ethic. Research has made at least one thing clear, however -- that capitalism was flourishing long before the Reformation. Trade was already restive under the restrictions placed on the lending of money by the Church. So much so that "probably the control of usury did not amount to much after the twelfth or thirteenth century."[1] It is misleading, therefore, to suggest that Protestantism in general, and Calvinism in particular, was responsible for the growth and development of capitalism, and for the loosening of Church control over economic life.

The Reformation came at a time when profound changes were taking place in the medieval pattern of civilization. The spirit of the Renaissance had long been at work proclaiming freedom from authority and Church control. The Church could either continue to stress the old methods and regulations even though they were generally disregarded and failed to apply to the changed circumstances, or, as Calvin rightly saw, she could reassert the lordship of Christ over the whole of society by seeking to subject the activity of the new commercial age in her midst to meaningful and relevant disciplines and controls. The use of productive interest, which was essential to the new capitalist economic order, necessitated a change in the traditional Church attitude to usury. But no one who is familiar with Calvin's various qualifications upon the levying of interest[2] and the iron

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1. S. L. Greenslade, The Church and the Social Order, p. 69.

2. "There were altogether seven exceptions. It was wrong to exact usury of the needy. It was wrong to oppress the poor by demanding greater security than they were able to afford. It was wrong to insert any clause in the loan contract which was contrary to natural justice. It was wrong to take payment for a loan unless the borrower made a gain equal to or greater than that of the lender. It had to be recognized that a practice was not necessarily just because it was in common use. All contracts were illicit which were not more to the advantage of the state than to its disadvantage. It was illicit to take a higher rate than the maximum allowed by the civil power." (J. Calvin, De Usuris Responsum - J. Calvini Epistolae et Responsa, Geneva, 1617 ed., Column 488, quoted in H. M. Robertson The Rise of Economic Individualism, p. 117). Calvin himself had held that a 2.5 per cent interest rate was high enough. (J. M. Yinger, Religion in the Struggle for Power, p. 116).

discipline which the Church at Geneva placed over commercial life, could seriously claim that Calvin either desired or allowed free play of the capitalist spirit.

In the end, of course, Calvinism, in various lands, failed in its attempt to restrain the commercial spirit and to regulate economic life.[1] But, as R. H. Tawney has shown in his classic work, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, this failure lies with later Calvinism, and not with Calvin himself. Calvin and his immediate followers strove to relate the Christian ethic in relevant terms to the whole life of a society that was in the process of rapid change. But increasingly in the 17th century Calvinist theologians failed to follow this process through; failed to think out the implications of the Christian faith in terms of the social, political and economic movements of the time. Gradually the stress in social teaching was shifted to the moral virtues of individual kindness, thrift, temperance and honesty, while the aims and methods of commercial life were largely left unquestioned; gradually Church discipline and control exercized over social and economic activity weakened in the face of the rising commercial spirit of the time, and the valid and necessary individualism inherent in the Reformation theology, when applied to other areas such as business and commercial activity, was given a false authority divorced from all the restraints of the traditional social teaching of the Church. Such individualism, when allowed free reign in the economic field, soon came to regard worldly success as evidence of divine favour and proof, therefore, of honest industry and frugal living. So the Church, having unknowingly accommodated herself to the virtues of capitalism, found it increasingly difficult to offer any relevant guidance or criticism to the developing institutional structures of society. In the words of Tawney:

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1. Lutheran and Roman Catholic efforts likewise failed in their respective spheres of influence. Indeed, perhaps failed to an even greater extent. Troeltsch believes that Calvinism, in spite of its general failure in this area, because of its active and dynamic character, has always manifested a more critical attitude to the development of capitalism than has either Lutheranism or Roman Catholicism. (The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, vol. 2, p. 649).

> "In an age of impersonal finance, world-markets, and a capitalist organization of industry, its traditional social doctrines had nothing specific to offer, and were merely repeated, when, in order to be effective, they should have been thought out again in new and living terms. . . . The social teaching of the Church had ceased to count, because the Church itself had ceased to think."[1]

At the same time, left to go its own way, the whole area of economic life gradually emerged as an autonomous activity with a law of its own answerable to no other authority. 'Business is business' came to be its reply to those who sought to subject it to moral or religious criteria.

Thus the great synthesis of Christianity and civilization, the 'corpus Christianum', which the medieval Church had built up and which, through modification and improvement the Reformers, especially Calvin, had sought to preserve, gradually disappeared. The unified culture had fallen apart -- resolved into 'departments' of life -- politics, business, 'religion'. Each had an independent existence, and like parallel lines could never meet. Such was the Church's relationship to society on the eve of the Industrial Revolution.

Since, however, this study is concerned specifically with Scotland, further consideration must be given to the situation there as it developed from the time of the Reformation.

In much the same manner as Calvin, Knox and the other Scottish Reformers sought to regulate social, political and economic activity as well as moral and religious life. However, only when Calvinism reached Scotland was it tried on a national basis rather than a civic one. The 'holy community' of Geneva which Knox regarded as the 'most perfect school of Christ', was the pattern for the whole Scottish nation.

It was in the application of the concept of discipline to both Church and state that the comprehensive social concern of the Scottish Reformers is to be seen. Discipline was not merely a negative concept, but in this early period

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1. R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, p. 185.

especially, it was also a positive and dynamic one signifying the corporate and social concern of both Church and state for the whole of national life.[1] The plan of the First Book of Discipline for a comprehensive, compulsory system of education, and for adequate provision for the poor is well known. The unwillingness of the greedy lords of Scotland to accept this radical scheme and grant the Church her rightful endowments for the purpose, meant that the efforts of the Church to carry out her social task, especially in these two areas, was severly hampered. But this setback did not mean that the Church gave up her struggle to subject the whole nation to the discipline of the Gospel. Indeed, the first decades of the Reformation period are marked by frequent pronouncements and declarations by the Church criticizing those of royalty,[2] the nobility, landlords, merchants, and any others who refused to accept such discipline as it applied to social, political, and economic, as well as moral questions. The following example from the First Book of Discipline,[3] concerning the treatment of the poor by landlords, is typical of the directness of the Church's prophetic criticism:

> "With the grief of our hearts we hear that some Gentlemen are now as cruel over their tenants as ever were the Papists, requiring of them whatsoever before they paid to the Church; so that the Papistical tyranny shall only be changed to the tyranny of the Lord or of the laird. We dare not flatter your Honours, neither yet is it profitable for you that we so do. If you permit such cruelty to be used, neither shall ye, who by your

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1. The concept of the 'two kingdoms', the Church and the state, both ordained by God, meant that while each had its own respective sphere of responsibility, they worked together as twin instruments in seeking to build up a unified and disciplined Christian society. Clearly this division of responsibility did not mean that the Church gave up her right to criticize the existing order in the name of Christ. The right to criticize the Civil authority is quite explicit in the Second Book of Discipline, Chap 1, 14: "The ministers exercize not the civil jurisdiction but teach the magistrate how it should be exercized according to the Word."

2. "A Scotch presbytery, according to James VI. . . 'agreeth with monarchy as God and the Devil. There Jack and Tom and Will and Dick shall meet and censure me and my Council'." (J. H. S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland, p. 415).

3. This document, approved by the General Assembly of the Church in 1560, was addressed to the Great Council of Scotland, the body that exercized authority in the land after the Queen Regent was deposed in 1559.

> authority ought to gainstand such oppression, neither (shall) they that use the same, escape God's heavy and fearful judgments.[1]

This freedom with which the early Scottish Reformers exercized their prophetic task in society is one of the most noteworthy features of the early Reformed documents. Political rulers, including Kings and Queens, the aristocracy, economic practices, unjust laws, social pretensions -- all were subjected, in the name of Christ, to forthright and outspoken criticism both by individual ministers and by the Church courts.[2]

Ivo Clark in his History of Church Discipline in Scotland has shown that in their scheme of discipline as applied to economic matters, the Scottish Reformers did not differ in substance from the Church before the Reformation. On the matter of usury the early Reformed standards were strongly critical of the practice.[3]

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1. W. Croft Dickinson, ed., "The First Book of Discipline", in John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland, vol II, p. 303.

2. Some who view all historical happenings from a standpoint of economic determinism point out that it was inevitable that the Reformers should be critical of the aristocracy and their unjust oppression of the poor, because it was they who robbed the Church of her rightful wealth and left the clergy impoverished. No one would deny that economic causes played a large part in determining the Church's hostility to the landed classes. But such a factor cannot begin to explain the reason for the comprehensive scope of the Church's social criticism at this time. Consider, for example, criticism of the economic practices of merchants and traders, people whom the Church had no 'economic reason' to denounce. Others have tried to account for the Church's freedom in criticizing royalty by attributing it to the frequent opposition of the monarch to the Reformed faith in Scotland, and the later hostility over the question of the relationship between Church and state. But while such antagonism may have sharpened the Church's awareness of her prophetic office in relation to rulers in particular and the state generally, once again, as in the case of the economic factor, it hardly explains the existence of dynamic Christian criticism of other aspects of contemporary life. Clearly, the real source of the social dynamic of the Scottish Church in this period was the living and vital nature of the Calvinistic faith itself. We noticed how this Calvinism in Geneva carried on a vigorous criticism of all aspects of civic life. Calvin and the other Genevan Reformers had no 'economic reason' to criticize the wealthy classes and business interests; they had no 'religious reason' to criticize the civic rulers. So it was in Scotland. To say that it was only economic determinism and religious antagonism that caused the Scottish Church to engage in social criticism is to forget the power of the revitalized Church and her goal for society. The Reformers' aim was to bring the whole life of Scotland under the lordship of Christ. Here was the ultimate reason why those who ruled, and those of wealth and social position could not be exempt from social criticism.

3. Knox's Order of Ecclesiastical Discipline (1560)states that " 'if there be

However, though Scotland was, throughout this early period, still a relatively backward country economically, the rise of trade and commerce in England and Europe had already had its effects on Scotland by the beginning of the Reformation, and it seems likely that the medieval ban on usury was not long enforced in Scotland. As in Calvin's Geneva, regulation of interest seems to have replaced outright prohibition.[1] The desire to accommodate itself creatively to the realities of economic life was, as we have seen, a mark of the Calvinistic social ethic. In Scotland, as in Geneva, the Church seems to have followed this course without in any way relaxing her general authority over economic activity. For a whole century after the Reformation, the Scottish Church never ceased to speak out against social and economic injustice. What contemporary Christian criticism of the economic order could be stronger or more direct than that voiced by the General Assembly in the year 1596:

> "Sacrilege in all estates, without any conscience, growing continually more and more, to the utter undoing of the Kirk and staying to the planting of the Gospel -- cruel oppression of the poor tenents, whereby the whole commons of the country are utterly wrackit by the extreme dear setting of their rooms and holding out of their corn by untimeous teinding and extreme thraldom in services. Oppression under pretext of law, by usury and by contracts against law, forstalling of markets, ane regrateing by gentlemen burgesses and commons, whereby the prices of victual is marvellously raised, to the great hurt of the poor, and suchlike girnelling of victuals, and withholding of them from markets and not threshing them out in due time."[2]

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any blasphemer, drunkard, slanderer, usurer -- they ought not to escape either admonition or punishment'." (Ivo Clark, A History of Church Discipline in Scotland, pp. 96-7). Clark goes on to show that while usury is not mentioned in the First Book of Discipline, in the Second Book it is put among the sins for which ministers may be deposed. In 1581, the General Assembly placed usury "along with adultery, heresy, fornication, incest, slaughter, theft -- among the most deadly sins". (Ibid., p. 97).

1. Clark notes that as late as the beginning of the 18th Century, there is still evidence of Church opposition to usury. Walter Steuart of Pardovan, "writing between 1708 and 1711 'Of the Vocational Faults of Ministers and Probationers', says that ministers are not to take usury, and if they do, they are to be deprived". (Ibid., p. 97). However, Clark concludes that it is doubtful if usurers were disciplined at all after 1600 (Ibid., p. 98), for the state sought to control it rather than ban it. "The first act of the Scots Parliament dealing with this matter after the Reformation is not an absolute prohibition but an attempt to regulate the amount of interest." (Ibid., p. 96).

2. Alexander Peterkin, ed., The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland, p. 435. (Spelling modernized as in Clark, op. cit., p. 217).

In 1645, the General Assembly in issuing a 'solemne and seasonable warning' to the nation, declared that:

> "If, among our nobles, gentrie and barons, there have been some studying their own private interests more than the publick, and 'seeking their own things more than the things of Christ, or oppressing and defrauding the poorer sort or the needie, because it was in the power of their hand;' . . . shall not God search all this out?"[1]

Three years later, the Commission of the General Assembly again condemned the prevalent public sins of the day, including acts of economic injustice -- " 'arbitrary and uncontrolled oppression and griding of the faces of the poor by landlords and others in place and power' ".[2] In the same year, the Assembly went so far as to issue an act censuring ministers who, through fear and timidity, did not preach against public sins and injustices. It warned that those who failed to exercize their prophetic calling faithfully would be deposed from the ministry.[3] Clearly there was no 'hands off politics and economics' for the Church of Scotland in this period.

This strong note of prophetic social criticism is clearly evident in the declarations of the General Assembly up to the middle of the 17th century. Then followed a long and bitter period of turmoil and strife in Scottish political and ecclesiastical history. In 1653 Cromwell forcibly dissolved the General Assembly and it did not meet again until 1690. When, at the end of this turbulent and unsettled period the Church again began to act and speak through her Assembly, a

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1. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842, Church Law Society ed., p. 124.

2. General Assembly Commission Records 1648-9 (Scottish History Society 1896), p. 86, quoted in S. Mechie, The Church and Scottish Social Development 1780-1870, p. x .

3. The General Assembly "appoint and ordain, that every minister do, by the word of wisdom, apply his doctrine faithfully against the publick sins and corruptions of these times, and particularly against the sins and scandals in that congregation wherein he lives, according to the act of the Generall Assembly, 1596, revived by the Assembly at Glasgow, 1638; appointing that such as shall be found not applying their doctrine to corruptions, which is the pastorall gift -- cold, and wanting of spirituall zeal -- flatterers, and dissembling of publick sins, and especially of great personages in their congregations -- that all such persons be censured according to the degree of their faults, and continuing therein be deprived." (Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842, op. cit., p. 188).

decided change can be seen in her social outlook. The vital prophetic awareness of the Reformers has virtually disappeared; the positive and dynamic concept of discipline which sought to bring the whole life of society -- of peer and peasant alike -- under the kingly rule of Christ, has been gradually perverted into a negative and oppressive system. Social and economic sins -- selfishness, pride, avarice, greed and exploitation by the wealthy and influential classes -- which had always been the object of the Church's criticism equally with the more individualistic moral sins, came to be ignored in the 18th century as the latter came into greater prominence.

The Revolution settlement of 1690 which safeguarded and established Presbyterianism in Scotland undoubtedly led to a great weakening of the Church's social criticism. Henceforth, the Church of Scotland's position of privilege and power in the nation was dependent upon the safety and stability of the 'status quo' -- the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the existing social class arrangements and political and economic structures. This strong vested interest in the existing order silenced the Church's criticism of that order and was one of the strongest reasons for her social indifference in the 18th and early 19th centuries. A cursory survey of General Assembly pronouncements from 1690 to 1830 reveals the appalling extent to which the Church believed that establishment implied the duty of the Church to defend and teach obedience to the existing laws and institutions of society. The following portion of an address to the King in 1782 reveals this basic assumption which dominated all the Church's social thinking:

> "Convinced that we owe our existence and protection, as a National Church to the stability of that government under which we live, we take a warm interest in the train of striking events which, in the course of Divine Providence, we have been called to behold: and it is a constant study to cherish and diffuse sentiments of loyalty amongst the people with whom we are connected."[1]

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1. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638 - 1842, op. cit., pp. 808-9.

Again, even allowing for the fact that the nation was gripped by fear, and that great excesses had marked the French Revolution, it is not easy to understand how a Church, which for a hundred years was so in sympathy with the common people of Scotland, could by 1800, dismiss the legitimate desires of the working classes for justice and political reform in the following facile and condescending manner:

> "We reflect with the deepest regret on those groundless complaints and murmurings which were heard at no distant period in every corner of our land, and which furnished a just subject of alarm to the friends of order and peace. But we rejoice to think, that the exertions of the virtuous, the writings of the wise, and the seasonable interposition of public authority, have served, by the blessing of Heaven, to counteract the insidious arts of the disaffected."[1]

The decline in radical social criticism can be detected from the beginning of the 18th century but the subservience of the Church to the state and the ruling classes is most evident after the middle of the century when the Moderate party in the Church gained the ascendancy. The Moderates had their roots in the new rationalism of the 18th century Enlightenment.[2] In reaction to the political and religious strife of the previous century, the Moderate party sought to bring the Church into conformity with the spirit of reason, moderation and tolerance. Thus, they were men who cherished and shared in the urbane and polite atmosphere made possible for the cultured few by the growing prosperity of Scotland towards the end of the century. Since both the Moderates and the aristocracy were bolstered by the patronage system which upheld the special rights and privileges of each

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1. Ibid., p. 878.

2. Nowhere is the autonomous spirit of the Enlightenment more evident than in its concept of the secular society freed of any criticism or control from the Church. In the words of John Locke: " 'The Church itself is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the commonwealth. The boundaries on both sides are fixed and immovable. He jumbles heaven and earth together, the things most remote and opposite, who mixes these societies which are, in their origin, end, business and in everything, perfectly distinct, and infinitely different from each other' " (John Locke, Works - 1823 ed., vol 21, quoted in A. R. Vidler, The Orb and the Cross, p. 20). Unfortunately, the Church, which had in this period narrowed the scope of her concern to 'moral' and 'spiritual' affairs, too easily accepted such a limitation of her authority.

group, each in turn catered to the interests of the other. Under such influences, therefore, the Scottish Church, controlled by the Moderates, capitulated to the spirit of the age and the vested interests of the day, and exchanged her prophetic freedom for a docile servility.

Nor was the other major party in the Church at the time, the Evangelicals, less guilty of neglecting their social responsibility. Though extremely critical of the worldliness of the Moderates and their subservience to the power and influence of the state, the Evangelicals, nevertheless, until well into the 19th century, displayed an essentially negative attitude to the state, being largely indifferent to the importance of the institutions and structures of society. Individual salvation and personal piety was the essence of the Christian faith. In the end, "this world was of no real importance; and therefore Evangelicalism, though abounding in philanthropy, had no social message".[1] Perhaps the social outlook of the Church in the 18th century can be summed up by saying that while the Moderates were too 'this-worldly' to engage in any serious social criticism, the Evangelicals were too 'other-worldly' to do so.

Another factor in the Church's abdication of her prophetic calling was the change that had taken place in Reformed theology. The Reformation period had been marked by the recovery of a biblically-centered theology. The lively categories in which the Christian faith was formulated was a feature of the early Reformed standards. These standards were not a rigid schematic system but were an expression of a dynamic understanding of God's activity in Christ.[2] This outgoing activity of God in Christ called for man's response in faith and obedience. But for Calvin and Knox such response was not merely personal obedience but was also a corporate obedience whereby the whole of society, and indeed the whole of the created order would become 'the theatre of God's glory'. Such was the dynamic

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1. A. J. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland 1707-1929, p. 172.

2. This strong Christological emphasis is evident in the Scots Confession of 1560.

theological understanding which lay behind the courageous and forthright social criticism of the early Scottish Reformers. In the 17th century however, in the course of the theological controversies which raged on the continent, the biblical teaching of the Reformers came to be hardened into the rigid categories of a scholastic Calvinism. This later Calvinism, with its doctrines of double predestination and limited atonement, found a formal framework in the Federal theology of the time with its two separate covenants -- a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. The adoption by the Scottish Church of the Westminster standards, with their moderate form of Federal theology, reflected a significant change of emphasis in Scottish theology which affected the whole life and work of the Church, not least her social outlook. In the content and application of preaching, for example, T. F. Torrance notes that:

> "At the Reformation preaching was concerned with presenting Christ and His graces and focussing the attention of the people upon Him, while in the application of the Gospel the people were directed toward their neighbours in Christian love and charity. In the post-Westminster period, however, there is a change. Preaching is much more concerned with experience of Christ, with application of His benefits, with attaining an interest in Him, while in the application the people were exhorted to be concerned with working out their own sanctification. There is a marked turning of the attention inward upon the self."[1]

This development toward a pietistic individualism was accompanied by a trend toward legalism and moralism in ethics. In the Federal theology, the covenant of works divorced from the covenant of grace meant that the former came to be viewed apart from the all-embracing grace of God in Christ; creation was separated from redemption. Since the covenant of works was that made with man at the creation apart from grace, the whole of the created order -- the whole life of society -- had its own separate relationship to God, apart from Christ, and was subject to its own particular 'natural' and 'moral laws'. Thus separated from the dynamic centre of the Gospel of grace -- the humanity of Christ -- the Church's social

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1. T. F. Torrance, ed., The School of Faith, p. XLVIII.

teaching degenerated in the 18th and 19th centuries to mere legalism and moralism. This was as true of the hyper-Calvinism of the Evangelicals as the laxer Calvinism of the Moderates. Tragically, long before the first challenge of the gradually emerging industrial society had presented itself, the Scottish Church had exchanged the dynamic biblical theology and the vigorous social criticism of the Reformation period for a static rationalistic theology and a pietistic moralism.

Calvinism, as Tawney rightly pointed out, "varied widely from period to period and country to country, with differences of economic conditions, social tradition, and political environment".[1] Scotland was a notable example of such variation. There, the rigorous teaching and ethics of the original Calvinism persisted much longer than among Calvinists in England and on the continent. Because Scotland was a relatively small and unified country with a single national faith; because she was a country whose economic structure was largely medieval for two centuries after the Reformation, the system of discipline could be applied and maintained much more effectively than elsewhere. " 'My one aim is that Prince and people alike should obey God' ",[2] claimed Knox, and whatever may be said of its harsher aspects, this simple, but comprehensive and positive goal of discipline at least meant that the Scottish Church sought to influence all aspects of life, and meted out criticism and punishment impartially to the powerful and wealthy as well as the poor. And, though the relaxing of discipline on on economic activity and the cessation of all social criticism had occurred, as we have seen, by the beginning of the 18th century,[3] it was not until near the

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1. R. H. Tawney in Introduction, p. 9, of M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

2. As quoted in E. Troeltsch, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 634.

3. Tawney's remarks concerning the Church of England apply equally to Scotland: "In the eighteenth century it is almost superfluous to examine the teaching of the Church. .. as to social ethics. . . . The very conception of the Church as an independent moral authority, whose standards may be in sharp antithesis to social conventions, has been abandoned." (Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, pp. 188-9).

end of the century with the onset of the Industrial Revolution and the gradual breakdown of the parish system in the large towns, that the Church's loss of control and influence in society became fully apparent. It had taken from the 16th to the 19th century for the concept of an autonomous order to become embodied in the workings of the new industrial society. In Scotland, the early tradition of the Reformers had died very slowly.

This hasty and fragmentary sketch of almost 1800 years of Church history is sufficient to indicate that the present-day claim of the Church to be heard in relation to social, political and economic life is no innovation, but is a re-assertion of an historic responsibility which had been an integral part of the Church's traditional witness from her earliest days. This concern for society, as we have seen, has taken different forms at different times and in different situations. Often the Church failed to limit social and economic evils; often she tolerated or was blind to inequalities and injustices in the systems which she supported and promoted. But never, during by far the greater part of the whole period of her existence, did the Church cease to deliberately exercize influence on the political and social ordering of men's lives, and upon economic relations between both individuals and classes. What is significant, therefore, about most of the 18th and 19th centuries is not simply the absence or failure of the Scottish Church's social criticism, but the willing acceptance by the Church of the amazing claim that she had no right or authority to engage in such activity; that the whole enterprise of social criticism was a novel and unwarranted intrusion of an alien element into the spiritual concerns of Christianity.

Such was the outlook of the Church in Scotland at the beginning of the 19th century as she sought to grapple with the manifold problems raised by the rapidly developing industrial society. Only then, when the challenging and fateful changes taking place in social, political and economic life called out for

relevant Christian criticism and guidance, were the tragic consequences of the Church's prophetic silence and social conformity fully revealed. By 1830 the patterns and effects of the new industrial society were becoming apparent, and it is, therefore, to a detailed investigation of the critical period from that date to mid-century that this study now turns.

PART II

THE CRITICAL PERIOD IN THE FAILURE

OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

1830 - 1850

CHAPTER THREE

THE EFFECT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ON CHURCH AND NATION

The years 1830 - 1850 were eventful ones in Scottish history. They witnessed political reform agitation, the effective beginnings of working class movements, Chartism, the first significant measures of factory legislation, a continuation of the Highland clearances, the poor law controversy, corn law agitation, and in the Church, the prolonged voluntary and non-intrusion controversies, and the Disruption. Yet none of these can be understood apart from the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Most of these movements and events arose directly or indirectly through the coming of industrial society; the others, including those in the Church, were profoundly affected by it.

Clearly, the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the old patterns of Scottish life were many and various. Nowhere, however, were its effects upon both Church and nation so evident as in the impetus it gave to the growth and movement of population in the first half of the 19th century. From 1801 to 1851 the population of Scotland increased from 1,608,000 to 2,888,742. Of even more significance was the change in the national population distribution over this period. Throughout these years the drift of population was from the rural areas to the towns, especially those in the new lowland industrial belt in the Clyde valley. Glasgow is a typical example of the rapid growth of most towns in the west. With 77,385 people in 1801 it had increased to 202,426 by 1831 and

344,986 by 1851.[1] Though less pronounced, the trend was the same to the large towns on the east coast. Edinburgh grew from 90,768 at the turn of the century to 208,477 by 1851, while Aberdeen and Dundee both trebled their population in this period. By mid-century, the mechanization of industry, changes in agricultural methods, the increasing flow of trade and commerce, and related factors had greatly altered the population distribution of the country. By 1851 almost twice as many people were engaged in the manufacturing industries as in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

The problems created by the rapid influx of people into the larger centres of population were enormous. A new pattern of life was forced upon tens of thousands of town-dwellers quite unlike the way of life they had formerly known. The most dramatic changes took place in the nature of their work and in the circumstances of their home and family environment. These changes in turn created great problems in the life of the Church, and in the life of the nation. It is to an examination of the most important changes which the coming of industrial society brought upon both the Scottish Church and the Scottish people that we now turn.

A. The Impact upon the Church

The social, political and economic effects of the Industrial Revolution had a profound influence upon the Church. After 1800, the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland, which had been dominant during the last half of the 18th century,

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1. The percentage increase in many smaller towns and parishes was even more spectacular. In the parish of Old Monkland the development of coal and iron industries increased the population from 9,580 in 1831 to 19,709 in 1841, and 27,333 in 1851. The adjoining parish of New Monkland more than doubled in ten years -- from 9,867 in 1831 to 20,515 in 1841. (D. F. MacDonald, Scotland's Shifting Population 1770 - 1850, pp. 67-8). From 1821 to 1861, Airdrie grew in population from 4,900 to 12,900; Coatbridge from 500 to 10,500; Galashiels from 1,100 to 6,400; and Wishaw from 1,000 to 6,100. (G. S. Pryde, Scotland from 1603 to the Present Day, p. 250).

gradually declined. The Moderates were not by background or temperament particularly suited to an industrial society. Being men of culture and learning they cherished the free and leisurely paternalistic atmosphere of rural life. Accustomed to mixing with the gentry and nobility, they found little in common with the new hard-working businessman, much less the industrial worker. However, though declining, the Moderate influence in the General Assembly remained dominant until 1833 when at last the Evangelicals, who had the support of the rising middle classes, gained control.

As early as the 1790's the inadequacy of the existing parochial system was becoming obvious to some in the Church. Both the general increase in population and the influx of people to the industrial towns meant that many existing churches served huge and unmanageable parishes, while elsewhere new communities had arisen where no church existed. Though the Moderates were lukewarm toward church extension, believing it to be a possible threat to the patronage system which preserved their privileges, in 1798 the Assembly made provision for setting up chapels-of-ease within existing parishes. But it was decreed that voluntary church-door collections could not be used to build such chapels, and in order to preserve the privileges of the parish ministers, the ministers of the chapels, usually popularly chosen, were excluded from the church courts. Therefore, since most patrons were unable or unwilling to build new churches, and Parliament refused to do so,[1] apart from several built by the town councils in the large towns such as Glasgow and Edinburgh, few new churches were erected before 1834.

For many years, the Church had urged Parliament to make provision for the extension of the parochial system into the industrial areas, but without success. At last in 1834, the General Assembly under Evangelical control passed the Chapel Act which allowed Presbyteries to divide parishes quoad sacra (for spiritual

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1. Only in 1824 in the Highlands and Islands did the government build and endow new churches. In that year 42 'Parliamentary churches' were built.

purposes only), gave the chapels their own districts, and their ministers a place in the church courts. The same Assembly set in motion a massive church extension campaign with Chalmers as convener. By 1838 it was reported that "within the last four years, upwards of 180 new places of worship have been built, a number nearly three times greater than those built previously since the time of Knox."[1]

Yet noble as this effort was, it came at least 30 years too late. By the middle of the 1830's great numbers of the industrial masses had been without any church connection for decades. One minister of a working class parish reported:

> "The ignorance prevalent in this place is so great, that few will be able to form any conception of it. . . . But true it is, there are people here who do not know who made the world; who neither know of the creation, fall or redemption of man; who neither know of a heaven nor of a hell."[2]

A survey by the church extension committee revealed that

> "there were tens of thousands of our fellow-countrymen living under the same laws, and speaking the same language with ourselves, who stand as much in need of the labours of the Christian Missionary as if they were living in the South Sea Islands, or under the burning sun of India."[3]

But even the new chapels largely failed in their main purpose. It had been hoped that if these churches were built by voluntary effort, Parliament could be induced to endow them. However, neither the Whigs, who held power until 1841, nor the Tories were prepared to do so. Without endowments, therefore, the new chapels had to rely on the system of seat rents to support their ministers. Unfortunately, since the sliding scale of seat charges meant that inevitably one's place in church reflected one's position and status in society, this system gave rise to tragic class divisions and class consciousness in the churches. The

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1. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, June 1838, p. 24. The huge sum of almost £300,000 was raised in this campaign -- an indication of the wealth of the new middle classes even in the bad depression years of 1836-8.

2. Ibid., October 1838, p. 88. 3. Ibid., May 1838, p. 13.

labouring poor, who could seldom afford to pay seat rents had to bear the social stigma of accepting free seats[1] or stay away. It is not surprising that the more independent and self-respecting of them chose the latter. Certainly the system of seat renting played no small part in the alienation of the industrial lower classes from the Church. Dr. Black, the minister of Barony Parish Church in Glasgow reported to a Parliamentary Commission in 1838 that "there are no free sittings for the poor, generally speaking, in the churches of Glasgow and suburbs; in the Barony kirk there are 50 only appropriated by special grant."[2] He said it was "very probably that a poor person taking a seat in one of the churches in Glasgow might be removed therefrom, but that the same exclusion would hardly be visited on a well-dressed person."[3]

From 1838 until the Disruption in 1843, interest in church extension declined as the non-intrusion controversy increasingly absorbed the attention and energy of the Church. From a genuine concern to reach the 'churchless' masses in the industrial areas, she turned to ecclesiastical controversy at the very time when commercial depression and the worsening state of the poor called for an even greater effort. At the height of the controversy some saw the damage it was doing to the Church's mission to the nation, and how irrelevant it all was to the labouring classes. One minister in Glasgow was well aware that

> "the great mass of the people who live in our wynds and vennels, and in the deep closes of the Bridgegate and Saltmarket, and High Street, among whom such intense spiritual desolation reigns, never heard of our controversies and they have no concern about them."[4]

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1. From the standpoint of location, these seats were always the worst situated in the church. They were frequently behind pillars or in the extreme back corners under the galleries.

2. Reports from the Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners, vol. XLII (159), p. 47.

3. Ibid.

4. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, August 1842, p. 118. These people -- the very poor -- if Scottish and not Irish, though usually outside the organized Church, were nominally of the Church of Scotland and largely remained so after the Disruption.

When the actual Disruption came, it further weakened the Christian witness to the unchurched. For many years both branches of the Church had to concentrate their main effort on their own internal organization -- the Church of Scotland, sadly depleted in numbers and vigorous leadership, in supplying ordinances in the vast number of vacant charges, teachers in vacant schools and providing adequate endowments for all the new church extension charges left in her care; the Free Church, without buildings or endowments, in providing churches and schools for her people throughout the length and breadth of the country.

In the 1830's the Church of Scotland was engaged not only in internal controversy, but she was waging an external one -- the voluntary controversy -- with the Dissenters. Foremost of the Dissenting Churches were the Secession and Relief Churches. Both these Presbyterian bodies had made great progress in the 1820's and 30's, much of it at the expense of the Established Church, due to the extreme unpopularity of the patronage system, and, as we shall see, her reactionary social and political outlook. During these two decades, these Churches added to their number 144 new congregations.[1]

Activated by their success, the Dissenters, reflecting the strong climate of individualism and political liberalism of the time, began a vigorous agitation in the 1830's for what they considered to be religious freedom. Claiming the voluntary system to be the only biblical method for the support and extension of the Church, they demanded a complete separation of Church and state involving the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Scotland. The struggle was a bitter one for both sides claimed scriptural support for their position. One important result of the voluntary controversy should be noted here. The strength of the

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1. Made up of 106 Secession and 38 Relief congregations. At the union in 1820 the Secession Church had 283 churches. In the same year there were 95 Relief churches. In 1847, all 400 Secession and 118 of 136 Relief churches united to form the United Presbyterian Church. (W. MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church, pp. 36-41).

Dissenters in Scotland and more particularly in England, and their influence over Whig policies was one of the major reasons why the Whig governments of the 1830's found it politically inexpedient to endow the new churches built by the Church of Scotland.[1] But our main concern with this controversy will be to examine later the effect it had upon the social and political outlook of both the Dissenters and the Established Church. By 1843 the voluntary agitation had subsided and though the Secession and Relief Churches came together in 1847 to form the strongly voluntary United Presbyterian Church,[2] the controversy did not flare up again until later in the century when the majority of those in the Free Church joined the battle against establishment.

Finally, if the rapid rise of industrial society created 'churchless' masses, the inadequacy of the other two branches of the parochial system -- education and poor relief -- was even more apparent. We will have occasion later to consider the Church's attitude to the question of poverty. Brief attention will also be given to education when the Church's reaction to the Factory Acts and her attitude to the poor is examined. It is enough to note here that by the early 1840's it became increasingly obvious that the Church lacked the necessary resources to provide for either an adequate system of poor relief or sufficient educational facilities for the rapidly growing population of the industrial towns. Ultimately, the state had to assume responsibility for these two vital fields. So in 1845, with the passing of the Scottish Poor Law, the Church of Scotland gave up her

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1. This, as we have noted, had a crippling effect on the Church's efforts to reach the poorest classes. Though there was much that was valid in the arguments of the voluntaries, it seems clear that the voluntary system, dependent as it was upon regular collections and seat rents, could not meet the needs of the poorest classes in the large towns at this period in Scotland's industrial development. While many of the artisan class were Dissenters, very few of the lowest classes were in the Secession, Relief or later United Presbyterian Churches.

2. Hereafter referred to by her popular designation, the U. P. Church.

traditional role in relation to the poor, and later in the century, in 1872, a national system of education finally superseded the denominational schools.

B. The Impact upon the Life of a People

It has often been remarked that in Edinburgh the gully spanned by the North Bridge, linking the New Town with the Old Town, forms the outward and visible symbol of the social and psychological division in the community and nation at large caused by the Industrial Revolution. Before the building of the New Town all classes had lived together in the famous closes of the High Street and Canongate. It was not uncommon to find in the same close a peer of the realm, lords of session, parish ministers, doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers and artisans. Relations were marked by mutual respect and genuine friendship; all felt bound together in the bundle of life with common cares, anxieties and problems.

With the coming of industrial society, however, these social relationships changed. The new class divisions based on one's function in industry -- between those who controlled and those who merely operated the instruments of production -- came to be reflected in social and community life. The New Town was built, itself the symbol of the new social structure. Here moved the educated and prosperous middle classes -- professional people, the new owners and managers of industry, and later the merchants. The North Bridge, which made the social alienation possible, became the means of 'escape' across the gully which henceforth cut in two the old integrated society. Soon after this exodus to the New Town, "the historic areas of the Canongate and the Grassmarket presented aspects of acute urban demoralization."[1] By 1830, the Old Town, inhabited only by the labouring

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1. L. J. Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-40, p. 89.

classes and the destitute, was already manifesting all the signs of the deplorable but familiar pattern of 19th century industrial towns -- the working class slum area.

For the lower classes in the urban centres, many of whom had only recently come from an integrated rural or village community, the loss of independence and status, together with the social class alienation and consequent absence of the old sense of a unified community, was hardly less damaging and disruptive a factor in their lives than the economic hardships which they had to face. The destruction of the old social fabric, the hardening and widening of social class divisions and distinctions which took place in these early decades, and the economic inequalities which subsequently developed, formed the basis for the tragic social and economic class conflict which has been such a marked feature of industrial society during the past 150 years.

It is difficult to exaggerate the appalling conditions under which great masses of the Scottish people had to live in the industrial towns throughout most of the last century. Contemporary sources make it clear that conditions were far worse in Scotland than anywhere in Europe. English reformers, long familiar with the worst slums of England, were horrified at the sights they saw in Scotland, especially in Glasgow. One commissioner in a Report to Parliament in 1839 said:

> "I have seen human degradation in some of its worst phases, both in England and abroad, but I can advisedly say, that I did not believe until I visited the wynds of Glasgow, that so large an amount of filth, crime, misery and disease existed on one spot in any civilized country."[1]

In some of the hovels,

> "ten, twelve, and sometimes twenty persons of both sexes and all ages sleep promiscuously on the floor in different degrees of nakedness. These places are, generally as regards dirt, damp and decay, such as no person of common humanity to animals would stable his horse in."[2]

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1. Reports from the Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners, vol. XLII (159), p.51.

2. Ibid.

Nor was this the fate of only a small section of the city's population. The same authority estimated the population packed into closes in these wynds at probably 30,000 men, women and children.[1]

The disastrous effect of miserable environment on the health and general well-being of the labouring classes was becoming fully apparent after 1830. The severe overcrowding, due to the greatly increased population and the inadequate supply of new houses,[2] the long hours, back-breaking and monotonous toil, unhealthy working conditions, low wages, prolonged periods of unemployment, the filth, misery and destitution began to take their toll in chronic diseases, violent epidemics and early death. From about the middle of the 18th century in Scotland, there had been a slow and uneven but nevertheless real improvement in the health and general welfare of the people. This trend was reflected in the declining death rate up to about 1820. But thereafter, as destitution and disease increased in the rapidly expanding industrial areas, the death rate began to rise again in all the major urban centres:

> "In 1830 the death rate in Glasgow was 1 in 41 annually but in 1840, it is 1 in 31 annually. . . . In England it is 1 in 60, and London 1 in 51. In Glasgow in 1837 the year of great commercial distress and dreadful destitution, saw it go to 1 in 24."[3]

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1. Ibid.

2. In Scotland in 1801 there was a ratio of 5.46 persons per house; in 1851 this had risen to 7.80 persons per house. Yet since these figures include the villages and rural areas they fail to reflect the much greater increase in the industrial towns, much less the fact that the increase was almost wholly confined to the poorer and already overcrowded parts of these towns. For example, with few new houses constructed during the period, the population of Glasgow between 1831 and 1841 increased by 33,031. But in the most destitute parts of the city it had doubled, while the number of inhabited houses had not increased at all. (J. H. F. Brotherston, Observations on the Early Public Health Movement in Scotland, pp. 48, 58-9).

3. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, November 1841, pp. 663-4.

Other cities were little better. Edinburgh's death rate in 1837 was 1 in 25, Dundee's 1 in 27.[1]

Bad as these figures seem to be, they do not tell the full story because, like the overcrowding, the rise in the death rate was confined to working class districts.[2] Indeed, in Edinburgh, from the point of view of the higher classes, the city was long considered to be one of the healthiest towns in Britian.[3] In 1845 half the members of these classes could count on living to age 51½, whereas half the artisans and labourers of the city "had died out by the age of 17½".[4] In view of this imbalance between rich and poor districts in all industrial towns, it is not improbable that in a bad year like 1847 when Glasgow had a city-wide death rate of 1 in 19,[5] at least every eighth or ninth person living in the poorest districts died.

A government inquiry which published its findings in the Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Scotland[6] in 1842 revealed the alarming extent of the misery and destitution throughout the country, and how closely connected it was with the prevalence of disease.[7] Though sanitary conditions

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1. Brotherston, op. cit., p. 59.

2. Ibid., pp. 44-6. 3. Ibid., p. 46. 4. Ibid., p. 44.

5. T. Johnston, The History of the Working Classes in Scotland, p. 298.

6. This valuable 330 page social document, largely the work of medical men throughout the country, presents a comprehensive picture of the housing, working and living conditions of the working classes in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dumfries, Ayr, Stirling, Musselburgh, Tranent, Greenock, Lanark, St. Andrews, Inverness, and Tain and Easter Ross.

7. This period was marked by dreadful cholera and typhus epidemics in Scotland. Serious cholera outbreaks took place in 1831-2 when 10,650 died, about 3,600 of whom were in Glasgow; 1848-9 when 3,800 died in Glasgow; and 1853-4 when about 6,000 died, 3,892 in Glasgow. (T. Ferguson, The Dawn of Scottish Social Welfare, pp. 128-9). Typhus epidemics occurred in 1836 in Glasgow when 30,000 were infected and 3,300 died; 1837 in Edinburgh with 10,000 cases; 1842-3 when 12% of Glasgow were infected, of whom 32% died; and 1847 when 4,346 in Glasgow died. (Ibid., p. 122, and Johnston op. cit., p. 298). Bad sanitary conditions were largely responsible for the quick spread of these outbreaks. But their connection with destitution was seen in the fact that the epidemics were at their worst in areas of acutest poverty and squalor, and always coincided with, or closely followed, the periods of depression and unemployment.

were bad in all the towns investigated, Glasgow was again singled out. In one area off Argyll St.,

> "there were no privies or drains, and the dungheaps received all the filth which the swarm of wretched inhabitants could give; and we learned that a considerable part of the rent of the house was paid by the produce of the dungheaps. . . . The interiors of these houses and their inmates corresponded with the exteriors. We saw half-dressed wretches crowded together to be warm; and in one bed, although in the middle of the day, several women were imprisoned under a blanket, because as many others who had on their backs all the articles of dress that belonged to the party were then out of doors in the streets. This picture is so shocking, that without ocular proof, one would be disposed to doubt the possibility of the facts."[1]

In the main Report presented to Parliament, the commissioners concluded that "both the structural arrangements and the condition of the population in Glasgow was the worst of any that we had seen in any part of Great Britain."[2]

However, if the social and economic changes brought about in the towns by the Industrial Revolution -- the rapid influx of population, inadequate housing and bad sanitation, irregular employment and low wages, disease and destitution -- forced great numbers of Scotsmen to live in much more inhuman and degrading conditions of home and family environment than had ever been their lot in the past, they also forced upon most Scotsmen an equally dramatic but no less fateful alteration in the nature of their work and their conditions of employment.

Before the growth of the large industrial towns, industry on a small scale had been scattered over many parts of the country. Many a head of a household had his small trade with his family and perhaps a few apprentices. In the little shop there was a companionship between master and men that bound them together in mutual respect and genuine community of interest. There was no social and economic gap between them. The master's few workmen ate at his table, married his daughters and had hopes of becoming masters themselves. Certainly the hours of work might be

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1. Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Scotland, 1842, pp. 8-9.

2. Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, 1842, p. 25.

long and there was no hope of wealth and few luxuries, but neither was there fear of absolute destitution nor the constant threat of recurring mass unemployment. Above all, life offered tradesman and worker alike a large measure of security, independence, and a dignified status in the community.

But the coming of the power machine and the factory system greatly altered the old master-worker relationship, as well as the conditions of work. It meant the loss of all self-sufficient handicraft for great masses of the people. Gradually, skilled workers lost the tools with which they had worked and the skills which had enabled them to live relatively independently. Thus the former small masters and independent workers became displaced workers. Those who stubbornly sought to maintain their independence did so at the cost of a steadily declining standard of living.[1] But the vast majority could no longer compete with the machine, so they had to come to the machine for work. Into the large towns they came, where their old skills were of little or no use, and where, having lost control of the 'means of production', they became work-'hands' rather than work-'men' in the mills and factories. There the former companionship that had existed between master and men in the small shops was gone, replaced by a great, and what was to become an ever increasing gap both in outlook and circumstances between employer and employee. Two distinct classes were created: on the one hand, those who owned the new factories, the inventors of the machinery, the investors and speculators, with their new-found economic wealth and power, and rising social status; on the other, those who laboured in the factories -- the 'hands' -- the men, and, since the machines needed little skilled attention, the women and the children with their abundant and cheap labour.

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1. The hand-loom weavers, who were long noted in Scotland for their high level of education and intelligence, are the best-known example of a large class of workers who fought a losing battle against the effects of the machine on their trade. Their plight became so serious that several government investigations were conducted into the causes of their destitution. Formerly they had been among the highest paid of the artisans, but an official Report published in 1839 revealed that their average weekly wages had declined from approximately 18/ to 22/ in 1810-16 to 6/ to 7/6 in 1838. (Reports from the Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners, vol. XLII, 159, pp. 13-15).

So the age of industrial capitalism became a reality. With it came the erciless and shameful sacrifice of men, women and children to the needs of the ew machines:

> "A plethora of labourers, cottars from the soil, hand-craftsmen from the villages, driven to little overcrowded, bleak and cheerless hovels, hastily erected around the factory walls; compelled to sell their toil in foul and filthy working conditions, and for the barest pittances; from dawn to sunset bullied and oppressed, the last ounce taken from their bodies by scarcely less oppressed overseers; hunger, misery, dirt, no sanitary or factory regulations; no machinery fenced; their children killed off like flies, and they themselves emaciated, consumptive, and without hope."[1]

Nor is this description at all exaggerated. Time and again the investigations f government commissioners in the 1830's and 40's brought to light the shocking orking conditions in Scottish mills and factories -- dirty, unhealthy, often amshackle buildings, without sanitation, lacking adequate ventilation and lighting, nfenced machines without safety devices, the long hours, and worst of all, the idespread employment of young children.[2]

These official Reports, filled with a mass of evidence gathered on the spot rom workers, overseers, managers and owners paint a grim picture of factory life n Scotland in these decades. To read the awful details of child labour in the actories from the evidence given by the children themselves, declared a contem- orary newspaper, " 'makes a man almost loathe his species' ".[3] Subjected to the ame long hours and hard work as adults, factory children, the Reports found, were obbed of all time and energy for natural childhood recreation and play, not to ention education. Within the confines of their dreary and hopeless existence hey could "do nothing but attend that mill and sleep".[4] In one Dundee factory,

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. Johnston, op. cit., p. 271.

. See, for example, the First Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children in Factories, vol. XX (450), pp. 97-323, and the Second Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children in Factories, vol. XXI (519), pp. 23-95, both published in 1833, which provide a wealth of material on the working conditions and hours of labour in Scottish factories and mills. The former document contains many hundreds of testimonies gathered from witnesses -- mostly the workers themselves -- in all the major industrial areas of Scotland.

. Report in the Morning Chronicle, quoted in Johnston, op. cit., p. 318.

. First Report, op. cit., p. 111.

the commissioners interviewed two sisters, the oldest not yet 7 years of age, the youngest just turned 6, both of whom had been working in the factory for almost a year. They each earned 1/6 a week and laboured from 5:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. except on Fridays when they finished at 8 p.m.[1]

Poor orphan children formed one of the cheapest sources of child labour for mill owners. From the poorhouse, gangs of them were sometimes sold to the highest bidder. In one case, a manufacturer contracted with a parish authority to take an idiot with every twenty sound children.[2] "Some owners kept a private burying-ground where the bodies of the dead infants were unceremoniously buried."[3]

In their investigations, the commissioners found that the children's tasks in the factories often subjected them to constant physical suffering:

> "She is at the wet frame, and always stands in the wet, and is wet in front from the hot water splashed on her. Her legs often swell; and both her feet and hands are hacked with the hot water; and she is sair fatigued and sleepy in the evening. 'She whiles gangs to bed without her supper, she is sae tired'."[4]

If she had shorter hours, said this 13 year old Kirkcaldy girl, then she "might go to school and learn to read, write and to sew."[5]

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1. Second Report, op. cit., p. 35.

2. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, July 1836, p. 114.

3. Johnston, op. cit., p. 318.

4. First Report, op. cit., p. 111.

5. Ibid. The hours of labour in this mill were 13 per day, not including time for meals. Until 1833, workers in most factories worked 13 to 16 hours. Under the provisions of the Factory Act of 1833, the length of this girl's working day would have been reduced to 12 hours. The 10 hour day did not come until 1847. Even by the Act of 1833, children 9 to 12 years of age still worked 8 hours, and therefore could not attend school during the day. Frequently the provisions of the Acts were evaded. Before 1833 there were no factory inspectors. In 1833, 4 were appointed for the whole of Great Britain.

Evidence from witnesses indicated that in many factories if children arrived late in the mornings, could not keep pace in their work with the speed of the machines, or, what was very common, fell asleep at their machines because of fatigue, they were subjected to strapping by the overseers. In many instances the beatings were harsh and brutal. One 13 year old girl who had worked in a Fife mill for 7 years testified that she and other children had often been beaten with a leather strap by an overseer:

> "She used sometimes to cry, when he beat her with the strap, mostly, soon after she came, when she was a mere child, and 'could not put on her ain claithes', which her sister did for her; that he has beat her till she screamed again, but she does not think that he beat her so much as the others, 'as he ken'd that she had neither faither nor mither'."[1]

At Monifeith, near Dundee, another witness described the brutality of the owners and overseers. He

> "has often seen the workers beat cruelly and severely; that he has seen the girls strapped; but the boys were beat so that they fell to the floor in the course of the beating; that they were beat with a rope with four tails;. . . that he has seen the boys black and blue crying for mercy; that all the overseers carried straps."[2]

It seems clear that many witnesses brought before the commissioners were afraid to criticize their employers or the conditions for fear of being discharged. A mechanic attached to a mill in Montrose said he had often seen an overseer "strike grown-up girls with a strap; has 'heard it come sharply off their backs'. Thinks children are too terrified to complain. They would be turned away from their situation."[3] In Dundee, when an overseer was fined by a magistrate for

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1. Ibid., p. 117. The owner of this mill, when questioned about these beatings, said that Watt, his foreman "was severer to the children than he wished. . . that he has seen the children crying with the strapping Watt gave them 'which was not a pleasant sight to him', (but) that he does not recollect of Watt so striking any worker as to inflict any permanent injury on them." (Ibid., pp. 117-8). This employer proudly testified that "he gives the children religious instruction on Sabbath evenings, and has free seats for them in the established and secession church." (Ibid., p. 118).

2. Ibid., p. 137.

3. Ibid., p. 267.

excessively punishing a child worker, the employer "compensated the overseer, discharged from his employment the witnesses to the case, and declared that 'he could do what he liked with his own'."[1]

Yet, bad as things undoubtedly were for the workers in the factories in this period, conditions in the mines of Scotland were far worse.[2] There men, women and children toiled laboriously below ground in the pits for 12-14 hours, sometimes longer. Hugh Miller, in describing a mining village near Edinburgh, has given us a most shocking but revealing account of the effects of collier life on the character and physical appearance of the women. These

> "poor over-toiled creatures, who carried up all the coal from underground on their backs, by a long turnpike stair inserted in one of the shafts -- continued to bear more of the marks of serfdom still about them than even the men. How these poor women did labour, and how thoroughly, even at this time, were they characterized by the slave nature!. . . I have seen these collier women crying like children when toiling under their load. . . . It has been estimated. . . that one of their ordinary day's work was equal to the carrying of a hundred-weight from the level of the sea to the top of Ben Lomond. They were marked by a peculiar type of mouth, by which I learned to distinguish them from all other females of the country. It was wide, open, thick-lipped, projecting equally above and below, and exactly resembled that which we find in the prints given of savages in their lowest and most degraded state."[3]

Conditions were so bad in the mines that the government at last ordered an investigation in 1840. The official Reports published in 1842 provided shattering

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1. Johnston, op. cit., p. 319.

2. The Scottish mining population had long been in a degraded condition. Prior to 1775 the miners were, by common law of Scotland, in a state of slavery. They, and their wives and children, were the property of their master and were transferable with the coal mine, as slaves in the colonies were when the estate was sold. In 1775 an act declared them 'free', but the spirit of the act was destroyed by its restrictions and regulations and in 1799 another statute had to be passed reaffirming the provisions of the first. Yet such legal freedom did little to improve their working conditions or their social state. Often uneducated, brutal and vicious, they continued to be a race apart -- cut off socially and culturally from the rest of society.

3. Hugh Miller, My Schools and Schoolmasters, p. 317.

evidence of the inhuman agony and sufferings endured by women and young persons underground.[1] As in the case of the slums, conditions were far worse in Scotland than in England.[2] In the words of the commissioner who investigated eastern Scotland:

> "The coal-bearers are women and children employed to carry coal on their backs in unrailed roads, with burdens varying from ¾ cwt. to 3 cwt. It is revolting to humanity to reflect upon the barbarous and cruel slavery which this degrading labour constitutes."[3]

Listen to the words of 6 year old Margaret Leveston of West Linton:

> "Been down at coal carrying six weeks; makes 10 or 14 rakes a day; carries full 56 lbs. of coal in a wooden backit. The work is na guid; it is so very sair. I work with sister Jesse and mother; dinna ken the time we gang; it is gai dark. . . . Never been to school."[4]

Testified Margaret Watson, age 16, of the same mine:

> "I was first taken down to carry coals when I was six years old, and have never been away from work except a few evenings in the summer months. . .. Most of us work from three in the morning till four or five at night. I make 20 rakes a day and 30 when mother bides at home. What I mean by a rake is a journey from the day-light with my wooden backit to a coal-wall, and back with my coal to the daylight when I throw the coal on father's hill, and return. I carry 2 cwt. on my back; never less than 1½ cwt. . . . We

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1. See the First Report of the Commissioners on the Employment and Condition of Children in Mines, vol. XV (380), and Reports and Evidence of Sub-Commissioners on the Employment and Condition of Children in Mines, vol. XVI (381-2). In the latter volume pp. 311-512 deal exclusively with mines in Scotland. The Reports for eastern Scotland documented no less than 429 personal interviews with the miners. (pp. 436-512). These interviews provide valuable social data on the moral, intellectual and religious state of miners in the 40's. Few, it seems, had more than the rudiments of an education; few a knowledge of even the barest essentials of the Christian faith.

2. "In Scotland the employment of girls and women in the ordinary under-ground work of the coal-pits is even more extensive than any part of England." (First Report, op. cit., pp. 27-8). In eastern Scotland, about 1/3 to 2/5 of the miners were young people and children 18 years old and under. (Ibid., pp. 38-9). About 1/4 to 1/3 of adult coal miners were women. (Reports and Evidence, op. cit., pp. 379-81).

3. First Report, op. cit., p. 28.

4. Reports and Evidence, op. cit., p. 458.

> often have bad air below; had some a short time since, and lost brother by it: he sunk down, and I tried to draw him out, but the air stopped my breath, and I was forced to gang."[1]

The Reports contained drawings which strikingly illustrated the nature of the work these 'beasts of burden' had to endure. These pathetic creatures are shown going on all-fours like animals dragging loaded trucks of coal to which they were harnessed by a chain and girdle. The amazed commissioner for eastern Scotland declared:

> "It is almost incredible to believe that human beings can submit to such employment, crawling on hands and knees, harnessed like horses, over soft slushy floors more difficult than dragging the same weights through our lowest common sewers."[2]

Accidents, many of them fatal, occurred almost every day. They were so common that their cause was seldom investigated and no records of deaths were kept.[3] These accidents, together with the laborious nature of colliery work, and the prevalence of those diseases connected with the unhealthy conditions in the pits, took a heavy toll of life among the mining population.[4] The bodies of children in the pits for years frequently developed abnormally. They were crippled and distorted, their growth stunted, and "many die in consequence before arriving at manhood."[5] Even if they survived to maturity, in most cases their strength and

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1. Ibid. 2. Ibid., p. 479

3. A late overseer at Newbattle colliery testified that "Accidents are very frequent. . . no notice is ever taken, for when people are killed they are merely carried out and buried, and there is very little talk about it." (Ibid., p. 445). One doctor knew of some 50 people in his charge who had been killed by accidents in the mines of the town and "I do not remember of an investigation having been made by the sheriff in more than one instance." (Ibid., p. 394). A 17 year old girl in another mine declared that she "had no father or mother alive; mother died of consumption, and father was brought home dead a few years since; he was supposed to have been murdered, but no one ever sought after those who killed him." (Ibid., p. 494).

4. An inquiry conducted by a medical doctor in Tranent in 1841 disclosed that about one collier family in every three had been deprived of the father, and that the average age of the living male heads of families was only 34 years. (Report of the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Scotland, 1842, p. 103).

5. Ibid., p. 128.

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health seriously deteriorated between 20 and 30 years of age,[1] and by 40 both men and women looked old and worn out. Concluded the east of Scotland commissioner after his lengthy investigations:

> "When the nature of this horrible labour is taken into consideration, its extreme severity, its regular duration of from 12 to 14 hours daily, the damp, heated and unwholesome atmosphere of a coal-mine, and the tender age and sex of the workers -- a picture is presented of deadly physical oppression and systematic slavery, of which I conscientiously believe no one unacquainted with such facts would credit the existence in the British dominions."[2]

This constitutes merely a brief glimpse at the miserable existence of those who lived in the slums, and those who laboured in the factories and mines of Scotland during this period. Of course not all who immigrated to the towns lost their status and independence and were submerged among the masses. Some made good. Some rose to positions of wealth and responsibility and helped to form the new middle classes. Not only did these new 'elite' achieve wealth, social status and economic power, but they came in these decades to dominate the political life of the country. Indeed their political supremacy and economic position remained in Scotland throughout the remainder of the century.

However, if the industrial transformation of the country made it possible for the new bourgeoisie to share in some of the affluence and comfort formerly enjoyed only by the aristocracy, its effect upon the great masses of the industrial working

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1. Cf. Reports and Evidence, op. cit., pp. 412-5.

2. First Report, op. cit., p. 28. As a result of the shocking conditions revealed in the Reports, the Mines Act was passed in 1842. Its great achievement was the prohibition of all female labour underground. Lord Ashley's original measure also proposed to exclude boys of 12 and under from the pits, but the House of Lords, which contained most of the mine-owners, altered the Bill to exclude only boys who were 9 years and under. They also deleted the clause which gave inspectors the power to report on the state and conditions of the mines. The Act failed to place any limitation on the hours of labour in the mines even though they exceeded those in the factories. Small boys of 10 still worked 12-14 hours, sometimes longer.

classes was clearly of a rather different nature. By the middle of the century the tragic consequences of their hardships and suffering were well known. Sheriff Watson of Aberdeen, the founder of Industrial schools in Scotland, noted in 1850 that those working class children who went to his schools were " 'dwarfish in body and mind. . . puny, pigmy, feeble, deformed creatures'."[1] Without doubt, here in the degrading slum, mining and factory environment of industrial Scotland, "was reared a new generation of Scots, wizened and stunted troglodytes who peered out at the world with eyes very different from their forbears."[2] Nor was the cost of their suffering

> "paid only in shrunken limbs and disease-stricken frames and in the coffins of those who died too early. Stamped deeply upon the soul of the Scottish nation today is the memory of an experience such as no other Western people has passed through."[3]

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1. The Glasgow Herald, October 28, 1850, quoted in Johnston, op. cit., p. 320.
2. G. M. Thomson, A Short History of Scotland, p. 279.
3. Ibid., p. 280.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC THOUGHT OF THE CHURCH

It is only in the light of the foregoing picture of the horrors which attended the development of capitalist society in its earlier unregulated phase that the tragic nature of the Church's social conformity and prophetic silence becomes fully apparent; only then does her failure -- a failure whose legacy remains to plague the mission of the Church today in modern industrial society -- stand revealed as a most shocking type of blindness and unfaithfulness.

From what has been observed of the Scottish Church's abdication of her prophetic responsibility in the century preceding the Industrial Revolution, it comes as no surprise to find that officially the Church -- Established, Free and Dissenting -- in the two decades 1830-50, maintained an almost complete silence on all the public issues of the day. In the proceedings of the church courts one looks in vain for any prophetic word of guidance or criticism on the perplexing social and economic questions that were agitating the minds of men in these years. This official passivity of the Church in the face of the appalling evils and injustices manifesting themselves in industrial life is itself a revealing testimony to her blindness and insensitivity. But the silence of such official sources in this period means that if we are to accurately ascertain the Church's views on the critical events and movements of the period, as well as the more subtle theological and sociological factors and influences which gave rise to such views, it is necessary to rely upon those other sources which give expression to the 'mind of the Church' -- particularly church publications,[1] and the views and activity of

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1. On social questions, apart from the official pronouncements of the Church through her courts, the church press forms the most representative and

representative churchmen.[1]

We shall be concerned in this chapter and in the remainder of Part II to investigate in considerable detail the thought and activity of the Church in the critical period 1830-1850, in order to determine the factors which gave rise to the prolonged period of prophetic silence through most of the 19th century. This will be done by examining in this present chapter the Church's social, political and economic presuppositions; then, in chapter five, a study will be made of her reaction to key events and movements of the period; while in the concluding chapter six, attention will be directed by way of contrast and conclusion to the life and thought of a most remarkable prophetic figure.

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authoritative expression of the 'mind of the Church'. Since these questions find little place in the deliberations of the church courts throughout the 19th century, the church press is an indispensable source of data in this period. No adequate comprehensive picture of the Church's social attitudes can be formed without a study of these documents. Fortunately, there are a large number of such publications from the 1830's until the last quarter of the century when their numbers begin to decline. Some are official denominational publications, some semi-official, while others can be said to unofficially represent a denomination. Relatively few are undenominational. Together, these publications reveal not only the Churches' social outlook and their reaction to the key events of the period, but also their distinctive theological tendencies and fundamental attitudes toward contemporary culture.

1. Since this study is concerned with the corporate attitude of the Church rather than the outlook of certain individuals, the views of individual churchmen are of value only insofar as they are representative of the whole 'mind of the Church'. One representative source is the 15 volume New Statistical Account of Scotland compiled by parish ministers in the years 1833-44 which furnishes valuable data on the social attitudes of ministers in this period. C. F. Smith has amassed a wealth of material from the Accounts in "The Attitude of the Clergy to the Industrial Revolution as reflected in the First and Second Statistical Accounts," a thesis presented to the University of Glasgow in 1953. His work has been of great assistance in facilitating my use of the Accounts. For the purpose of this study, the Accounts vary in their usefulness. Some make little or no reference to contemporary events and movements nor attempt to grapple with any of the basic issues raised by the transformation of social and economic life. Those of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Paisley and other large towns, where some of the worst features of industrial society were manifesting themselves, are particularly disappointing, but revealing, in this respect.

A. Social Inequality and the Class Structure

One outstanding feature of the Church of Scotland at the time of the Reformation was that the Church was truly "the Church of the people rather than any class. The last thing that can be laid to its charge is that it was the creature or tool of the sovereign or of the aristocracy, or even of the clergy."[1] But within two centuries the situation had completely changed. One of the most tragic facts of Scottish Church history is the extent to which the Established Church by the end of the 18th century had ceased to be the Church of the people in the true sense, and had become, in effect, the tool of the privileged classes. Though still owning the allegiance of the great majority of the Scottish people,[2] the Church of Scotland had unconsciously become a class Church[3] by accepting the established hierarchical order of class relations as God-ordained, and enlisting all her power and influence on the side of the status quo aginst the popular wishes of the people.

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1. A. M. Fairbairn, "The Scottish Church and the Scottish People," The Contemporary Review, vol. LXXIX, January 1901, p. 139.

2. It seems unlikely that the Presbyterian Dissenters could claim more than 10% of the Presbyterian population in 1800, nor more than 15% at their greatest strength later in the century. Before the large-scale Irish immigration in the 1830's and 40's the size of the non-Presbyterian population was insignificant.

3. This refers, of course, to the leadership of the Church -- the clergy and leading laymen -- those who shaped and gave expression to the Church's thought and life, and not to the rank and file membership whose outlook would have been more co-extensive with the general population. G. D. Henderson (The Burning Bush, pp. 125-6, 215) has pointed out that while the Church of Scotland had a basically democratic structure, in practice the church courts were not democratically constituted. Elders were not selected by the people but were co-opted by the existing Session in much the same manner as the new town councillors were appointed in the unreformed burghs before 1833. The result was that the courts were heavily weighted in favour of the landed and business classes, and thus the more conservative elements of the community. Even the more democratically chosen members of the Dissenting church courts were seldom representative of the Churches as a whole. For example, they never fully reflected the radical views of the considerable numbers of the artisan class within their membership. Though the influence of the landed classes in the Established Church declined after the abolition of patronage in 1874, the basic problem did not disappear, nor has it today. The tendency of lay leadership in general, and lay representation on church courts in particular to be more conservative in their social and political outlook than the membership as a whole, because of age and class composition, is well-known, and has always to be taken into account when church courts deal with social questions.

"Who are the people? We know them not; we are independent of them; we are the church, not of the people, but of the constitution."[1] Since the constitution safeguarded the special privileges and position of the Church of Scotland, it was only too easy to believe that it was part of her divine calling to defend the existing constitution.

In the latter part of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the dangerously close alliance between the Established Church and the state, whereby the interests of the Church virtually came to be identified with the interests of the state -- in this case a corrupt and reactionary government -- undoubtedly caused serious and lasting damage to the Christian cause, especially among the more progressive elements in the country. In an age of momentous change, the patronage system imposed on the Church the role of conserving and defending the vested interests of the privileged classes against the just demands of the people. In the hands of Dundas, the 'uncrowned king of Scotland', and the aristocracy, patronage, judiciously employed for political purposes, succeeded in making the National Church into an appendage of the Tory party. There are numerous examples of how the patronage system was employed to ensure the placing of politically 'safe' men in key parishes:

> "On December 29, 1792, Lord Ruthven writes as follows to H. Dundas in favour of a minister: 'I assure you that both in a religious and political view he is to be depended upon. He appears to be thoroughly well affected to the present Constitution and Government, and has distributed many pamphlets to that purpose in his parish'. . . . Sir J. Colquhoun in recommending a young man who had been in his family for ten years, states that 'his political principles are such that we need not be afraid of him'. . . . On May 16, 1799, the Rev. Robert Moodie writes to the Rev. Dr. Finlayson regarding a vacancy in the parish of Denny. 'We want a moderate man. . . the parish requires a firm, steady, loyal man to counteract that spirit of Sedition and Democracy which abounds there'."[2]

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1. R. F. Burns, The Life and Times of Rev. Robert Burns D. D., p. 87. Burns, an Established and Free Church minister in Paisley from 1811 to 1845, writing in 1867, recalls these sentiments as representative of the anti-democratic feeling of the Church in the earlier decades of the century.

2. H. W. Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution, pp. 202-3. The first quotation from Scot. Corr. vol. VI; the second and third from Edin. Univ. Laing MSS. No. 500.

By such means the ruling classes succeeded in using the most powerful and influential body among the people to suppress all ideas and movements of change and reform.

Nor was the social and political subservience to the ruling classes confined to the Moderate party. The Popular party at this time were never 'popular' in the sense that they championed the popular rights of the people. Though a few Established clergy, both Moderates and Evangelicals, sympathized with the widespread demand for reform in the early years of the French Revolution, this soon disappeared. The Evangelicals, like the Moderates, were convinced that the satisfaction of the civil and political demands of the people would endanger the Church and to such a threat they "could not remain indifferent, and it was therefore with one voice that the clergy denounced all democratic aspirations."[1]

In addition to convincing the Established Church that her survival depended upon her allegiance to the ruling classes, there was another way to enlist her support -- by ensuring that the social status and personal income of the clergy was elevated enough to attract only the cultured and the 'safe' classes. A letter addressed to Dundas in 1795 is revealing in this regard. The writer, concerned about the social class composition of the ministry, notes that in Scotland, the

> "appointments of the clergy, neither too high nor too low, long secured to the Church a succession of ministers drawn from the middle ranks of life, the rank of which intelligence, decency, and virtue are the characteristics."[2]

But because stipends have not risen as rapidly as they ought,

> "persons of the middle rank preferring civil to clerical appointments, will leave the Church to be filled by men bred in the lowest walks of life, who, little respected themselves, will bring religion herself into discredit."[3]

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1. Ibid., p. 195.
2. The Church of Scotland Magazine, June 1838, p. 212.
3. Ibid., p. 213.

Because the clergy have been traditionally drawn from the middle class, "religion has had the most beneficial effects and will continue its influence while the Established clergy are drawn from this class."[1] That this should continue is essential

> "not only to the religious but to the political welfare of the country at large. For the dissenting clergy, drawn generally from the lowest class of people, meanly bred and poorly educated, are but little qualified to instruct their hearers."[2]

Concluding, the writer promised that if ministers were given a stipend in keeping with their social class, they "will inspire the people with sentiments of benevolence and forgiveness, with a love of justice, order and subordination";[3] they will teach the poor the divine wisdom of that "inequality of fortune on which they now look with such malignant jealousy."[4]

Principal George Hill of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews, warned in 1803 that if stipends were not raised the decline in the social status of the clergy

> "would render them contemptible, and the Church would soon be supplied only out of the lowest orders of the people. It is a branch of political wisdom to save the Established Clergy from this degradation, which would undermine their usefulness, and by allying them to those who have nothing to lose, might render them dangerous to the State."[5]

There can be little doubt that such pleas had their effect on a government anxious to retain the political loyalty of the Established Church, and that they played their part in the awarding of the generous increase in stipend during the Napoleonic Wars.[6] Prior to that time stipends had been low. While the average

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1. Ibid., p. 214. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid.

5. George Hill, Theological Institutes, pp. 282-3.

6. So concerned was the government to 'buy' domestic peace in these years, that even the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland received state grants. Dundas was assured that the subsidy given to them " 'would secure friends to the great cause of subordination and allegiance to His Majesty's Government'." (H. W. Meikle, op. cit., p. 197).

living was £52 in the middle of the 18th century, many ministers had only £30 to £40, and some as little as £20. Subsequently, with the rise in prices toward the end of the century, some of the poorer clergy were suffering considerable hardship. But in 1810 the government instituted an annual grant which substantially increased all the lowest stipends and set a minimum of £150 plus manse and glebe, in all regular parishes in Scotland.[1] By way of contrast, the recent Education Act of 1803 had fixed the salary range of teachers at £18 - £24 plus fees.[2] This meant that even the lowest paid parish minister now had an income 4 or 5 times greater than that of a teacher. But the great majority were receiving more than the minimum at this time,[3] and with the rise in the price of grain during the next three decades,[4] most stipends rose considerably higher.

The relative affluence and the elevated social position enjoyed by the Established clergy in the 1830's and 40's is seldom realized. In 1843, Patrick MacFarlan of Greenock, giving up his charge to enter the Free Church, was receiving the enormous stipend of £1,000. Although this exceeded any other in Scotland at

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1. A whole century later, the minimum stipend was almost unchanged. In 1914 it finally reached £180. In 1908 it was £160 in the United Free Church.

2. Income from fees varied. However, they seldom exceeded £20 in this period, and probably averaged £10 to £15, except in the Highlands where they were much lower.

3. In 1810, of the approximately 950 parishes in Scotland, fewer than 200 required grants to raise them to the minimum. (A. J. H. Gibson, Stipend in the Church of Scotland, pp. 30-1).

4. Partly because the Established clergy had a vested economic interest in the high price of grain, and also because their sympathies generally lay with the landed classes, the Church of Scotland did not favour repeal of the Corn Laws. It is true that in keeping with the emerging 'laissez-faire' doctrines, Chalmers and some other Evangelicals did support repeal, but they did not take part in the contemporary repeal agitation in which the Dissenting Presbyterian ministers took such a leading part, nor did they gain the support of the majority of their fellow clergy. In 1826, the General Assembly actually petitioned the government to retain the existing duties on grain. The opposition of the Church of Scotland to repeal, which appeared to be based on sheer self-interest, was bitterly resented by the poorer classes, many of whom were constantly on the verge of starvation. It further confirmed the view already prevalent among the working classes, that the Established clergy were the hirelings of the aristocracy.

the time, many of the older, historic charges carried large stipends. Even in the rural parishes many ministers had over £300 plus manse and glebe, while £400 - £500 was not uncommon in the towns. In 1835, the 35 Church of Scotland ministers in Glasgow and suburbs all had stipends in excess of £300. Ten of these, in the older city parishes, received £425 - £500.[1] In 1845 in the High Church in Edinburgh, the two ministers shared £1185, as did the two ministers in the Tron Church.[2] Indeed, in that year, none of the 18 Church of Scotland ministers in Edinburgh were receiving less than £550.[3] These stipends contrast sharply with the average parochial teacher's salary in 1841 of £40 - £55 including fees, and the skilled artisan's and the labourer's wage of some £35 - £50 and £20 - £30 respectively.

Clearly, it was from a position of relative economic security and social elevation that Church of Scotland ministers viewed the events of their day.[4] Principal Hill had insisted that the surest way to render the clergy 'safe' was to give them a stake in the existing order. A comfortable income and a solid middle class social standing would prevent any 'dangerous' sympathies with the

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1. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 6. pp. 187-8. The writers of the Account regarded the stipends as quite inadequate because "the clergymen of Glasgow have long moved in the first rank of society. Their dwelling-houses and their domestic expenses are necessarily on a scale suited to their rank. . . their sons usually receive a university education and their daughters that which is suited to their station." (p. 191).

2. The United Secession Magazine, December 1845, p. 667.

3. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 1, p. 665. In the Free Church, the first equal dividend from the Sustentation fund after the Disruption was £105. The next year it was £122 and by 1868 it reached £150. Local congregations made additions to this minimum, ranging from only a few pounds in some cases to hundreds of pounds in others. Rural ministers often received little more, but by the early 1850's stipends in many wealthy city congregations compared favourably with those in comparable parishes churches.

4. The social status of ministers who entered the Free Church remained high. (Cf. T. Brown, Annals of the Disruption, pt. 3, pp. 190-9).

common people -- 'those who have nothing to lose'.[1]

Here, undoubtedly, was an important factor in the absence of Christian social criticism. From their comfortable position among the privileged classes within the established order of society, the clergy found it impossible to seriously question either the basis or the presuppositions of that established order. It was sincerely believed that not only their own position and influence in society but, as we have seen, the very existence of the Established Church, and perhaps even of Christianity itself in Scotland, depended upon the defence of the constitution which safeguarded the Church. We side with those, declared a Church of Scotland magazine,

> "who venerate the constitution of their country, who are convinced that anarchy and confusion can be obviated only by the firmness of a well established government, that irreligion and immorality can be kept in check only by the influence of a religious Establishment."[2]

Such a belief necessarily demanded the preservation of the social and political privilege and power of the ruling or 'safe' classes.[3] In this way, the Established Church came to be one of the greatest defenders of the hierarchical social class system.

Quite unconscious of her class bias, and the tragic consequences of such an attitude in a society coming alive with democratic aspirations, the Church taught

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1. Chalmers saw the validity of this economic determinism demonstrated during the radical disturbances in the west of Scotland in 1820. Writing to his friend Wilberforce, he assured him that in all the agitation connected with this period of depression and distress, the middle classes remained 'loyal', for there were " 'not half a dozen instances of people befriending Radicalism who are possessed of more than £200 a year'." (W. Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, vol. 2, p. 262).

2. The Church Review and Scottish Ecclesiastical Magazine, April 1836, p. 7.

3. In this aim, Moderates and Evangelicals were united. The only difference between them was that the former wished to see the ruling classes composed only of the aristocracy, while many Evangelicals, like the Whig party, felt that giving the middle classes a share of power would render them 'safe', and would broaden the basis of support for the existing social and economic system.

not only that the existing pyramidal social structure was socially and politically desirable, but that it was rooted in the divinely ordained structure of the universe. Henry Moncrieff Wellwood, who, before his death in 1827 was one of the leading Evangelical ministers, clearly expressed this social doctrine which, through most of the 19th century, found a prominent place in Christian teaching and preaching:

> "Our separate duties, like our different conditions, are not the effects of any arbitrary arrangements, devised by men, but are universally the consequences of the wise and perpetual decrees of God, who gives to every man his place, and selects for every man his peculiar occupations. The distinctions created by wealth and poverty, by power and dependence, are inseparable from the condition of human nature, and of civilized society. . . . The lower orders of the people are often apt to imagine that all the labour is with them; and that they who occupy the superior, and even the middle ranks, live above the necessity of personal exertion, on the industry of those below them."[1]

This is not so, he explained, for those in the higher orders, like those in the lower, have duties and responsibilities in keeping with their particular function in society. The former are born to govern; the latter to obey. It is the task of the former to

> "provide for the effectual defence and security of the state, for the suppression of vice, for the punishment of crimes, for the firm and impartial execution of the laws, for the protection of the innocent, for the encouragement of industry, for the progress of arts and of improvement, for the general instruction of the great body of the people, for the education and employment of the poor, and for the effectual relief, which can be given, from the pressure of age, of sorrow, and of poverty. On the other hand, they whom Providence hath placed in the inferior stations, have duties assigned to them of equal importance, and not less indispensable. To them are committed the practical arts, on which the articles of first necessity depend, the labours of industry, the culture of the soil, the duties of subordination and obedience, either in public service or domestic occupation."[2]

The Christian duty of those at the base of the social pyramid was to be content in their lowly station because it was assigned them by the immutable will of God

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1. The Scottish Christian Herald, April 30, 1836, p. 129. This article was originally written in 1807.

2. Ibid., p. 130.

for the total well-being of society:

"When God built up the dome of blue,
And portioned earth's prolific floor,
The measure of His wisdom drew
A line between Rich and Poor;
And till that vault of glory fall,
Or beauteous earth be scarred with flame,
Or saving love be all in all,
That rule of life will rest the same.

We know not why, we know not how,
Mankind are framed for weal or woe --
But to th' eternal law we bow;
If such things are, they must be so."[1]

The poor should also be content with their lot because their condition provided the rich with the opportunity to exercize Christian charity:

> "The end for which Providence ordains unavoidable poverty in a community, is to stimulate the benevolent feelings of the rich, and the grateful feelings of the poor, and so make even poverty a source of moral wealth, and of salutary genial feeling."[2]

This inequality between rich and poor has always existed, and

> "it is clear from Scripture the relationship shall continue. Probably it had its origin in the disastrous consequences of the fall; but now it is inseparable from human society, and it is doubtless designed, for wise, moral purposes, to try and exercize our graces by the difficult circumstances in which it often places us. Of its supposed injustice none can complain who remember that there is not one of our fallen race who does not deserve utterly to perish for his sins. . . and that a reception of the Gospel, through the grace of God, is able substantially to overcome all the natural and social disadvantages under which anyone can labour."[3]

Chalmers, whose voluminous writings on social and economic questions were characteristic of the Church of his day, was certain that there was " 'nothing in the progress of religion which is at all calculated to level the gradations of

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1. The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, July 1851, p. 103. The editor of the magazine was the famous Norman MacLeod. The identity of the writer of the poem was not revealed. This was the usual practice with magazine contributions in general in the last century.

2. The Free Church Magazine, March 1849, p. 78.

3. The Scottish Christian Herald, April 6, 1839, pp. 217-8. Written by J. G. Lorimer, minister of St. David's Parish, Glasgow.

human ranks, or to do away with the distinctions of human society'."[1] Clearly, Christians are not called " 'to annihilate poverty, for it is said of the poor that they shall be with us always'."[2] Thus, we are assured " 'that to the end of the world the men of opulence will be the few and the men of industry will compose the multitude. The structure of human society admits of no other arrangement'."[3] Indeed,

> "the deference for rank is by itself so strong, that, when not overborne by other influences, it mightily conduces to the stability of our social system; and for this beneficial end is inserted, we have no doubt, as a principle in the human constitution, by the author of our frame."[4]

Therefore,

> "for the best construction of a social edifice, in every large country like ours, we would have a king upon the throne. . . borne up by a splendid aristocracy, and a gradation of ranks shelving downwards to the basement of society. . . . We think of our own political fabric, that it not only affords a vastly greater number of noble and graceful spectacles, in the minarets and the blazing pinnacles which crowd its elevation -- but that, abstracting the degradation which has been caused by its accursed law of pauperism, it would have had a more elevated basement in its well-conditioned peasantry, than any other country or kingdom of the civilized world."[5]

This hierarchical class system, Chalmers declared, was essential to the elevation in mind and manners of the lower classes, because from the "higher galaxy of rank and fortune, there are droppings, as it were, of a bland and benigant influence

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1. Hanna, op. cit., p. 202. From Chalmer's sermon on the death of Queen Charlotte, Nov. 17, 1818.

2. Ibid.

3. T. Chalmers, quoted in N. Masterman, Chalmers on Charity, p. 169.

4. Chalmers, On the Sufficiency of the Parochial System, p. 13.

5. Chalmers, On Political Economy, pp. 368-9. It is noteworthy that Chalmers here attempts to 'abstract' from his favourable evaluation of the existing social structure the lowest and most degraded part by blaming the poor law for its existence. He was blind to the fact that massive destitution was an integral part of his cherished social pyramid -- the sad but inevitable fate of those at the base who, lacking political or economic power, had been cast aside by a cruel and heartless competitive industrial system.

on the general platform of humanity."[1] These 'droppings'

> "caught, as if by infection from the higher, forms our best security against an extreme wretchedness in the lower orders. . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> There is a soul in chivalry, which though nursed in the bosom of affluence, does not cloister there, but passes abroad from mind to mind, and lights up a certain glow of inspiration throughout the mass of the community. . . where there are nobles, the common people are not so ignoble."[2]

How strange such social teaching must have sounded to the masses of Scottish people living in the crowded industrial towns in the 30's and 40's; how anachronistic; how irrelevant. The views expressed by Chalmers in his work On Political Economy appeared in the year of the Reform Bill -- a year when hundreds of thousands of intelligent, independently-minded Scots working men throughout the country, gathered on their common greens to demand those civil and political rights which they regarded as essential to their full citizenship and true manhood. It is not difficult to understand the revulsion they must have felt for much of the supposedly Christian teaching proclaimed from the pulpits across the land; nor why some believed they must, in faithfulness to Christianity as they understood it, leave a Church which preached contentment to the poor, and hallowed and sanctified an arbitrary and unjust social class arrangement.

Turning now to the main Presbyterian Dissenters -- the Secession and Relief Churches -- certain qualifications have to be made in the above picture of the Scottish Church. Because the Dissenters were born and bred in a spirit of protest against state interference in the spiritual affairs of the Church, their attitude to, and relationship with the state was quite different from that of the Established Church. Receiving neither state recognition nor support, they had no vested interest in the preservation of the status quo in either Church or state. As a consequence, they retained a freedom of thought and action that was denied to the Church of Scotland.

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1. Ibid., p. 367. 2. Ibid., pp. 367-9.

To the Tory governments in power before 1830, the activity and allegiance of Dissenting ministers was always open to suspicion. This was a matter of some concern, especially during the French Revolution. "In November, 1792, Henry Dundas, writing from Melville Castle to Pitt, reported that while the clergy of the Established Church were loyal, the others were far otherwise."[1] In this the government was certainly quite mistaken. Probably the interest displayed by a few ministers in the reforming societies during the early years of the Revolution formed the only basis for such a belief. But to a reactionary government which was inclined to regard as sedition even the slightest sympathy for social and political reform, this was sufficient evidence to cause alarm.

As later developments were to indicate, the Dissenting ministers, as a body, could hardly be classed as reformers or radicals, much less revolutionaries or anarchists. Nevertheless, their sympathies often lay with the people. Being popularly chosen by their congregations; generally in receipt of modest stipends;[2] drawn more largely from the lower classes than the Established or Free Church clergy and thus lacking their prestige and social position, they tended to remain in closer touch with the desires and aspirations of the common people than did their more elevated ministerial brethren. It would be true to say, therefore, that during the Revolutionary period and in the decades of social and political awakening which followed, the Secession and Relief Churches could with more justice lay claim to the historic title of 'the Church of the people' than could the National Church.[3]

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1. Meikle, op. cit., p. 198.

2. Because the Secession and Relief congregations were more financially independent than the Established and Free Churches, and depended for stipends solely on local seat rents and voluntary collections, there was a considerable variation between wealthy and poorer congregations. While a few of the former could afford as much as £300 and over, the majority of ministers had little more than £100, sometimes less. In 1846, the Relief Church reported that 31 congregations, about one quarter of the total number, still paid stipends of less than £100. (Minutes of the Relief Synod, October 1846, p. 392).

3. The Dissenting magazines and journals reveal, in general, more enlightened social attitudes and liberal sympathies than do Established and Free Church publications.

Yet in spite of the popular sympathies of the Dissenting Presbyterian Churches, they too shared in the tragic prophetic silence of the age. One peculiar reason for this strange passivity on the part of relatively liberal and enlightened Churches was their unique relationship to the state. Arising out of their stress upon the separation of Church and state, they tended, in practice, to regard the state as outwith the concern of the Church -- as, in fact, almost a purely secular institution. This tendency was not found in all sections of these Churches, but many Dissenters would have agreed with the position of John Brown, the famous minister of Broughton Place Church in Edinburgh, who objected to any interference by the Christian Church in secular affairs. Writes his biographer:

> "He objected to the discussion of such questions as that of National Education in the courts of the Church to which he belonged and also to all petitions sent by these bodies to the Legislature, as well as to deputations intended to influence men in power."[1]

It is true, of course, that many Dissenting ministers took a prominent part in public affairs. The great public platform for discussion in the 30's and 40's was the city hall in Glasgow. There, in addition to the issues raised by the voluntary controversy, individual ministers were especially active in the anti-slavery campaign in the 30's and the Corn Law repeal agitation in the 40's. But the impetus this activity might have given to some involvement in public affairs by the Churches themselves was prevented by the belief that, as Churches, this was not part of their responsibility. In addition, none of these Dissenting Churches, not even the large and powerful U. P. Church formed in 1847, claimed to be, or attempted to be a national Church as the Established Church was, and the Free Church came to be. Consequently, they lacked the sense of parochial responsibility to the local community and national responsibility for the whole people, which marked the two larger Churches.

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1. John Cairns, Memoir of John Brown D. D., p. 201.

We are primarily concerned here, however, with another and more important reason for the prophetic failure of the most liberal of the Presbyterian Churches. Like the rest of the Church, the Dissenters never seriously doubted the practical desirability and divine appointment of the social class pyramid. Contemporary sermons and articles in magazines and periodicals express a universal acceptance of the capricious social and economic inequalities inherent in the existing class system:

> "Human society presents all varieties of condition. Wealth, station, and power are all distributed in very unequal proportions; and while some have a measure of each, multitudes may be said to have nothing. That this diversity so far belongs to the constitution of the world, as planned by its Maker, cannot be reasonably doubted."[1]

Such inequalities, it was argued, are essential to the well-being of the social fabric, for if there were no rich with their kindly charity and benevolence, the spiritual and material condition of the lower orders would be desperate. God

> "has chosen to lay this obligation upon the rich to unite the different classes of men, and thus make the very difference of their condition instrumental in promoting their spiritual and eternal happiness. And this it does when it is a means in the hands of the divine Spirit of sanctifying the poor, by leading them to the exercize of humility and patience, under suffering, and of gratitude to their benefactors, and when it is the means of advancing the rich in conformity to the moral image of Christ, by their enlightened charity and benevolence to the poor."[2]

Above all, it is essential for social harmony that those placed in the lower stations "avoid harsh or envious feelings toward those who occupy the higher places on the social pyramid,"[3] for "there will be inequality while the world endures; but we desire the coming of a time when -- religion pervading all classes of mankind -- the rich shall help the poor by his wealth, and the poor man gladden the rich by his love."[4]

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1. The Christian Treasury, March 28, 1845, p. 49. From an article by David King, minister of Greyfriars Secession Church, Glasgow.

2. The Christian Journal, May 1836, p. 245. From a sermon by James Anderson, minister of Beith Relief Church.

3. Ibid., May 1850, p. 220. From an anonymous open letter addressed to the working classes.

4. Ibid.

It is always disturbing to find the Christian Church with her great stress on the equality of all men in the sight of God, and the infinite dignity and worth of each and every human being for whom Christ died, attempting to morally justify a system of class inequality. It is even more disturbing in the case of the Dissenting Churches whose essentially democratic ecclesiastical structure stressed the equal participation of all members in church affairs; who were passionately committed to religious freedom and spiritual equality; and who were powerful advocates of political and civil liberties. Yet this is exactly what all the Churches attempted to do throughout most of the 19th century. They did so by 'spiritualizing' the concept of Christian equality. The equality of Christians before God was interpreted in a purely spiritual sense by relegating it to the sphere of transcendence and irrelevance. True, the Church taught that in the eyes of God there were no social or economic distinctions and divisions -- no aristocracy or peasants, no rich or poor -- that all were one in Christ Jesus. But this only applied to the 'spiritual' world. It had nothing to do with real life in society. Christian equality had absolutely no social, political or economic significance. In the eyes of God, the poor man is regarded as highly as the rich man. Therefore,

> "in respect of religious matters, he is on a footing of equality with those who are more favoured by providence in their outward circumstances. [However,] in our civil transactions and ordinary intercourse, external distinctions ought not to be overlooked. Diversities of rank and station ever have existed, and, while human nature is constituted as it now is, ever will exist. But these ought not to be known in our ecclesiastical concerns. Rich and poor there meet together. There is no master and no slave. Those who 'have' the gifts of providence ought not to shame, or affect a superiority over those who 'have not'."[1]

Within the Christian community, declared a later writer, there is no place for distinctions of race or class or economic circumstance. But

> "let it not be concluded from the observations here offered, that the writer desires the destruction of all gradations of rank, for nothing can be

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1. Ibid., May 1835, p. 295.

> further from his mind than such a feeling. He does not forget that there have been rich and poor in the Christian Church from its commencement till the present time; and he believes that such will continue to be the case till the present dispensation shall close; and he desires, with all his heart, to give honour to whom honour is due."[1]

So claimed the journal of the Relief Church -- the most democratic and enlightened of the Churches in this period.

This tragic dichotomy between the world of the soul and the present life of society was a prominent feature of contemporary Christian thought.[2] The message of the Gospel was primarily for the souls of men, not for their bodies; for their eternal welfare, not for their circumstances and condition in this life. Without realizing it, the Church preached a kind of docetic Christ, rather than the Christ of flesh and blood; a 'spiritualized', 'otherworldly' Gospel, rather than the full Gospel of the Incarnation. This failure to take the real humanity of Christ seriously inevitably meant the failure to take the real humanity of men -- their needs and problems, their misery and degradation -- seriously. It was thus destructive of any truly Christian social ethic, for such an unbiblical understanding of the Christian faith meant that the Church never attempted to bring all aspects of human life and society under the radical judgment of God. Little wonder that such 'spiritualizing' robbed the Gospel of its dynamic power, and thus its searching, disturbing criticism of the corporate life of society; that the Church's prophetic voice was never raised; that for the suffering masses of the industrial population such 'otherworldly' Christianity seemed quite meaningless and hopelessly irrelevant.

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1. Ibid., November 1835, p. 613.

2. Chalmers' well-known New College address is another example of this type of dichotomy. (Cf. supra, chap. 1, p. 2).

B. Political Reform and Civil Obedience

As late as 1780, although Scotland was alive intellectually and gradually coming alive industrially, politically the country was still asleep. Because feudal ideas of representation were stronger than in England, the nation remained politically apathetic. After 1783, however, there were some signs of awakening, and the first years of the French Revolution, 1789 - 1792, unleashed a wave of reform enthusiasm. Many intelligent people of all classes came to see the need for some moderate and gradual reforms. But unfortunately, with the excesses of the Revolution, the cause of reform in Britain very soon became suspect in official circles. The privileged classes, filled with the dread of sedition and revolution, moved quickly to suppress all public meetings and discussion. In Scotland the 'Dundas despotism' began a long reign of repression with the shocking trials and sentences of Muir and Palmer. Throughout these years, as we have observed, the part played by the Established Church in actively supporting such a reactionary regime had far-reaching consequences in alienating the popular sympathies of the people, and injuring the Church's true interests.

Following the war with France, Toryism still remained supreme, and repressive government continued. The years 1816 - 20 were marked by economic depression and social unrest in Scotland. Since legitimate reforms were still equated with revolution, and further harsh measures were taken to stamp out all dissent, a series of risings took place in the west of Scotland in which several rioters were killed in battle, several hanged and about 20 transported. After 1825, however, middle and working class support for reform became overwhelming, and the Whigs, who were wise enough to see that revolution would come if reforms were not granted, finally came to power in 1830 pledged to parliamentary reform. Following a struggle of almost two years, during which time massive open-air demonstrations demanding extension of the franchise were held in many of the large towns in Scotland, the Reform Bill was passed in 1832.

In view of the attitude which the Established Church generally was to adopt on the whole question of political reform, it is important to emphasize the tremendous popularity of the 1832 Reform Bill in Scotland, and the changed pattern it set for 19th century Scottish politics. Before 1830, the Tories had always held a majority of the Scottish seats, but the first election under the extended franchise gave them only 10 of 53 seats. Never again during the whole of the century did the Tories win an election in Scotland.[1] The remarkable support for the Whigs and Liberals after 1832 revealed both the extreme unpopularity of the Tories after 40 years of repressive rule,[2] and the extent to which the enfranchised Scottish middle classes embraced the social and economic tenents of liberalism.

Turning now to the position taken by the Church, her reaction to this measure of political reform and indeed to all proposals for social and political change in the 30's and 40's, can only be understood in the light of her fundamental conception of the basis and nature of political authority itself. Therefore, before considering the actual response of the Church to specific movements for political reform, some attention must be directed to this matter.

Reinhold Niebuhr has pointed out that the Bible contains two approaches to the political order:

> "According to the one, government is an ordinance of God and its authority reflects the Divine Majesty. According to the other, the 'rulers' and 'judges' of nations are particularly subject to divine judgment and wrath because they oppress the poor and defy the divine majesty. These two approaches do justice to the two aspects of government."[3]

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1. Not until the 'khaki election' of 1900, fought amid the jingoistic climate of the Boer War, did the Conservatives win a majority of seats in Scotland.

2. This unpopularity is reflected in the first municipal election in Edinburgh after the Burgh Reform Act of 1833. Of the 31 seats contested, 24 Whigs and 7 Radicals were elected but not a single Tory.

3. R. Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, pt. 2, p. 269.

This being so, there must be a dialectical tension involved in the Church's attitude to civil authority. On the one hand, government is one of the 'orders of creation' by whose power order is preserved and anarchy restrained. But, on the other hand, this power cannot be identified with divine power, because always remaining subordinate to it. Therefore, while 'the powers that be are ordained of God',[1] the biblical paradox makes clear that this cannot mean that the particular ruling powers of the moment express the full will of God, nor that they stand above the need of criticism in the light of the Gospel; God wills order, but this does not mean that a given social, political or economic order is authorized by Him. To preserve the proper religious reverence for the principle of order, without at the same time assuming an undue or uncritical reverence for particular historical orders, means that the two aspects of biblical teaching must be taken together and held in balance.[2]

Unfortunately, this is largely what the Scottish Church failed to do in the critical decades of the 30's and 40's, not to mention the prior half century. Almost invariably in her teaching, no attempt was made to distinguish between civil power as an ordinance of God's providence, and the existing social, political and economic power structures of the day. Since obedience to God demanded acceptance of the former, the implication was that it also demanded acceptance of the latter. Indeed, it was sincerely believed that "if a religion taught principles

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1. Romans 13:1.

2. Knox, in justifying his resistance to the Crown, preserved the distinction between obedience to the principle of government and obedience to particular governments in his interpretation of Romans 13. In the 17th century, Samuel Rutherford was likewise aware of this distinction: " 'We teach that government is natural not voluntary; but the way and manner of government is voluntary'." (Rutherford, Lex Rex, 1644, Question IX, quoted in Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 268).

inconsistent with civil obedience, and that submission to authority which the ends of society require, this would be a just reason to exclude that religion."[1] By this subtle process of reasoning, the tension between Christianity and civil authority preserved in the biblical paradox was forgotten, and as a consequence, the historic note of prophetic protest and criticism disappeared. The Church too easily assumed that because God had ordained 'the powers that be', therefore, He had ordained the existing distribution of social and economic power in society. It followed, that in accepting the existing order, one was obeying God; in questioning the existing order, one was questioning the divine will. By virtually deifying the status quo in this way, it was inevitable that the Church tended to regard all movements advocating any basic structural change in society, be it social, political or economic, with suspicion, if not horror. Their attack upon a God-ordained order seemed to be a form of infidelity and blasphemy.

In opposition to the growing democratic sentiment and the widespread demands for more liberal institutions in the 30's and 40's, therefore, all branches of the Church, but particularly the Established and Free Churches tended to stress only one aspect of the biblical teaching -- the Christian duty of accepting the existing order. In contemporary Church documents almost no attempt was made to indicate the other aspect of biblical teaching: that the Gospel demanded social justice and righteousness as well as social peace, harmony and order, and that in attempting to preserve the latter, the former could not be sacrificed. Inevitably, biblical passages which emphasized an unconditional 'passive obedience' were among the favourite texts of the time.[2] A writer in the pro-Evangelical Church of Scotland

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1. The Church of Scotland Magazine, April 1834, p. 44.

2. In addition to Romans 13:1-7, First Peter 2:13-17 and Proverbs 24:21 were commonly employed for this purpose. The latter -- 'Fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change' -- was particularly useful to discourage Christian support for those advocating any basic reforms in society, such as political radicals, Chartists, socialists and trade union 'agitators'. It was often delivered by Established clergy as a warning to Dissenters who found themselves during the voluntary controversy in company with such reformers in their advocacy of disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Scotland.

Magazine, praising the sentiments of a sermon on First Peter 2:13-15,[1] remarked that:

> "The sermon opens with two paragraphs very proper for calming the prejudiced feelings of restless politicians: -- 'If any individual now present feels withim him a rising dislike to the text which I have just announced -- is sensible of an unpleasant emotion towards the requirement which it contains -- let him examine himself. His heart is not, in this respect, 'right with God'. He is in an unchristian frame of mind. . . . The man who indulges his tongue in contumelious and reviling language against the authorities of the land, language fitted to bring Government itself into contempt and disrepute, is a dangerous enemy of his country's weal, as well as, a direct and open violator of the express commands of God'."[2]

The writer commended to his readers the fitting ending of the sermon which "concludes by an appeal to the heart and feelings of the reader aginst this political spirit, with the warning 'Fear thou God and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change'."[3]

To typical middle class churchmen like Chalmers, the fact that the lower orders were dissatisfied with things as they were, and complained aginst 'the powers that be' -- politicians, men of social prominence and wealth -- was a sign not only of disobedience to God, but of plain ill-breeding:

> "We hold nothing to be more unscriptural than the spirit of a factious discontent with the rulers of our land -- while we feel nothing to be more untasteful than the insolence of a vulgar disdain towards men of rank, or men of opulence."[4]

The obvious fact that the humble and pious Christian poor who 'knew their place' never displayed such insubordination, left the Church in no doubt that most if not all those who were dissatisfied with the existing social order were godless infidels.

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1. 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God. . . .'

2. The Church of Scotland Magazine, January 1838, pp. 9-10.

3. Ibid., p. 11.

4. T. Chalmers, "On the Advantages of Christian Knowledge to the Lower Orders of Society," Sermons preached in St. John's Church, Glasgow, p. 366.

With typical bourgeois self-righteousness Established churchmen were convinced that

> "the pure and holy principles of the Church of Scotland can find no sympathy in the hearts of the godless and the profligate. These are at present a mighty mass in our land. Under a system of great worldly prosperity, of great spiritual neglect and destitution, which have broken down the barriers of piety and virtue and led to degradation and profligacy, vast multitudes, especially in our large cities, have thrown off all fear of God and nearly all regard to man; and, like the troubled sea that cannot rest, they are passively agitated by every storm, and every now and then threaten to heave their 'wild waves' against all that is stable in the land, against all the mounds that would restrain them within their proper bounds."[1]

During the voluntary controversy in the 30's, the criticism levelled against the state connection and privileges of the Established Church caused great alarm in all sections of the Church of Scotland. Not only were the voluntaries undermining the link between Church and state, but, as history had demonstrated, the very attack on an established institution in society posed a threat to the stability of all existing institutions. After all, when

> "did the principles of the Voluntaries and their allies formerly prevail? Why in the time of Cromwell and the Commonwealth. . . . Now let it be remarked that the Independents of those times did not rest satisfied with their first demands -- they laid violent hands on their King, and stained the scaffold with his blood. . . . If those who now oppose the Established Church had but the power, they would not only bring religion to the ground but the king to the scaffold and the state to ruin."[2]

On the other hand, how different are those who defend the Church of Scotland, for "their cause is that of peace, and of order, of religion, and of God."[3]

In the eyes of the Established Church, the voluntaries -- "Papists, Deists, Unitarians, Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers, Jumpers, Ranters, etc. in religion; in politics, nondescripts, Radicals, republicans, democrats, and destructives"[4] --

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1. The Church of Scotland Magazine, June 1834, p. 157.
2. The Presbyterian Magazine, June 1834, p. 185.
3. Ibid., p. 186.
4. The Church of Scotland Magazine, November 1835, p. 361.

were obviously composed of the most 'unsafe' religious and political groups in society. It was not surprising, therefore, that they were marked by a "spirit of irreligion, of change, of resistance to the laws."[1] "We remember the levelling spirit which they have been cheering on; we have not forgotten the political frenzy which they have manifested"[2] -- how they have gone "over the length and breadth of our beloved land, to engender the spirit of bitterest animosity, and of social war."[3]

The present demands for religious freedom and social and political change, warned a Moderate party journal,

> "have always been precursors of a nation's downfall. Wherever they have prevailed, they have ultimately brought with them certain ruin. . . yet we will not learn wisdom. Passion, or a love of change, blinds us to our true interests; and though we see danger in the attempt, and experience cries 'Beware', we still fearlessly advance. . . . From such factions, our country is at present in jeopardy: Radicals, Whigs, and Democrats agitate the State; and Voluntaries, Sectarians, Infidels and Papists, the Church. All of them are working hard at their several vocations, -- the one to pull down the Altar, the other the Throne; and with them all those public institutions which, for ages, have made our island sit as QUEEN in the midst of the ocean."[4]

An example of a voluntary threat to civil authority was to be seen in the Dissenters' openly declared intention of opposing the action of the government if it dared to aid the Established Church in building or endowing new churches:

> "Is this, we would ask all christian men and lovers of social order, is this an attitude becoming christian ministers, whose duty it is to enjoin submission to the powers that be?"[5]

In opposition to what she regarded as the socially disruptive tendencies of the voluntary Churches, the Church of Scotland stressed her duty and ability to teach proper submission to constituted authority. 'Lovers of social order' were

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1. Ibid., April 1834, p. 72. 2. Ibid., May 1834, p. 86.
3. The Edinburgh Christian Instructor, November 1832, p. 756.
4. The Church Review and Scottish Ecclesiastical Magazine, January 1838, p. 739.
5. The Church of Scotland Magazine, March 1834, p. 19.

fortunate in having available an Established Church

> "which is admirably adapted to train the people at large to the performance of those duties of private and public life -- which teaches them to obey magistrates -- to love their country -- to be sober, pious and benevolent -- to discharge with fidelity, and on principle, whatever they owe to the station they occupy, and to be 'fruitful in every good word and work'. . . . It is thus that the reforming power of the pulpit -- of the public institutions of religion -- is felt upon thousands of individuals, upon society in general, and upon Christian nations in particular."[1]

The strong emphasis upon the Christian duty of accepting the established social order was not confined to the period of the voluntary controversy. As we shall observe, it continued to be a prominent feature of the Church's message throughout the decade of Chartist agitation, 1838 - 48. Then in the latter year, it received a fresh impetus from a series of riots and disturbances which occurred in Britain in a few of the industrial centres. This fresh outbreak of social unrest was an aftermath of the democratically-inspired revolutions on the continent, aggravated at home by economic depression which caused severe unemployment, distress and destitution among large numbers of the industrial classes. In Edinburgh, disturbances took place which led to the smashing of many shop windows and over 1,000 street lamps. The Riot Act had to be read, special constables sworn in and cavalry used.[2] In Glasgow, the disturbances were of a more serious nature. On a visit to the city in 1848, Norman MacLeod witnessed one serious riot which impressed upon his mind the appalling condition of the lowest classes:

> "Suddenly the leading thoroughfares were swept by a torrent of men and women of a type utterly different from the ordinary poor. Haggard, abandoned, ferocious, they issued from the neglected haunts of misery and crime, drove the police into their headquarters, and, for a while, took possession of the streets."[3]

The response of the Church to these events was traditional. There was no

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1. The Church Review and Scottish Ecclesiastical Magazine, January 1838, p. 745.
2. The Witness, March 8, 1848, p. 3.
3. Donald MacLeod, Memoir of Norman MacLeod D. D., vol. 1, pp. 282-3.

attempt to understand the basic causes of the widespread unrest among the destitute masses;[1] no suggestion that their grievances should be given consideration. She expressed only social alarm, fear, and panic that the 'depraved' classes would shake and bring down the whole social edifice. She denounced all social and political 'agitators' who stirred up in the people a spirit of discontent, and urged upon the masses submission to 'the powers that be'.

In its annual message to the Queen, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1848, expressed its "feelings of deep regret and indignation at the wicked attempts lately made to stir up a spirit of disaffection and insubordination among Her Majesty's subjects."[2] To the Queen and the government it conveyed

> "the strongest assurance of the resolution of the Ministers and Elders of this Church to inculcate the duty of combining with the offices of piety, fidelity to the Sovereign, respect for the laws, and submission to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."[3]

Though couched in milder terms, the annual message of the Free Church General Assembly[4] in 1848 expressed much the same sentiments:

> "It is our earnest desire, and shall be our unwearied endeavour, in our public and private capacity, in dependence on Divine grace, to diffuse among the people under our care the spirit of enlightened and fervent piety, the only source of pure moral conduct, of contentment with the will of God, and cheerful submission to lawful authority."[5]

But in their press and pulpit Free churchmen were not so reserved. One editor declared:

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1. One editor saw in the disturbances and the discontent "just another revelation of the truth that large masses in all our cities have broken loose from all restraint of Christian principle." (The Free Church Magazine, March 1848, p. 91). Another writer was satisfied that the discontented mobs were "composed only of the immoral and irreligious." (Ibid., April 1848, p. 99).

2. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1848, p. 42.

3. Ibid., p. 43.

4. Unlike the Church of Scotland and the Free Church, neither the U. P. Church, nor the former Relief and Secession Churches, under normal circumstances, sent annual addresses to the Crown. Being opposed in principle to the state establishment of the Church, their practical relationship to the state was not as intimate as the two larger Churches.

5. Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1848, p. 20.

> "Political reform is cried up as the remedy for all social evils; new assaults are every day made upon our constitution, -- men of whom better things might have been expected are joining in the clamour; and thus the spirit of democracy is fed and goaded on, till in a short time the cry for a republic will spread over the land. It becomes men who love their country to stand aloof and protest against the unbridled spirit of the age. It becomes men who love their Bible to remember that it is written, 'Fear God, honour the king and meddle not with them that are given to change'."[1]

In a paper delivered at the time to a Presbytery meeting on 'Our Home Heathen', consideration was given to the causes of the widespread social unrest and the alienation of the lowest classes from the Church. It was affirmed that one of the basic causes was the general contempt among the people for the divine authority of rulers: -- "Men have learned to speak evil of dignities. . . . They who honour not God cannot be expected to honour the king."[2] Another cause, significantly, was the popular estimate of the social and political sympathies of the clergy: -- "Great multitudes speak with a virulence and a vehemence of the heralds of salvation, as if they were the enemies of their kind, the hinderers of all social and political regeneration."[3]

Preaching in 1849 on 'Christian Loyalty' from the text First Peter 2:17 -- 'Fear God; honour the king', the minister of Free St. David's Church in Glasgow, declared that in all the past disturbances and demonstrations in the city during periods of unemployment and distress, Christian working men took no leading part. Indeed,

> "those who are best acquainted with such matters will be the first to state that the discontented, on such occasions, mainly consist of persons who make no profession of religion at all; and that their dissatisfactions are restrained and rendered safe by the sounder and more loyal principles of their fellow-workmen, who, as part of their religion, 'fear God' and 'honour the king'."[4]

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1. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, July 1848, p. 378.
2. The Free Church Magazine, February 1848, p. 42.
3. Ibid.
4. John G. Lorimer, Christian Loyalty, p. 35.

Because, he affirmed, 'the powers that be are ordained of God', therefore,

> "in honouring God's institutions we honour God himself; and when we think how wise, and kind, and tender, as respects Christians, the reasons of civil submission are, surely our obedience should be the more enlightened and cordial."[1]

A leading Church of Scotland journal was also convinced that the real cause of social unrest among the lower classes was their failure to recognize the divine sanction resting upon constituted authority. "Multitudes of people in our own and most other countries, in modern times, consider civil government as the device of a few for their own profit, honour, power, and aggrandisement."[2] What these deluded people fail to understand is that civil institutions

> "are <u>appointments</u> and <u>ordinances</u> of God; and, therefore, we dare not speak evil of them, or of the holders of them. We cannot imitate those who do so; else we should be dishonouring God, who has forbidden us 'to curse the gods, and to speak evil of dignities' -- and we should be pouring contempt on his ordinances."[3]

Therefore, a Christian

> "will never be found among the ranks of those who work upon the prejudices and ignorance of ill-informed, uneducated, and unreflecting crowds, making poor misguided people believe that they are oppressed and enslaved, and that their poverty and misery result from the existing laws, and can be cured by changing these. One would wonder, that in the middle of the nineteenth century, anyone should be so stupid as to believe such absurdities, and yet more, perhaps, that any should have the impudence to propound doctrines so palpably false."[4]

Such, then, was the manner in which the Scriptures were often employed to enforce 'passive obedience' to the existing institutions in society; such the manner in which the Christian Gospel was used to soothe the troubled waters of discontent -- ironically enough, surely a divine discontent, often caused by a stirring of the Christian conscience. The tragic result of such theologically

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1. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 27.
2. <u>MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review</u>, October 1848, p. 172.
3. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 175.
4. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 177.

distorted and class-biased teaching was that those whose consciences were most deeply aroused by the gross injustices and inequalities inherent in the existing order, had to look elsewhere than the Church to find an outlet for their Christian discontent. In particular, to the socially-conscious segment of the working classes, alive to the necessity of dealing radically with the dreadful condition of suffering humanity about them, the image projected by the Church, as far as her working class composition was concerned, was too often that of a community of the patient, the submissive, the obedient, the docile; not the aroused or the disturbed, much less the discontented or dissatisfied.

In all fairness to the Dissenting Presbyterian Churches, it must be noted that they did not engage as whole-heartedly in this veneration of the existing institutions of society as the Established and Free Churches. There always seem to have been a few Dissenting clergy who were somewhat suspicious of the motives of those who constantly preached the Christian duty of 'passive obedience'. Such was William Anderson of John St. Church in Glasgow:

> "There are some preachers who presume to inculcate that it is unbecoming of Christians to take a part in political disputes, and they will prostitute the Scriptures in their advocacy of the perpetuation of abuses, calling upon us to 'meddle not with them that are given to change,' as if all desire of change implied a discontentedness of disposition which nothing will satisfy. Those declaimers against politics will usually be found to be themselves the most violent political partisans in the defense of corruption, that it be allowed to fester undisturbed."[1]

While a man like Anderson was a rare exception rather than the rule, perhaps the freedom inherent in the Dissenting Churches' traditional attitude to the state, their more liberal political sympathies, and their more intimate knowledge of

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1. Wm. Anderson, "Christian Loyalty to Earthly Princes," a Sermon preached in 1830, quoted in G. Gilfillan, Life of Rev. William Anderson LL.D., p. 107. Anderson was minister of John St. Relief (later U. P.) Church for 50 years -- from 1822 to 1872. Of all the Dissenting Presbyterian ministers of that time, says David Woodside in his history of the U. P. Church, "Dr. Anderson was the man who was most involved in the public movements of the day." (The Soul of a Scottish Church, p. 217).

working class radicalism,[1] made them generally less fearful of the effects of change and more dubious of an unquestioning 'passive obedience'.

At the same time, in seeking to understand the reason for their prophetic failure, it is important to emphasize again that even these relatively enlightened Churches at this time never questioned the existing basis of the social order -- the graded hierarchical structure with privileges and power concentrated in the hands of the few at the top. Like the other Churches, they confidently believed that the evils which existed in society, however appalling, could be cured without disturbing in any fundamental way the distribution of power -- social, political and economic -- preserved in existing institutions, laws and practices. This acceptance of the status quo often took the form of a naive 'laissez-faire' optimism so typical of middle class liberalism:

> "Christianity looks round upon society and its relations with no cold suspicion, but with the most confiding love and hope. . . . It knows that many of the arrangements thereof might be infinitely bettered by wisdom and forbearance, but it seeks to overturn none. It sanctifies all, even the worst, by throwing new life into the relationships and duties to which they give rise, and it has ever the pleasure of seeing as this life grows up the loathsomeness and corruption dropping off, and the thing itself assuming á new and perfect form. . . . It is thus that Christianity works out its social reform. It seeks no violent changes, no pulling of things to pieces, that it may build them up anew; indeed, primarily, it aims at no change at all, but teaches men to do their duty in the circumstances in which they find themselves. And as they do this, they find in the first place these circumstances rendered far more tolerable, and ultimately changing altogether for the better."[2]

In a discussion of the 'Fundamental Principles of Social Progress', The United Presbyterian Magazine in expressing a desire to see the working classes enjoying a better and fuller life, claimed this could not be achieved by disturbing the existing social class structure or the present concentration of wealth and property. Their desire that

> "they should be raised to the same condition as that which the higher classes occupy is impossible, and therefore the idea is not to be entertained for a

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1. The Relief and Secession Churches included a higher percentage of the politically radical artisan class than the other Churches.

2. The Christian Journal, May 1844, p. 196.

> moment. . . . We cannot so construct society as to have no gradation of classes. . . equality in point of rank is no essential element of progress. The comfort of the working classes consists not in being made equal to those who now occupy the high places of society, in sharing property to which they have no lawful claim, and in enjoying riches which they have never earned; but depends on moral character -- intellectual taste and culture."[1]

One would gather from reading the Established Church documents during the voluntary controversy, that most Dissenters, if not revolutionaries and anarchists, were at least radicals and democrats determined to overthrow all the hallowed national institutions. This impression only indicates the degree of social alarm in the Church of Scotland in the 30's. In fact, the Dissenting ministers almost to a man were Whig supporters and, though favourable to some reform, like the Whigs, they had clear ideas as to its purpose and its limit. It was believed that by admitting to political power the middle classes -- those who had already achieved economic power and were rapidly attaining considerable social pre-eminence as well -- a more solid basis of support for the existing social and economic system would result.

Reflecting the political views of the Whigs, therefore, the vast majority of Dissenting Presbyterians, and many Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland, especially the laity, supported the 1832 Reform Bill. While, like the Tories, the Whigs believed that the country should be ruled only by those with a stake in it -- that power should go with property -- they argued, against the Tories, that the middle classes had now earned the right to a share in political power by their success in amassing wealth. Their wealth rendered them politically 'safe', thus the electorate should be enlarged to include the new owners of property, the new aristocracy -- the aristocracy of wealth. As the editor of the Evangelical party newspaper The Scottish Guardian declared:

> "The middling classes have become the great depositaries of the wealth, the intelligence and virtues of this country. They best deserve, because

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, October 1854, p. 439.

> they will least abuse, political power. . . . We believe Reform to be a great healing and conservative measure, which will knit the hearts of the middling classes to the Constitution, secure a strong and efficient government, consolidate public liberty and check popular excesses."[1]

Disagreeing with those who criticized the Bill for its illiberality,[2] this churchman warned that a wider extension of the franchise "would reverse the balance of society, and throw power into the hands of the lower portion."[3] The present Bill, he was convinced, was a conservative rather than a liberal measure, for it aimed at "keeping us above the disorder and anarchy into which a more extended suffrage would plunge us."[4]

It was natural that Dissenters and Evangelicals would support political reform that placed power in the hands of the middle class. Not only were they a 'safe' class; they were the class whose influence was dominant in their congregations. The new voters were "the men who constitute the bulk of our Christian Congregations."[5] More than any other class, they embodied in their habits and outlook those virtues which evangelical Christianity most admired -- piety, respectability, self-control, thrift and industry.

With the country in control of such men of strong Christian principle great things were expected. Non-intrusionists who supported the Bill hoped that political

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1. The Scottish Guardian, January 17, 1832, p. 1.

2. Before 1832 there were in Scotland about 2,500 county and 1,500 burgh electors; after the Reform Bill about 33,000 county and 31,000 burgh electors. In Glasgow and Edinburgh before 1832 the member of parliament was chosen by the town council -- some 30-35 men -- itself a self-elected body. After the Reform Bill, there were 7,024 electors in Glasgow. Edinburgh, with a considerably smaller population, had about 9,400 voters, thus reflecting its much larger percentage of the professional classes. Yet in spite of this sharp lowering of the franchise, political power remained firmly in the hands of the privileged classes at the top of the social pyramid. It has been estimated that in Scotland following the 1832 Act, less than 8% of the adult male population possessed the right to vote.

3. The Scottish Guardian, January 20, 1832, p. 1.

4. Ibid., March 6, 1832, p. 1.

5. Ibid., January 17, 1832, p. 1.

reform would lead to ecclesiastical reform; most champions of the Bill looked for an improvement in the social and moral condition of society. By 1846, with the great middle class victory in the repeal of the Corn Laws, the supremacy of the virtuous element of society seemed assured:

> "Our aristocracy of wealth will henceforth consist of tradesmen; and the nation will be influenced and governed by an aristocracy of talent. . . devoted to the realization of truth, justice and humanity. . . . Under such a state of things, the industrious, sober, and prudent part of the community ought to be comfortable; and, as for the rest, till they are reformed in themselves, it is impossible to preserve them from being miserable."[1]

This attitude reflects the widespread assumption in the Church, among both supporters and opponents of reform, that there was no hope of improvement for the great mass of the people in the lower grades of the social scale unless, in effect, they became like the middle class. Not, of course, like them in social status or wealth, or by sharing in political rights, or enjoying equality of consideration and opportunity, but like them in their personal and moral habits. By this means alone, said Chalmers, who opposed all political reform, those in the 'basement' of the social edifice, the

> "mighty host who swarm upon its surface, brought under the elevating power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and so rescued from grovelling ignorance and loathsome dissipation, may rise to a full equality with ourselves in all that is characteristic of humanity, and take place along with us, side by side, on the footing of kindred and companionable men."[2]

Therefore, "we would leave the elevated parts of our social fabric untouched"[3] and urge the lower classes to seek their improvement "through the medium, not of political change in the state, but of moral and personal change upon themselves."[4]

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1. The United Secession Magazine, August 1846, p. 387.
2. The Witness, June 6, 1846.
3. T. Chalmers, The Supreme Importance of a Right Moral to a Right Economical State of the Community, p. 79.
4. Ibid.

To cure the ills of society, claimed another prominent Evangelical minister, "let but the working classes. . . under the influence of Christian teaching and training, rise to the improved, and, we trust, improving habits, of the middle classes."[1]

Clearly, even more enlightened churchmen who supported the political reforms embodied in the 1832 Act, did not do so in order to alter or disturb the structure and institutions of the existing social order, but because they believed judicious reform would strengthen and preserve it. To virtually all these supporters of this measure of reform, it was axiomatic that the right to vote must be limited to only a small elite at the apex of the pyramid. Any attempt to lower the franchise to include 'the people' -- who composed at this time over 9/10ths of the population -- had to be resisted if society was to be spared social upheaval and chaos. The great fear among the privileged classes was that of anarchy, and anarchy was almost synonymous with democracy. This fear was reflected in all the Churches of the time, for anarchy and even democracy suggested not only mob rule and social disorder, but the destruction of religion and morality. They believed that the vast majority of 'the people' could not be trusted with political power because they were not 'safe'; nor could they be rendered 'safe' until they had a stake in the existing economic order (i.e. wealth or property). Until long after the middle of the century, few churchmen were inclined to question the validity or justice of this convenient assumption of the possessing classes. The Church was so alienated in sympathy and outlook from the common people of Scotland, that she completely misunderstood and distrusted their just democratic aspirations for political representation and the improvement in their social and economic condition which they rightly believed would come in its wake.

Some of the effects of this political bias upon the Church's relationship to the working classes will be noted when consideration is given to the Chartist

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1. George Lewis, The Pauper Bill of Dundee, p. 12.

movement. For the present it only remains to mention briefly certain further reactions of the Churches to political reform.

If the Dissenters and some Evangelicals gave their support to the Reform Bill,[1] the response of most of the representative leadership of the Church of Scotland, including the whole of the Moderate party and a considerable number of Evangelicals, especially clergy, was quite different. The Moderates, being supporters of the aristocracy, the Tory party and the patronage system, were thus opposed to any type of political reform for social, political and ecclesiastical reasons. They believed that the right to vote, like the power of patronage, was a heritable right tied to existing property rights. To lower the franchise, even to those immediately below the aristocracy on the social scale, would threaten the traditional rights of property and undermine all constituted authority in Church and state. It is not surprising, therefore, that soon after the Reform Bill was passed, the Moderates believed that their fears had been substantiated. It appeared to them that

> "institutions which had been established and supported without challenge for two or three hundred years, began all to be overthrown. Experience, the wisdom of our forefathers, and even the vested rights of property, were at once to yield to fancied theories about the rights of the people."[2]

As they had warned, even the Established Church now came under criticism. Until

> "the Catholic Emancipation Bill, with that of Parliamentary Reform, passed, she had comparatively few enemies. . . . But all of a sudden this bright scene was overcast. The Reform Bill seemed to have changed men's natures."[3]

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1. The Secession and Relief Magazines favoured the Bill. Also, the leading Dissenting ministers of the time, such as James Harper, Wm. Anderson, Hugh Heugh, Henry Renton, all supported this measure of reform. Indeed, there is no indication that any Dissenting Presbyterian ministers were opposed to it. In addition to The Scottish Guardian, the Evangelical Edinburgh Christian Instructor gave some support to the Bill, while noted individuals such as George Lewis, Robert Burns, and Hugh Miller were among its Evangelical supporters.

2. The Church Review and Scottish Ecclesiastical Magazine, November 1836, p. 452.

3. Ibid., January 1838, p. 740.

The Moderate party regarded all the attacks on the established order in Church and state subsequent to 1832 -- the voluntary controversy with its threat of disestablishment; the growth of the non-intrusion party with its threat to patronage; the Disruption with its crippling of the Established Church and its supposed threat to the authority of the state; the growth of political radicalism and the Chartist movement; and, indeed, virtually all social changes of any kind -- as the inevitable result of the democratic feeling let loose in society by the Reform Bill. They warned of the terrible consequences to the nation if the democratic process continued. All liberty and freedom would disappear for

> "every democratic form of government, whether civil or ecclesiastical, must, of its very essence, be tyrannical; and this just more or less, according to the greater or less prevalence of the pure democratic principle."[1]

After the Disruption, the Church of Scotland continued to fear the popular will, whether in Church or state. She was convinced that the abilities and intelligence of the great majority of the Scottish people had not progressed to the stage where they could be trusted to act with the wisdom of their social superiors. In the Church, it was hoped that eventually members would come to possess the degree of enlightenment necessary to have a voice in the selection of their ministers. Indeed,

> "we anticipate a time when, through the blessings of an education as superior to that which now obtains in the land, as the learning of an academy, is to that of a country school, they will be as well qualified as any patron in the highest rank of society, to judge as to the qualifications of candidates for the sacred office. BUT THAT TIME HAS NOT YET COME."[2]

In the mid-30's even the Evangelical party was hardly less alarmed at the democratic spirit which political reform had unleashed:

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1. Ibid., May 1837, p. 83.

2. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, February 1846, p. 8.

> "The Reform Bill was introduced and carried at the expense of a convulsion which shook the whole frame-work of society. The immediate consequence of this entire alteration of our representative system, was to throw an immense weight of political influence into the hands of the people. The possession of this influence at once developed the real state of the popular mind, by bringing out into a position of prominence and power all those wild views and feelings which a want of adequate moral, and spiritual instruction had been allowing to grow and strengthen among the working classes of the community."[1]

These sentiments reflect an attitude which had led many Evangelicals to oppose the Reform Bill itself. Believing that the only effective cure for the misery of the working classes lay in their own self-improvement through individual moral reformation, and not by external changes effected in the social and economic structure, they were skeptical of the new interest of the people in politics:

> "It is truly lamentable to see men excited even to ferocity on the subject of a reform in parliament, while they are totally insensible to the glaring defects of their own character, and to their own urgent need of reform themselves. Of all the miserable objects and scenes that earth presents, there can be few more miserable than that of a man discussing the question of parliamentary reform with all the eagerness of an enthusiastic partizan, utterly unmindful the while of the squalid wretchedness of his wife and children, who are in want of the necessities of life while he goes to swell a reforming or anti-reforming mob."[2]

Since churchmen believed 'the squalid wretchedness' of great masses of the people was largely their own fault, and was not due to a defect in the social and economic system which could be remedied through political action, it followed that instead of concerning themselves with politics and seeking to change society, the people should seek to change themselves. This is

> "a reform infinitely more conducive to their welfare, both in this world and that which is to come, than any reform in parliament can ever be; is a reform which, by the blessing of God, they can accomplish for themselves, without waiting for any legislative enactment."[3]

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1. The Church of Scotland Magazine, August 1834, p. 214.
2. The Edinburgh Christian Instructor, December 1831, p. 853.
3. Ibid., p. 854.

Certainly, until the working classes had lifted themselves morally by self-improvement to the position occupied by the classes above them, political reform could not benefit them but only do them infinite harm.

Generally speaking, it appears that those Evangelicals who opposed the Reform Bill did so not so much because they were social reactionaries like the Moderates,[1] but because they sincerely believed political change was not in the best interests of the people, morally or spiritually. With that sense of 'other-worldliness' which marked evangelical Christianity at the time, they feared it would give them a

> "distaste for the contemplation of those objects which forms the characteristic of a religious nation. Hitherto, Scotland has been quiet, unagitated and unagitating. It is by many feared that, by this measure. . . . our condition will be altered for the worse; and that, seeing we live at a period when the newspaper and the political tract are much more read than the Bible, our religious character will soon be lamentable enough."[2]

There can be no doubt that the voluntary controversy played a large part in increasing the unpopularity of the Established Church in the 30's. In attempting

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1. A few Evangelicals like Chalmers, however, seem to have shared the Moderates' veneration of the aristocracy, believing them to possess an innate, almost divine, right to rule. Chalmers was convinced that social influence and political power should be limited to the few who had the means and leisure for study and reflection: "It is. . . a vast accession to a community when there is in it a quantity of mind disengaged for general speculation, and therefore, if under patriotic and enlightened direction, in a state for devising the best institutions and the best economy of things for the well-being of a nation. Law and education and charity and all the collective interests of a state are more likely to be put on their best footing. . . . With an order of men possessing large and independent affluence, there is a general security for the general comfort and virtue of the whole, than when society presents an aspect of almost unalleviated plebeianism." (On Political Economy, pp. 367-8). Chalmers had an instinctive hatred of democracy which seemed to him nothing less than mob rule. He never understood the new hopes and aspirations of the common people and, as a consequence, he was never able to trust them. Such a measure as the Reform Bill, which, as we have seen, gave the vote to less than 8% of the adult male population, he regarded as a dangerous pandering to the popular will and a direct threat to the hierarchical social structure which he so cherished. Chalmers' reactionary views and his unpopular opposition to reform in overwhelmingly Whig Edinburgh was strongly resented by the people. For failing to join in the illuminations in Edinburgh in connection with the passing of the Reform Bill, he shared the fate of other opponents of the Bill who had their windows broken. (H. Craik, A Century of Scottish History, vol. 2, p. 356).

2. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, July 1831, p. 97.

to defend herself against attacks from the voluntaries the Church of Scotland was forced to identify her interests too closely with the interests of the political party which, in the eyes of the great majority of Scotsmen, was thoroughly discredited. Once again the National Church appeared to be the enemy of progress and liberty and the bulwark of those forces of privilege which had been guilty of such political patronage, corruption and repression over the past 50 years. Although the Whigs had no intention of disestablishing the Church of Scotland, their friendly relations with the Dissenters, their unwillingness to endow the newly built churches, and their sympathy toward proposals for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland led both Moderates and Evangelicals to fear their policies and thus to line up solidly with the Tories:

> "The great mass of the clergy of Scotland are decidedly attached to what are called Conservative principles, and the body formerly supposed to be politically allied to the Whigs, do not now in this respect differ from the Moderate party, who for a long period have been as a body, supporters of such principles."[1]

During the election of 1837 at the height of the voluntary controversy, Church of Scotland ministers campaigned vigorously to defeat the Whig government and elect the Tories:

> "Let the clergy of the Church of Scotland remember that. . . it is within their power to place these men at the head of her Majesty's councils. These men profess to think with themselves, that the maintenance and extension of the Church of Scotland are essential to the best interests of religion, morality and good order. . . . This trusty band of Conservative leaders now await the will of the sovereign people."[2]

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1. The Church Review and Scottish Ecclesiastical Magazine, September 1837, p. 464. Writing in 1847 on the political allegiance of the Scottish clergy, Hugh Miller, the editor of The Witness, stated that in the 18th century the Evangelical party was Whig, but that from the time of the French Revolution onwards "the popular party in the Church of Scotland were gradually relinquishing their old Whiggish principles, and taking up a Conservative position." (The Witness, August 11, 1847, p. 2). He urged the Free Church to remain free from party politics. This, he stated, the Established Church and the Dissenters had not done. (Ibid.). Wm. Hanna in his Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers (vol. 4, p. 191), estimated that as late as 1840, more than 3/4 of the Evangelical clergy were Tories.

2. Ibid., August 1837, pp. 388-9.

The same source insisted that the votes of the clergy may be decisive in this election, "but it is not their numerical value that we so much regard. The influence which they have in their power to exert, in guiding their flock to a just decision, is of infinitely greater value."[1]

During this period, Established Church ministers were often prominent at Tory political dinners and rallies. The public appearance of 45 ministers at one such rally in Edinburgh brought widespread criticism upon the Church from many quarters.[2] One writer, aware of the popular hostility aroused against the Church by her open support of the anti-reforming side, warned that by lending "herself as an instrument of mere political partisanship, she may doubtless gain some immediate temporal advantage, but she will at the same time ensure her ultimate destruction."[3]

Writing in August 1837, immediately after the election, the Whig jurist Henry Cockburn declared:

> "The clergy have again acted foolishly. They have not only voted in great numbers, but have canvassed, and have polluted themselves by the intrigues of elections, and almost invariably on the unpopular side. Dr. MacLeod,[4] indeed, the Moderator of last year, has publicly boasted that the Church does not contain above six clerical Whigs. This being their line, the Dissenting clergy. . . carry off the popularity. The Church of Scotland is ceasing to be the people's church."[5]

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1. Ibid., p. 389.

2. Cf. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, January 1837, pp. 286-7, and W. L. Mathieson, Church and Reform in Scotland, p. 283.

3. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, January 1837, p. 287.

4. Dr. Norman MacLeod, minister of St. Columba's, Glasgow, and father of the famous Norman MacLeod later minister of the Barony Church, Glasgow. Other references to Norman MacLeod in this and later sections refer to the latter.

5. H. Cockburn, Journals, vol. 1, p. 147.

A devastating attack on the Established clergy also appeared in the Relief Church magazine:

> "Who are they who all along have been, and never more so than at the late election, the allies of the tories, the people's sworn foes? The state priests. They preached, they prayed, they visited, they begged for the tories, during the recent canvass. They talked of the gloom of popery gathering on the land, when they met the simple and the pious. They spoke of the immediate repeal of the corn bill, should the Whigs keep place, when they met the farmer and the laird. They canted about revolution and bloodshed, of signs in heaven and signs on earth, and dark days coming for poor Scotland, when they met the timid."[1]

On the other hand, in the 30's the Dissenting clergy were as violently denounced by the Established Church for their public support of the liberal side. Ministers were accused of

> "canvassing for their interest, vexing their lungs in their behalf, nay, even abridging the duties of the sanctuary, and hurrying from the pulpit to occupy the hustings!. . . . The pulpit itself was pressed into service. It was made to utter a language which was foreign to its purpose. Instead of breathings of charity, it gave forth the accents of vituperation. In place of moderating, it was made to minister to human passion. . . . The words that should have advocated liberality catered only to the advocacy of liberalism."[2]

Although during the voluntary controversy in the 30's Established churchmen and Dissenters alike were involved in undue and unhealthy political partisanship in order to advance their own interests, it was the former that appeared in the most unfavourable light. Already undemocratic in frame of mind and temper, the Church of Scotland throughout the controversy was forced to adopt an even more hostile attitude to legitimate change and reform by her attempts to defend her established state connection. The vast majority of the clergy, in the face of the popular clamour for changes in Church and state which they believed the Whigs fostered, were convinced it was their imperative duty to

> "contribute by every constitutional and honourable means within their reach, to hurl such a Government from power, and to replace it by men who will

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1. The Christian Journal, January 1838, p. 8.

2. The Church of Scotland Magazine, May 1834, pp. 85-6.

disdain to pander to the worst passions of the multitude, that by this multitude they may retain the reins of administration in their hands."[1]

So biased were her social and political sympathies,[2] that the Established Church was apparently unaware of the inconsistency involved in her readiness to denounce as a form of blasphemy all criticism of 'the powers that be' when such criticism emanated from the 'lower orders' or the political 'left', while she herself, from the political 'right' was attacking the civil 'powers that be' in an attempt to preserve the social and ecclesiastical status quo.

Before concluding this section, one final comment must be made concerning the effect of contemporary social and political thought upon the major ecclesiastical event of the period -- the Disruption.

It is seldom realized the extent to which the prevailing climate of social and political opinion in the decade preceding 1843 hindered the aims of the non-intrusion party in the Church of Scotland. Among the privileged classes generally there was widespread apprehension and alarm at the swelling democratic spirit manifesting itself in society. To the Tories and even to most Whigs; to the Moderates and even some Evangelicals,[3] the granting of further concessions to the

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1. The Church Review and Scottish Ecclesiastical Magazine, September 1837, p. 461.

2. In 1837, one minister was reported to have told a parishioner "that in 'voting for the tory he would gain the approbation of all good people, have the approval of his own conscience, and, what was more, the smile of his God'." (The Christian Journal, January 1838, p. 8). In one Rosshire Presbytery a motion was actually made and seconded that "every minister who had voted or who should vote for the Ministerial side should be dealt with as one who had violated his ordination vows." (Cockburn, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 147-8).

3. It has been estimated that some 260 Evangelical ministers remained in the Church of Scotland in 1843. (Mathieson, op. cit., p. 371). This figure appears to include the group of clergy sometimes referred to as 'the middle party', one of whom was Norman MacLeod. The vast majority of these 260 must have been sympathetic to the non-intrusion cause. There can be little doubt that apart from a natural unwillingness to surrender comfortable stipends and secure charges, fear of the social and ecclesiastical consequences of disrupting the Church played a large part in their refusal to join their brethren. Even as enlightened a churchman as MacLeod believed that only a strong Established Church could save the nation from social revolution. He called it " 'this bulwark of Protestantism, this ark of righteousness, this conservator of social order and religious liberty'." (Donald MacLeod, Memoir of Norman MacLeod D. D.,

popular will, whether in Church or state appeared to be extremely dangerous. In the words of one Church historian:

> "Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, spoke for the ruling majority, when he refused alike to concede the principle of election to 'a variable and irresponsible multitude' of Church people, and to grant the demand of the Chartists for a democratic franchise. Even the Whigs were timid about the prospect. For a religious establishment in any part of the kingdom to esteem popular rights as more sacred than the law and order laid down by the State for its government appeared to British statesmen of that time a sinister phenomenon."[1]

For several years prior to the Disruption, the non-intrusionists, led by Chalmers, laboured hard and long to convince 'the powers that be' that the achievement of spiritual freedom for the Church would not, as their opponents claimed, threaten existing institutions and property by abetting democratic sentiments and encouraging contempt for law and order.[2] On the contrary, they argued that the granting of freedom from the bondage of patronage would release a new vitality in the Church and enable her to pursue more effectively her work among the masses -- a work which by diffusing Christian instruction among "the ignorant and godless of the land cannot fail to contribute to the peace and good order of society; the neglect of which cannot fail, in the long run, to be attended with very serious evils."[3] This, claimed the non-intrusionists, was surely a noble work, entirely

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vol. 1, p. 199). When the Disruption actually occurred he forecast that the Free Church would " 'blow up itself, or blow up the whole British constitution, or sink into paltry dissent'." (Ibid., p. 203). On the other hand, because the National Church had survived the crisis, he could say: " 'I think the present Establishment has indirectly saved the monarchy'." (Ibid., p. 207).

1. J. R. Fleming, A History of the Church in Scotland 1843-1874, p. 25.

2. It is ironic that such a socially conservative segment of the community as the non-intrusion party, led by such a devoted defender of the existing order as Chalmers, should be accused of promoting policies which would weaken civil authority and undermine the stability of the whole social order.

3. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, February 1839, p. 149.

on the side of social peace and order, loyalty and submission.

But the Tory government remained unconvinced. Leaders like Peel and Graham were certain that the non-intrusion movement amounted to " 'an ecclesiastical domination in defiance of law'."[1] So they resolutely refused to act and avert the Disruption.

As has already been observed, the Disruption was generally regarded among those who remained in the Established Church as but another tragic consequence of the prevailing democratic spirit which threatened all established institutions in society. After 1843, therefore, the National Church came to regard herself as the last remaining stronghold among the Churches for those conservative and anti-democratic forces in the country seeking to preserve the social, political and economic status quo. The principles of the Free Church, on the other hand, were condemned as subversive of all law and order:

> "The Church of Scotland presents the natural and only rallying point for the whole Conservative feeling of the country. . . . Notwithstanding loud professions of loyalty, on the part of the Free Church leaders, the doctrines they have avowed in regard to sites, and the terms they have applied to the aristocracy and judges of the land, show some progress already made towards an attitude of hostility to all the institutions of the country."[2]

In the Highlands, where the Free Church had made her greatest gains from the Established Church, local disturbances resulting from acute famine conditions in 1846-7 were regarded as yet another indication of the inevitable tendency of Free Church principles:

> "They preach doctrines which produce their natural fruits in 'Rosshire Riots' -- Church riots in 1843 -- Meal riots in 1847. . . . We must say that the Free Church is daily assuming more and more of the character of a 'fiercer democracy' -- of a turbulent, political and revolutionary party, of whose spirit the Rosshire riots are only the first fruits."[3]

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1. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 366.

2. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, February 1847, p. 46.

3. Ibid., April 1847, pp. 210-11 (footnote).

Free churchmen were not insensitive to such attacks and they hastened to defend their civil loyalty and social allegiance:

> "As a Church, we are under peculiar obligations to loyalty and obedience, because recent events in our history are liable to be misunderstood and perverted to our disadvantage. The unthinking and the hostile allege that the Disruption of 1843, our separation from the church of the state, is the evidence of a spirit of civil insubordination. The charge is cruel as well as false. It adds insult to injury. There is no change in our principles, civil or sacred. . . indeed, rightly understood, our Disruption was itself an act of homage to civil loyalty."[1]

But too often the Free Church sought to defend herself by claiming that she, and not the Established Church, was more successful in keeping the 'lower orders' in check and preserving social peace and order:

> "Many things occur to indicate that our principles are becoming better understood; and that the very aristocracy, who so lately would have extinguished us in their wrath, are beginning to prize the evangelical Churches as the most effectual breakwater between them and the masses -- as the true conservatives of the land."[2]

Fortunately, however, after the middle of the century, though ecclesiastical bitterness and rivalry continued, the foolish and damaging attempts of the Churches to smear and discredit one another on the basis of social and political loyalties, so prevalent in the 1830's and 40's, largely disappeared. Never again to the same extent were the political sympathies of the Scottish Churches to play such a decisive role in determining the nature and the limits of their social concern.[3]

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1. John G. Lorimer, Christian Loyalty, pp. 35-6.

2. The Free Church Magazine, from the year-end review addressed to readers at the close of 1849, p. iv.

3. This is true even though, for the remainder of the century, the political allegiance of the Scottish clergy was usually determined by denominational attachment. Church of Scotland ministers, with few exceptions, remained Conservatives, while U. P. clergy were overwhelmingly Liberal supporters. Although Free churchmen were less committed as a body to one particular party than their brethren, after the events of 1843 most of them supported the Liberal party.

C. Political Economy and Natural Morality

Economics have often, and rightly, been called the 'lost province' of religion. But this was not always so. Considering the long history of the Church, the freeing of economic activity from subjection to moral and religious criteria was, as we have seen, a relatively modern development.[1] As far as Scotland is concerned, it was only during the century preceding the coming of the Industrial Revolution that the Scottish Church gave up her traditional concern to regulate and criticize economic practices. This she did by gradually narrowing the ethical scope and application of the Christian faith, and consequently, of her formerly all-inclusive concept of discipline, to exclude economic activity. By this process, it is not surprising, therefore, that in the early decades of the 19th century, the Church possessed no relevant social ethic by which to evaluate, much less challenge, the assumptions of the new industrial society. Nor is it surprising that into such a vacuum in her ethical thought she too easily assimilated many of the moral theories and pre-suppositions of the new science of political economy.

The general principles of classical political economy associated with the names of Adam Smith and his two successors Ricardo and Malthus are too well known to warrant detailed consideration here. It is enough to note that the basic thesis of such economic teaching, namely, that man by pursuing his own self-interest would be led by an 'invisible hand' to promote the general welfare of society, provided the theoretical justification for the development of the 'laissez-faire' capitalist system in the 19th century. This concept of 'laissez-faire' in its economic form was essentially naturalistic. It regarded society as regulated by self-acting and unalterable natural (i.e. divine) laws operating harmoniously in a mechanical, non-moral, non-spiritual sense. Its advocates thus insisted that the task of government was solely that of maintaining law and order. Only by allowing

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1. Cf. supra, chapter 2.

the economic forces of nature free play through the removal of all restrictions and restraints on economic activity could the social well-being of the nation be secured. Such assumptions found a ready acceptance in the Church:

> " 'Laissez-faire' -- allow the natural laws of Providence to operate, without counteraction from any of the interventions of human legislation, and by a slow, but sure and safe reaction, the social system will right itself."[1]

In order to understand something of the ease with which the Church assimilated into her social teaching the new economic doctrines, it is necessary to give some brief attention at this point to the Christian attitude to the concept of natural law.

Generally speaking, the Church regarded the teachings of the political economists as accurate expressions of the manner in which so-called economic laws functioned. These economic laws in turn, were but one practical demonstration of the natural law embracing all those immutable divine laws built into the structure of the universe by which it is governed. Forming part of this general concept of natural law was the moral law, a universal standard of conduct, morally binding on all men, and discernible, like all aspects of natural law, by the light of reason:

> "The moral law. . . is just a fair and correct transcript of that rule of obedience which was originally inscribed by the finger of God on the heart of man, and the fragments of which, remaining there since the fall, are the only moral guide which the great proportion of mankind have in every relation. . . . Nothing has occurred, or ever can occur, to exempt man from its obligation in its original form."[2]

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1. The Free Church Magazine, June 1845, p. 186.

2. The Presbyterian Magazine, September 1832, p. 228. It is perhaps worth noting that Calvin, like the Reformers generally, was suspicious of this concept of a natural moral law because, in its traditional form, it failed to do justice to one important aspect of the biblical teaching on the fall, namely, that man's reason had fallen, and that consequently, unredeemed man possessed no 'natural' knowledge of God. Calvin, therefore, made little use of natural law in his theology, although the later Calvinists gradually gave it a larger place. Locke and the Enlightenment largely secularized the theory, and its influence was greatly extended. Thus, when the new economic science began to take shape in the late 18th century, the soil was well prepared for the acceptance of its notion of 'natural' economic laws.

Since the Church accepted the various immutable laws operating in every sphere of the universe as an integral part of the natural revelation of God, she believed that such laws, whether they governed the physical sciences or moral behaviour, must be rigidly obeyed. Individuals and nations who failed to do so would bring disastrous consequences upon themselves. Therefore, any attempt to regulate or interfere with the natural operation of these laws, whether on the part of the state, or, by implication, the Church, was not only unwise and unnecessary because 'unnatural', but was also impious. Any such act of disobedience would necessarily bring its own 'natural' God-ordained retribution.

Another conclusion inevitably drawn by the Church from her understanding of natural law was that since all the physical and moral laws of the universe derived their authority from God, all must be in harmony and ultimately teach the same truth. Throughout the natural order there was for all to see, an inherent and natural harmony of interests. Thus, there could be no clash of interests, for example, between Christianity and the self-evident truths of the natural moral law or the dogmas of economic individualism. All taught the same lessons. In all instances, "we may rely upon it, that the interests of humanity, of education, of religion, and of commerce, are permanently one and the same interests."[1]

It was in the natural harmony of interest between Christianity and political economy that the Church was primarily interested. Throughout this period, the efforts of those churchmen, like Chalmers, who were most concerned with the relationship betwen 'laissez-faire' economic theory and the teachings of Christian morality, were almost entirely directed towards the demonstration of this natural harmony. The teachings of the political economists were "very much at one with the Bible."[2] Indeed, the Scriptures demonstrated the truth of the doctrines of

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1. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, July 1833, p. 63.

2. The North British Review, November 1844, p. 10. A review article by Chalmers on 'Malthus, the Bible and Political Economy'.

the new economic science:

> "They enable us to make positive exhibition of harmony which obtains between what an enlightened science pronounces to be true and an enlightened Christianity pronounces to be right and good."[1]

One important consequence of the general acceptance of natural theology by the Church in this period was that political economy virtually came to be regarded as an aspect of natural religion. Economic laws governing the universe, like the moral laws governing human behaviour were part of the natural revelation of God which could be understood and proved rationally. Since both were part of the divine law, and thus in harmony, political economy and natural morality really taught the same lessons. It is understandable, therefore, why political economy from its beginnings in Scotland formed a branch of natural ethics and that its teaching in the Universities formed part of the chair of moral philosophy.[2]

Typical of the professors lecturing in economic theory as well as moral philosophy was Dugald Stewart. This famous professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh played a large part in the dissemination of classical political economy among a generation of students -- including pre-divinity students -- many of whom later became prominent in the Universities and in public life. Stewart believed that natural religion was the answer to the scepticism which spread from

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1. Ibid., p. 13. Against the claims of an English author that the doctrines of political economy were the antithesis of biblical teaching, Chalmers in this book review argued that the moral teachings of the two were identical. Clearly, not all Christians in this period had been hypnotized by the new science, for the author rightly saw that one of the main reasons why the appalling social evils of the time went unchecked was the growing influence of such doctrines. He charged that the teachings of political economy were given the full blessing of the clergy who frequently preached them from the pulpit. (Ibid., p. 5).

2. Adam Smith was himself professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow. He "conceived the entire subject he had to treat in his public lectures as divisible into four heads, the first of which was natural theology, the second ethics, the third jurisprudence; whilst in the fourth 'he examined those political regulations which. . . are calculated to increase the riches, the power, and the prosperity of a state'." (John K. Ingram, A History of Political Economy, p. 87). In the November 1846 issue of The Free Church Magazine, a writer notes that in none of the 5 Scottish Universities (2 in Aberdeen) was there a professor of political economy, but that all teaching on the subject was done in the chair of moral philosophy. Not until the 1870's did the University of Edinburgh have a separate chair of political economy, while in Glasgow even at this date the subject was still being taught by the professor of moral philosophy. (James Mavor, My Windows on the Street of the World, vol. 1, pp. 171-2).

the French Revolution, while the doctrines of political economy were the most effective antidote against social and political radicalism. Little wonder that ministers who derived their economic theories from such men as Stewart readily believed that the laws of political economy were not only compatible with natural religion, but formed a part of it, and that by preaching and teaching the 'truths' of economic science, they were proving and confirming the divine 'truths' of natural morality, as well as the Christian duty of obedience to the existing laws and institutions.

However it was Chalmers, a student of Stewart, and himself professor of moral philosophy at St. Andrews from 1823 to 1828, who exercized the greatest influence over churchmen on economic questions. Chalmers shared Stewart's view that the teaching of political economy, by demonstrating the divine origin and unalterable nature of economic laws and institutions, was a great bulwark against all forms of dissatisfaction on the part of the 'lower orders'. For Chalmers, political economy, teaching the same moral 'truths' as Christianity, was, like Christianity itself, a most effective 'opiate of the people'. Believing this, he advocated the teaching of its doctrines to the working classes:

> "We are not aware of a likelier instrument than a judicious course of economical doctrine for tranquillizing the popular mind, and removing from it all those delusions which are the main causes of popular disaffection and discontent. . . . It will prove not a stimulant, but a sedative to all sorts of turbulence and disorder."[1]

This it will do by spreading

> "abroad this salutary conviction, that neither government nor the higher classes of the state, have any share in those economical distresses to which every trading and manufacturing nation is exposed; but that, in fact, the high road to the secure and permanent prosperity of labourers, is through the medium of their own sobriety, and intelligence, and virtue."[2]

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1. T. Chalmers, The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, vol. 3, p. 386.

2. Ibid.

Chalmers was certain that there was no better device than political economy for teaching the working classes that, apart from themselves, no one was to blame for their misery and distress.[1] He never tired of telling them that their sufferings from industrial depressions and unemployment, long hours and starvation wages, poverty and destitution, insofar as they were not due to a personal lack of initiative in the individual, were caused by the workings of immutable but nevertheless beneficial economic laws, and could never be blamed on the state, or the privileged classes; and that their economic condition could not ultimately improve until they embraced the Christian (i.e. middle class) virtues of 'sobriety, intelligence and virtue'.

It is difficult to overestimate the fateful influence of a man of Chalmers' undoubted ability and ecclesiastical position on the economic thinking of the Scottish Church. After leaving his chair of moral philosophy in St. Andrews in 1828, Chalmers lectured for almost 20 years in Edinburgh -- first in the University chair of Divinity until 1843, than in New College until his death in 1847. The teaching of political economy, particularly as formulated by Malthus,[2] formed an integral part of his lectures to many hundreds of divinity students.[3] Although he

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1. The Church's ethical teaching derived from the natural moral law, of course, taught virtually this same lesson. Chalmers always regarded the diffusion of Christianity through the extension of the parochial system -- churches and schools -- as the most effective means of undermining all doctrines and movements of the 'left'. Glasgow, he wrote on one occasion, was " 'just all the less Radical than it would have been by every congregation of Christian worshippers, whether in the Establishment or out of it'." (W. Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, vol. 2, p. 263).

2. The substance and application of Chalmers' Malthusian views will be examined when consideration is given to the Church's attitude to poverty, the poor law and the working classes.

3. Two of Chalmers' most famous works dealing with the application of particular aspects of economic theory and practice to Christian morality -- On Political Economy, and On the Sufficiency of the Parochial System without a Poor Rate -- were the substance of lectures delivered to divinity students. In both these works, in addition to his economic teachings, Chalmers' belief in the divine authority and practical necessity of the hierarchical social class pyramid, with its demand upon the rich for kindness and condescension, and upon the poor for humility, gratitude and 'passive obedience', was set forth. (Cf. in the second work, the appendix, pp. 278-80 'On the delicacy of the lower orders when rightly and judiciously dealt with', et passim both works). Many of his sermons were

had many able followers in this field,[1] Chalmers was unquestionably the Church's leading authority -- lecturing, preaching and writing extensively in order to demonstrate the practical lessons to be learned from the natural harmony of political economy and Christian morality.

Nor was Chalmers' influence limited merely to his Evangelical followers in the pre-Disruption Established Church and the later Free Church. The Dissenting Presbyterians, strongly imbued with political and economic liberalism, eagerly embraced the basic doctrines of political economy taught by Chalmers.[2] Even the

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concerned to demonstrate how the 'truths' of political economy were also taught in the Bible, and also to illustrate the harmonious relationship between the economic virtues and Christian virtues. (Cf. the series of sermons entitled Commercial Discourses).

1. Hugh Miller, the noted editor of The Witness, was one of the most devoted followers of Chalmers in the field of economic theory. Through the medium of this influential non-intrusion and Free Church newspaper, Miller did much to spread among churchmen Chalmers' views on political economy.

2. Although the Dissenters never questioned the basic principles of Chalmers' economic teaching, nevertheless, they were often critical of the practical application he made of such teaching, particularly in support of what they considered to be conservative interests, such as the privileges of the aristocracy and the position of the Established Church. Chalmers' combination of social and political conservatism with what was basically economic liberalism certainly was, to say the least, unusual. Quite naturally, to the Dissenters, classical political economy correctly applied issued in liberalism not conservatism. In a review of Chalmers' recently published work On Political Economy, a Secession magazine charged that "Although this book had no other fault, it deserves to be exposed for its illiberality. The whole tone and spirit of it are out of unison with the spirit of the age. It is the first attempt, so far as we know, to enlist political economy on the side of the Conservatists, and to make that science which, rightly understood, lays the foundation of public prosperity in public justice, a partial and prejudiced pleader in behalf of particular classes and particular interests." (The Edinburgh Theological Magazine, September 1832, p. 497). The reviewer claimed, for example, that Chalmers' advocacy of greater taxation for the extension of the parochial system could not possibly be derived from the teachings of political economy. But significantly, throughout the review, the writer never objected to Chalmers' basic economic theories. Indeed, noting that his teaching was essentially that of Malthus, the reviewer declared that this was "a doctrine which we certainly are not disposed to call in question." (Ibid., p. 500).

Moderate party in the Church of Scotland, who, being Tories, ought to have been less susceptible to economic individualism and 'lassez-faire' ideas generally, were hardly less affected than the Evangelical party by the dominant economic theories disseminated so effectively in the Church by Chalmers and his economic disciples.[1] Chalmers' influence was such that beyond Scotland itself, his economic writings were well-known, particularly in England[2] and in the U. S. A.[3] Long after his death, the prevailing influence of Chalmers' teaching on, and practical application of the lessons of political economy was manifest in the whole pattern of Church life and work in Scotland. Until the final two decades of the 19th century his views were almost universally shared by Scottish churchmen.

This willing but fatal acceptance by the Church of the general principles of political economy, virtually precluded any suspicion that the Christian ethic and the assumptions of economic individualism were, or ever could be opposed. Therefore, instead of seeking to formulate relevant Christian ethical criteria for evaluating the moral and social teachings of political economy as well as the practical consequences of the emerging capitalist system, churchmen like Chalmers who were concerned

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1. One indication of this influence is to be seen in their general agreement with the Evangelicals in opposing compulsory relief for the poor. While it is true that the Moderates and the post-Disruption Church of Scotland opposed a few of the popular objectives of economic liberalism such as the repeal of the Corn Laws and the modification of the laws of entail and primogeniture (Chalmers too was opposed to any change in the latter), there is no evidence to suggest that they questioned any of the basic assumptions with which classical political economy operated. This is not surprising, inasmuch as they shared with the rest of the Church the same naturalistic and rationalistic view of the universe -- the whole comcept of natural law with its autonomous and inflecible economic laws.

2. Even Karl Marx was aware of the nature of Chalmers' economic teachings, as is indicated in Capital, footnote to section 1, chapter XXIII, where he refers to "the arch-Parson Thomas Chalmers."

3. Henry F. May in Protestant Churches and Industrial America has shown that in that country, until long after the Civil War, the Church not only accepted the principles of 'laissez-faire', but that clergymen and church leaders acting in the capacity of professors of economics were the leading protagonists of the whole notion. There are references in the work to the influence of Chalmers and other Scottish moral philosophers. (e.g. p. 21 and footnote p. 69).

with economic questions, occupied themselves by rationalizing, on moral and religious grounds, the various laws invented by the economists -- for example, the law of supply and demand, the theory of population, freedom of contract, and the 'iron' law of wages[1] -- and seeking to draw from them divine 'truths' for individual and social morality. Consequently, these churchmen not only failed to subject economic individualism to Christian criticism, but they actually ranked among its most effective defenders and apologists.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Church, believing in the words of Edmund Burke, that 'the laws of commerce are the laws of nature, and consequently, the laws of God', should largely acquiesce in the values and standards of the new capitalist spirit -- its encouragement of the aggrandizing instincts; its glorification of wealth and the 'will to power'; its fostering of extreme social and economic inequalities and widening class divisions; its brutal indifference to the poverty and degradation that inevitably came in its wake. With the dynamic power of the Gospel shackled by cast-iron economic dogmas, any effective Christian criticism of the existing economic order was virtually impossible. By 1830, with both its ultimate goals and the means required for their achievement left unquestioned by the Church, 'laissez-faire' capitalism was free to pursue its own 'natural' course unhindered.[2] So industry and commerce, subject only to autonomous economic laws, grew up largely motivated by self-interest with little moral or social concern.

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1. Chalmers saw one proof of the eternal validity of the law of supply and demand in the fact that "the Author of our nature hath so wisely adapted the constitution of man to the interests of human society, that the moral forces on the side of expenditure and accumulation balance each other." (The Supreme Importance of a Right Moral to a Right Economical State of the Community, p. 92). As we shall see, his acceptance of the 'iron' law of wages and the notion of freedom of contract, and his strong belief in Malthus' theory of population, played a large part in determining his attitude to trade unions and to the poor, respectively.

2. The dominant period of 'laissez-faire' individualism is generally regarded as 1830 to about 1880.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHURCH AND THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

A. The Parochial System and the Unchurched

It would be wrong to suggest that the church in Scotland in the 1830's and 40's was completely unaware of the social evils and problems which were manifesting themselves in industrial society. But in the light of her social, political and economic presuppositions which we have examined, it is not difficult to understand the limited nature of her response.

Quite naturally, the Church's distorted and biased presuppositions issued in a superficial and one-sided view of the basic causes of the evils in society. Because these evils were interpreted largely in terms of a narrow, individualistic moralism carried over from pre-industrial 18th century social relations, the Church's response to the problems of industrialism, therefore, can best be described as traditional. Being insufficiently alive to the radical nature of the changes taking place in the whole fabric of social life, whereby a simple, agrarian, paternalistic society was being rapidly transformed into a complex, competitive, industrial one, the Church merely stressed with renewed emphasis in these decades the traditional moral virtues and values which were largely meaningless in the industrial context. She simply tried to moralize all the new social and economic relations by treating each transaction as a case of personal conduct, involving personal responsibility. In this way even the most complex social evils of industrial society were reduced to a matter of personal morality.

To the masses in the industrial towns where the homogeneity of the old village life had broken down, therefore, the Church continued to preach the unaltered validity of all the personal virtues of pre-industrial society -- independence and self-reliance, thrift and frugality, hard work and industry -- virtues which were still relevant to the urban experience of the middle classes, but which had little significance to the experience of most of the working classes. To the latter, for example, the apparently arbitrary manner in which poverty, unemployment, disease and early death struck the moral and immoral alike, without regard to personal character, seemed to call in question the validity of many of the traditional moral virtues when applied in the industrial context. For such people, quite apart from the appalling physical and economic hardships they suffered, the breakdown of the old moral and spiritual valued and standards issued in a different but no less severe form of distress. When

> "struck by such impersonal factors as an economic crisis or an epidemic; then the conflict between inherited values and urban experiences broke down the exposed and unsupported personality. . . . For many, the new environment seemed to outrage all the decencies and impugn divine justice itself."[1]

Inevitably, for large numbers of those with simple, often pious, rural backgrounds who now found themselves crowded into miserable hovels in the large towns, where they were subject to all the uncertainties and insecurities of a harsh and unregulated economic system, the relevance, if not the truth, of traditional Christian ethical teaching became suspect. Indeed, the degraded and dehumanized existence which was the lot of great masses of people raised doubts about the very truth of the Gospel itself. There can be no disputing the fact that only with the greatest difficulty could many of the lowest and most depressed classes retain a true and living Christian faith.[2] Little wonder that the conditions of life in

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1. L. J. Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-40, p. 162.

2. To the unsophisticated moral consciousness of the average industrial worker caught up in the senseless, irrational and impersonal nature of events and forces pressing down upon him, faith was often little more than a fatalistic

in the industrial towns produced unchurched masses; that virtually all of these unchurched occupied the 'basement' of the social and economic edifice;[1] and that, therefore, even this early, the Church had taken on her middle class character.

A contemporary church extension survey found that

> "in every case. . . the poor were the worst provided; nay, that it was in direct proportion to the depth of their poverty that they were destitute of the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence. The scale of seat-holding and church attendance seemed to be coincident with that of worldly wealth and external respectability."[2]

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acceptance of a rigid necessity or determinism operating in the universe. Men were merely the helpless victims of this rigid necessity which was regarded as the immutable will of God. Unfortunately, as we shall have occasion to observe, the dominant Calvinist orthodoxy of the time did nothing to correct this false conception. Rather, the rationalism inherent in its theology only served to reinforce it. Significantly, this deterministic view of the universe, with its practical faith in luck and chance remains a mark of the industrial working class outlook to this day.

1. It seems evident that lack of church accommodation constituted only one factor, perhaps a relatively minor factor, in the alienation of the poorest classes from the Church. By the early 1840's this alienation had reached alarming proportions. James Henderson, minister of St. Enoch's Parish Church in Glasgow, lecturing in 1843, claimed that of the city's population of 290,000, over half -- 150,000 men, women and children -- had no connection with any Christian church; that only 73,000 of a total of some 100,000 church sittings were taken; that by no means all of these 73,000 were occupied each week; and that many of the approximately 27,000 untaken seats were the lowest priced ones intended for the working classes. (Lecture on "Immorality" from Lectures on the Social and Physical Condition of the People, pp. 119-21, 124). He said that with the exception of Edinburgh where church attachment was slightly better, 50% or more of the population in the large industrial towns in Scotland were unrelated to any church and never attended worship. (Ibid., p. 121). This lecturer concluded, probably rightly, that although in the past a shortage of church accommodation prevented the lower classes from attending worship, this was no longer a major obstacle -- "The people having been long uncared for, have at length become careless. Once they could not find accommodation in a place of worship and now they do not seek it." (Ibid., p. 124).

2. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, May 1838, p. 13.

Yet how lamentably blind remained the Church to the fundamental significance of this whole deeper dimension of industrial life -- the threat to Christian faith itself inherent in a soul-destroying environment.

Throughout this period, any suggestion that certain aspects of the developing industrial system were violating human dignity, not to mention the Christian ethic, never seems to have been raised. The claims of humanists like Robert Owen that the main cause of social evils lay in the existing social and economic arrangements were dismissed as preposterous.[1] Nothing could shake the Church from her conviction that such evils were basically due to personal moral failure and could be removed only through a reform of moral character. To socially elevated and economically successful Christians of the time, the obvious fact that it was among the lowest and least 'christianized' classes that the most glaring social problems existed, merely confirmed the conviction that until a moral and spiritual regeneration took place among such classes, there could be no improvement in their physical condition. So it was that the relationship between socio-economic condition and church attendance led to the facile assumption that the basic reason for the existence of social misery among the lowest classes in the industrial towns was their alienation from the Church[2] -- that "irreligion is the cause of this miserable state of things, and that religion is the only cure."[3] Only Christianity was able to

> "check the spread of poverty and vice in this place, -- to raise the character and condition of the working classes, -- and to promote those habits of prudence, economy, industry, and contentment which are so necessary to the well-being of the community."[4]

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1. Chalmers described Owen's attempts to recreate the social environment of workers by means of model villages and the cottage system as the "crudities of mere sentimentalism." (On Political Economy, p. 36).

2. Often the manner in which this conviction was expressed seemed to suggest that if all men were Christians there would be no social evils. This virtually amounted to the adaptation to the social sphere of the perfectionist doctrine that if all men were Christians there would be no sin.

3. The Witness, December 18, 1841, p. 2.

4. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, February 1844, p. 347.

The only hope of any improvement in the condition of society, churchmen believed, lay not in disturbing the existing social order, but in preaching the Gospel to the unchurched masses. In a manner which must have delighted the privileged classes, therefore, the Church, in effect, offered the Gospel as a substitute for basic social and economic change:

> " 'The best remedy for the evils of the people is that which is least discussed in the socialist systems, namely, the religious and moral elevation of men. Propagate the truths of the gospel among the labourers; announce to them God the Saviour; turn their thoughts to invisible things, to the happiness of heaven; try, with the blessing of the Lord, to convert them to the faith, to the life of Christianity: you will at once produce a sensible amendment even in their physical condition. For such labourers will be temperate; they will have regular habits of business; they will be foresighted, economical, industrious; they will provide a good education for their families. Godliness is profitable for all things, says Paul'."[1]

Only if the working classes were 'christianized', it was urged, could the special privileges of the ruling classes be preserved:

> "There is one consideration we wish to press on the middle and higher classes of society -- that their own interest is bound up with the moral and spiritual improvement of the working classes of this country; if they wish to maintain their present position -- if they value the comforts, the social refinements, the luxuries, the splendour, which they now enjoy -- if they wish to leave them as an inheritance to their children -- if they would like their country to escape the terrors and alarms, the social and political disorders which other countries have experienced, or the grinding tyranny of some political adventurers, which the up-heavings of a popular fury might chance to throw upon the surface. . . let them see to it that the masses of the population be leavened with those holy and salutary lessons which the Bible alone teaches, which enable a man to rise above the trials and vexations of this life, by directing his hopes to a better state of being."[2]

Therefore,

> "let the doctrines of the cross be more extensively diffused and more generally experienced, and. . . poverty and crime will soon in a great measure disappear, and loyalty and sobriety will soon smooth the troubled surface of society."[3]

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1. The Free Church Magazine, August 1848, p. 248.

2. The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland, August 1852, p. 16.

3. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, February 1844, p. 347.

The great undertaking of bringing the Gospel to bear upon all the unchurched masses could only be accomplished, Established churchmen believed, by a large-scale extension of the parochial system -- churches and schools -- into all the neglected areas of the large towns. This constituted the main response of the Church of Scotland and the later Free Church to the changes brought about and the social evils raised by the Industrial Revolution.[1] The belief in a direct link between social evils and the alienation of the masses from the Churches, supplied much of the motivation for the massive church extension efforts of the Established Church under Evangelical leadership[2] in the decade preceding the Disruption, as well as the Free Church's later efforts to extend the parochial system into the poorer areas in the 1850's and 60's. By means of a revitalized, comprehensive parochial system, the Church was convinced she could cure the evils of industrialism, halt the social disintegration of society, and return Scotland to the glorious days of the old, integrated, paternalistic, pre-industrial society. The aim of the church extension campaign, therefore, was

> "to agitate every parish in Scotland, not with a political, but with a christian commotion -- not with the tumult of civil discontent and disaffection, but with a holy rivalry of exertions to make our church and our country, as they were in the times of old -- a praise and a beauty in the midst of the whole earth."[3]

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1. The Dissenting Presbyterians had no such overall 'scheme' to meet the problems of industrial society. (Cf. supra, p. 68). Being voluntaries they could only build new churches as a demand arose for them in the unchurched areas. Education and poor relief, they believed, should be organized on a non-denominational, national basis. References in this section to the efforts of 'the Church' to extend the parochial system, therefore, refer only to the Established and Free Churches.

2. The Moderates were not as zealous in the work of church extension, nor were they normally as concerned about the social evils of the time as the Evangelicals. It is significant that none of the churchmen who were noted for their social concern before and after 1843 -- Chalmers, Guthrie, Miller, Brewster, MacLeod, Begg, Blaikie, Lewis -- belonged to the Moderate party.

3. The Church of Scotland Magazine, August 1834, p. 218.

It is, wrote one noted Evangelical clergyman,

> "by moral remedies -- by the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God -- that the evils of such a state of society are to be permanently healed. A Christian, and especially a PAROCHIAL church in every little vicinity, without seat-rents, and furnished with its BIBLE SCHOOLS, would be a TREE OF LIFE bearing all manner of fruit for the healing of our social evils. The church alone will bring rich and poor together, construct bridges across the chasms of society, instruct the poor in that Word and those hopes which render men patient under present poverty, and, by gathering them into its society on earth, prepare them for the society of heaven."[1]

It is quite obvious that the motives of many of those who eagerly supported church extension were far from pure. A sheer disinterested regard for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the lowest classes seems to have been rare. Not unnaturally, most men operated with mixed motives. While inspired by genuine evangelical concern and Christian compassion, social fear and alarm undoubtedly played a large part in their response.[2] They were not unaware that

> "by our neglect it is not only the spiritual interests of our people that are put in hazard, but the peace and order and wholesome coherence of society are endangered, and they cannot now with safety to the community be left as they are."[3]

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1. George Lewis, The Church in the Fire, p. 16.

2. The liberal response of the wealthier classes, particularly the rising middle classes, to the church extension and endowment campaigns was quite remarkable considering that the 1830's and 40's marked a relatively early stage in Scotland's economic development, and that, quite apart from the large numbers of poor, most Scotsmen still enjoyed what can only be described as a marginal existence. We have already noted the generous response to the church extension campaign in the 1830's. After 1843, the Church of Scotland under the leadership of James Robertson undertook a great campaign to endow all the new church extension charges built in the 30's. By 1860, when Robertson died, the huge sum of almost £500,000 had been raised for this purpose. Even larger sums were raised by the Free Church. In 1843, she set out to build 700 new churches and in two years almost 600 of these had been completed. By 1851, she had 889 places of worship with 495,000 sittings. The wealth of the middle and upper classes and their strong allegiance to the Church was quite evident in the various church extension appeals. The Free Church campaign to raise £150,000 to build 700 manses was deliberately limited to 'wealthy individuals'. Thomas Guthrie reported that in the first three days of the campaign he had received for the fund in Glasgow alone £10,000 in sums not less than £100 each. (The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland, August 1845, p. 188). The Free Church theological colleges were built and endowed through gifts from wealthy business and professional people. A group of 14 such men, some of whom had previously helped to endow the college in Edinburgh, later gave over £70,000 to build and endow the Free Church college in Glasgow.

3. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, August 1842, p. 118.

But clearly the motives of others were somewhat less mixed. They were largely activated in their enthusiasm by the most unchristian considerations. For them the extension of churches and schools into poorer areas was regarded as a means to an end -- the end being the pacifying of the 'lower orders'. The more 'christianized' the masses were, the more they would be content, passive and obedient. To all such staunch defenders of the status quo, the widespread diffusion of Christianity was welcomed and supported as the most effective bulwark against those who sought changes in the existing social and economic order.[1]

It should come as no surprise, of course, to find that men were governed by such low motives. There have always been, are now, and always will be those who never hesitate to use Christianity for their own selfish ends. What was so lamentable in this period, was the shocking manner in which so many church leaders were equally prepared to turn the Christian faith into an ideology of social reaction. In their appeals to the wealthy classes for financial support, churchmen often pandered the worst motives of fear of social disorder and sheer class self-interest. Shortly after his appointment as convener of the church extension scheme, Chalmers, for instance, in an official letter addressed to all the Church's ministers seeking support for the scheme, claimed that:

> "Even to the mere politicians and worldly philanthropists of your acquaintance, you can address the argument, that a depraved commonality is the teeming source of all moral and all political disorder; and the fearful presage, if not speedily averted by an efficient system of christian instruction, of a sweeping anarchy, and great national overthrow."[2]

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1. Norman MacLeod, though himself a Tory and an ardent defender of the hierarchical social class structure preserving as it did the position and privileges of the aristocracy, was, nevertheless, rightly suspicious of the manner in which the latter were prepared to 'use' the Established Church for their own ends. Writing in 1845, he warned the Church of Scotland not to " 'lean on the aristocracy. They have but one eye, and it looks at but one object -- the landed interest. If they, as a body, support the Establishment, it is on much the same principle that they support guano -- because it helps to make men pay their rents'." (Donald MacLeod, Memoir of Norman MacLeod D. D., vol. 1, p. 228).

2. The Church of Scotland Magazine, August 1834, p. 220.

The following, taken from an article commending the collection for church extension, may be regarded as representative of the general tone of the regular appeals for financial support in official journals in this period. This appeal, after listing the usual 'spiritual' reasons for supporting the scheme, adds:

> "Let it not be forgotten, also, that Church Extension, by bringing the lessons of the Gospel to bear, in the most effective manner, upon the consciences and the hearts of men, by inculcating everywhere habits of sobriety, contentment, diligence in worldly business, and subjection to lawful authority, is the best friend of the temporal comfort of the people, and of the peace and good order of society."[1]

The Church of Scotland after the Disruption likewise utilized the weapon of social alarm to rouse the privileged classes in support of her endowment scheme. Only by means of an effective parochial system, Principal James Robertson told them, could the existing order be preserved. Therefore, this

> "cause is the cause of piety and patriotism united. It concerns the temporal, not less than the spiritual wellbeing of the community. Its success is identified with social order, and domestic peace, and national prosperity."[2]

Appeals of the same nature emanated from the church courts. In 1846, the Free Church General Assembly issued a Pastoral Address to all congregations on the state of religion in the land. A long section dealing with the alienation of large masses of town dwellers from the Churches, warned of the dreadful consequences of the great 'infidelity'[3] which threatened to undermine both the Church and the existing social system. Only the parochial system, it claimed, could get to the root of the problem; could reform the character of these 'most degraded and wretched

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1. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, January 1840, p. 97.

2. Ibid., January 1852, p. 10.

3. This term was often applied rather indiscriminately by the Church to those whom she referred to as the 'lapsed masses', without regard to the reason for their alienation from the Church. It seems to have been virtually equated with non-churchgoing and the failure to keep the prevailing Christian standards on such matters as Sabbath observance, family devotions, and general moral behaviour.

of our people'. But time was running out; there

> "are elements at work in the very bosom of society, which unless they are speedily counteracted by a higher power, are sufficient to sap the very foundation of social order, and to bring on a crisis such as every statesman must dread and every patriot deplore."[1]

Five years later in the Assembly of the same Church a leading minister claimed that it

> "is infinitely cheaper to govern society by the Bible than by the sword. Churches cost far less than jails; and schools than poor-law workhouses. . . . There are elements of mischief gathering deep down in these dark and dismal recesses of the city that will spread havoc around them, if any social or political convulsion should stir them into life."[2]

In all these appeals by the Church to the wealthy classes on the basis of self-interest, we have but another demonstration of the extent to which Christianity had been identified with the existing order of society; the extent to which it was accepted and honoured not because of its truth but because of its utility. The Church had yet to learn that those within her ranks who cherished Christianity largely for the sake of social order, or for the protection of property, or as a safeguard for social class privileges or special economic interests, and who were in their comfortable high-priced pews each Sunday, were in fact much farther from the kingdom of God than many of those unchurched masses -- the simple but proud poor, and the pathetic social rejects of a harsh industrialism -- whom she, in all her bourgeois self-righteousness, was ever prepared to denounce as irreligious and godless 'infidels'.[3]

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1. Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1846, p. 92.

2. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1851, p. 310. Speech by Robert Buchanan of Tron Free Church, Glasgow. In the same debate, Robert Candlish of St. George's Free Church, Edinburgh, confidently assured the Assembly that the wealthy businessmen of Glasgow would gladly supply the money necessary for church extension in that city. "He could not doubt that the merchant princes of Glasgow would of themselves accomplish that one definite object." (Ibid., p. 330).

3. Although not physically alienated from the Church like the lower classes, perhaps many of the privileged classes were alienated from the Christian faith in a much deeper and more profound sense. One writer refers to "the shock of hearing a room-full of the 'best society' discussing the practice of their going to church as only useful in order to set an example to the lower orders to do so." (The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, August 1852, p. 150).

In this period, what the Church, in effect, attempted to do was to re-introduce, as far as possible, the traditional concept and machinery of the 'corpus Christianum' into the industrial towns, where the old ordered and homogeneous life of rural society had broken down. Since it still operated reasonably effectively in the rural areas,[1] its re-establishment in the large towns was regarded as imperative both for the temporal and 'Christian good of Scotland'. Only the revival of the old, unpolitical, paternalistic, Church-guided society in the industrial towns, churchmen believed, would end the 'alienation of class from class', root out the poverty, misery and degradation of the masses, and restore true social contentment and harmony to Scotland.[2] So it was, that even after half a century of rapid industrial development which transformed the whole basis of social and economic life, the Church remained convinced that the ideals and values of agrarian society were as valid as ever in the new situation; that by means of Christian preaching and instruction, the diffusion of Bible knowledge in schools, and the exercize of the traditional moral discipline, especially through the administration of poor relief, she could still 'control' the complex relationships of industrial capitalism in much the same manner as she did the simple relationships of rural society.

But industrial society was not medieval society. A pre-industrial pattern of social and economic relations could not be applied in the new context, nor could a social ethic transplanted from agrarian life be meaningful in the impersonal world of large-scale industrial organization. Relying solely on an idealized conception of pre-industrial society as a guide, the Church's social teaching,

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1. In rural society, with its paternalistic structure, there was not the widespread alienation of the lowest classes from the Church, nor the social class estrangement so apparent in the industrial areas.

2. In his study of the Statistical Accounts, C. F. Smith notes that these documents reflect a nostalgia on the part of many of the clergy "for the old Scotland that was passing away." ("The Attitude of the Clergy to the Industrial Revolution as reflected in the First and Second Statistical Accounts," p. 76).

therefore, became increasingly irrelevant as industrialization progressed.[1] The conventional categories and concepts of personal morality and private virtue forged in the simple environment of rural society were not adequate to stem the new creed of the 'self-made' man proclaiming his gospel of the absolute value of economic success.

Since the Church possessed no distinctively Christian social and economic teaching relevant to the complex conditions of industrial society, all her efforts to attain in the large towns the position and influence she enjoyed in rural society were fruitless. One primary cause of this failure in the industrial context lay in the narrow understanding the Church had of the ethical scope and application of the Gospel. As we noted in an earlier chapter,[2] during the century preceding the Industrial Revolution, the Scottish Church had gradually ceased to regard social institutions and economic activity as subject to Christian criticism and discipline. Indeed, the influence of her pietistic and individualistic theology was such that in this period the Church virtually abandoned the historic belief that Christianity provided an independent standard and criterion by which the social, political and economic order could be tested and criticized. Consequently, that sphere of activity which was to assume a wholly new importance with the arrival of industrial society, and become the most vital and fateful area of ethical decision -- namely, that relating to the corporate structures and institutions of society -- was the very sphere from which the Church had already withdrawn her concern. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when the revolutionary changes brought about by industrial development began to take place in society, the Church made no attempt to bring the truth and insights of the Christian faith to bear

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1. This has already been observed in connection with the Church's attitude to social class relations, political thought, and the causes of contemporary social evils. It will be noted again later in her attitude to the poor, and her reaction to working class movements.

2. Cf. supra, Chap. 2, pp. 25 ff.

on the new structures, practices and relationships evolving in social and economic life. In any case, by that time, the Church saw no need to apply Christian standards to social and economic activity. So captivated was she by the 'truths' of political economy, that she confidently believed it was quite unnecessary to insist on commercial morality because a sound Christian morality 'naturally' harmonized with commercial wisdom. Since there already existed an essential harmony between private interests and public well-being, all that was needed in order to achieve a just social order was to stress in the area of private interests such conventional virtues as personal kindness, charity and honesty.

But even if the Church had not lost the will to bind social institutions and economic activity within the discipline of Christian justice, she no longer possessed the power to do so. Having long ago narrowed the concern of Christianity to the affairs of private life, morality and 'religion'; having drawn too sharp a distinction between the sacred and the secular spheres and held herself aloof from concern with the latter, the Church was no longer capable of applying Christian discipline impartially to the whole life of man and society. Indeed, in view of the Church's reactionary and class-biased outlook in these decades, it was inevitable that in those few remaining spheres of activity where she did attempt to 'control' society by traditional concepts and methods of discipline, her efforts were hopelessly misguided and issued in perverted expressions of true Christian discipline.[1] Tragically, the historic Reformed concept of discipline

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1. Nowhere is the practical outworking of her distorted, class-biased conception of discipline more evident than in the Church's treatment of the poor. (Cf. infra, section B on the Poor). The one-sided application of discipline also manifest itself in her attitude to the working classes, the largest and most obvious group alienated from the Churches. Viewed in the individualistic terms of evangelical moralism, discipline was, in this instance, applied to the whole range of 'sins' peculiar to the social habits of the workers -- intemperance, improvidence, and Sabbath breaking. Significantly, the more subtle moral faults of the higher classes -- spiritual sins such as pride, acquisitiveness, greed, and social pretension -- did not come within the scope of such discipline. This false view of Christian discipline was evident even in the Church's attitude to education. In view of the Scottish Church's

which sought to subject every aspect of human activity to the guidance and criticism of the Gospel had been transformed into a discipline which was

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advanced and liberal tradition of education dating from the time of Knox, it is shocking to discover the extent to which this noble tradition was being perverted by the Church herself in the first half of the 19th century in an attempt to 'discipline' the working classes in attitudes of submission and obedience. In this period there were actually those both inside and outside the Church who questioned the wisdom of educating the working classes at all. To such people it seemed self-evident that education tended to make those in the 'basement' of the social edifice dissatisfied with their condition. But even those who upheld the historic duty of educating all the people frequently stooped to argue their case on the basis of the most unworthy reasons -- for example, that education would teach the children of the 'lower orders' early in life to obey their social superiors, and make them diligent, hard-working and contented in their lowly stations. Preaching in 1823, Chalmers could claim that most of the higher classes no longer regarded the education of the masses as a threat to social order: "They have, at length, found that the best way of disarming the lower orders of all that is threatening and tumultuous, is not to enthral, but to enlighten them. . . that the strongest rampart which can possibly be thrown around the cause of public tranquillity, consists of a people raised by information, and graced by all moral and all Christian accomplishments." ("On the Advantages of Christian Knowledge to the Lower Orders of Society," Sermons preached in St. John's Church, Glasgow, p. 367). It is not difficult to imagine the nature of the 'information' Chalmers wished diffused among the workers. They were not to be taught anything that would not be useful in that station assigned them by God. " 'It is not wise to disturb the platform of society, and to bestow upon those who form the basis of the pyramid, qualifications costly or difficult in the acquisition and unprofitable in the use'." (W. Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, vol. 3, p. 26). A long article on education appearing in the August 1833 issue of the Evangelical Edinburgh Christian Instructor, displays the shameful manner in which this great heritage of the working classes was utilized as a weapon of suppression against them. The question discussed was whether, and to what extent ought the labouring classes to be educated. The writer argued that it was a 'safe' and 'conservative' measure to educate them, for "in the case of political ferment, the minds of educated people are accessible to good sense and sound argument, by means of books and pamphlets, while those of uneducated persons are not so." (Ibid., p. 524). But they should not be educated as the other classes -- "If the labouring classes are to be educated, their education should be the useful and attainable kind." (Ibid., p. 521). It must be merely pragmatic -- designed to enable them to fulfil 'their labouring tasks'. They must not be taught algebra, mathematics, metaphysics or science. We are "distinctly of the opinion that education of that description would be prejudicial instead of advantageous to the labouring classes." (Ibid., p. 520). Rather they should be taught "their native tongue and to read in it not only the Scriptures and catechisms, but the best English authors. . . . We are truly at a loss even to figure a good objection to the lower classes receiving such an education as this, for while it would in all probability do much good, it is but little likely to do any harm." (Ibid). This limited type of education and the kind of reading it will enable the lower classes to do, "seems well fitted for their situation, just as particular kinds of clothing and food are best suited to them." (Ibid). One need not wonder what Knox and the Scottish Reformers would have thought of this class-biased attitude to the education of the common people of Scotland, or the gross perversion of their dynamic and positive understanding of discipline it implied.

tantamount to the repression of a particular class rather than the impartial discipline of a whole nation.

Therefore, the Church's efforts to 'control' the new world of industrial society through the revival of the traditional machinery of the parochial system in the 1830's and 40's were not, in the end, effective. It could not really be otherwise. Operating with antiquated pre-industrial social concepts, bound by the inflexible laws of economic science, and the no less rigid categories of a narrow theological orthodoxy, and thus completely lacking in any genuine prophetic consciousness, the Church was quite inadequately equipped, both theologically and intellectually, to cope with the deeper challenge and the fresh problems raised by industrial capitalism.

B. Calvinist Orthodoxy, Malthus, and the Poor

One of the prime causes of the increasing social unrest and class antagonism in the industrial areas after 1830 was the growing estrangement of the higher classes from the lower. The Church was not unaware of this social gap nor that it was obviously becoming wider. She saw too that such social class estrangement was having a damaging effect on community and national life. But the Church misjudged the causes of this class separation. Because she ignored the effects of the new capitalist structures and institutions upon the conditions of labour, home environment and whole outlook of the workers, she failed to take into account the vital economic factors which lay behind the social and political unrest of the time. She was not aware that the growing class hostility could not be separated from the economic inequalities arising out of the new functions in industry -- between the owners of the machines and the 'hands' who merely worked them. Therefore, instead of seeking to reconstruct new and meaningful social relationships relevant to industrial society by working for a greater measure of social justice and a narrowing

of the economic inequalities which gave rise to much of the class conflict, the Church was content to accept and even defend all the unjust social and economic inequalities of the existing order as both inevitable and right. Her answer to the growing separation and hostility of the classes was to strive for the revival of the old, pre-industrial, paternalistic understanding of class relations by urging upon all ranks, both high and low, the necessity of assuming the traditional duties and responsibilities of their particular station within the social pyramid.

The Church cherished the old rural type of ordered society because, as we have seen, she sincerely believed it formed part of the divinely-ordained structure of the universe. According to this essentially feudal conception, everyone's way of life was determined by the rank and position into which he was born in society,[1] and out of which he did not normally rise, nor indeed, fall.[2] Essential to this rigid scheme was another traditional assumption of Christian social teaching, namely, that God had implanted in man certain principles, which, by their natural working and without any enactment of them by human laws, were calculated to secure the social and economic well-being of society. It was in the unhindered operation of these natural principles -- such as condescension, sympathy, kindness and charity on the part of the rich; dependence, gratitude, obedience and submission of the part of the poor -- within the hierarchical class structure, that the Church

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1. A person's position in the social pyramid largely determined the type of clothes which should be worn, the variety and quality of food eaten, the nature and duration of educational opportunity, the type of work for which one was intended, and, not least, the 'proper' social attitudes to be adopted to those above and below one in the pyramid. Violations of these unwritten laws of social behaviour were frequently condemned in the Church's social teaching. One of the 'sins' commonly rebuked by ministers in sermons and articles until almost the close of the century was the prevalent tendency of servant girls to wear fancy and expensive clothes inappropriate to their station in life.

2. Poor relief was intended to prevent such a decline among the 'deserving' members of the working classes. For the relief of hardship and misfortune among the higher classes, other means of assistance more appropriate to their station than poor relief were available. Private groups and agencies, such as the Society for the Relief of Indigent Gentlewomen, were responsible for the provision of assistance to the more socially elevated sections of the community.

believed the true peace and harmony of society was to be found:

> "Civil society is formed by the natural operation of those principles of order and subordination, which the God of order implanted in the heart of man at his creation. In the family of Adam, every member was taught of God his due place; and as families multiplied, men were instinctively led by the development of the same principles, to form themselves into larger communities."[1]

A lecture delivered in 1843 on the 'Divine Constitution of Society'[2] may be regarded as representative of the Church's views at this time. The introductory page outlines the basic teaching:

> "Society constituted by the Moral Governor of the world on the principle of sympathy and mutual dependence. Consequences of the neglect of this principle, -- alienation of the lower from the upper classes, -- growth of poverty, discontent, ignorance, vice, irreligion, among the former, of selfishness, luxury, unconcern among the latter. Society as a whole threatened with disorganization and dissolution."[3]

Later the lecturer says:

> "To every considerate mind it cannot fail to appear a self-evident truth that sympathy has been implanted in the soul to mitigate the inequalities in man's condition, and to elevate and sweeten the general condition and circumstances of society."[4]

But should "the rich, the natural superiors of the poor"[5] neglect their responsibility to those below them, then social unrest results. When

> "left unguided, untaught, uncared for, society seeks its own leaders. They come under the influence of men of high, it may be, but misguided talent, and of violent hostility to all existing institutions -- who neither fear God nor honour the king."[6]

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1. The Presbyterian Magazine, March 1833, pp. 79-80.

2. A lecture by John Forbes, minister of St. Paul's Parish Church, Glasgow, in Lectures on the Social and Physical Condition of the People. Forbes and the other four lecturers who contributed to this volume all entered the Free Church a few months after these lectures were published.

3. Ibid., p. 1 4. Ibid., p. 22. 5. Ibid, p. 30.

6. Ibid. The 'misguided' persons who usurped from the 'natural superiors' of the lower classes their former task of leadership were, of course, such disturbers of the 'existing institutions' as Chartists, political radicals and trade union organizers.

Clearly, "where there are no natural superiors, but where all exist on the same humble level, the state of habits and manners becomes more rude and reckless."[1] Therefore, "let the rich constitute themselves in fact what Providence has made them in rank, the guardians of the poorer orders;"[2] let them give the poor sympathy and advice, not money and material comforts. It is not a redistribution of wealth that will aid the poor, for "silver and gold they have; but these form not the remedy by which the foundations of society are to be strengthened, her pyramid consolidated, and her glory restored."[3]

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1. Ibid., p. 33.

2. Ibid., p. 32. The Church's agrarian social ideal was reflected in her frequently expressed disappointment in the failure of the manufacturers and factory owners to care for their town workers in the same paternalistic manner as the landed aristocracy looked after those peasant workers who tended their estates. The obvious difference in the condition of the rural peasants and the industrial lower classes was invariably attributed by churchmen to the beneficial influence of a residing gentry among the former. The new 'industrial aristocracy', they lamented, neither lived and mixed among their workers, nor normally took any interest in their welfare or condition apart from paying them their wages.

3. Ibid., p. 41. Various Christian schemes were advocated and carried into practice in the 19th century designed to renew contact between the higher and lower classes in the industrial towns. By these schemes, cultured middle class Christians could bring the Gospel to the unchurched poor, and also offer them, in connection with their poverty, sympathy and advice and attempt to raise them in 'mind and manners'. In an address advocating the adoption of a scheme whereby socially elevated Christians would become 'patrons' of poverty-stricken children, Robert Buchanan, one of the leaders of the Free Church, displayed the usual condescending, class-conscious paternalism which was such a marked feature of the Church's dealings with the poor: " 'The kind benefactor who has become, according to this system, the patron of some poor, helpless, neglected youth, goes and meets him at school; speaks to him a few encouraging words; follows him to his humble and comfortless home; introduces himself to the parents as the friend of the child; wins his way to their confidence by the mere fact that he comes in such a character; awakens their self-interest in the well-being of their family; and thus by degrees, bridges over that widening and perilous gulf which, in these modern times, has been more and more separating and estranging from one another the upper and lower orders of the people'." (N. L. Walker, Robert Buchanan D. D., p. 313).

Operating with this theory of class relations, it is not difficult to understand why the Church believed her task in society was not to question the inequalities of station or class but to 'sweeten' and 'beautify' the traditional relationships between the classes; nor why anything that tended to impede such harmonious relationships, whether it was the selfishness and neglect of the rich or the discontent and dissatisfaction of the poor, became a prime target for the moralistic preaching of the time.

We have already observed how the doctrine of 'passive obedience' in relation to civil authority formed part of Christian teaching to the working classes in the 1830's and 40's. But the same doctrine, together with its related 'virtues' of subordination and resignation, were even more extensively proclaimed to the lower classes both in relation to their attitude to their 'earthly' social superiors and employers, and, in a 'spiritual' sense, to the immutable will of God.[1]

There was almost no end to the teaching of such 'passive obedience' in contemporary sermons and in ecclesiastical magazines. The following example is typical. It is the substance of an article on 'The Poor and the Gospel' by John Hunter, one of the ministers at the Tron Church, Edinburgh. The Gospel, declares the writer, is a most wonderful consolation to the poor. It

> "teaches them, that though neglected and despised by mankind, they are not forgotten by him who inhabiteth the praises of eternity; that he cherishes towards them the tender affections of a parent; that he guides and directs every event that befalls them, and that even the very hairs of their head are numbered of the Lord. It reminds them, that while excluded from the presence of the great and powerful, they are yet permitted to approach the God of heaven, to pour out before him their wants, their cares, and their

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1. Strictly speaking, this teaching on the submission to the divine will, taken alone, normally represented perfectly orthodox Christian doctrine. But it was preached with such regularity and in such an all-embracing manner, that its implications for the pious Christian poor could not be limited to merely 'spiritual' contentment. Take the following example from an item entitled 'Against Murmuring': "Consider this, Christians, that of all men in the world you have the least cause, yea, no cause to be murmuring or muttering against any dispensations you may meet with in this world. Is not God thy portion?. . . . Murmuring is a black garment, and it becomes none so ill as saints." (The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, July 1849, p. 105). Here, obviously, discontent and dissatisfaction of any kind, however justified it may be, amounts to 'murmuring' against the goodness of God.

sorrows, and to ask the aid which they require, for duty, for trial, for life, and for death. . . and it unveils to their view, that happy country where the distinctions of rank are for ever levelled.

But while the Gospel is fitted to enlighten, elevate and cheer the minds of the poor, it is also admirably calculated to train them to the practice of those virtues which are suited to the condition they occupy in society. Is industry indispensably necessary to procure for them the means of subsistence? The Gospel teaches them that the eye of the Omniscient is continually upon them, that he marks the fidelity and diligence, or negligence and sloth with which their duties are discharged, and that, before his dread tribunal they must at last appear to render an account of their stewardship. Is a sacred regard to the principles of integrity and honour essentially requisite to their success in life? The Gospel reveals the Most High as a God of justice and truth, it exhibits the purity and sanctity of that law which he hath prescribed for the regulation of human conduct, and solemnly declares that every liar shall have his portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. . . . Does contentment administer to their minds a healing balm amid all the anxieties and sorrows they are destined to endure in this vale of tears? The Gospel enables them to cast their cares upon that gracious being who hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up to death for them, it elevates their affections from earth to heaven, and leads them to consider every worldly joy and sorrow as nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity, compared with the purity and bliss of eternity. . . .

In Jesus we perceive a humility which cheerfully performed the meanest offices which duty or affection could dictate, a patience and resignation which endured the severest calamities without a murmur, and in the darkest hour of adversity cheerfully acquiesced in the will of heaven; a meekness which remained calm and unruffled amid insult and oppression; and a godlike compassion which implored forgiveness and mercy to its bitterest enemies. The cultivation and practice of such dispositions, are, indeed, suited to every situation of human life, but to the poor they possess a peculiar value. They enable them to tread with a firm and undaunted step the rugged path of sorrow, and teach them in this imperfect state, to acquire that temper and spirit which will prepare them for joining the society of the blessed inhabitants of the realms of glory."[1]

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1. The Scottish Christian Herald, June 22, 1839, pp. 385-6.
Note in the last paragraph the use made of the Incarnation. It was common practice in preaching to the poor to appeal to the 'passive obedience' and submission of Christ to the will of God, and his meek acceptance of his poor and lowly state among men, as the divine example for them to emulate. If the Son of God was willing to accept this lowly position on the social pyramid, never complained about his poverty, and passively submitted to unjust treatment, cruelty, and even death, it obviously amounted to something like blasphemy for the lower classes, no matter how poor they might be, to murmur and complain about the lowly station God had assigned them, or against the oppression and injustices to which they were subjected.

Chalmers, whose attitude to the poor and the question of poverty, as on so many other matters, was typical of the Church as a whole, had the same teaching on 'passive obedience' to offer the poorer classes in relation to their employers. Preaching on the duties of servants to their masters, he discusses what the reaction of a Christian servant ought to be when subjected to abuse, hardship and suffering at the hands of his employer. In this situation, says Chalmers, the oppressed servant will be tempted by nature to complain and rebel against the injustice of such treatment. However,

> "the spirit of a servant never reaches to a truer or more noble elevation than when -- keeping down the tendencies of nature in submission to the will of Christ -- he maintains an uncomplaining patience under all the wrongs and all the severities which are inflicted upon him -- and when, instead of resisting any insult or any aggravation he may meet with, he offers it up in silence unto the Lord. . . . The long-suffering of a Christian servant may in these circumstances look a tame and a pusillanimous thing to those who look at it with this world's eyes, and pass their judgment on it upon the world's principles; but I am quite sure, that in the high estimate of eternity, a servant never makes a greater exhibition of character, or reaches to a nearer resemblance of the Godhead Himself."[1]

According to this widely diffused teaching, therefore, the most saintly Christians among the poor were those who 'knew their place', accepted it, and meekly acquiesced ' in the spirit of Christ' to whatever burdens and injustices the superior orders (or the providence of God), might choose to lay upon them. One can easily imagine how the owners of the factories and mills must have applauded such social doctrines so ideally suited to provide an unlimited supply of pious, submissive and uncomplaining 'hands' to operate their machines. Nor is it at all surprising that political reformers and trade union organizers frequently complained that it was among church-going members of the poorer classes that they most often encountered a reluctance to combine with other workers in collective efforts to achieve their political rights and improve their social and economic condition.

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1. W. Hanna, ed., Sermons by the Late Thomas Chalmers (vol. VI of Posthumous Works), p. 387.

Such was the burden of the Church's message to the poor in these decades. To say the very least, the essentially true and valid Christian virtues of patience, humility, 'passive obedience' and submission to the will of God were grossly overstressed by the Church. More accurately, perhaps, we should say that they were proclaimed in such a manner as to turn them into positive vices. So overstressed were they, and so shamefully misapplied -- keeping in mind the dreadful conditions and the cruel injustices to which the industrial lower classes were subject at the time -- that the Church was often, in effect, preaching not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but an ideology of class repression. In the famous words of Charles Kingsley, " 'We have used the Bible as if it were a mere special constable's handbook, an opium dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they are being overloaded'."[1] Tragically, the Church had forgotten that patience, while often a divine virtue, was not necessarily divine; that it was sometimes wicked; that the truly divine virtue in some situations -- this clearly being one of them -- was impatience, not patience.

It is only to be expected that the Church's antiquated social teaching offered no challenge to the injustices and inequalities in industrial society. Whatever efforts the Church made to deal with contemporary social problems were intended to take place within the existing framework of society. They were advocated to 'beautify' and 'sweeten' existing class relationships, and strengthen and bulwark existing social and economic institutions; not to judge or criticize them, much less radically change or transform them. At this time even the most enlightened churchman would hardly have dared to suggest that the starvation wages and unemployment, the misery, pauperism and destitution, the disease and early death, which was the inevitable lot of the majority of those in the 'basement' of the social edifice, as well as a perpetual threat to most of the remainder of the industrial working classes, condemned the basic structure of the existing social system; that, in fact,

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1. As quoted in W. D. Morris, The Christian Origins of Social Revolt, p. 174.

the very existence of a graded hierarchical society enshrining as it now did the most arbitrary and capricious inequalities -- social, political and economic -- was fundamentally unjust, not to say unchristian.

It is true, of course, that many Christians did have an uneasy conscience with regard to the great and growing inequalities of wealth and poverty in these decades, but the Church offered no way of dealing with the problem except by acts of charity and philanthropy. Because the present order was assumed to be sacrosanct, this was the only means by which Christian love could be expressed. The Church taught that while all men were equal in the sight of God, the effective recognition of such equality came in another world, therefore, the poor were not to insist upon equality of social status or economic opportunity. To the lower orders she preached subordination and discipline, not equality. She in no sense questioned, but passionately defended class distinctions, inequality of opportunity and the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the few. To the rich and powerful she preached the duty of stewardship. This was the Church's answer to the problem of inequality. As long as wealth and special privileges were properly used and not wasted in idle or riotous living, then the inferior orders would look up in respect to the superior orders and have no cause for discontent with their station. In the ideal Christian social order cherished by the Church, the poor, if they were obedient and grateful, would be cared for not by labour agitators with their utopian promises of higher wages and improved social conditions, but by the benevolence of Christian men to whom God in his infinite wisdom had given control of the property interests of the country.

Undoubtedly the Church's teaching that all wealth belonged to God and that consequently it must be used not in a selfish but a beneficial manner, played a large part in encouraging among the privileged classes habits of thrift and industry so essential to the accumulation of the savings necessary for the development of

industrial capitalism. It also produced among the rich many good stewards and issued in much charitable and philanthropic endeavour. But, unfortunately, this particular application of valid Christian teaching on the use of wealth tended to blur the basic issue of social justice. In the industrial context, such teaching meant that charity too often became a substitute for justice.[1] In the final analysis, it only helped to further rationalize economic inequality by giving a divine sanction to a grossly inequitable distribution of the nation's wealth.

Up to this point in our study of the Scottish Church, only brief attention has been drawn in passing to the influence of the Church's theological outlook in shaping her social and economic teaching. However, in order to understand the basic factors which determined the Church's attitude to the question of poverty, some further consideration must be given here to certain features of contemporary Calvinist theology.

It is a well-known fact that different theological traditions inevitably manifest themselves in different attitudes toward the social order. It is impossible, of course, to say how far the Church's theological outlook in these decades was in itself directly responsible for her fateful social conformity and prophetic silence.[2] What is clear is that the dominant Calvinist orthodoxy of the period[3] easily

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1. This type of charity could never be an adequate expression of Christian love, for it was something less than justice. As Emil Brunner reminds us, "love can only do more, it can never do less than justice." (Justice and the Social Order, p.129). Only when the hungry poor, lined up to receive their soup from the rich, began to ask why they could not have their own soup, was such charity called in question by the basic demands of justice. " 'Damn your charity, we want justice'. . . . To those for whom the order itself is suspect or worse," says William Temple, "such charity is blood-money. Why should some be in a position to dispense and others to need that kind of charity?" (Christianity and the Social Order, p. 23). Unfortunately, the Church left it to the humanists and socialists of the time to raise all such fundamental questions.

2. Much as she would like to believe otherwise, the total life, thought and work of the Church in any age is strongly influenced by non-theological factors. As we have observed only too clearly, sociological factors played a decisive part in determining the Church's social, political and economic outlook in this period.

3. Attention has been drawn to the significant change that took place in Calvinist theology in Scotland between the period of the Reformers and the beginning of the 18th century, and its effect on the decline of the Church's social criticism. (Cf. supra, chapter 2, pp. 27-29).

accommodated itself to the individualist creed of capitalism because it stressed in the moral and ethical sphere the same virtues and values which the latter stressed in the economic sphere;[1] that consequently it supplied no relevant criteria for a criticism of the developing ethos of economic individualism, but instead offered a rigid, deterministic view of God and the natural order which sanctified the existing arrangements in society and made it easy for churchmen to justify their defence of the status quo on supposedly theological grounds.

The rigid theological doctrines of orthodox Calvinism harmonized well with the Church's equally rigid understanding of natural law embracing all the immutable divine laws -- moral and physical -- built into the structure of the universe. Scholastic doctrines such as that of double predestination lent strong support to deterministic notions of the operation of divine providence in the natural order. It was accepted, for example, that inequality and privilege was the mark of all the activity of God's providence, both in the 'spiritual world' -- in the divine act of election and reprobation -- and in the 'physical world' -- in the divine ordering of men's lives and of social and economic relations. The existing arrangements in society, like the divine plan of salvation, were determined by the inscrutable will of God. Social elevation and material comforts, like salvation, were not intended for all but were, in the wise providence of God, reserved for the few.[2] The divine structure of the universe permitted no other arrangement. Just as sinful men could not question the justice of the divine decree of election, so they were not allowed to criticize the natural laws by which God governed the world. Neither salvation

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1. In the following analysis of the Church's theology, it will be obvious to the reader that the main criticism of 17th century Calvinism on the Continent and in England contained in the well-known Weber-Tawney thesis (Cf. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, and Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, respectively) -- namely, that it provided a moral and theological justification for economic individualism -- is no less applicable to 19th century Calvinist orthodoxy in Scotland.

2. If, on the other hand, the atonement had been regarded as universal and not limited, then the case for privilege and inequality would have been greatly weakened, for if Christ died for all men and not merely for the few, why should God's temporal blessings be reserved for the few?

nor a just society could be achieved by human effort. Social privilege and economic inequality, like sin, was part of the structure of the universe.

It is not surprising that the rigidity and inflexibility of this Calvinist orthodoxy prevented the Church from interpreting the Gospel in a living and relevant way to the far-reaching changes taking place in society. The static rationalistic doctrines of such a theology only bulwarked the prevalent social and economic dogmas of the period and utterly failed to provide an adequate vehicle through which the dynamic power of the Gospel could be expressed. Thus among men living in an impersonal industrial context, there was little sense of the active presence and power of God at work in the corporate life of society. The living, active, judging, transforming God had become the slave of His own immutable natural laws which governed the universe; had become imprisoned within a rigid and impersonal system known as divine providence:

> "Men were in the grip of this rigid necessity which they conceived to be God's will. It was at best the will of a God who had ceased to be a Creator in His own world. And with such a God men can have no active fellowship such as the Incarnation promised. In such a belief there must clearly be a breakdown of all real creation by the human spirit of an environment corresponding to its inner life. There can be no realization of the fellowship of Heaven in the life of the earth. Men are not free to mould, and their environment is not able to be moulded. The human spirit can only have a vague communion with the Spirit of God, for religion has ceased to be a matter of the whole of life. . . . Little wonder that men living constantly in this atmosphere came to disbelieve in a God who promised to do greater things in them than He ever did in Christ."

In addition to its rigid determinism, orthodox Calvinism was marked by a narrow individualism which further affected the Church's relationship to society. This strong individualism when applied to the social, political and economic sphere issued in a Christian ethic which was hopelessly irrelevant to industrial society. It inevitably favoured an economic system in which private interests came before those of the community; it emphasized individual and private virtues and vices

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1. J. W. Stevenson, Christ and the Economic Crisis, pp. 38-9.

rather than social and corporate ones, and idealized self-help and individual effort at the expense of communal and corporate effort and concern. The tragedy was that this pietistic individualism became dominant in the early decades of the 19th century at the very time when serious problems raised by the Industrial Revolution were coming into prominence;[1] when amid increasing wealth on the one hand and increasing poverty and economic serfdom on the other, the true meaning of Christian community and social righteousness needed most strongly to be reaffirmed.

Prevented by an excessive determinism and individualism from bringing the dynamic criticism of the Gospel to bear on the corporate relationships, institutions and structures of the new industrial society, this later Calvinism only served to provide a most amazing Christian justification for the values, ideals and goals of economic individualism. Its theological individualism admirably complimented the rugged individualism of capitalism's doctrine of 'laissez-faire'. The virtues stressed by each -- industry, thrift, sobriety, diligence and honesty -- were alike moral and economic virtues, eagerly embraced by the rising middle classes and preached by the Church.

In this way, Christian moral virtues were easily regarded as a spur to the economic virtues. Economic progress was taken to be a natural consequence of moral virtue; economic failure inevitably signified some moral lack. Therefore, while the Church believed that God in his infinite wisdom had elected some men to high social stations and some to low, some to riches and some to poverty, she also taught that this choice was not unrelated to the moral worth of such men. God, it seemed, 'helped those who helped themselves'. Success, wealth and property was an indication both of divine favour and of the diligence, thrift and industry of the individual. Such rewards were the natural outcome of the beneficial operation of the divine

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1. In Scotland, the evangelical revival had a strong influence on the middle classes, and played a large part in bringing the Evangelical party into a dominant position in the Church of Scotland in the 1830's. The Evangelicals and the later Free Church received strong support from the wealthy, rising manufacturing classes.

moral and economic laws:

> "It will scarcely be questioned by anyone who admits a Providence at all, that there are laws established in nature, and felt to be in constant and vigorous operation, which have an important bearing on the possession of property -- laws which connect prosperity with industrious and prudent habits, on the one hand; and which, on the other, entail loss and suffering on sloth, imprudence and vice. We do not say, nor is it needful, that in the present state all men are dealt with according to their deserts -- for we know that, for wise reasons, a great inequality exists in the distribution of God's gifts; but the general rule will scarcely be denied -- and has, in fact, passed into the proverbial maxims of all nations -- which teacheth that 'the hand of the diligent maketh rich' -- that 'he that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread' -- but that 'the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags'. The operation of these providential laws may be said to be one of the chief means by which the moral government of the world is carried on; and although their effects are often severely felt, yet, on the whole, their influence is highly salutary, since they act as a powerful check, in the first instance, and, if disregarded, as a penal affliction, in the second."[1]

Such an understanding of the operation of divine laws in the sphere of economic relations formed the basis of the so-called prudential theology which marked 19th century Calvinism in Scotland. It was this theology which justified the activist creed of the 'self-made' man[2] -- the man

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1. The Free Church Magazine, May 1845, p. 148. It was upon the poor and destitute, of course, that the harsh punitive effects of 'the operation of these providential laws' were 'often severely felt'. This was typical Malthusian economic teaching.

2. The morally virtuous activity of 'self-made' men was frequently commended in the contemporary church press. Typical of the articles praising the evangelical and economic virtues of wealthy industrialists was one appearing in the October 1855 issue of the Edinburgh Christian Magazine. In it a writer spoke of a recently deceased industrialist as "the type of 'The Successful Manufacturer'." (p. 201). "The grace of God, acting on a mind which loved the light, delivered him from the power of darkness, and translated him into the kingdom of His dear Son; and the divine life which he thus received animated a character naturally energetic to press forward on a career of success. God honoured the man who honoured him. . . . The man imbued with a spirit of divine zeal and earnestness, will clear a way for himself through the yielding crowd of gazing, gaping, idlers. It is the want of these qualifications which makes any young man fail; it is the rareness of these among the young men of the age, which makes so few of them as successful as ------ was. . . . Unlike the thousands among our working classes then and now who only work as many days in the week as will provide them the means of subsistence and dissipation, he had the moral courage to reprobate, both by speech and example, so pernicious a practice." (pp. 202-3). Unlike his fellow-workers who had not the moral virtue to work harder for longer hours in order to be 'successful', this illustrious Christian for a time worked night and day in order to rise to the top in the competitive struggle. "For twenty hours out of twenty-four he labcured at the trade at which, in early life, he had become proficient. . . as a result of this conduct, he was enabled, in the

"who knew that honesty was the best policy, that if one looked after the pence, the pounds would look after themselves, that we should trust in God and keep our powder dry; who believed in thrift, education, prudence, dilignece, sobriety, self-control and the observance by all of law and order. In Old Testament fashion he associated virtue with success, and failure with vice and folly; so he respected those who made good in business as God's chosen people, and looked down upon the unfortunate as getting what they deserved under Providence."[1]

With economic success regarded as a justly deserved reward for the diligent exercise of the Christian virtues, the successful 'self-made' man could think of himself, and be thought of by others, as the righteous man. This conviction, diffused widely among all classes, including the pious poor, provided a powerful moral justification for existing economic and class inequalities. Such inequalities, it was urged, were not at all unjust, because they derived from the moral inequalities among men:

"Grades in rank and influence have their rise in the first laws of our nature. This is a truth so plain, that we wonder that anyone should maintain the contrary. . . . Every day's experience furnishes us with instances of men who have risen in society through their native force of character and excellent talents, -- and such being the case, we must conclude that it is the will of divine providence that virtue should be thus rewarded."[2]

Clearly,

"the distinction between Rich and Poor, is essential to the welfare, if not the very existence, of society. It is sanctioned by all religion, natural and

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course of a year, to engage premises for himself." (p. 203). The same encouragement of the spirit of economic individualism is evident in the Statistical Accounts. There, the clergy gave almost universal approval to the activity of this new class of 'self-made' men. Since the prudential pursuit of wealth tended to build up self-disciplined character which favoured godly habits, the clergy made no attempt to check the greed and cruelty inherent in a system which greatly increased the material wealth of the country but at the cost of appalling misery, suffering and death for the industrial working classes. Those who were successful in ammassing wealth in the competitive struggle and who promoted the material expansion of industry were lauded as public benefactors. To "parish ministers, the man who established a factory was a patriot and the man who, at the same time, paid some heed to the education, health and morals of his workers was a benevolent philanthropist." (S. Mechie, The Church and Scottish Social Development 1780-1870, p. 23). Provided wealthy and enterprising Christians conformed to the accepted standards of Christian morality -- religious observance, private morality and charitable activity -- they were free, indeed encouraged, to reap the rich rewards of the new acquisitive society.

1. G. D. Henderson, The Claims of the Church of Scotland, pp. 44-5.

2. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, July 1851, p. 341.

revealed. But it is founded in that which is preliminary to the influence of religion, -- namely in the natural constitution of each human being, the natural inequality of mankind amongst themselves."[1]

Like the teaching on the Christian use of wealth, this theological rationalization of success and inequality prevented the rich and successful from feeling guilty about their wealth and success in the midst of the shocking misery and poverty about them. It also prevented the pious poor from being resentful and impatient with their lot, for according to this social theory the able-bodied poor had only themselves to blame for their wretched condition. Since, if they wished, they could be thrifty, hard-working and industrious like the successful, their state of poverty was to be blamed not on social, political and economic injustices and inequalities, but on a moral failure to practise diligently those Christian virtues and obey those natural laws which formed part of the structure of the universe. The Church's rationalistic and deuteronomic theology taught her that a

"character of universality belongs to all the laws of nature. This is equally true of physical and moral law. The law of gravitation holds good everywhere; so does the law, that vice is followed by misery, and virtue by happiness."[2]

According to such theological presuppositions, therefore, the misery and degradation of the poor was largely the consequence of their vice and sin; the happiness and comfort of the wealthy and successful was largely the consequence of their moral virtue.[3] Because poverty among the able-bodied -- including that caused by unemployment, low wages and chronic ill-health -- was caused by a moral lack in the individual, it could be cured only by moral remedies and not economic ones:

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1. The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, July 1853, p. 123.

2. The Church of Scotland Magazine and Review, June 1854, p. 469.

3. It was a common assumption among churchmen that the lower classes normally became paupers (a pauper was one who accepted public relief raised by a compulsory poor rate), not because they were poor and in need, but because of sin: "Of those who are reduced to the unhappy condition of dependence on public alms, some few have been so by original inferiority of mind or body, by the visitations of Providence, or by old age: but the vast majority of paupers have become such in consequence of vice." (The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland, May 1854, p. 254). It is well-known, said another writer, "that the question of pauperism has been practically solved in Scotland by the experience

> "We are confident that a moral remedy will alone reach the centre and source of the evil, and that to heap money on unreclaimed heathenism is only to heap coals of fire on that which already burns too fiercely."[1]

Christianity, therefore, not social, political or economic reform was the only effective and permanent answer to poverty. For

> "if by the blessing of God on our endeavours, the gospel enters the hearts of those whom we would aid, then temporal benefits become incalculably more valuable, vicious habits disappear, and those that come in their place tend directly to the increase of temporal comfort, improvement of circumstances, and elevation in the scale of society. . . it leads to habits of industry and of frugality, and gives birth to noble and honourable feelings, which raise the Christian into another sphere."[2]

It is certain

> "that the influence of Christianity being thus universally diffused, would soon, as of old, put pauperism to flight, and the most skeptical would see an illustration of the truth that 'godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come'."[3]

The Church was convinced that if only the destitute and degraded poor could be 'christianized' and thereby adopted the Christian moral virtues, they could not fail to rise out of their poverty, for with Christianity inevitably came an improvement in economic condition. To churchmen, the obvious fact that the poverty-stricken masses were not in the churches, implied that true Christians seldom, if ever, found themselves destitute and in need of public assistance: "Let the reader consult his own experience, and he will find that few indeed, if any, whom he has

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of nearly three centuries. Ignorance and vice are its parents, and wherever the parents are destroyed, the noisome brood soon diminishes, and to a great extent disappears" (The Witness, April 14, 1841, p. 2). The Bible teaches and experience testifies that man is morally deranged and this is the basic cause of all social evils including poverty, claimed Hugh Miller. Therefore, "what is needed is an infusion of new moral power into society, that it may throw off the poverty and slavery, and the thousand other evils with which it is burdened." (Ibid., Sept. 26, 1849, p. 2).

1. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, April 1840, p. 620.

2. The Free Church Magazine, December 1848, pp. 368-9.

3. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, April 1840, p. 621.

known as regular attenders in the sanctuary have ever become paupers."[1] This is so because

> "the gospel feeds the springs of industry: it engenders true independence of mind, . . . it moderates desire, and imparts that 'contentment', which, 'with godliness' is a great gain. Thus it gradually empties the penitentiary and the poorhouse; for idleness it substitutes honest labour, and for rags decent apparel."[2]

From what we have seen of Calvinist orthodoxy, it is not surprising that throughout most of the 19th century this theology, with its rigid determinism, narrow individualism, and prudential tendencies, had a disastrous influence upon the Church's whole social outlook and in particular her attitude to the industrial lower classes.

However, no less important an influence in determining the Church's relationship with the poor was political economy -- particularly the teachings of Thomas Malthus which were widely accepted and preached by the Church.[3] It was Chalmers who was

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1. The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland, May 1854, p. 254.

2. Ibid.

3. Malthus, a Church of England clergyman, in his classic 'Essay on Population' claimed that since the number of people in a nation tended to increase faster than the food supply, poverty would always exist and the lower classes would always live on the verge of starvation. Indeed, unless the population was kept in check by 'natural' means such as disease and war, or by a voluntary limitation in the number of new offspring through fewer and later lower class marriages -- this self-discipline did not, of course, apply to the higher classes -- the poor would sink below the subsistence level and widespread starvation would prevail until the population fell back to its 'natural' level. It followed that nothing but the fearful threat of starvation and death would persuade the poor to keep their numbers in check. Public relief only made matters worse, for to relieve poverty was to increase it. Malthus, therefore, urged the abolition of the 'right' of the destitute to relief, believing that if the condition of the poor was improved through such 'unnatural' means as regular relief, the population would increase and surpass the food supply. If the poor had not the moral virtue to limit their numbers, they had only themselves to blame and must be left to the punishment of the laws of nature, which, as Malthus frequently emphasized, were the laws of God. Because society was in no sense to blame for their miserable condition, it ought not to interfere to relieve the punishment. In Malthus' own words: "When nature will govern and punish for us, it is a very miserable ambition to wish to snatch the rod from her hand and draw upon ourselves the odium of the execution." (Quoted in Alexander Gray, The Development of Economic Doctrine, p. 165).

Malthus' leading exponent in the Scottish Church. Since we have already noted the extensive influence of Chalmers' economic teaching on all branches of the Church, a brief examination of his views on poverty and the poor will indicate the general attitude of churchmen to this question in these decades.

Chalmers differed from Malthus on only one major point -- he did not share Malthus' gloomy and pessimistic conclusion that the poor would always merely subsist on the verge of starvation. He believed that with an efficient parochial system extended into all the lower class industrial areas, the poor, under the influence of Christian preaching and teaching, could achieve, through the constant exercize of the moral and economic virtues -- including birth control by later and fewer marriages -- a minimum level of comfort suitable to their station. The answer to the misery and destitution of the industrial poor he insisted was not to be found in disturbing the existing social, political or economic status quo. It could only come by a moral reformation in the character and habits of the poor themselves. The pathetically naive optimism of Chalmers' 'laissez-faire' views are evident in the following description of the harmonious social state that would 'naturally' arise if true moral effort, self-respect and independence could be stirred up in the lower classes:

> "It is by a tranquil process, such as this, that the general condition of our people will at length be elevated. It is by a slow, but a resistless movement, which combination[1] cannot speed, but which will be sure to make its way, though in the absence of all combination. In none of its successive steps is there aught that can endanger the peace of society, or that should give alarm to the rulers of it. The triumph that awaits the humbler classes, will not be exhorted from the higher by the outcry of popular discontent, but silently and insensibly gained from them by the growth of popular intelligence and virtue. What is there to convulse our land, in the multiplication of schools, in the exchange which our people make of loathsome dissipation for respectable scholarship, in their habits of improving comfort and cleanliness, in their general postponement of marriages, and in the consequent result of smaller but well-condition families? In the whole of this beautiful progression, there is nothing to alienate, but everything to attach the people to that existing order of things in which they find that industry meets with its recompense, and that, with the labour of their own hands, they can rear their children in humble, but honest independence. Instead of so many fiery spirits, now in bitterness, under a sense of difficulties, and in the vain imagination that they

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1. A reference to trade unions.

> are so many wrongs inflicted by the hand of an arbitrary government, casting resentment and reproach on the politics of the kingdom, we should find each in busy occupation with the management of his own thriving affairs, and recognizing, in the hopeful prosperity of his own household, the best evidence of a sound public administration."[1]

Chalmers claimed that "it is only a moral and voluntary restraint, . . . the effect of which will be, more provident, and hence, both later and fewer marriages"[2] that could lead to any improvement in the condition of the lower classes. If they fail to exercize this restraint no increase, however great, in the general wealth and prosperity of the nation could possibly benefit them;

> "if they will, by their rash and blindfold marriages, over-people the land, all the devices of human benevolence and wisdom cannot ward off from them the miseries of an oppressed and straightened condition. There is no possible help for them if they will not help themselves. It is to a rise and reformation in the habits of our peasantry that we look for deliverance, and not to the impotent crudities of a speculative legislation. . . . This will at length save the country from the miseries of a redundant population -- and this we apprehend, to be the great, the only specific for its worst moral and its worst political disorders."[3]

Like the Church generally, Chalmers felt that the main responsibility for the relief of poverty should rest with the lower classes themselves, not with the higher classes.[4] Indeed, Chalmers' harsh and inhuman, not to say unchristian, Malthusian presuppositions made him insist that in order to stimulate the benevolence of poor neighbours, aid from private charity should be withheld to the last minute before

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1. T. Chalmers, The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, vol. 3, pp. 262-3.

2. Chalmers, On Political Economy, p. 552.

3. Ibid., pp. 25-6.

4. In an official Report to Parliament in 1839, the Church of Scotland declared that the assistance provided under the traditional system of poor relief in Scotland was only meant to supplement aid from other sources, preferably from the poorer classes themselves. Whatever aid the destitute could procure from their own labour, their relations, their neighbours, and finally the rich, in that order, must be exhausted before parochial relief is sought. In this way, "the poor are led to be industrious and provident; their relatives and neighbours are encouraged to assist them; a spirit of independence is cherished; an unwillingness arises to come on the parish for the pittance which it yields; the burden to the industrious part of the community of the ordinary poor is lessened; a compulsory assessment is avoided." (Report by a Committee of the General Assembly on the Management of the Poor in Scotland, 1839, p. ix).

the point of starvation is reached:

> "The truth is, such is the recoil of one human being from the contemplation of extreme hunger in another, that the report of a perishing household, in some deep recess of a city lane, would inflict a discomfort upon the whole neighbourhood and call out succour, in frequent and timely forthgoings, from the contiguous families."[1]

Chalmers was always amazed how the industrial lower classes, subjected to the frightful hardships and miseries caused by trade depressions, disease and destitution, managed to save themselves from starvation and survive on their meagre resources without regular help from the wealthy classes. Only the beneficial operation of the natural economic laws could explain such survival:

> "It is this which explains how roughly a population can bear to be handled, both by adverse seasons, and by the vicissitudes of trade -- and how, after all, there is a stability about a people's means which keep its ground against many shocks, and amidst many fluctuations. It is a mystery and a marvel to many an observer, how the seemingly frail and precarious interest of the labouring classes should, after all, have the stamina of such endurance, as to weather the most fearful reverses both of commerce and of seasons; and that, somehow or other, you find after an interval of gloomy suffering and still gloomier fears, that the families do emerge again into the same state of sufficiency as before. We know not a fitter study for the philanthropist, than the workings of that mechanism by which a process so gratifying is caused, or in which he will find greater reason to admire the exquisite skill of those various adaptations, that must be referred to the providence of Him who framed society, and suited so wisely to each other the elements whereof it is composed."[2]

It followed for Chalmers that any attempt to interfere with the providential operation of these economic laws in relation to the relief of poverty was both religiously impious and economically disastrous. Consequently, he opposed all contemporary schemes -- such as public relief for poverty, and pensions for the elderly -- designed to ensure regular, systematic provision for the economically

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1. Chalmers, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 65.

2. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 36-7.

underprivileged sections of the community.[1] This he did on the ground that such an artificial method of increasing the material comfort of the poor would only lead to a slackening of moral effort on their part, an increase in their numbers, and a subsequent deterioration in their condition.

Not unnaturally, such Malthusian doctrine so widely accepted and preached by churchmen was popular among the most selfish segments of the privileged classes. The notion that excepting the blind, deaf, lunatic and maimed poor who were 'made'

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1. No man, claimed Chalmers, had any 'right' to relief merely because he was starving. The relief of such need was the duty of charity not justice, therefore, there should be no regular public provision for the poor established by law. " 'Whatever the calls be, which the poverty of a human being may have on the compassion of his fellows -- it has no claims on his justice'." (Quoted in N. Masterman, Chalmers on Charity, p. 57). If a man had a 'right' to food this would be an encroachment on property on the one hand, and destructive of the initiative and independence of the recipient on the other. " 'The principle that each man, simply because he exists, holds a right on other men or on society for existence, is a thing not to be regulated but destroyed'." (Ibid., p. 58). To those who argued that charity was weak, uncertain, emotional, and totally inadequate to meet the appalling need of the destitute poor; that people, regardless of their moral character could not be allowed to starve and that, therefore, there must be a steady income to relieve such destitution, Chalmers replied that while justice should be enforced by law, charity must be left 'free'. In words which display his naive and optimistic 'laissez-faire' view of unregulated human nature, he declared: " 'We would, in short, raise no positive apparatus whatever for the direct object of meeting and alleviating the ills of poverty. This we leave to the theorists; and we satisfy ourselves with simply asserting, that unfettered Nature working in individuals, can do the thing better than regulation can'." (Select Works, IX, p. 459). "The virtue of humanity ought never to have been legalized, but left to the spontaneous workings of man's own willing and compassionate nature." (On Political Economy, p. 415). Concerning the aged poor, he said: " 'I think that old age is so much the general lot of human nature that it would strike too much into the providential habits of the poor to make anything like a regular and systematic provision for it'." (Quoted in Masterman, op. cit., p. 83-4). "A systematic provision for old age in any land is tantamount to a systematic hostility against its virtues, both of prudence and of natural piety." (The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, vol. 2, p. 218). His attitude to other forms of suffering and destitution were no less harsh. "Even in the case of illegitimate children and families deserted by the father Chalmers wished no parochial relief to be given." (Mechie, op. cit., p. 50-1). While he did not oppose state provision for the sick poor in institutions, Chalmers objected to any public medical care or medicines being administered to the poor in their homes. "All that kind of household distress which falls in the way of the ordinary experience of families, I think should be left to be provided for by the families themselves, or by private charity." (On the Sufficiency of the Parochial System, p. 283).

so by the 'act of God',[1] the poorer classes themselves were to blame for their condition -- not bad social and economic arrangements -- must have done much to soothe many an uneasy Christian conscience. Such teaching was most "congenial to the natural inertia of comfortable folk and to the moralistic stress which ever tends to pervert the thinking of the earnestly religious."[2]

Blinded by her social, economic and theological pre-suppositions from seeing the complex factors which produced poverty in the industrial context, the Church, though aware of the miserable state of the lower classes,[3] sincerely believed that

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1. The Church had traditionally divided the poor into two categories on the basis of a moral judgment. On the one hand there was unavoidable poverty which produced the deserving poor -- those who were 'made poor in the providence of God' through no fault of their own; on the other hand there was avoidable poverty which produced a class called the undeserving poor -- those who, in the eyes of the church, were poor because of moral faults of character over which they could exercise control. The poverty of the former was to be met by Church administered, voluntarily raised, parochial relief; that of the latter was to be stamped out through a denial of relief. Whatever validity this moral distinction had in pre-industrial Scotland, it was irrelevant to the condition of the poor in the industrial centres in the 19th century. Among those classed as undeserving and who were denied relief were the able-bodied poor -- a category of poverty that reached alarming proportions by the 1830's as a consequence of the developing pattern of commercial depressions that marked industrial capitalism. Large-scale unemployment, reflecting no discredit on the individuals concerned, but bringing thousands of upright and industrious families into a state of degrading misery and want made nonsense of the traditional concepts of deserving and undeserving poor. Yet the Church seems to have regarded unemployment and other economic ills as some sort of moral disease of which individuals and society itself might repent. Thus the frequent calls by the Churches for national days of prayer and humiliation whenever the periodic commercial depressions appeared.

2. Mechie, op. cit., p. 57.

3. Churchmen often expressed alarm at the degraded and miserable condition of the poorest classes caused by destitution. George Lewis, speaking of the condition of the poor in his parish of St. David's in Dundee, remarked that every sixth family was deprived of the father due to epidemics which swept the poorer districts. Yet the surviving widows and children received only a pittance in relief. "What relief can 1s. or 1s.6d. a week give to an aged and sick and disabled man and woman, having one or two other human beings equally helpless dependent on him?" (G. Lewis, The Pauper Bill of Dundee, p. 4). It was hardly enough, he declared, to pay the rent. "As for food and clothing, it is plain that they must find that elsewhere or starve; and starve I believe many of them do." (Ibid., p. 3). Thomas Guthrie, describing his first winter as minister in Edinburgh in 1837-8 said: "My door used to be besieged every day by crowds of half-naked creatures, men, women, and children, shivering with cold and hunger; and I visited many a house that winter, where there were starving mothers and starving children, and neither bed, bread nor Bible." (D. K. and C. J. Guthrie, Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie D. D. and Memoir, p. 154). In the same winter he gives an account

neither the state nor the wealthy classes, neither political reform nor economic changes could do anything to permanently improve their condition without doing great harm to their characters.[1] Above all, she was convinced that the enactment which had the most damaging effect upon the moral character of the poor was a compulsory system of poor relief.[2] So overawed was the Church by the doctrine of moral

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of a visit to a poor destitute widow with four children. While he spoke to her the 'white-faced children' cried for food as they were famished. " 'There were five living beings in that house, without either a loaf or a handful of meal! Giving one of the children sixpence, I sent it out to fetch some bread. I have seen the wild beasts in the menagerie fed, but never saw those hungry animals fall with more keenness on their food than did these skeleton children'." (Ibid., p. 314). But, strangely enough, such inhuman sights never raised any doubts about the existing social and economic order in the minds of churchmen like Lewis and Guthrie. Indeed, both these Evangelical leaders were strong opponents of compulsory public provision for the poor.

1. The Dissenting Presbyterian Churches, while no less wedded to Malthusian concepts, were more inclined than the Established and Free Churches to assign a limited role to certain economic factors as a contributory cause of poverty. They regarded laws which violated 'laissez-faire' economics, particularly the Corn Laws -- the elimination of which was regarded as a great Christian and moral crusade -- as secondary but significant factors in giving rise to distress among the lower classes. The general support given by these Churches towards the alteration of the traditional Scottish system of poor relief prior to 1845, however, seems to have been motivated as much by the desire to see the Church of Scotland control of poor relief ended as any genuine longing for a compulsory assessment. (Cf., Minutes of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church, June 1841, p. 51).

2. We need not enter here into the details of the poor law controversy which raged for several years in Scotland prior to the passing of the Poor Law Act of 1845. Nowhere, however, were the effects of the Church's antiquated social concepts and her bondage to Malthusian dogmas more evident than in the role of opposition to compulsory assessment which she adopted in this controversy. In the face of this opposition, Scottish poor law reformers, led by Dr. Wm. Alison, professor of medicine at Edinburgh University, sought to reform the existing poor law by bringing it more into line with the liberal English system. They demonstrated that in Scotland far less was done for the poor than in any other civilized country. For example, "in 1838 in England the funds available were six times greater than in Scotland in proportion to the population." (J. H. F. Brotherston, Observations on the Early Public Health Movement in Scotland, p. 69). Alison's claim that if the desperate needs of the poor were to be met, the present expenditure for relief needed to be raised from the present £140,000 annually to £800,000, alarmed contemporary churchmen. It was denounced as "a mere physical remedy for a moral disease." (The Witness, March 28, 1840, p. 2). But the reformers, making use of medical statistics, pointed out that Scottish towns had much worse slum and sanitary conditions, and much higher disease, epidemic and death rates than English towns because the degree and extent of poverty and destitution among the lower classes was so much greater. In the mining town of Tranent, the 'deserving' poor -- mostly widows, orphans and lunatics -- got only 9 pence a week; in Glasgow and

responsibility -- that men were directly and personally responsible for their moral state and thus for their social condition -- that she ignored the new and decisive importance of the institutional framework of society in shaping personal character and in determining the possibilities and progress of the individual. Unable to give due place to the economic factors which were producing the prevalent and increasing destitution and suffering, the Church, because of this moralism in her ethical and theological thought, naturally regarded those who failed to keep pace in the competitive struggle for existence as encumbrances upon society, and if they were able-bodied and unemployed, she denounced rather than pitied them. Convinced that the alarming increase in pauperism was due to a weakening in the old spirit of thrift and independence among the lower classes, she longed for the return of the 'good old days' of the 18th century when the poor were content to suffer want and privation in silence because of their pride and independence and religious character. Hugh Miller longed for the revival of that class of poor

> "who bore up in their honest and independent poverty, relying for support on the promise of their heavenly Father, but who asked not the help of man, and who, in so many instances, would not receive it even when it was extended to them."[1]

Most churchmen believed the only way to revive the old independent habits and virtues of the masses in the disease-ridden slums and hovels of the industrial towns

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Edinburgh they got 2/6 to 5/ a month. (Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Scotland, 1842, pp. 115-6, 158-9, 199). In the Highlands relief was practically non-existent -- "In the north of Scotland generally, about 1844, the annual allowance made to the poor was sometimes as low as two shillings, and seldom exceeded ten shillings even in cases of special necessity." (D. F. MacDonald, Scotland's Shifting Population 1770-1850, p. 106). Little wonder that a Report to Parliament declared that in Scotland not only were many of the poor not entitled to relief, but "the allowances to aged, infirm and disabled persons, and to widows and orphans, are so small as in many instances not to preserve them from the state of destitution." (Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Scotland, 1842, p. 31).

1. The Witness, March 28, 1840, p. 2.

was to deny them the 'right' to assistance;[1] to make the acceptance of public relief a condition of shame and degradation. So the 'undeserving' -- the chronically weak, sick, and handicapped, driven to the wall by the heartless competition for wealth and success; "the victims of industry and its worn-out veterans, who had failed to provide against the penalties of unemployment and old age -- were taught to shun the poor-box as a source of contamination and disgrace."[2] They were made to "feel the weight of those severities which are intended by the God of Nature to follow in the train of idleness, improvidence and vice."[3] As Chalmers declared on another occasion:

> "The remedy against the extension of pauperism does not lie in the liberalities of the rich; it lies in the hearts and habits of the poor. Plant in their bosoms a principle of independence. Give a high tone of delicacy to their characters. Teach them to recoil from pauperism as a degradation."[4]

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1. Along with some Dissenting ministers, there were, however, a few individual parish ministers -- mostly in the west where unemployment was severe -- who, by 1840, had come to see the absolute necessity of a legal provision for the poor. One of these was Robert Burns of Paisley who, at a Presbytery meeting in 1840 advocated legal relief for the able-bodied poor. Pointing out that thousands of the unemployed were starving, he claimed that the country should see to it that aid, at least to the extent of preventing disease and death by starvation, should be provided to all. "The law of nature," he said, "has made provision for all its children, and the title of a common humanity is sufficient." (The Scottish Patriot, September 19, 1840, p. 183). But such enlightened views, unfortunately, were only held by a small minority. The Report by a Committee of the General Assembly on the Management of the Poor in Scotland submitted to the government in 1839, advocating the continuance of the voluntary system with no provision for the able-bodied poor, represented the official Established Church position. The same position is reflected in the views of the overwhelming majority of the parish ministers writing in the second Statistical Account in the 1830's and early 40's. C. F. Smith in his study of the Accounts points out that the views of the clergy had altered little from the time of the first Account written in the much less industrialized society of the 1790's. Their belief in voluntary relief in the early Accounts is understandable, he says, "but when all the factors making the old system inadequate had been at work for another forty years it is surprising to find the same unanimity in the New Account." ("The Attitude of the Clergy to the Industrial Revolution as reflected in the First and Second Statistical Accounts," p. 296).

2. W. L. Mathieson, Church and Reform in Scotland, p. 250.

3. T. Chalmers, On the Sufficiency of the Parochial System, p. 175.

4. Chalmers, quoted in N. Masterman, Chalmers on Charity, p. 209. As early as 1817, Chalmers had been criticized for the harshness of his teaching on poverty. Writing in the Edinburgh Review of March 1817, "Chalmers had asked: 'Which is nobler --

What appeared to contemporary social reformers to be a cruel and inhuman, not to say unchristian attitude to the poor was in reality, the Church claimed, a genuine Christian concern for their greater welfare, namely, the utter removal of pauperism.[1] Making the receipt of public poor relief a degradation had a most

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to struggle with the difficulties of your situation, or to lay open your house and your circumstances to the scowl of the official inquisitor?' " (R. M. W. Cowan, The Newspaper in Scotland 1815-1860, p. 119). The Glasgow Chronicle published a letter by a critic who observed that the question of Chalmers " 'means in plain English: Is it nobler to suffer your wife and children to die of hunger in a world which God has stocked for your support, or to abate your pride so far as to solicit relief from the charity which religion inculcates and the law has confirmed?' " (Ibid).

1. However sincerely the Church believed her response to the rapid growth of poverty in industrial society was the only valid one, there can be no doubt that the implication of much of her teaching was that a terrible degradation -- a stigma -- attached to being poor and in need of regular parochial assistance. No matter how worthy of relief, to accept it brought some measure of humiliation. Poverty itself had a moral connotation which suggested that the poor were the victims of a moral deficiency from which the higher classes were exempt. It is not surprising that the most upright, self-respecting and independent of the poor often suffered terrible destitution and misery rather than accept the aid to which they were entitled. Church magazines and sermons constantly lauded those poor who refused to accept relief -- no matter how worthy or how genuine might be the need of such individuals. Many an editor was delighted that so many Scots poor regarded it as a disgrace to accept parochial relief: "A poor old Scotchwoman, when asked why she did not make application for an allowance from the parish fund, returned a national answer when she said, 'Na deed me, I wudna hae the name o't for a' the worth o't'." (The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, April 1842, p. 87). The basic aim which motivated churchmen was to spend as little as possible on the poor in the hope that this would 'drive' them to be industrious, thrifty and independent like the middle classes. "Every penny given where it might have been withheld, impairs industry, and destroys independent habits. . . . Every case kept off the pauper list is a gain. We may lessen our expenditure by checking the growth of paupers, by diligently and indefatigably working all the moral machinery a parochial system commands, among families that are meditating a fall into pauperism." (Ibid., pp. 86-7). The practical outcome of this misdirected Church policy of making the acceptance of legal relief a disgrace was that much genuine poverty and distress was hidden rather than relieved. This policy formed the basis of Chalmers' falsely praised scheme in St. John's parish in Glasgow.

ficial effect on the character of the Scottish poor, a Church of Scotland

rt to Parliament maintained, for it "increases their repugnance in later life, absolutely compelled by want, to become pensioners on this fund."[1] It teaches that "both their subsistence and their comfort must ultimately depend on their onal industry."[2] It is only in this way

> "that they can be trained to steady habits of industry, and generally to a vigorous effort to raise their condition in life, -- that they can acquire the prudence, forethought and self-command necessary to their making provision for an evil day, -- the spirit of righteous independence which would make them shrink from maintaining themselves out of the substance of others."[3]

In spite of the sustained opposition of the Established Church, however, by the amount of unrelieved misery and destitution among the poorer classes had me so extensive that the Poor Law Commissioners appointed by the government ded it was absolutely necessary to introduce a Poor Law in Scotland based on ulsory assessments. But the new Act of 1845 fell far short of the expectations he Scottish poor law reformers. Although provision was at last made for the

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Report by a Committee of the General Assembly on the Management of the Poor in Scotland, 1839, p. vi.

Ibid., p. vii.

Ibid., p. 39. One of the charges brought by the Church against the idea that the poor had a 'right' to relief if destitute was that it violated property rights and weakened kindly feelings of charity. To give the poor such a 'right' amounted to robbery of the rich. It gave to the poor a right to the produce and wealth of the land in spite of the ownership of its true possessors. The legal rights of the poor thus violated the natural rights of property. This was regarded as immoral because property and wealth were taken to be signs of moral virtue -- the due and proper reward of diligence, industry and thrift. Moreover, a 'right' to relief "forces its assessments from the rich without fostering benevolence, and spends them on the poor without imparting gratitude." (The Free Church Magazine, March 1849, p. 78). Therefore, such "an act of Parliament destroys the idea of charity both in the giver and in the receiver, and virtually gives a drunkard a right to be supported by the sober, and the spendthrift a right to live on the savings of the industrious. It merely points to poverty, but cannot discriminate amongst the causes of poverty, -- amongst those who become poor in the providence of God, and ought to be liberally supported by the benevolence of Christians, and those who make themselves poor by their own wickedness, and whose misconduct ought to be denounced and repressed." (The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, April 1840, pp. 625-6).

sick poor, the Act, unlike the English one, failed to provide for poverty and destitution among the able-bodied even in times of commercial depression. The poor had to prove physical or mental disability as well as destitution before relief could be obtained.

No doubt the Church's strong insistence that it was neither necessary nor expedient to provide relief to the able-bodied poor, played a large part in contributing to this lamentable weakness of the Act.[1] In any event, this failure to provide aid to the helpless victims of the recurring commercial depressions which marked the 19th century undoubtedly made the sufferings of the poor, and the working classes generally, much more acute in Scotland than in England. Certainly it must have contributed in no small way to the notable contrast between the state of the housing, sanitation and health of the industrial classes of Scotland compared to England.

Such is but a brief glimpse of the Scottish Church's dealings with and attitude to the poor in these decades. How pathetically she had lost touch with the real needs and hopes and problems of the poor; how blinded she was from seeing the basic causes which made and kept people poor in a ruthlessly competitive industry society. So closely aligned was the Church in sympathy and outlook with the privileged classes that she was incapable of seeing, much less denouncing -- as did the Scottish Reformers in their day -- the cruelties and injustices which were being inflicted upon the weak and underprivileged members of society. Indeed it is not too much to

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1. Churchmen even objected to destitute children of unemployed parents receiving relief. One editor denounced a recent decision in Glasgow which ruled that while unemployed poor were not entitled to relief, their children, if destitute, were to receive an allowance. The editor claimed the ruling would undermine the independence of the poor: "It is, therefore, an attempt to overthrow our old Scotch habits by a side wind. . . . By all means let the helpless poor be liberally supported but let us not reduce the whole land to beggary, by giving way to the crotchets of mere visionaries, and suffering idle profligates to eat up the hard-earned property of sober and industrious men." (The Free Church Magazine, February 1848, p. 62).

say that the Church herself, by her biased and distorted views on the causes and treatment of poverty, unknowingly contributed to and perpetuated the oppression of the poor.

C. Mining and Factory Conditions

Given the Church's conviction that it was only by moral means -- through the diffusion of Christianity and education -- that contemporary social problems could be solved, one would have expected to find all branches of the Scottish Church in these early decades vigorously protesting against any feature of industrial society which tended to undermine or hinder the effectiveness of their work of moral reformation. But such was not the case. While the Church of Scotland did engage in a vigorous campaign to set up schools and churches in the poorer areas, she made little effort, for instance, to criticize the injustice done to the thousands of children in those areas who were denied the opportunity of receiving an education because of their long hours and exhaustive toil in the factories and mines. Even if the Churches were largely insensitive -- as indeed they were -- to the human suffering and hardship endured by women and children in the factories and mines, one would at least have expected to see them vitally aroused over the sad decline in the state of Scottish education due to factors arising out of the Industrial Revolution.[1]

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1. As a consequence of the Church's efforts, Scotland had long been famous for the high standard of her education. In the 18th century, in spite of the fact that educational facilities in the Highlands were grossly inadequate, the majority of Scots peasants, unlike the English, could read and write. But after 1820 a serious decline was evident in the industrial towns like Glasgow. By the 1830's it was found that in many parts of these towns over half the children under 13 were not attending school. As late as 1850, a survey in Glasgow revealed that 93.89% of upper class children were attending school, 72.09% of the middle class, but only 37.38% of the working class. (The Home and Foreign Mission Record of the Free Church of Scotland, October 1850, p. 98). In 1846 "in the Gorbals parish, a district of incurable poverty, 93% of the children were attending no school whatever." (J. R. Glover, The Story of Scotland, p. 292). Often working class parents, because of poverty, were unable to clothe their children properly nor pay their fees. More often they were forced to remove them from the schools when only 8 or 9 years old and send them into the mines and factories. Thus, a

But the Church as a whole was not greatly aroused. As we shall see, although many individual churchmen did express their concern, on only one occasion throughout these two decades did a higher court of any branch of the Church even discuss this essentially moral and religious issue in relation to its chief cause -- the employment of young children for long hours in the factories and mines. By her failure to insist that the children of all the Scottish people -- even those who, because of 'economic reasons' had to labour 12-14 hours daily down the pits and in the mills -- were entitled to an opportunity to acquire at least the basic rudiments of an education, the Church was unfaithful to one of the primary principles of her own noble educational heritage received from the Reformers.

In spite of the fact that ministers in industrial and mining areas must have been familiar with the long hours and dreadful conditions of labour endured by women and children in the mills and mines long before public agitation for reform arose, there was no reference whatever to such matters in the writings of leading churchmen or in the religious press prior to the investigations of the commissioners on the conditions in Scottish factories in 1832 and 1833, and those on the employment of children in the Scottish mines in 1842.[1] It was only at this point -- when the

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recent study has shown that there was a huge gap between the large number of workers who could read and the much smaller numbers able to write -- an indication of the decline in the duration and breadth of education. (R. K. Webb, "Literacy among the Working Classes in Nineteenth Century Scotland," The Scottish Historical Review, vol. XXXIII, no. 116, pp. 112-3). Little wonder that as early as 1834, a survey of the education of some 30,000 operatives working in factories in different parts of Scotland revealed that while only 4% of the workers could not read, 47% could not write. (Supplementary Reports of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children in Factories, XIX. 253. XX (167), 1834, p. 42).

1. Cf. the final section of chapter 3, pp. 46-52, for the findings of the commissioners published in the Reports of 1833, 1834 and 1842. Perhaps the majority of the clergy -- certainly those who had no first-hand experience with the industrial areas -- were unaware of the extent of the evils of the factory system. One editor was amazed at the shocking conditions revealed by the commissioners' investigation "which is at present horrifying the nation by its development of scenes, which we ignorantly imagined could be witnessed only in the meridian of the West Indies." (The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, March 1833, p. 386).

Reports to Parliament revealed such a shocking situation that public opinion demanded legislative action -- that churchmen writing in the church press, and after 1833 in the second Statistical Account, began to express a real concern over the ill effects of child labour. Significantly, although the government Reports of the 1830's had stressed the physical suffering endured by factory women and children, C. F. Smith notes that among those ministers who referred to this problem in the Statistical Accounts, the emphasis was "less on the hardships of the children than on the neglect of education entailed by their employment."[1]

As we might expect, there were not lacking ministers who unashamedly declared that the long hours of child labour in the factories had no harmful effects on the offspring of the lower classes. When asked if labour of 12-14 hours a day was not harmful to young children, Robert Smith, parish minister of Lochwinnoch, testified that he did "not think much suffering exists amongst the children in consequence of the length of labour to which they are subjected."[2] Writing in 1833, the parish minister of Galashiels, Nathaniel Paterson, went even further by positively praising the practice of employing young children from the age of eight in the factories. Such "children earning 3 s. a-week, instead of proving a burden, are a help to their parents;"[3] and

> "by the habits of industry, too, which they early acquire, they are much more qualified for future service, or the duties of active life, than such as spend their early lives in idleness. . . . There can be no training of the volatile minds of youth equal to that which is maintained at the factories."[4]

But even among churchmen who were genuinely concerned about the effects of prolonged labour on the children of the working classes, there was no unanimity about

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1. C. F. Smith, "The Attitude of the Clergy to the Industrial Revolution as reflected in the First and Second Statistical Accounts," p. 206.

2. The First Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children in Factories, vol. XX (450), 1833, p. 322.

3. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 3, section 3, p. 23.

4. Ibid.

what could or should be done. Governed by the usual individualistic and moralistic presuppositions, many were inclined to see the source of the evil in a lack of a sense of moral responsibility on the part of parents, rather than where it rightly belonged -- in the unregulated, competitive industrial system itself. Thus, instead of denouncing a system which sacrificed in a ruthless and inhuman manner the welfare of 'persons' to the needs of 'machines', they denounced the parents of the children who worked in the mines and factories;[1] instead of criticizing the greed and exploitation of mill and mine owners who were amassing huge profits from the cheap labour of women and children,[2] they attacked what they called the greed and selfishness of the poor parents. One Established Church magazine even charged that working class parents who allowed their children to go into the factories did so because they were interested in 'amassing wealth' for themselves:

> "We are grieved to think that it is not now as it once was 'the habit and the pride', as it has been happily expressed, 'of Scotchmen of the lowest rank to educate their children'. . . . A new and destructive competition has arisen in the establishment of factories in many parts of the country, and the people, now strangers to the spirit which actuated their fathers, are willing, like the degenerate son of the ancient patriarch, to barter away 'their birthright for a mess of pottage', ay, more, to hazard the eternal interests of their children and the glory of their country for the bread which perisheth, or the grovelling desire of amassing wealth."[3]

Those who blamed the working classes for the existence of child labour were naturally lukewarm if not hostile to the Factory Acts which were to prove such a

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1. The commissioners who investigated the employment of children in Scottish mines in 1842, however, remarked on several occasions that the lack of any legal relief in Scotland for those who were unemployed was the major reason why there were more women and children working in the mines in Scotland than in England. Unemployed miners, they claimed, had to send their wives and children into the pits in order to keep themselves and their families from starving.

2. "Some measure of the savage exploitation of the working class is to be found in the fact that, in the course of four years, Robert Owen showed a profit of £160,000 on the New Lanark Mills, besides paying 5 per cent on the capital employed, and raising the selling value of the factory 50 per cent. And Owen, be it remembered, was a model employer, for whom his business contemporaries predicted speedy bankrupcy when he reduced the hours of labour from seventeen to ten a day, and refused to employ children under ten years of age. Never were such profits wrung from the blood and sweat and tears of the common people." (W. D. Morris, The Christian Origins of Social Revolt, p. 154).

3. The Church of Scotland Magazine, August 1835, p. 250.

blessing to the oppressed women and children in the factories. Among these was Chalmers. He strongly attacked the Factory Bill proposed in 1832[1] as a measure which would only disappoint and could not improve the lot of the working classes. Chalmers referred to the universal cry coming from the oppressed workers in the manufacturing districts imploring the passing of Bill as a hopeless cry -- "a cry extorted from a suffering population by the monstrous evils which that measure promises, but we fear vainly promises, to remedy."[2] While commending the efforts of Sadler[3] in bringing the appalling factory conditions to light, he maintained that his legislative remedy was useless, and that, therefore, in spite of "all his benevolence and rectitude of purpose, we dare hardly hope for any further services from his hands."[4] His Bill was "truly a bungling legislation, which seeks to obtain its object by what mathematicians would term, a compensation of errors."[5]

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1. In 1833, this became the first substantial Factory Act. It excluded children of 8 years and under from most factories except silk mills; limited the hours of those from 9 to 12 years to 9 hours, and those from 13 to 17 years to 12 hours a day or 69 a week.

2. T. Chalmers, The Supreme Importance of a Right Moral to a Right Economical State of the Community, p. 48.

3. Michael Sadler, M. P. for Leeds, and prominent factory reformer who drew up and introduced the Bill to Parliament. He was an anti-Malthusian and an advocate of compulsory poor laws. Consequently, his economic views and his practical measures of factory reform were, in Chalmers' eyes, hopelessly misdirected.

4. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 48.

5. Ibid. Chalmers' basic objection to factory legislation was that it violated the Malthusian theory of population. He claimed that the poor law with its indiscriminate relief of poverty was responsible for the excessive numbers of children, but if these numbers could be reduced by the self-restraint of the lower classes, there would eventually be a shortage of labour, and thus no need for young children to work in the factories. Factory legislation merely tried to compensate for the evil consequences of an over-abundant population by an "artificial restraint of a penal statute." (Ibid). By interfering in this way, legislation "violated the parental rights of the people" (Ibid), who should be left 'free' to exercize their own moral self-control in regard to their children. Chalmers was also fearful of the threat made by the factory owners that if the Bill was passed, they would discharge all those under 18 years of age from their factories, or reduce the hours of labour of all their employees to a 58 hour week. If either of these threats were carried out, warned Chalmers, they would reduce the wages of families and bring even greater suffering and misery to the working classes. (Ibid., p. 49).

But, fortunately, by no means all the clergy shared this hostility to measures of factory legislation. Indeed, it seems that Chalmers' fellow-Evangelicals were, on the whole, more enlightened on this issue than other churchmen, and that even Chalmers himself, in the last six months of his life, modified some of his views on this question.[1] Perhaps because of their strong sense of evangelical concern for the moral and religious well-being of the lower classes, it appears to have been among a few Evangelicals in the 1830's, and a certain section of the Free Church after 1843, that the most sympathy with legislation limiting the hours of child labour was to be found.[2]

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1. In December 1846, at the height of the agitation for the 10 hours Bill, Richard Oastler, the great champion of factory reform, conducted a series of meetings in Scotland in support of the Bill. Since Oastler was particularly concerned to win the support of the evangelical Scottish middle classes, the arguments he advanced in his campaign were based primarily on considerations of morality and Christianity rather than politics and economics. Consequently his appeal made an impact on a considerable number of Free Church ministers. When Oastler came to Edinburgh, one of Chalmers' friends who favoured the Bill arranged a personal meeting between the reformer and the famous churchman who was a well-known opponent of factory legislation. Apparently Chalmers was so impressed with the Christian character and appeal of Oastler's arguments that he told him he would give his support to the Bill. (Cf. J. T. Ward, "The Factory Reform Movement in Scotland," The Scottish Historical Review, vol. XLI, no. 132 (October 1962), pp. 100-123). Although Chalmers did not attend either of the two large public rallies which Oastler later held in the city, several prominent Free Church ministers were in attendance. Church of Scotland, Relief and Secession ministers were conspicuous by their absence. (Cf. The Witness, December 26, 1846, p. 2, and December 30, 1846, pp. 2-3).

2. It is sometimes assumed from what is known of the contemporary English situation that in Scotland the Evangelicals, reflecting the liberal, 'laissez-faire' viewpoint of the manufacturing interests, would have been more hostile to factory legislation than the Moderate party, reflecting the interests of the Tories and the landed classes. But the opposite seems to have been the case. The supreme courts of the Established Church never raised this critical issue in any shape or form either before or after 1843, while her official and unofficial publications maintain a similar silence. In the case of the Dissenting Presbyterian Churches, their record was little better. They were much more concerned to attack the landed classes and advocate the repeal of the Corn Laws than criticize the mill-owners and champion factory reforms. Their only official comment on the Factory Bills was in 1843 when the Synods of both Churches, without passing any judgment on the basic reforms embodied in a new Bill before Parliament, merely petitioned against its educational provisions which required factory children to attend parish schools for a few hours a day. This, they claimed, was unjust to Dissenters -- "trenching on the rights of private judgment -- sectarian in principle -- compulsory and oppressive in its details." (Minutes of the Relief Synod, May 1843, pp. 191-2. Cf. Minutes of the United Associate

The largest single barrier to the open support of the Factory Acts even by those churchmen who had a genuine sympathy with the oppressed factory workers was the feeling that such legislation interfered with the natural operation of economic laws. This apparent conflict between the interests of religion, morality and humanity, and the dogmas of political economy was never finally settled in the mind of the Church as a whole in these decades. The failure to resolve this conflict largely accounts for the confused thinking in the Church on this vital issue and the consequent silence of the church courts.

For the most sensitive and humanitarian churchmen, some measure of relief from this perplexing conflict between ethics and economics was found by insisting -- as some political economists were prepared to concede -- that while legislative interference on behalf of adults violated the laws of 'laissez-faire' economics, the same was not true of legislation designed to protect helpless children who were not mature enough to look after their own interests. This argument, which conveniently justified some limited legislative action without interfering with the accepted economic dogmas, was almost invariably adopted by those in the Church who favoured the Factory Acts.[1] Indeed, by means of a rather tenuous extension of this argument

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Synod of the Secession Church, May 1843, pp. 21, 42). Such was the extent of the Dissenters' official concern for the oppressed workers in the factories and mines. The amazing passivity of the courts of all the Scottish Churches regarding the enslaved women and children of the working classes at home is in marked contrast to their lively interest in slavery overseas. There were regular petitions to the government from the Scottish Churches denouncing negro slavery in the colonies as well as petitions to American Churches criticizing slavery in that country. Little wonder that Lord Ashley "complained in 1844: 'The saints who agitated against negro slavery abroad seem indifferent to the hardships endured by the children of British artisans'." (J. R. Fleming, A History of the Church of Scotland 1843-1874, p. 99).

1. This was the position taken by the Evangelical newspaper The Scottish Guardian. An editorial in the first year of its publication declared that under normal circumstances no law should be allowed to interfere with the rights of parents, but that under the present abnormal situation in which the health, morality, and education of young children needed to be safeguarded, legislation was justified. (April 10, 1832, p. 1). Much the same argument was used by The United Secession Magazine: "Nor do we think it compatible with sound legislation in a free state, that any class of the community, who are of age to judge for themselves, should have their hours of daily labour appointed them by the sovereign voice of public

to include women as well as children within the legitimate scope of legislation, some churchmen were able to justify their approval of the Mines Act of 1842 which excluded both women and girls from the pits,[1] and the 10 hours Bills of 1844 and

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law. Nay, farther, as a general principle, and in ordinary cases, we should deem it the wisest course in the legislature not to interfere with the natural and immediate guardians of the young, in their employing them in juvenile labour." (June 1844, p. 297). However, the writer conceded that in the present circumstances, due to the selfishness and greed of certain parents, the state should interfere to protect children from being overworked (p. 298). In July 1833, a writer in the pro-Evangelical Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, defended Sadler's Factory Bill from the criticism that "it violates the important principle of leaving every man to exercize his industry, at whatever time and in whatever manner he conceives most for his own advantage." (p. 55). He stated that this objection would only have been valid had the Bill applied to men rather than children (pp. 55-7). Unfortunately, he claimed, political economists are correct when they say that legislation cannot benefit adults. Such desirable reforms as a reduction in hours for adults and the banning of women from the mines cannot be enacted by law: "If any legislative remedy could reach these evils, most gladly would we advocate the application of it. But we are conscious that none but the parties themselves can reform these practices, and to the gradual elevation of the character, habits, and views of the workmen do we look for the only remedy. We only demand that the legislature secure the years of boyhood for early education, -- having obtained this boon, we do not despair of the operatives obtaining gradually the remaining reforms themselves without any legislative interference." (p. 58).

1. Although conditions in the Scottish mines were far worse than in the factories, no one in the Church seems to have given a thought to the enslaved women and children who toiled 12-16 hours a day in the pits. Even Hugh Miller, who was aware of the appalling state of the mining population, did not champion their cause editorially in The Witness until the shocking Reports to Parliament were made public in 1842. Only then were the reservations of his own strong 'laissez-faire' liberalism overcome sufficiently for him to declare at last that "Parliament should interfere by all means, and get the poor Scotch coal-women out of the pits. It is not often safe to disturb the natural, self-regulating course of supply and demand by the interference of acts of Parliament; here, however, is a proper subject for legislative enactment. The collier cannot be other than a savage so long as his wife and daughter are thus degraded below the level of the brute. We have paid twenty millions for setting free the negroes. We are not sure it would cost us anything to set free collier women and children; at most it could amount to only some twopence or threepence on the ton of coal; but whatever the price, it is surely an imperative duty that they be set free." (June 11, 1842, p. 3). After the Act of 1842 'freeing' female labour from the mines, there were frequent references to the 'monstrous slavery' that had formerly existed. Being thus 'wise after the event', a writer in a Free Church organ, with more than a hint of ecclesiastical self-righteousness, declared in 1847 that female labour in the mines was "incompatible with the existence of the lowest form of Christianity, alike brutalizing to the soul and body, and from which, to the female colliers, there was no possibility of self-deliverance. Yet, amidst the silence of the Church of Scotland and of Dissenters, this system of female labour continued, unaltered, until Lord Ashley's Committee exposed the evil, and applied a Parliamentary remedy." (The North British Review, May 1847, p. 58). Significantly, the writer neglected to mention that the Evangelical churchmen

1846-7.[1]

However, in spite of the open support given the 10 hours Bill by certain ministers -- notably of the Free Church -- the vast majority of churchmen never seem to have been able to satisfactorily reconcile the laws of political economy with the demands of Christian morality and common humanity. As one writer defined the dilemma:

> "Upon the one hand, we are urged to abridge the period of labour, in order that the morals and health of the operatives may not suffer; on the other we are told by economists, that to interfere with the duration of labour is to interfere with the freedom of commerce, which should never be done, as trade, when left to itself, adjusts all anomalies."[2]

Convinced of the validity of both these claims, most churchmen were apparently satisfied to gloss over the fundamental conflict of interest by making a superficial reconciliation such as that noted in the case of the employment of children, or by considering all practical schemes as technical matters outwith the concern of the Church and into which churchmen -- apart, of course, from their capacity as citizens -- ought not to meddle. This latter position was the policy adopted by the courts and official bodies of all the Churches. It presented the simplest method of dealing with the two conflicting interests, for it permitted ministers and -- if they wished -- church courts, to lament the long hours of factory labour endured by women and children without having to offer any opinion on whether specific measures of reform, such as the Factory Acts, were beneficial or not. In this way the Church was deluded into believing that she was adopting a neutral or impartial position on controversial questions, whereas in fact, such a passive attitude implied nothing else than

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who made up the Free Church had dominated the Established Church for a decade before 1843 and thus had ample opportunity to protest about conditions in the mines had they so desired.

1. Not until 1844 did Parliament limit the hours of adult female labour in the factories. The Act of that year set a limit of 12 hours a day.

2. The Free Church Magazine, January 1847, p. 14. This writer's answer to the conflict was a simple one -- give the factory children the opportunity to receive an education and "then, in obedience to the self-regulating principles of trade, they will protect themselves." (Ibid).

the subjection of ethical to economic considerations. By treating economics as an autonomous sphere not subject to religious and moral criteria, the Church merely contributed to the growing irrelevance of the Christian ethic in the vast and increasingly complex area of economic activity.

The tragic consequences of the Church's failure to resolve the conflicting interests of ethics and economics is nowhere more evident than on the single occasion when the higher courts of a Church dealt with the question of child labour in the factories. This occurred in 1846 when agitation for the 10 hours Bill was at its height throughout the nation. In that year, both the Commission of the General Assembly of the Free Church meeting in March, and the Free Church Assembly itself meeting in May, considered the burning issue of the conditions of factory labour.

At the meeting of the Commission, the members resolved not to make any pronouncement on the merits of the Factory Bill before Parliament which proposed to reduce the daily hours of labour of women and young persons from 12 to 10 hours. However, they unanimously agreed to convey to Lord Ashley a personal message of gratitude for his general concern for the improvement of the lot of the overworked women and children. Candlish, in proposing the motion, referred to Ashley's long labours in the cause of humanity and Christian philanthropy. But he emphasized that the Church was paying only a personal tribute and was not thereby approving his past or present Factory Bills: "It was not for them to pronounce any opinion upon the particular measure now before Parliament. He did not propose that the Commission should at all involve itself in what might seem to be the present politics of the country."[1] He said if the Church spoke favourably of the proposals to shorten the hours of labour, her judgment "would be liable to be misconstrued. But regarding simply the past labours of the noble individual he had referred to, no one could doubt that he had been eminently instrumental in the cause of Christian philanthropy. (Hear, Hear)."[2] Several later speakers stressed that in honouring Lord Ashley, they

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1. The Witness, March 7, 1846, p. 3. 2. Ibid.

were not approving his factory reforms. Said the Moderator, Patrick MacFarlan, "There was a difference of opinion in regard to the merit of these bills, but in respect to the character of the Noble Lord there could be no difference. (Hear, Hear)."[1] As far as legislation designed to reduce the hours for women and children was concerned, "he did not think it fell within the province of the Free Church, or any Church in the three kingdoms, to express any opinion on that point."[2] Candlish then moved that qualifying words which would safeguard the Church against criticism should be included in the communication to Ashley. Consequently, the deliverance officially read:

> "The Commission, deeply impressed with the great services which have been rendered to the cause of humanity by Lord Ashley, resolve, without expressing any opinion on the Factory Bills which have been before Parliament, to address a communication to his Lordship, setting forth the sense which they entertain of the great importance of these services, and the benefit which he has thereby conferred on his country."[3]

The action of the General Assembly of the same Church a few months later, when it actually sent a petition to Parliament on the question of factory labour, is equally revealing. In its Report to the Assembly of 1846, the Church's Committee on the State of Religion drew attention to the adverse effects of the long hours of labour upon the spiritual and religious condition of the people, and recommended that the Church express her concern to the government. The Report stated that a major factor in the low state of religion among the industrial working classes was

> "the long hours of ordinary labour, particularly as regards factories and public works. Your Committee would carefully guard against offering any opinion on this subject as a question of commercial policy. They are not in circumstances to judge of such questions, and wish to be understood as not intimating on matters of this kind any opinion whatever; but while they disclaim all interference with the question as a matter of human policy, they submit that it is the duty of the Assembly to give an opinion on the moral and religious effect of protracted labour. . . . What your Committee would therefore suggest is, that the General Assembly should petition both Houses of the Legislature,

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1. Ibid. 2. Ibid.

3. Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1846, p. 74.

setting forth, as above, the evils entailed by protracted labour, be it dependent on what it may, guarding at the same time against giving any opinion as to the policy of particular measures."[1]

In the Assembly, Candlish proposed the motion that Parliament be so petitioned, and this was successfully carried.[2] In his motion he emphasized that the Church was only concerned with the religious and moral effects of this evil, therefore, the petition must be carefully worded, as in the Report, so that no hint of approval would be given to any political and economic measures of reform such as the proposed Factory Bill:

> "I say, the terms used in that report, because the terms in that report are exceedingly cautious and judicious in regard to this subject. . . . All that is proposed is, that the Church shall petition upon the subject of the evils arising from the present protracted hours of labour, without adverting to any particular principle, and on that subject Christian men must be all agreed. . . . We are aware there are difficulties connected with the question so far as economics are concerned; but without committing ourselves to any particular views, we may lift up our testimony to this important fact, that whatever may be the case in a national point of view, the country is suffering in a moral and religious point of view, under the wide prevalence of this great evil."[3]

It is a sad commentary on the Church's limited conception of the nature and application of the Gospel, and her loss of any true sense of prophetic criticism that the most sympathetic and enlightened churchmen of the time dared not breathe a whisper of official approval even for widely acclaimed measures of reform designed to curb the ruthless and selfish exploitation of helpless women and children. How careful the Church was not to offend the vested interests, nor allow her evangelistic concern to spill over into the sacred sphere of economics; how pathetically she tried to be neutral without realizing that such neutrality was immoral where the interests of justice and humanity were concerned. In the final analysis, however alarmed the Church might become over the sad plight of the women and children in factories and

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1. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1846, pp. 78-9.

2. Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1846, p. 66.

3. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1846, p. 117.

mines, when she came up against the economic facts of life -- such as the plea that Britain needed cheap and abundant child labour in the factories if the country was going to maintain its industrial ascendancy in the face of foreign competition -- she was struck dumb. Considerations of morality and humanity, however pressing, could only in the end be subordinated to economic considerations.

D. The Highland Clearances

Probably no single event in Scottish history betrays more dramatically the disastrous consequences of the 19th century tendency to sacrifice human beings to economic needs than the Highland clearances. Over a period of almost a whole century -- from the late 18th to the late 19th century -- tens of thousands of Highlanders were forcibly evicted from their homes, their crofts, and even from their native land, often in ruthless fashion, so that the land might be more profitably used for sheep-runs or a pleasant hunting-ground for a non-resident aristocracy. Such was the extent of the injustice which could be perpetrated on a plea of economic necessity.[1]

Since the most extensive of the Highland clearances -- the infamous Sutherland clearances -- took place in the second decade of the last century, strictly speaking,

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1. Under the old clan system, the Highland chief was a petty sovereign who retained civil and criminal jurisdiction over his clansmen. However, the clansmen were neither serfs nor vassals but free men; and the clan was really a great family. The land belonged to the clan and not to the chief as a private landlord. After 1745, however, the government sought to assimilate the chiefs to the nobles and great landowners of England. Soon the chiefs were transformed into private landlords and their rights regarding the land were carefully conserved. But the ancient rights of the clansmen were ignored and the people were deprived of their status as free men. A system amounting to a modified feudalism resulted. Entails became common, and by marriage, inheritance and purchase the great estates became still greater and passed into fewer hands. By the beginning of the 19th century, the high rents offered the Highland landlords by Lowland sheep farmers made it highly profitable for them to 'dispose' of their small tenants. Thus followed the clearances in which the landowners were able to exercize irresponsible, despotic power over their former clansmen by evicting them at will.

they fall outside the period of this study.[1] For this reason, and also because the events surrounding these fateful evictions -- including the pathetic reaction of the parish clergy -- are relatively well-known and have only recently been investigated afresh,[2] only brief attention need be given here to such earlier clearances. However, the shocking succession of forced evictions in Scotland continued for yet another 60 years, ending only in the 1880's when at last legislative interference was forthcoming to bring them to an end.[3] Consequently, the attitude of the Church to the Sutherland clearances forms part of the background to any examination of her response to the later evictions.

Such eye-witnesses of the Sutherland clearances as Donald MacLeod and Donald Sage[4] -- the latter was the only parish minister among the seventeen in Sutherlandshire who expressed any manner of disapproval of the evictions -- have left to posterity terrifying descriptions of the manner in which the irresponsible power of proprietors was exercized against poor and helpless crofters. Of one series of

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1. The Sutherland estate even at this early date contained over 700,000 acres and covered over one-half the county. It was inhabited by some 15,000 small farmers, almost all of whom were forcibly driven off in the course of the clearances and replaced by 39 sheep farmers and a few shepherds. Those who were evicted from their homes and farms went to the sea coast where small patches of land were allotted to them -- consisting often of moor and bog quite unfit for cultivation -- or else they emigrated to Canada.

2. Cf. the recently published works The Trial of Patrick Sellar by Ian Grimble, and The Highland Clearances by John Prebble.

3. Cf. Alex. MacKenzie, The History of the Highland Clearances, pp. 128-247, where accounts are given of dozens of these later evictions in all parts of the Highlands and Islands.

4. MacLeod, a stone-mason by trade, witnessed several clearances over a period of years and was twice the victim of such events himself. In 1840-1, he described the Sutherland clearances in a series of letters to the Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle. These were later published as the well-known volume Gloomy Memories. Sage was minister of Achness when the Sutherland clearances of 1819 took place. Both he and the entire population of 1600 among whom he laboured were forcibly evicted from their homes and crofts in that year. Sage described the events in his reminiscences which were published under the title of Memorabilia Domestica after his death.

victions conducted in 1814 by the notorious Patrick Sellar,[1] factor of the

uchess of Sutherland, MacLeod wrote:

> "In the former removals the tenants had been allowed to carry away this timber to erect houses in their new allotments, but now a more summary mode was adopted, by setting fire to the houses! The able-bodied men were by this time away after their cattle or otherwise engaged at a distance, so that the immediate sufferers by the general house-burning that now commenced were the aged and infirm, and the women and children. . . . These proceedings were carried on with the greatest rapidity as well as with most reckless cruelty. The cries of the victims, the confusion, the despair and horror painted on the countenances of the one party, and the exulting ferocity of the other, beggar all description. . . . Many deaths ensued from alarm, from fatigue, and cold; the people being instantly deprived of shelter, and left to the mercy of the elements. Some old men took to the woods and precipices, wandering about in a state approaching to, or of absolute insanity, and several of them, in this situation, lived only a few days. Pregnant women were taken with premature labour, and several children did not long survive their sufferings."[2]

lacLeod's description of another clearance in Sutherland several years later is no

ess shocking:

> "The consternation and confusion were extreme; little or no time was given for removal of persons or property -- the people striving to remove the sick and the helpless before the fire should reach them -- next, struggling to save the most valuable of their effects. The cries of the women and children -- the roaring of the affrighted cattle hunted at the same time by the yelling dogs of the shepherds amid the smoke and fire -- altogether presented a scene that completely baffles description: it required to be seen to be believed. A dense cloud of smoke enveloped the whole country by day, and even extended far on the sea; at night an awfully grand, but terrific scene presented itself -- all the houses in an extensive district in flames at once! I myself ascended a height about eleven o'clock in the evening, and counted two hundred and fifty blazing houses. . . . The conflagration lasted six days, till the whole of the dwellings were reduced to ashes or smoking ruins."[3]

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1. As a result of the atrocities perpetrated by Sellar on this occasion, he was tried in 1816 for murder and incendiarism, but was easily acquitted by a jury packed with landlords and factors. Unfortunately for the oppressed crofters, before 1832 the administration of justice was safely in the hands of the landowning class.

2. Donald MacLeod, Gloomy Memories, pp. 8-9. MacLeod described the cruelties inflicted upon several elderly men and women which resulted in their death: "Donald Macbeath, an infirm and bed-ridden old man, had the house unroofed over him, and was, in that state, exposed to wind and rain till death put a period to his sufferings." (p. 9). In another house lay an old bed-ridden woman of nearly 100 years of age. Though the 'fire-raising evictors' were warned of her condition, "fire was immediately set to the house, and the blankets in which she was carried were in flames before she could be got out. She was placed in a little shed and it was with great difficulty that they were prevented from firing it. . . . She died within five days." (p. 9).

3. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

The Strathnaver clearance in Sutherland in 1819 has been vividly described by Donald Sage. He tells of one aged widow

> "who, by infirmity, had been reduced to such a state of bodily weakness that she could neither walk nor lie in bed. She could only, night and day, sit in her chair; and having been confined for many years in that posture, her limbs had become so stiff that any attempt to move her was attended with acute pain."[1]

When the evicting party arrived,

> "her family and neighbours represented the widow's strong claims on their compassion, and the imminent danger to her life of removing her to such a distance as the lower end of the Strath, at least ten miles off, without suitable means of conveyance. They implored that she might be allowed to remain for only two days till a conveyance could be provided for her."[2]

This request, however, was bluntly refused, and she was ordered out of the house immediately before it was burned. The pathetic creature

> "was, therefore, raised by her weeping family from her chair and laid on a blanket. . . . All this she bore with meekness, and while the eyes of her attendants were streaming with tears, her pale and gentle countenance was suffused with a smile. The change of posture and the rapid motion of the bearers, however, awakened the most intense pain, and her cries never ceased till within a few miles of her destination, when she fell asleep. A burning fever supervened, of which she died a few months later."[3]

Yet in spite of the appalling hardships the poor crofters had to endure at the hands of a selfish and irresponsible landed aristocracy, they offered virtually no protest or resistance. This is perhaps the saddest part of the whole story of the evictions -- a noble, brave and manly race passively allowing despotic landowners to treat them with less consideration than the sheep which displaced them. They were deprived of their ancient rights as free men, were threatened and driven off their land, had their houses and crops burned, and their women and aged thrust outside sometimes to die of exposure and shock, they were exploited, starved and

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1. Donald Sage, Memorabilia Domestica, p. 217.
2. Ibid., pp. 217-8.
3. Ibid., p. 218.

degraded.[1] Yet they made hardly any attempt at resistance. Such was the effectiveness of the clergy's teaching on 'passive obedience' to the divine will and constituted authority. Certainly, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if the Highlanders had resolutely opposed these acts of cruelty and oppression, and drawn public attention to the injustices to which they were subjected, reluctant governments would have been forced to act on the matter in the early part of the century -- as they did in the case of conditions in the factories and mines -- instead of waiting until the 1880's when, after a century of evictions and steady depopulation, the manhood and energy of many Highland districts had already been drained away. If the crofter population had been more concerned to press their just grievances before public opinion, the government would soon have been compelled to investigate their condition and at least grant them some measure of protection against ruthless and arbitrary evictions.[2]

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1. There were two serious famines in the Highlands following the early clearances -- in 1837 and 1846. Both of these periods of distress were aggravated by the impoverished state of so many of the displaced crofters who now farmed small plots of poor land on the sea-coasts which could not provide even a subsistence living. It has been estimated that in 1846-7 close to 200,000 people were living on the verge of starvation in the Highlands. "The crofter and pauper classes are now, and for several weeks past, eking out a prolonging life, by resorting to the sea-shore, and collecting shell-fish where it can be found; and that, too, by moonlight, under the power of the sore cravings of hunger." (The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland, December 1846, p. 563). The widespread poverty and destitution during and following these catastrophes resulted in a number of fresh evictions of crofters who could no longer pay their rents. Significantly, the favourite interpretation of the famines in sermons, says MacLeod, was " 'that the Lord had a controversy with the land for the people's wickedness; and that in his providence, and even in his mercy, he had sent this scourge to bring them to repentance'." (MacLeod, op. cit., p. 35). Thus, the best the Church could do was to act in terms of charity, and "sympathize with, and deeply lament the temporal destitution which, in the all-wise providence of God, has fallen upon the population of many districts in the Highlands and Islands for the last three years especially and still continuing in some of those districts with unabated severity." (The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland, July 1849, p. 142, from the Report of the Gaelic Committee to the General Assembly).

2. Hugh Miller believed that one of the main reasons why the aristocracy were able to carry through the evictions virtually unopposed was "the uncomplaining character of the people." (The Witness, September 19, 1849, p. 3). As respected and responsible an authority as Professor J. S. Blackie of Aberdeen, who went so far as to learn Gaelic that he might discover the real truth behind the Highland

From what has already been observed of the theological tendencies of Calvinist orthodoxy and the social and economic presuppositions of the Church generally in the first half of the last century, the acquiescence of the Highland ministers in this cruel and inhuman treatment meted out to their people in the Sutherland clearances becomes, in part at least, understandable. In particular, it was the clergy's social sympathies, their deterministic theology, and their belief in the sacred, inviolable rights of property[1] that not only prevented them from siding with the people, but actually cast them in the role of apologists for the oppressing landlords.[2]

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clearances (Cf. his book The Scottish Highlanders and the Land Laws), believed that in view of the unjust manner in which their ancient rights and freedoms had been usurped, "the Scottish Gaels might have saved themselves much misery if they had been less law-abiding." (Grimble, op. cit., p. 111).

1. Reinhold Niebuhr has noted that a natural consequence of Calvinism's excessive determinism has been its tendency to accept uncritically existing property rights. (The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, pp. 68-9). Even Calvin seems to have regarded the existing distribution of property as divinely ordained and, therefore, as the inevitable and just reward of diligence and industry. " 'Though some seem to enrich themselves by vigilance it is nevertheless God who blesses and cares for them. Though others are rich before they are born and their fathers have acquired great possessions, this is nevertheless not by accident, but the providence of God rules over it'." ("Sermon on Deuteronomy", Works, XXVI, 627, quoted in Niebuhr, p. 68). Gradually after the Reformation, says Niebuhr, traditional Christian economic teaching, which had always given property only a relative sanction, came to be subtly changed to give it an absolute sanction.

2. The Statistical Accounts for Sutherlandshire, written some twenty years after the worst clearances by the parish ministers -- several of whom were the same ministers who had witnessed and supported the evictions -- are revealing. The writers display an amazing complacency regarding the past events which caused such untold human suffering and led to such a tremendous upheaval in their parishes. The minister of the parish of Farr, David MacKenzie, who obediently read the eviction notices to his people in 1818 and 1819, and who urged them to accept their fate as part of the immutable will of God (Cf. Grimble, op. cit., p. 7), practically ignored the evictions in his Account written in 1834. He merely remarked that the decline in population "was owing to the introduction of the sheep-farming system. By its adoption, the farmers and tenants who occupied the straths and glens in the interior were, in 1818 and 1819, all removed from these possessions." (The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 15, section 1, p. 73). Now, he said, "all the lands, both hill and dale, which they possessed, are held in lease by a few sheep-farmers, all non-resident gentlemen, -- some of them living in Caithness, some on the south coast of this county, and some in England; and the straths, in which hundreds of families lived comfortably, are now tenated by about twenty-four families of herds." (Ibid., p. 79). Thus, he disposed of the evictions in a few lines. The minister of Kildonan, where one of the most sweeping and ruthless of the evictions took place, had even less to record. He

Donald MacLeod and other eye-witnesses and authorities who were familiar with the clearances rightly saw that it was primarily the influence of the clergy that led the Highlanders to passively accept the injustices inflicted upon them. In the words of MacLeod:

> "The clergy, also, whose duty it is to denounce the oppressor, and aid the oppressed have. . . found their account in abetting the wrongdoers, exhorting the people to quiet submission, helping to stifle their cries, telling them that all their sufferings came from the hand of God, and was a just punishment for their sins!"[1]

Ministers "were continually preaching submission declaring these proceedings were fore-ordained of God, and pronouncing the vengeance of Heaven and eternal damnation on those who should presume to make the least resistance."[2] When, in 1841, a few crofters, faced with evictions, did offer some resistance to a new clearing at Durness, the parish minister

> "made himself useful on the occasion, threatening the people with punishment here and hereafter. . . . According to him, all the evils inflicted upon them were ordained of God, and for their good, whereas any opposition on their part proceeded from the devil, and subjected them to just punishment here and eternal torment hereafter."[3]

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merely remarked, without comment, that due to the introduction of sheep-farming, the population of his parish had declined from 1574 in 1811 to 257 in 1831. (Ibid., p. 147). The minister of Lairg claimed that "the change produced on the condition of the people by the introduction of sheep-farming. . . a change which, though for the time subjected the people to very serious inconvenience, is now showing its salutary effects." (Ibid., p. 65). Likewise, the minister of Clyne spoke of "the extensive and perfect improvements on the estate of Sutherland." (Ibid., p. 164). While silent on the injustices and cruelties of the evictions, the Accounts were all loud in their praise of the noble and benevolent Duchess of Sutherland in whose name and by whose order such appalling deeds were perpetrated. This was in keeping with the almost blasphemous adulation heaped on the Duchess in 1837 by the Presbytery of Tongue: "May it please your Grace with feelings of profound respect, and to express our joy at your safe arrival within our bounds. . . . That Almighty God may bless your Grace, -- that he may long spare you to be a blessing to your people, -- and that he may finally give you the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is the prayer of, May it please your Grace, the Members of the Presbytery of Tongue, Hugh MacKenzie, Moderator'." (MacLeod, op. cit., p. 37).

1. MacLeod, op. cit., p. 4. 2. Ibid., p. 7. 3. Ibid., p. 58.

MacLeod summed up his condemnation of the clergy by saying:

> "I am truly sorry that truth has obliged me to represent the character of these latter gentlemen in an unfavourable light, but I am convinced that had they done their duty, in denouncing the wrongs perpetrated before their eyes, instead of becoming auxiliaries, the other parties (landlords and factors) would have been unable to proceed. The oppressors always appealed to them for sanction and justification and were not disappointed. The foulest deeds were glossed over, and all the evil which could be attributed to the natives themselves, such as severe seasons, famine and consequent disease, was by these pious gentlemen ascribed to Providence, as a punishment for sin. . . . Such was the holy teaching of these learned clerics. They had always the ear and confidence of the proprietors, and I put it to their consciences to say how often, if ever, they exerted that influence in favour of the oppressed. To the tribunal of that Master whose servants they pretend to be I cite them, where hypocrisy and glaring perversions will not avail."[1]

Other authorities also attest to the fact that it was only the powerful hold of the Church upon the minds of the Highland peasantry that prevented organized and sustained opposition to the clearances. A special correspondent for the Times, describing the cruelties which attended an extensive clearing at Glencalvie, Rossshire in 1845, claimed that

> "so strong is the feeling of the poor Highlanders at these outrageous proceedings, so far as they are concerned wholly unwarranted from any cause whatever, that I am informed on the best authority, and by those who go amongst them and hear what they say, that it is owing to the influence of religion alone that they refrain from breaking out into open and turbulent resistance of the law'."[2]

It is clear from contemporary sources that in keeping with a dominant tendency in the Calvinist orthodoxy of the time, all the clergy -- even those most sympathetic with the sufferings of the poor Highlanders -- were the victims of a disastrous theological error brought about by their rigid, deterministic understanding of God's providence. This was the error of regarding every human event and activity -- including all the evil and injustice caused by the wickedness of men -- as somehow the positive expression of the will of God. Thus, even Norman MacLeod, one of the few post-Disruption Church of Scotland ministers to display any marked sympathy for

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1. Ibid., p. XVI. Cf. pp. 18, 21-2, 30-1, 37 and 67-8 for other criticisms of individual ministers and the clergy in general because of their 'betrayal of the people'.

2. The London Times, May 20, 1845, quoted in MacKenzie, op. cit., p. 133.

the plight of the exploited Highlanders,[1] at a public meeting called in Edinburgh to rally aid and relief for the famine-stricken crofters in 1846-7, could propose a motion in the following terms:

> " 'As it pleased God in his mysterious providence to visit the Highlands and Islands of Scotland with Famine on account of their sin, that it behoved Christians of all denominations who were blessed with the means to come forward liberally that the Highlanders might be saved'."[2]

So also Donald Sage, whose sympathies were genuinely on the side of the oppressed crofters, was prevented from taking any positive action to assist his people by his bondage to a deterministic view of God's providence which demanded an unquestioning 'passive obedience' even in the face of unjust treatment. He shared the universal belief that the people must not murmur or complain against those that persecute them for, behind it all, it was God who was punishing them for sin. Therefore, to passively accept the decrees of 'the powers that be', however cruel and unjust, was

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1. MacLeod was extremely critical of the aristocracy for their heartless treatment of their tenants. Several of his books of religious fiction (e.g., The Old Lieutenant and his Son, published in 1862) attack the landlords for their selfishness and greed which led them to regard sheep more highly than men. The same criticism is to be found in his famous Reminiscences of a Highland Parish (pp. 44-5) which appeared in 1867.

2. Donald MacLeod, op. cit., p. X. The author of Gloomy Memories, who was in attendance at this public meeting, voiced a protest at Norman MacLeod's wording of the motion: " 'I cannot sit quiet in this great assembly of learned men, and hear the sins and heavy guilt of Highland proprietors saddled upon my God, and that by his well paid servant. Will the Rev. mover of this resolution tell me what cause he supposes the Lord has against the poor Highlanders for so long a time, that he should send a famine among them to destroy them; . . . methinks, that if God was to visit sinners with famine or any other calamity for their sins, that he would begin in London and with Highland proprietors, and not with the poor people who were more sinned against than sinners. Highland landlords are the legitimate parents, and the guilty authors of this and of former distress and famine in the Highlands of Scotland, and should be made responsible for it and for future calamities which they are storing up for the unfortunate victims of their boundless avarice. I did not come to this meeting, my Lord Provost, with a view to obstruct proceedings, for I rejoice to see such steps taken to save the people, not from the famine God sent among them to destroy them, but from the famine entailed upon them by their wicked unworthy landlords. But if God is not exonerated from the charge brought against Him, publicly here this day, and entirely separated from an ungodly association of Highland aristocrats, who were bent for years upon the destruction of the Highlanders, and upon the extermination of the race from the soil, I will be under the necessity of proposing a counter resolution.' His Lordship pledged himself that the committee would take it into consideration. I did not press my motion and the meeting proceeded." (Ibid., pp. X-XI).

to obey God; to offer any resistance or even to criticize such decrees was blatantly to flout the divine will. Sage's belief in such a doctrine is evident in his description of his people's response to the news of their impending eviction:

> "The people received the legal warning to leave forever the homes of their fathers with a sort of stupor -- that apparent indifference which is often the external aspect of intense feeling. As they began, however, to awaken from the stunning effects of this first intimation, their feelings found vent, and I was much struck by the different ways in which they expressed their sentiments. The truly pious acknowledged the mighty hand of God in the matter. In their prayers and religious conferences not a solitary expression could be heard indicative of anger or vindicativeness, but in the sight of God they humbled themselves, and received the chastisement at His hand. Those, however, who were strangers to such exalted and ennobling impressions of the gospel breathed deep and muttered curses on the heads of the persons who subjected them to such treatment. The more reckless portion of them fully realized the character of the impenitent in all ages, and indulged in the most culpable excesses, even while this divine punishment was still suspended over them. These last, however, were very few in number -- not more than a dozen."[1]

Here again, it seems, the Gospel had been so robbed of its power of dynamic and radical criticism that it amounted to little more than the 'opiate of the people'.

Not until after the Disruption in 1843 was there in the Scottish Church any real questioning either of the past and continuing practice of forced evictions or of the irresponsible and despotic power of the aristocracy in the Highlands. Futhermore it is worth noting that whatever criticism did arise following 1843 was almost wholly confined to a section of the Free Church.[2]

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1. Sage, op. cit., p. 215.

2. While in 1843 the vast majority of the population in the Highlands and Islands joined the Free Church, almost all the landed proprietors remained in the Church of Scotland. This wholesale loss of popular support and even firmer relations with the aristocracy did not help the Established Church to repent of her bad record in the Highlands in the earlier decades of the century. Until almost the end of the 19th century her social sympathies seem to have altered little from the time of the Sutherland clearances. She continued to view events in the Highlands through the eyes of the landed classes and neither in her courts nor official publications did she concern herself with such matters as the continuing practice of forced evictions, the rights of the oppressed crofters or the fundamental question of land reform. But if the Church of Scotland experienced a sharp decline in the number of her Highland adherents, the Dissenting Churches at no time had any following in the Highlands. Presumably for this reason, they displayed no interest in the questions relating to the clearances or the condition of the crofter population. In the case of the Free Church, although the General Assembly did not directly criticize or even discuss the clearances, the debates

It was the hostile attitude of the Highland landlords to the Disruption and above all their refusal to grant sites for churches and manses to the Free Church that opened the eyes of many Free Church leaders to the harsh and arbitrary power exercized by the aristocracy over the lives of their helpless people.[1] Only then, it seems, when it became apparent that the despotic power of the landlords extended even so far as to deny religious freedom to their people, did more enlightened Free churchmen at last become conscious of the extent to which the Highland people had been deprived of all their essential rights and freedoms.[2]

We will have occasion to examine the nature and extent of this Free Church criticism in the decades which followed the Disruption in a later chapter, when the Church's reaction to the clearances in the latter half of the century and the crofter agitation in the 1880's is considered. However, it should be noted here in passing that because much of the Free Church's hostility to the aristocracy arose out of the denominational antagonism of the time, her criticism of the 'cruel oppression' of the landowners was, unfortunately, by no means disinterested or

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which took place in connection with poor relief and Highland destitution as well as the refusal of church sites, clearly revealed a distinct feeling of hostility toward the Highland landlords for their selfish unconcern regarding the spiritual and physical well-being of their people. This feeling was given more definite expression by certain articles and editorials in most Free Church magazines.

1. The Duke of Sutherland, for example, not only denied the Free Church land in Sutherlandshire for the erection of churches and manses, but actually warned his tenants that "the penalty for entertaining or sheltering a Free Church minister was instant eviction." (Grimble, op. cit., p. 82).

2. Hugh Miller, editor of The Witness was, after 1843, easily the most vocal critic of the injustices involved in the clearances and of the ruthless power of the Highland aristocracy. But it is significant that the pages of The Witness were silent on this whole matter in the 3½ year period preceding the Disruption (the first issue appeared in January 1840), when the newspaper was an organ of the Evangelical and non-intrusion party. Miller's concern -- at least vocally -- only arose after the Free Church had been denied sites.

impartial.[1] Nevertheless, in spite of this serious limitation, the generally more critical attitude adopted by certain Free churchmen towards the arbitrary and irresponsible power exercised by the aristocracy -- as well as to particular fresh evictions as they occurred -- was to prove a distinct improvement over the passive and subservient role played by the Established clergy both before and after 1843.

E. Working Class Movements

Perhaps nowhere was the Church's failure to understand and sympathize with the legitimate hopes and aspirations of the common people of Scotland more evident than in the hostile attitude she adopted towards contemporary working class movements.

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1. Criticism which was made of specific evictions carried out by individual landlords was not, it seems, comprehensive enough to include those 'evictors' who happened to be prominent members of the Free Church. Take the example of the Marquis of Breadalbane, who had, in the words of Alexander MacKenzie, 'a mania for evictions'. (Cf. Norman MacLean, The Former Days, pp. 88-9). This evangelical nobleman who ruthlessly cleared out some 500 families from his estate at Glenorchy between 1831 and 1841, was ranked by one writer as second only to the infamous house of Sutherland among the notorious Highland 'evictors' (Letter dated July, 1853, by R. Alister, in D. MacLeod, op. cit., p. 159). He was accused of having "done more to exterminate the Scottish peasantry than any man now living." (Ibid). Yet this "oppressor of the helpless and the poor finds a place in Scots hagiology" (MacLean, op. cit., p. 88), for he was actually canonized in the famous volume of Disruption Worthies. There, he is the subject of the most sustained eulogy. He is spoken of as having embraced "Liberal opinions, when the very name of Reformer was odious." (p. 53). His pecuniary support of the Free Church was munificent. (p. 55). "His Lordship's moral qualities were of the first order: honour. . . truth. . . a sense of justice, keen and strong, and carried out inflexibly, at any cost to his interests or his feelings; and a heart as warm and tender in its affections as ever throbbed in human breast. Never perhaps was there a man more marked by strict integrity, and downright honesty. . . (he) was incapable of taking an unfair advantage of another. . . . His deepest sympathies were with his people. A Highlander himself, his heart was in the Highlands, and devoted to everything which concerned the honour and prosperity of that romantic country. It was his pride to be hailed, and to bear himself among his people, as a Highland chieftain." (pp. 57-8). Yet, says MacLean, "this was the man who drove one thousand of his people into homeless exile. It is difficult for us to think what manner of men they were who could thus eulogize him." (MacLean, op. cit., p. 89). To the modern reader this seems like the worst type of hypocrisy. But not so to the Victorian mind. What mattered was orthodoxy of belief, piety, and Christian benevolence, not brotherhood or justice. Such was the separation between Christian faith and the real life of humanity that "in those days, driving a clan from their homes and their livelihood did not debar a man from being ranked with the godly." (Ibid).

Certainly nowhere did her biased and distorted social and theological presuppositions have more fateful consequences for the future than when they led her to oppose those movements which sought, by corporate action, political equality and economic improvement for the working classes. For clearly it is here, in the initial phases of the development of industrial society, that we must look to find the roots of the modern-day alienation of the industrial working classes from the Christian Church.

(1) Trade Unions

Although in these decades workmen's combinations in Scotland were only in their early formative stage of development -- the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 which made combinations of workers illegal were only repealed in 1824[1] -- churchmen seem to have already adopted a highly critical attitude towards both their methods and their aims. This attitude is clearly reflected in the church press, in the Statistical Accounts, as well as in the writings of a churchman such as Chalmers, who was the accepted authority of the time in the sphere of 'Christian economics'.

Chalmers' views on trade unions were set forth at some length in the third volume of his Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns. Since such views, like his economic teachings generally, were almost universally shared by the Church at large, an initial examination of them will provide a background for understanding the attitudes of other contemporary sources to trade unions.

In keeping with the principles of 'laissez-faire' economics, Chalmers welcomed the repeal of the Combination Acts, believing that as a result of their removal, individual workmen would be 'free' to bargain with the highest bidder on equal terms according to the natural laws of supply and demand. With the worker granted such freedom of contract, he felt certain that there would be no need for workers to form

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1. Before the repeal, all combinations of workers were punishable as conspiracies. Thereafter, they continued to be regarded as 'organizations in restraint of trade' and, therefore, suffered accordingly.

trade unions to advance their economic interests.[1] Although Chalmers did not object to combinations of workers organized for non-economic purposes (e.g., friendly societies and provident groups designed to promote savings among workers, mutual insurance against sickness, etc.), he was opposed to those formed to achieve higher wages, shorter hours or better conditions of labour through industrial action. This he did on the ground that such labour unions embittered harmonious relationships between workers and capitalists, limited the freedom of individual workmen, and, most of all, because they interfered with the economic laws relating to supply and demand of labour. How tragic it was that while Chalmers genuinely desired and sought a rise in the economic condition of 'those at the base of the pyramid', his Malthusian views, his fatal adherence to the dogma of political economy known as the 'iron' law of wages,[2] as well as his natural sympathies -- conservative, evangelical and agrarian—

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1. The advocates of 'laissez-faire' economics believed that acts of legislation such as those prohibiting combinations of masters and workers, interfered with the natural operation of the immutable economic laws. Instead, they favoured the old liberal notion of freedom of contract which had applied in the simpler economic environment of pre-industrial society. According to this notion, every individual should be free to negotiate the best kind of contract he can obtain from any other individual. In particular, the liberty of workers and employers to bargain with each other as to wages and hours should not be hampered by laws of the state or the collective power of unions, whether of masters or workers.

2. The 'iron' law of wages, or, as it was sometimes called, the wage-fund theory, formed an integral part of the teaching of classical political economy. This stipulated that wages were paid from a fixed wage-fund whose amount could not be altered by human effort -- either government regulation or labour agitation -- but was altogether determined by the immutable natural law of supply and demand. In the words of Ricardo: " 'Labour, like all other things which are purchased and sold, and which may be increased or diminished in quantity, has its natural and its market price. The natural price of labour is that price which is necessary to enable the labourers, one with another to subsist and perpetuate their race, without either increase of diminution'." (D. Ricardo, Works and Correspondence, p. 93, quoted in J. K. Galbraith, The Affluent Society, p. 23). Trade unions, therefore, could do nothing to increase the workers' share of the rising national income. Indeed, not only were they useless, but they were positively harmful. For if trade unions struggled against this decree of nature and 'artificially' raised wages, it would only cripple the capitalists, lessen the wage-fund and cause unemployment. This natural economic law fully protected labourers from greedy employers without any need of assistance from workers' combinations. As Chalmers himself explained it: "Should manufacturers, by an artificial means, be made to realize a larger profit than they would otherwise do, this at once creates and allures to their manufacture that additional capital which will bring down the profit to the rate at which it would have settled in a natural state of

led him to oppose the only effective instrument of power possessed by the lower classes through which such an improvement in economic condition could be brought about.

When, after the repeal of the Combination Acts, the deluded workers, ignorant of the wisdom of the political economists, persisted in flying in the face of the economic facts of life by organizing unions and exerting pressure against employers by means of strikes, the ruling classes became alarmed.[1] It was at this point that Chalmers chose to offer some timely advice to employers on how to deal with workers who had formed themselves into trade unions to raise wages.

Chalmers claimed that once the working classes were properly educated in the 'truths' of political economy and saw how useless trade unions and strikes against employers were in promoting their economic improvement, both strikes and the unions themselves, would soon die out.[2] But it was the duty of the capitalists to hasten

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things. That process, by which it might appear at the outset, that profits will be increased at the expense of wages, must soon work in favour of the labourers, so that the increase will again come back to them, and bring their wages just to what they would have been, although no disturbing force had ever been brought into operation.. So that though all combinations of workmen were forcibly put an end to, there would yet remain an effective security for fair and adequate wages in the competition of the capitalists." (The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, vol. 3, pp. 238-42. Cf. pp. 237-56 where Chalmers outlines the validity of the 'iron' law of wages). Thus, "it is by a process altogether independent of combination, that the state of the working population is to be elevated." (Ibid., p. 256). Only by the acceptance and strict application of the Malthusian teaching on population, said Chalmers, could wages be permanently raised. For if the wage-fund of a nation was a fixed sum, it followed that the fewer working men there were to share in that sum, the better for them. Therefore, the only effective and 'natural' way of raising wages was for workers to voluntarily diminish the supply of labour by keeping their numbers down. The working classes were in a miserable state, not because they lacked the power to demand a just share of the new industrial wealth which their labour was producing, but because there were too many of them. "It is the redundancy of their own numbers, and nothing else, which is the cause of their degradation." (Ibid., p. 245). Wages, therefore, could be raised only by the personal moral effort and self-restraint of the workers through later or, much better, fewer marriages. "There is no other method by which wages can be kept permanently high, than by the operation of the moral preventative check among the working classes of society." (On Political Economy, p. 554).

1. Following the improvement of the legal position of trade unions in Scotland after 1825, there was an increase in the organization and activity of unions. (Cf. W. H. Marwick, Labour in Scotland: A Short History of the Scottish Working Class Movement, pp. 4-5).

2. T. Chalmers, The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, vol. 3, pp. 143-5.

this enlightenment of their workers by a firm refusal of whatever demands were made during a strike, thus showing their employees -- through a demonstration of their power to crush all strikes -- the futility of combinations as a means of raising or preventing a reduction in wages:

> "Employers will never be on so secure and kindly a footing with their workmen as when the latter have been taught by sad experience precisely to estimate how much they have to fear from any scheme of hostility against the interest of the former and how much it is they owe for admission and continuance in their service."[1]

If only masters would firmly resist striking workers, Chalmers insisted, the latter would inevitably be forced to surrender on the old terms, or else they and their families would face absolute destitution and starvation.[2] Union funds could not last long enough to win out over the power of the master and thus "stern necessity must at length prevail over their resistance."[3] If this method of dealing with strikers was followed, rather than reverting to the imposition of Combination Laws designed to make strikes illegal, "it will serve to bring out more singly, and therefore more impressively, to the view of the workmen, the natural control and ascendancy which masters have over them."[4] Surely,

> "it is altogether misplaced and unnecessary for government to meddle, but for the prevention and punishment of crime, with the steps of a process that will so surely terminate in the very result which it can be the only object of government to effectuate."[5]

Chalmers drew attention to several examples of recent strikes which, through the unbending firmness of employers, had ended in the complete surrender of the workers.[6] By such wise action, these employers, "we have no doubt, left a lesson of efficacy behind them, which will do more to tranquillize the working classes, than law could possibly do."[7] Clearly, "the result brought about in this natural way, has a far

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1. Ibid., p. 218.
2. Ibid., pp. 202-3.
3. Ibid., p. 203.
4. Ibid., p. 216.
5. Ibid., p. 203.
6. Ibid., pp. 203 ff.
7. Ibid., p. 203, footnote.

more permanent and pacifying effect upon the workmen"[1] than any legal restraints, for "they will be greatly more manageable, after having themselves made full trial of their own impotency."[2] Once the 'hands' in industry learn the foolishness of opposing by corporate action the power of the owners, claimed Chalmers, this will lead to industrial harmony and to "the quiescience of our working classes."[3] Soon, out of the free and natural competition of rival and conflicting forces of masters and men, unhindered by the unnatural interference of combinations on either side, "a fair adjustment must come. . . and a solid peace will be the fruit of this adjustment."[4] Then will the natural price of labour "find its own level in common with all other marketable commodities."[5]

In order to smash the workers' strikes, Chalmers urged masters to discharge all strike leaders from their works, replace workers who went on strike by cheap non-union labour, and refuse to re-employ strikers after a strike had been broken except at reduced wages:

> "The great compensation, then, for the evils of a strike, is the power which masters have of replacing those who struck work by other hands. . . . At the Redding colliery, for example, belonging to the Duke of Hamilton, and where disturbances assumed a very riotous character, this expedient was resorted to. . . . The manager there on the defection of the old colliers, employed in their place such labourers as were about the works, and who were before employed in above-ground jobs, together with a few strangers who accidentally came."[6]

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1. Ibid., pp. 204-5. 2. Ibid., pp. 208-9. 3. Ibid., p. 211.

4. Ibid., p. 217. 5. Ibid., p. 221.

6. Ibid., pp. 184-5. Chalmers strongly advocated the employment of 'blacklegs' to break strikes. (Ibid., pp. 158 ff. and 210). He wanted a law passed to prevent strikers from hindering non-union labour taking their jobs. (Ibid., pp. 178-9). The hostility of trade unionists toward the employment of 'blacklegs' during strikes, he denounced as an interference with freedom of contract, and a violation of the natural law of supply and demand in labour. (Ibid., p. 186). This great 'champion of the poor' even looked favourably on the idea of capitalists bringing in cheap labour from Ireland in order to break the strikes of Scots' workers. So he could laud an Ayr mine owner who hired at low wages local Irishmen to take over the pits when the colliers struck for higher wages and better working conditions. (Ibid., p. 189). This owner was especially commended for his determination to import from Ireland more cheap labour if a sufficient number of men could not be found locally. (Ibid). As proof of the effectiveness of this method of breaking strikes, Chalmers quoted with great approval the words

If only all owners would follow this wise practice, said Chalmers, strikes would soon come to an end, for strikers, if they did not wish to become permanently unemployed, would be forced to come begging to the masters for re-employment on the old, or even less satisfactory terms. When such strikers were taken back, masters should make them pay for any loss or inconvenience they had been caused:

> "Masters and manufacturers can lay an assessment on the wages of the re-admitted workmen, or which is the same thing, can take them in again upon reduced wages, till they have recovered, by the difference, a complete idemnification for all that they have suffered by the interruption of the manufacture."[1]

Such was the teaching of the most representative minister of the 'Church of the people'. Had such teaching been confined to only a minority in the Church -- however prominent and influential -- the effect upon the Scottish Church's mission to an industrial society might not have been so disastrous. However, the same attitude of hostility to trade unions is reflected in other contemporary church sources of all denominations. Said the minister of New Monkland parish writing in 1835:

> "The frequent associations and combinations which prevail here, and are connected with similar combinations in different parts of the country, to raise the price of labour, are very hurtful. They interrupt trade, and attempt what is impracticable, as the price of all labour must be regulated by the demand. They keep trades' people in a constant state of agitation, and make them spend much of their time and money attending their frequent meetings."[2]

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of the owner, spoken after the beaten miners had capitulated: " 'Our old hands, at least such as we have chosen to employ, have returned to their work, and have in a submissive manner, renounced the system of combinations'." (Ibid). Tom Johnston has noted that it was in this period -- during the miners' strikes of 1825-6 -- that "we find the first references to the importation of 'strangers from Ireland' as strike-breakers, a practice which seems to have been one of the contributory causes of that intense anti-Irish feeling which has scarcely yet died away in many districts." (The History of the Working Classes in Scotland, p. 331). "James McNair, writing in 1850, on the antipathy of the working classes of Glasgow to the Irish, attributed it to the latter's willingness to take work at any price." (C. A. Oakley, The Second City, p. 71).

1. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 225. In this suggestion, Chalmers was one step ahead of even the most harsh and reactionary employers. He charged that while many masters had often threatened to make the workers liable for losses, none, as far as he was aware, had gone so far as to actually impose such a penalty. (Ibid).

2. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 6, p. 249. The writer was James Begg, father of the more famous minister of the same name who was a prominent Free Church leader and social reformer after the middle of the century.

The writers of the Glasgow Account lamented that among workers of that city,

> "of late, trade unions have been much in vogue, many of them having rules and practices surpassing the closest corporations, and outvieing the fiercest tyranny of the darkest ages; and it is strange, that, although these unions have in most of the trades been successfully overthrown, still new unions urge the hopeless combat."[1]

This charge that workers who formed themselves into combinations were guilty of an economic heresy by foolishly struggling against the immutable natural law of supply and demand was a common one. Churchmen were concerned that workers should be taught the 'truths' of political economy, for "till men understood more of the laws they are bound to obey, narrow and jealous feelings will exist, to the hurt of themselves and employers."[2] Unless a worker was thus enlightened, he would continue to believe naively that by combining with his fellows and bargaining through corporate action he could improve his wages and working conditions; he would remain "ignorant of the relation between wages and capital -- despotic in his control over the free labour of his fellow-workmen -- easily duped into combinations and strikes."[3] The fact that so many workers were deluded by trade union organizers into believing that combinations could raise their economic condition, declared the writers of the Glasgow Account, was the greatest testimony to their ignorance of the doctrines of economic science:

> "It bespeaks deplorable ignorance in the mass of the operatives, who have so allowed themselves to be led by a few designing and selfish knaves; and submit to be urged by the violent wrong-headed fools of their order, -- a class to be found in all communities."[4]

Trade union officials -- the workers' "unprincipled leaders and deceivers"[5] -- were frequently denounced by churchmen in this way for misleading the working

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1. Ibid., p. 155. This account was written in 1835.
2. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, February 1844, p. 347.
3. The North British Review, November 1845, p. 146.
4. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 6, p. 155.
5. The Church of Scotland Magazine, March 1834, p. 2.

classes.[1] Among other things, they were accused of embittering social class relationships in society by stirring up in the workers a spirit of discontent and dissatisfaction; of seeking, therefore, to undermine the divine plan of social elevation which was to improve society from the top down and not from the base upwards:

> "The divine plan would seem to be to revive society downward from parent to child and from master to servant, and never save in rare exceptional cases to revive upward from an inferior to a higher grade. The exclusion of that influence which ought to leaven the mass of our industrial classes has thrown them upon their own resources in forming their opinions, and has exposed them to become the prey of designing and idle 'tramps', who contrive to carve out a comfortable pittance for themselves by humouring the prejudices and passions of the rest. Every influence is warmly welcomed which complies with their ideas of their own ill usage, and of the shortcomings of the rich."[2]

So it is, claimed this journal, that the industrial workers became stirred up against their employers, their social superiors and 'the powers that be'. How different the wild and agitating workers of the present are compared with the happy and contented Scots peasants of the past. Goaded on by their leaders, they

> "are nursed up in disaffection and rancorous class bigotry, which it will require an immense influence to subdue; and, indeed, so emptied are they of some of our better national traits, that they do not seem to be of the same stock with the cheerful, broad-chested, and full-hearted Scottish peasantry."[3]

Instead of foolishly supporting trade unions, churchmen urged workers to practice self-help, to save their money and thus become 'little capitalists'. To this end, they encouraged provident societies and savings banks.[4] Happily, these

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1. Hugh Miller, who, as a stone-mason had once been a member of a union, believed that trade unions unduly curtailed the freedom of individual workers. He claimed that " 'gabbers' were bound to lead in the movement, wherefore it was the business of the steady, sober-minded man to keep out of it altogether." (W. M. MacKenzie, Hugh Miller: A Critical Study, p. 184). He said that workers suffered more oppression from trade union leaders than from the higher classes. (The Witness, June 7, 1848, p. 2).

2. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, May 1849, p. 330.

3. Ibid., p. 331.

4. Throughout this period, the Church believed that the economic salvation of the lower classes was to be found only in individualistic methods of self-help. In countless sermons and in Christian periodicals, the working classes were urged to improve their condition by practicing the virtues of industry, thrift and self-denial. Such schemes of self-help as provident societies and savings banks

methods of self-help also weakened the trade unions:

> "He must be a weak-minded alarmist, and little acquainted with human nature, who imagines that the accumulation of £50 or £100 in a provident bank by a working-man will induce him to strike for a rise of wages. . . . A workman in his sound mind, with money in the Provident Bank, will not strike in order to obtain more than that price (i.e. the market price of labour set by the law of supply and demand), with the certainty of exhausting in a few weeks or months all the little wealth which he has acquired. In point of fact, the strikers, or at least the originators of strikes, are, perhaps, without any exceptions, the reckless and improvident, -- men who have nothing to lose, and who will not think: the sober and industrious are seldom or never engaged in these combinations."[1]

Optimistically, this minister declared that "the cruel and oppressive system of trades' unions is, it is believed, approaching to its dissolution; and the sooner it is dissolved, the better for the workmen and their families."[2]

This brief glance at the Church's attitude to trade unions makes it easy to understand the animosity almost universally displayed by the organized working class toward the clergy in this early period, and why many of them came to believe that the organized Churches were firmly allied with their enemies and oppressors:

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did indeed assist skilled artisans who earned relatively high wages and had steady employment. But such advice was of no use to the great majority of the lower classes -- the unemployed, the chronically ill, the parish poor, and the largest group of all, the low wage-earners -- who, however thrifty or virtuous, could not save money or elevate themselves because, at worst, they were destitute or, at best, their income could provide no more than a subsistence living.

1. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 7, section 1, pp. 480-1. This Account on the Parish of Greenock was written in 1840 by Patrick MacFarlan of West Parish Church. MacFarlan, who, as we have noted, was receiving the amazingly large stipend of £1000 -- the highest in Scotland at the time -- was certainly qualified to speak with personal knowledge about the beneficial effect of a 'little wealth' in giving a man a 'stake in the existing order' and making him contented with things as they were.

2. Ibid., p. 481. C. F. Smith, in his study of the Statistical Accounts, remarks that the attitudes of parish ministers were strongly biased in favour of capital and against labour. In their eyes, "strikes are anathema and unions which are struggling both to organize themselves and to create a bargaining power are regarded as subversive of all authority." ("The Attitude of the Clergy to the Industrial Revolution as reflected in the First and Second Statistical Accounts," p. 236). This bias "certainly appears in the tendency of the Statistical Accounts to describe employers as public-spirited gentlemen and workers' leaders as 'selfish and designing knaves'." (Ibid., pp. 326-7). Also, "we rarely hear of the combinations of masters, though frequently of those of workmen. . . . Their hostility to trade unions is in marked contrast to their tacit acceptance of employers' unions and their praise for chambers of commerce." (Ibid., pp. 322-3). With such a bias, it was inevitable that "neither the economic nor the political

> "You pretend to be the followers of him who was, is, and shall continue to be the poor man's friend, even the meek and lowly Jesus. Yet, notwithstanding this, I find you constantly arrayed on the side of power, taking part with the oppressor, opposing every measure that would tend to enlighten the minds of your fellowmen, or alleviate human suffering, and soften the pillow of distress. . . . You ought to teach that all mankind are equal in the sight of God, and that there is no real distinction but that arising from superior virtue. . . . But this you have not done, you have taught that God is partial, and a being of vindictive wrath, that the poor man ought to be content, though in a state of starvation, that it is the will of heaven that one man should work hard, and be half-starved, while others do nothing and live on the fat of the earth; that the poor, though oppressed, ought not to repine, but submit with patience to the 'powers that be'."[1]

Clearly, here developed the fateful split -- which was to widen as the century progressed -- between the self-conscious segment of the working classes and a middle class dominated Church which could not understand the needs and problems of workers caught up in the impersonal and ruthlessly competitive world of capitalist industry.

Blinded by their antiquated paternalistic and individualistic concepts carried over from agrarian society, churchmen constantly preached social doctrines which were largely irrelevant to the condition of the massive wage-earning proletariat bound together in a new solidarity of shared hardships and common goals. They stressed the paternalistic ideal of the father-children relationship of masters and employees which ran counter to the growing sense of brotherhood, equality and solidarity which had taken root among the working classes in the industrial context. This sense of group loyalty among the workers -- thus their hatred of non-union

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aspirations of the workers in their attempts to exert an influence, received any degree of sympathy from the clergy -- for they were symptoms of a revolt against the established order." (Ibid., p. 256).

1. The Scottish Patriot, February 15, 1840, p. 97. From an open letter addressed to the clergy of the Established Church. This radical weekly newspaper published in Glasgow gave its support to all working class movements of the time such as trade unions and Chartism.

labour and 'blacklegs' -- churchmen did not understand, and so they were openly critical of the uses the workmen made of their corporate power.[1]

With disastrous consequences for the future, therefore, churchmen taught the industrial workers to shun methods of combination as a means of bettering their social and economic condition. This they taught at the very time when the exploited workers' most crying need was, in fact, just such an instrument of power through which they could acquire effective protection against the arbitrary will and unchecked power of the owners of industry; through which they could assert their dignity and rights as human beings in the face of a ruthless 'system' which treated them not as persons but as 'hands' to be bought and sold in the market-place, to be disposed of when trade was slack, and discarded when ill or old and worn out. Not surprisingly, the democratically-inspired but politically and economically disinherited industrial workers, having been denied the sympathy much less the support of the Church -- a Church which, unfaithful to her own Reformed social heritage, no longer championed the cause of the poor, the underprivileged and the oppressed -- turned increasingly to other agencies for support and leadership. Not a few came in this period to regard the Church as an arch-enemy hindering the social and economic advance of the workers.

We have noted here but the initial reaction of the Scottish Church to the early formative development of trade unions. In subsequent chapters we will have

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1. Chalmers, for example, never understood the new situation of the industrial working class. "He was but little aware of its standards and interests, its distinctions of skill and status, its pride of work, its tradition of fellowship and group action, its intellectual independence and agility, its exposure to the risk of unemployment." (L. J. Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-1840, p. 211). He did not realize that the simple relationship between masters and men of the past was gone. Therefore, he unwisely scoffed at the 'grotesque committees' and 'curious machinery' of the trade unions. He did not see that with the great influx of cheap, unskilled labour from the Highlands and from Ireland into the large towns, the skilled worker was forced to engage in united action with his fellows in order to preserve the value of his skill and a minimum standard of living. Therefore, Chalmers naively denounced such workers for "shutting the avenues to their respective trades against the general population." (The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, vol. 3, p. 180). This he called the 'paltry selfishness' of 'petty oppressors'. (Ibid., pp. 179-80).

occasion to look at the Church's later attitude toward the expanding development and activity of the labour movement after the middle of the century.

(2) Chartism

The Scottish working classes had campaigned vigorously in favour of the Reform Bill of 1832. They believed that the lowering of the franchise would lead to great liberal measures of reform which would ultimately elevate their general social and economic condition. However, they soon became disappointed and disillusioned with the practical results of a Bill which still left 9 out of 10 Scots -- including even the educated, intelligent and hard-working artisan class -- disenfranchised, and which did nothing to relieve the misery, distress and poverty to which so many of them were subjected. As they quickly realized, the bitter struggle for the reforms of 1832 had merely resulted in a shift in the centre of political power from one class that used the people for its own ends to another -- from the landed aristocracy to the middle classes.[1] Consequently, the working classes began to demand new measures of political reform. By 1838 their demand for a further extension of the franchise was embodied in the Chartist agitation.[2]

The Chartist movement[3] expressed for the first time the unique political self-consciousness of the working classes. While in the past the politically conscious

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1. Even in the reformed House of Commons the 'common people' still had no representation. It consisted of members of the aristocracy, the army and navy, lawyers, manufacturers and businessmen. In short, it was composed of the moneyed classes and naturally represented the interests of property.

2. The "People's Charter" contained six points: (1) Manhood suffrage; (2) Vote by ballot; (3) Annual Parliaments; (4) Abolition of the property qualification for Members of Parliament; (5) Payment of Members; (6) Equal electoral districts.

3. The two important studies of the Scottish Chartist movement are: Scottish Chartism, by L. C. Wright, and "The Chartist Movement in Scotland," an unpublished Doctor's dissertation presented to the University of Oxford, by Alex. Wilson.

segment of the working classes had always supported middle class reformers, Chartism represented the first significant break between middle class liberalism and working class radicalism. However, it is important to realize that Chartism -- particularly in Scotland where it was especially strong[1] -- was much more than a movement for political reform. For those who became actively committed to the movement, it came to express a whole new working class ethos -- almost a philosophy of life -- embracing certain distinctive social, economic, ethical, religious as well as political attitudes. Chartists in Scotland, for example, not only demanded the political points of the Charter, but also normally advocated the repeal of the Corn Laws, a national system of education, temperance (usually total abstinence), home rule for Ireland, and opposed capital punishment, militarism and war (on the ground that all wars were fought to protect the vested interests of the privileged classes). Along with the national Chartist organization and the local political groups in virtually every important town in Scotland,[2] there arose local and national Chartist

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1. Scottish Chartism "was long contemptuously dismissed by historians as, in Cockburn's phrase, a mere 'sedition of the stomach', promoted by a few demagogues who 'gathered unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort'. Modern research demonstrates the existence of a well-organized movement, anticipating in many ways the modern Labour Party." (W. H. Marwick, "Social Heretics in the Scottish Churches," Records of the Scottish Church History Society, Vol. XI, part III, 1953, p. 229). The movement was considerably stronger in Scotland than in England. It was organized on a national basis a year earlier, lasted a few years longer, and received more widespread support -- both from the rank and file of the working classes and from the trade unions -- than was the case south of the border.

2. Chartist organizations in Scotland existed for some 15 years -- from 1838 to 1852. At one time or another within these years there were Chartist groups in almost every town of any importance, except in the Highlands where, significantly, the movement made no impression. However, the strength and activity of Chartism tended to fluctuate within that period according to the economic condition of the country, consequently, it was only a real force from 1838 to 1842, although there was a brief renewal of activity in 1848. At its height in 1839, Chartism had an amazingly large following. In that year there were actually 169 local groups in various parts of Scotland. (Alex. Wilson, "Chartism in Glasgow," Chartist Studies, ed. Asa Briggs, p. 250). In 1838 there were 76 groups, 124 in 1840, 61 in 1841 and 94 in 1842, dropping to only 5 in 1847. (Ibid). In 1848 the number rose to 20, while in 1851 there were 10. (Ibid). Many of these groups were small and inactive, but in about 45 districts there was a continuous form of organization from 1838 to 1842. (Ibid). The movement's greatest strength was in the west of Scotland, especially in Glasgow. In that city, when the

newspapers,[1] Christian Chartist churches and Chartist schools, all committed to the advancement of the cause of civil rights and social justice for the working classes. Not surprisingly, in Scottish Chartism -- unlike its English counterpart -- the moral force element in the movement clearly predominated over those who advocated more direct action.

Although Chartism failed to achieve its political objectives, this attempt to promote by political, intellectual and moral means, the social and economic elevation of the people, played a large part in stimulating the social awareness and the political maturity of the most thoughtful and intelligent members of the working classes. In Scotland, "it provided, against a background of rapid transformation, a vehicle for the expression of pent-up grievances of the people, which acted in accordance with the soundest principles of popular action evolved in earlier times."[2] Clearly, it was

> "the most important of a number of social movements which aimed at the fostering of habits of reason, self-respect and sobriety amongst the working classes, and which eventually succeeded in raising the question of the condition of the people of Great Britain as the most important of public matters."[3]

'People's Charter' was first published in 1838, a huge crowd -- estimated at 30,000 to 100,000 by the Tory and Liberal press, and 100,000 to 200,000 by the Radical press -- gathered from all over the west to demonstrate in favour of its adoption. (Ibid., p. 252). Of the signatures to the second National Petition for the Charter in 1842, Glasgow and Lanarkshire alone contributed more than 78,000 (The Scottish Socialists, p. 29). "For almost the entire Chartist period, the agitation was more strongly organized in Glasgow than in Leeds, Manchester or any other large Chartist centre." (Wilson, op. cit., p. 249).

1. A significant feature of Scottish Chartism during its peak years was the formation of several influential Chartist newspapers which had, for a time, large circulations. The True Scotsman of Edinburgh (which, soon after it began, boasted a larger circulation than The Scotsman, the Whig paper), The Scottish Patriot and The Chartist Circular of Glasgow, The Perthshire Chronicle, and several provincial papers such as The Northern Star and The John O'Groats Journal all advocated the Chartist cause. The Chartist Circular which claimed to be the official weekly organ of the movement, seems to have been widely read throughout the country, for in its first year of publication it had the very large circulation -- for the time -- of 22,500 per week. (R. M. W. Cowan, The Newspaper in Scotland, p. 193, and Wilson, op. cit., p. 267).

2. Alex. Wilson, "The Chartist Movement in Scotland," p. 545.

3. Ibid., p. 546.

Towards this first truly democratic political movement of the people, the Church, and especially the Established and Free Churches, displayed only the most sustained hostility.[1] Like all other movements of the 'left', the two larger Churches attacked Chartism because it seemed to pose a threat to the existing order -- social, economic and ecclesiastical.[2] It was widely accepted in these Churches that if the full democratic aspirations of the people for political equality were granted, it would not be long before demands would arise for social equality.[3] This in turn, it was feared, could only result in the collapse of the whole social class edifice, the overturn of traditional institutions -- including perhaps the existing Churches -- and lead to republicanism and anarchy. "Universal suffrage, in the present state of

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1. As far as can be ascertained, the only minister among all the Church of Scotland and Free Church clergy to give his support to the Chartist movement was Patrick Brewster, parish minister in Paisley. (Cf. chapter 6 for an examination of the social outlook of this unique prophetic figure).

2. To most clergy, the movement appeared to be anti-religious, even atheistic, and tainted with socialism. But no one who had even glanced at the Chartist press -- something the clergy apparently never bothered to do -- could have seriously made such a claim. "In fact, the great mass of Chartists had no hostility to religion, the family or the rights of property, and no intention of breaking out into revolutionary violence. . . . They wanted to curb oppression, improve their conditions of life, and make society more just and happy." (S. Mechie, The Church and Scottish Social Development 1780-1870, p. 101). As Wilson concludes: "Few of them were Socialists (in the Owenite sense of the term) or even permeated with Socialist ideas beyond what they regarded as Christian ideas of Social justice." (Wilson, op. cit., p. 682).

3. Churchmen frequently expressed criticism of the United States for their foolish attempts to abolish social class distinctions: "That grades in rank are necessary is proved by the fact that, with a few solitary exceptions, no nation has ever been truly great, in which it has been attempted to introduce a perfect equality among all classes." (MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, July 1851, p. 342). This writer claimed that the United States was the best-known example of the misguided attempt to establish a full democracy by treating all men, regardless of their class, as equal. But "that this attempt has proved a signal failure, every one will admit whose mind has not been perverted by prejudice." (Ibid). Chalmers insisted that Britain was a far nobler country than the United States "with all its coarse and boastful independence." (On Political Economy, p. 370). This was so because Britain had retained her aristocracy, whereas in the United States everyone had been reduced to the same low level of equality. Thus, he was opposed to all attempts to 'level ranks'. "We would, therefore, on the whole, leave the existing framework of our own community undisturbed." (Ibid).

public morals, would be the ruin of the country, -- the masses are not fit for it. . . it would lead directly first to anarchy, and then to despotism."[1] An Evangelical organ painted a fearful picture of the consequences of Chartist political agitation:

> "At the cross streets of our public thoroughfares, especially after a day of storm and snow, crowds of men out of work are to be seen discussing politics and the times, in committees and coteries. The iron-foundry and the weaving shop are pouring forth their two representative classes of revolutionists; the one the muscle, the strong arm, the physical force; the other with their pale faces and weak bodies, the free-thinkers, the plotters, the Thierses, the orators for the mob, the minds to sway and use the brute strength of bully brothers, the colossal iron-founders. Our sky is filled all over with dark thunder-clouds, fringed with fiery red. The flood gathers round us, blackens and begins to swell. The cry of peace is falsehood, is infatuation, is death."[2]

Only the diffusion of Christianity among the lower classes, declared this writer, can save society from destruction. Only "the Christian religion is equal to the salvation and the civilization of any time. . . it will master and overmatch the threatening anarchy of any age."[3]

Bedevilled by such fears, it is not surprising, therefore, that in contemporary Church of Scotland and Free Church sources there was a marked antipathy voiced against all forms of political activity on the part of the working classes. It was regularly affirmed that politics were not their concern; that the responsibility for the government of the nation was safely in the hands of the higher classes who were 'born to rule'; that involvement in political questions only diverted their attention and energies from effective means of raising their social condition, namely, personal moral and intellectual improvement.[4] Above all, it was feared

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1. The Witness, September 26, 1840, p. 3. From an editorial by Hugh Miller attacking Chartism.

2. The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal, April 1842, p. 94.

3. Ibid.

4. While accepting the fact that individual workmen by developing their personal moral and intellectual character might improve their temporal condition, it never occurred to the individualistically-minded churchmen of the time that together workers by corporate action might be able to raise the condition of

that among the politically conscious section of the working classes, politics had become a substitute for religion:

> "The disaffection which has seized the industrial mind, though nursed from several sources, is mainly political in its origin, and the passions which the demon of politics kindles in the popular breast, run directly counter to all evangelic appliances."[1]

It seemed only too clear to churchmen that the most pious and godly among the working classes took no interest in political questions, while the 'grumblers' and 'agitators' for political change were the ones least influenced by the Church. Strangely enough, said one parish minister, it was the lowest-paid workers who were "generally frugal, sober, and contented with their situation and circumstances."[2] The better-paid workers, on the other hand, were "discontented with their condition, and with everything and everybody about them."[3] The first group gave

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their whole class. Thus the charge against Chartism was that it withdrew "the minds of its votaries from the course by which as individuals they 'might' rise -- to the course through which it is vain for them to expect that as masses they can ever rise." (The Witness, September 26, 1840, p. 3).

1. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, July 1849, p. 367. This writer traced the reason for the workers' resistance to the Church's evangelistic outreach and their substitution of politics for religion to their firmly rooted disbelief in the genuineness of the Church's concern for their temporal welfare -- "a disbelief carefully strengthened by those petty agitators who thirst for political change and see in the Church an obstacle to the accomplishment of their aims." (Ibid., p. 368).

2. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. 7, section 1, p. 332. Written by Alex. Fleming, minister of the parish of Neilston.

3. Ibid. This was probably an accurate observation since Chartism and political radicalism was stronger among the skilled, better-paid workers than among the lowest classes. Some ministers concluded from this situation that high wages had an evil influence upon the morals and spirituality of the workers. One minister testified to a Factory Commissioner that "the working classes here have no want of money, many of them have far too much." (The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, February 1844, p. 347). Norman MacLeod did not believe that higher wages, less taxation or an extension of the franchise would do anything to relieve the appalling poverty among the working classes. " 'Is the cure less taxation? How this, when thousands of your most dangerous men tax themselves 70 per cent. for drink! Is the cure high wages? Ask the manufacturer if his safe men and true men are generally among those who have high wages. . . . Suffrage? Humbug'." (Donald MacLeod, Memoir of Norman MacLeod D.D., vol. 1, pp. 285-6). In MacLeod's first charge at Loudoun, most of his parishioners were hand-loom weavers and thus Chartists. Yet he made no secret of his hostility to Chartism and its demand for the working class franchise, which he

"themselves to the duties of religion, the other to politics. The latter would reform everything, yet refuse to reform themselves. Amongst a people given to politics, the moral and religious character is lost. The one absorbs the other, and the magnitude of eternity is lost in the littleness of time. The squabbles of factions is preferred to the peace of God, and the party howlings of this world's policy to the songs of Zion."[1]

Churchmen, therefore, sought to divert the energy of the working classes away from Chartism and its dangerous demand for an extension of the franchise into more useful channels. In particular, they agreed that "such energies as are directed to the promotion of Chartism would be invaluable if sanctified and consecrated to the advancement of Christianity."[2] But only the widespread diffusion of Christianity among the working classes could accomplish this end; only be means of a great religious awakening and revival could those who now sought political liberty be brought to see that the only true liberty was spiritual liberty, and that "having

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felt could only lead to anarchy and revolution. (Ibid., p. 119). On the other hand, he could not understand why the Chartists were antagonistic to the Church. His biographer remarks that he was strangely unaware of the fact that it was the Church's alliance with the enemies of civil liberty that had turned them against the Church. (Ibid., p. 149).

1. Ibid. This widely expressed opposition to working class participation in political activity as somehow 'unspiritual' must have sounded like strange doctrine to the some 9/10ths of the population who formed the disenfranchised classes. For, as we have seen, churchmen of all denominations engaged in heated political agitation in this period, and never hesitated to use political means when their own interests were at stake. The real objection to working class political activity was, of course, that it was the wrong 'kind' of politics. Churchmen would hardly have objected to such activity had the workers embraced the safe, conservative, patriotic policies of the Church's 'right-wing' politics which sought only social peace and order and the preservation of the status quo. C. F. Smith, in noting the universal opposition of the parish clergy -- except for Brewster -- to Chartism in the Statistical Accounts, says that in the eyes of the clergy "to hold political opinions is for a working man to be in opposition to the powers that be." (Smith, op. cit., p. 256). In this early period, "the politics of the left have already become a substitute for religion and who will say how much of this was due to the identification of religion with the politics of the right." (Ibid., p. 247).

2. The Free Church Magazine, December 1848, p. 374.

this, a person enjoys the highest franchise; wanting this, he is indeed only a slave."[1] In the end, there could be an improvement in the miserable social and economic condition of the working classes only by "heightening the moral sense of the people through the influence of Christianity,"[2] and not through demands for "unrealizable political privileges, which, even if attainable, would be useless."[3]

With that blind complacency which marked the privileged classes of the time, Church of Scotland and Free Church ministers from their comfortable position well up in the social pyramid could not understand the growing working class demands for political equality and social justice:

> "In this country, there seems among a certain class of people, always more and more discontent, the less reason there is, the less apology there is for any. Considering the equity of our laws in general; the perfect freedom which all men enjoy; the uncorrupt administration of justice; the open road which all men even the poorest, have to the highest and most honourable offices in the State; the liberty or rather license which they have of saying what they think, and teaching what doctrines they please -- the power to 'curse the gods, and speak evil of the rulers of their people'; considering this, we might be expected to say of ourselves -- "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, a people saved by the Lord'."[4]

But no, said this Established churchman, the people are still not contented. Now they clamour for what they call civil liberty and foolishly demand a share of political power. They fail to realize that "civil liberty does not arise from the character and quality of the laws when made and whoever makes them."[5] In this

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1. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, October 1848, p. 178. One minister commenting on the results of a recent religious revival in Kilsyth, remarked with great approval that "one remarkable effect has been, that political feeling which was formerly violent, is now greatly subdued, and persons of all different religious persuasions are affected in the same way." (The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland, September 1839, p. 42).

2. The Witness, May 7, 1842, p. 3. 3. Ibid., February 15, 1843, p. 2.

4. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, October 1848, p. 175.

5. Ibid., p. 173.

writer's view, the working classes did not possess this necessary 'character and quality' because they engaged in agitation and mass demonstrations in favour of the franchise.[1] This was proof that they lacked "sufficient intelligence and education to enable them rightly to use the power they covet"[2] and were unconcerned about the "order, peace and prosperity of the community. No body of men who do not possess these two qualifications can be invested with political power, without manifest danger to society. If a body of people say they want political power, and are qualified to use it, and then make a mob; I want no other proof that they are not qualified for what they seek."[3]

The Chartist leaders and the millions of British workers who supported them were, like all the supporters of movements of the 'left' which sought basic changes in society, constantly accused of lacking intelligence and education by writers in the church press.[4] Hugh Miller, commenting on the 1842 Chartist Petition presented

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1. Churchmen were highly critical of the massive Chartist gatherings because the Chartist orators invariably denounced the 'powers that be' and stirred up the people against the higher classes and the government. They frequently expressed amazement that the authorities permitted them to 'speak evil of dignities' in such a manner. "That our rulers, national or municipal permit such speeches, is indeed matter both of surprise and apprehension. The worst days of the French Revolution did not utter things so atrocious. And great is the responsibility of those who permit them to pass unnoticed." (The Church of Scotland Magazine, January 1838, p. 7).

2. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, October 1848, p. 174.

3. Ibid.

4. This was the most common criticism levelled against the Chartists. But it was manifestly false. As we now know, the Chartist leadership and the great mass of Chartist followers were able, intelligent, educated men. In this period in Scotland, "the crucial elements of the working classes -- the artisans, mechanics and skilled labourers -- were almost universally literate and of a fairly high degree of attainment. It was from these groups that the readers of the Glasgow Patriot or the Chartist Circular were drawn, and from which leadership came for political and trade union activities. It was they who formed a vital political potential in Scottish society and -- depending on one's point of view -- the most challenging threat or promise for the future." (R. K. Webb, "Literacy among the Working Classes in Nineteenth Century Scotland," The Scottish Historical Review, vol. XXXIII, no. 116, p. 114).

to the House of Commons, remarked how pathetic it was that 3½ million workers should be so deluded as to believe that a share of political power could ease their misery and distress. "They affix their signatures by millions to the wild ravings of some senseless demagogue, whom, with better cultivated minds, they would have all been enabled to despise."[1] By such action those who lacked property qualifications were foolishly demanding a natural right which belonged only to property-holders. This, said Miller, amounts to an attack on the divine right of property. For these misguided people with their Petition demanding the vote "come before the British Parliament charged with complaints against the great natural law of property, -- one of those institutions of God which no man or no nation ever set aside with impunity."[2] The sooner the working classes learned this 'truth' the better it would be for themselves. Miller said it was absolutely futile for them to complain of and agitate against the special rights and privileges of those placed in the higher stations above them. It was impossible to achieve social and political equality because

> "upper and lower classes there must be so long as the world lasts. . . . It would be alike unwise and unjust to attempt casting them down to your own level, and no class would suffer more in the attempt."[3]

Although undoubtedly there was far more basic sympathy for the general aims of the Chartists among Dissenters than among Established churchmen, there was, surprisingly, little more support for the Chartist movement itself from Dissenting

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1. The Witness, May 7, 1842, p. 3.
2. Ibid. To those churchmen who preferred to worship the divine rights of property rather than defend the dignity and rights of men, the masses who owned no property always seemed like something less than full human beings.
3. Hugh Miller, The Old Red Sandstone, p. 34.

ministers than from the latter clergy.[1] This notable lack of support from these more progressive and liberally-minded Churches proved much more of a disappointment to the politically conscious working classes than the hostile attitude of the Church of Scotland which had never attempted to hide her fear of the democratic aspirations of the people. Because Secession and Relief ministers had so overwhelmingly supported the political reforms of 1832, the working classes naturally looked to the same clergy to support their demands for more liberal reforms. Their

> "response, however, to such Chartist appeals was a profound and bitter disappointment to many devout Chartist Dissenters. . . . From the out-set, almost all clergymen, even those responsible only to their own congregations and conscience, showed great diffidence about committing themselves to the Chartist cause. Clergymen, well-known locally for their reforming zeal, found paltry excuses for refusing to sign the National Petition, and for declining invitations to lecture to Chartist audiences."[2]

Not surprisingly, the belief that even these most progressive ministers had betrayed the people, often led the Chartists to criticize the Dissenting clergy more sharply than Established churchmen. The leading Chartist newspaper accused the Dissenting ministers of preaching 'passive obedience' as openly as the Church of Scotland. They taught contentment in poverty, held up humility and subservience to the higher classes as a noble virtue, while civil liberty and those who sought to

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1. The majority of the Dissenting clergy probably viewed the Chartist movement with much the same apprehension as the famous John Cairns, who, later in the century, became a leading figure in the U. P. Church and principal of her theological college. Cairns shared the prevalent view of middle class liberals that the radical demands of the Chartists merely betrayed their lack of intelligence, and that such demands, if granted, could only lead to the overthrow of the existing social order. Writing to his father in 1839, he referred to a large Chartist meeting in Edinburgh as "a meeting of the simple-minded working men of this city to gaze at and applaud the selfish gang of English democrats who, under the line of universal suffrage, are seeking to establish a community of property and to revolutionize the existing state of society. The people of Scotland appear as yet to have too much sense and education to go into so pernicious a scheme, which has been eagerly adopted by multitudes of the ignorant and half-blackguard English working-people. In Edinburgh, at all events, as the late election showed, the party is as small in numbers as it is contemptible in point of respectability and talent. . . . I am truly sorry to see any well-meaning people deceived by their ridiculous promises." (A. R. MacEwan, Life and Letters of John Cairns, pp. 85-6).

2. Wilson, op. cit., p. 255.

arouse the people to seek justice through peaceful means were "denounced from the rostrum as opposed to the will and glory of God -- to the safety and well-being of society."[1] Yet

> "they talk of civil and religious liberty, and vehemently advocate a system of universal suffrage in spiritual affairs far more sweeping in its nature than that contained in the People's Charter, and demanded by the people for the just and proper management of their worldly interests."[2]

By seeking what they regarded as social, political and economic justice for the unenfranchised and dispossessed classes, the Chartists genuinely believed that their cause was much more than a mere political movement but was a moral crusade to achieve the God-given rights of the people. Consequently, they hoped to receive at least some sympathy if not open support from those Churches which professed to be the champions of civil and religious liberty. Accordingly, in the spring of 1840, they submitted addresses to the Relief and Secession Churches.[3] Both addresses were ably written and moderate in tone. The one transmitted to the Relief Church spoke of the fact that

> "in the midst of all our national abundance and luxury, there are a vast portion of the industrious classes who are doomed to struggle with almost perpetual famine -- who are subject to the most unhappy and precarious dependence -- ill-clothed, ill-lodged, ill-educated -- being deprived of the means necessary for domestic comfort, as well for mental, moral, and religious improvement."[4]

The address pointed out to the Relief Church that she had in her membership a large percentage of the industrious working classes, and that if she was genuinely concerned about their temporal and spiritual welfare, she could not ignore the question of the franchise. It cautioned the Church against placing the blame for the hardships of the poorer classes on God's providence rather than on class legislation

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1. The Chartist Circular, March 28, 1840, p. 108. 2. Ibid.

3. The Chartists were apparently only too familiar with the anti-democratic sentiment of the Church of Scotland for no such address was submitted to the National Church.

4. The Scottish Patriot, May 23, 1840, p. 321.

which was the inevitable result of political power being in the hands of an oligarchy. It did not ask the Church to become embroiled in politics but merely to concern herself with the poor and downtrodden and to urge the legislature to give the people their God-given right to liberty and a choice of those who were to govern them.[1]

The address to the Secession Church was somewhat longer. It likewise claimed that the question of civil rights was not a purely political matter:

> "If the people are bowed down to the dust by oppression -- if myriads of honest men and women are reduced by cupidity to a state of gaunt starvation -- if thousands, and tens of thousands of little children are hungry and naked -- if multitudes cannot attend the Church for want of decent apparel -- if the education of the rising generation is sacrificed by the destitution of their parents -- if disease is engendered by poverty and crime by ignorance, have the ministers of religion nothing to do with these things?"[2]

Universal suffrage, it declared, was surely

> "a right which no member of your Synod can deem extravagant, since it is exercized by all the communicants of your Church on matters which concern their eternal well-being. For to say, then, that the working man is not qualified to use the elective franchise in the management of civil society, is to affirm that the institutions of man are more elevated in their character than the institutions of the Messiah."[3]

Both Synods dismissed these addresses without considering them on the ground that they dealt with matters which fell outside the sphere of the Church's concern. The Relief Church's Committee for Receiving Petitions declined to transmit it to its highest court because "the Synod had ever waived the discussion of political subjects."[4]

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1. The Chartist Circular, May 23, 1840, p. 141.
2. Ibid., June 27, 1840, p. 161.
3. Ibid., pp. 161-2.
4. Minutes of the Relief Synod, May 1840, p. 82.

This official rejection of the Chartist claims is not surprising in view of the Church's narrow understanding of the scope and application of the Gospel and the passivity of all her courts in this period. What is surprising is the ease with which this working class movement seeking civil rights and social justice for the disenfranchised classes was dismissed by the Relief and Secession Churches as a purely political movement without moral or spiritual significance, while the middle class, 'laissez-faire' inspired, Corn Law repeal agitation -- which enlisted the rabid and enthusiastic support of many hundreds of Dissenting ministers -- was regarded not as a mere political movement but as a glorious moral, even Christian, crusade.[1]

Chartist speakers and the Chartist press were highly critical of the manner in which even the most progressive ministers embraced safe and respectable middle class causes but avoided contact with comparable popular movements. One writer charged that by constantly preaching against any involvement with political movements of the people, ministers had convinced many Christians

> "that to identify themselves with popular movements would be, in their view, to make shipwreck of a Christian profession, and to forego all claim to the character of a consistent adherent of religion. What has been the consequence of a state of things so anomalous? Instead of ministers of the Gospel being the fearless denouncers of oppression, they are found the apologists of bad government; and their hearers, instead of making common cause against a system which places the unrepresented in a state of virtual outlawry, assume the attitude of opposition, and become the most formidable barrier which stands between a people and their constitutional liberties."[2]

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1. The Christian Journal of the Relief Church affirmed: "As Christians, we take our stand on the New Testament, and we condemn the Corn Bill as openly at variance with the spirit and precepts of that infallible record." (April 1840, p. 163). In 1842 there was a huge rally of Dissenters held in Edinburgh to protest against the Corn Laws. Of almost 500 Dissenting ministers present, some 350 were from the Secession and Relief Churches. (Cf. Duncan MacLaren, The Corn Laws condemned on account of their Injustice and Immoral Tendency by upwards of Five Hundred Ministers of different denominations resident in Scotland, and J. R. Fyfe and Wm. Skeen, Report of the Speeches, delivered at the Conference of Ministers and Members of Dissenting Churches held to express their opinion of the Injustice and Immoral Tendency of the Corn And Provision Laws). According to the latter document, the conference declared "that the Corn Laws are opposed to the just and perfect precepts of His Revealed Word, and are thus an offence to Him, who shall 'break in pieces the oppressors', and who hath said, 'whoso shutteth his ears at the cry of the poor, himself also shall cry, but shall not be heard'." (p. VII).

2. The Chartist Circular, February 13, 1841, p. 305.

Another article claimed that these clergy were afraid to take the side of the oppressed working classes because it would offend the privileged classes in their congregations. The writer likened their shameful silence to that of the American clergy:

> "The clergy of America find that the majority of the upper and middle classes are opposed to the abolition of slavery there, and the British clergy find that the majority of the upper and middle classes are opposed to the rights of the people here; and therefore, if they interfere at all, they oppose in both countries what is just and right."[1]

Another Chartist writer said that Dissenting ministers were as subservient to powerful persons in the pews as parish ministers. While the latter preach to please their patrons, the former preach to please the ten-pound shopkeepers.[2]

Perhaps this middle class bias of Dissenting ministers and their reluctance to associate themselves with contemporary working class movements helps to explain why even the most progressive of them -- including those who openly advocated the extension of the franchise -- refused to support the Chartist movement or sign the National Petition, using the excuse that support of a political movement would compromise their ministry.[3] Thus, except for Archibald Browning, Secession minister of Tillicoultry -- apparently the only Secession or Relief minister who openly embraced the Chartist cause[4] -- the few Dissenting ministers who publicly advocated

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1. Ibid., March 28, 1840, p. 108. 2. Ibid., July 4, 1840, p. 166.

3. Public support of the Whig party apparently did not involve such a compromise, for as we have noted, the Dissenting clergy, almost without exception, were strong supporters of Whig politics, throughout this period. The Chartist press was rightly critical of the hypocrisy involved in this example of the anti-working class bias of the clergy.

4. Browning, however, gave up the active ministry in 1825 in order to teach, and during the height of the Chartist agitation in 1841 he withdrew both from the ministry and membership of the Secession Church. (Cf. his Apology for Withdrawing from the Communion of the United Associate Church). While the reasons he gave for his resignation were ostensibly theological -- he could no longer accept the rigid Calvinist doctrines, especially its teaching on predestination (Ibid., p. 10) -- they were not unrelated to his social and political views. In this pamphlet he defended his practice of preaching in Chartist churches. He said these congregations were not political churches but were made up of sincere Christian working men who desired their political rights and refused to go to the regular churches to hear themselves and their political opinions denounced by the clergy. (Ibid). He was a thorough-going democrat with a real

extended franchise only gave their support to the middle class dominated Complete Suffrage Movement.[1] It seems likely that the editor of The United Presbyterian

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concern for and understanding of the needs, problems and aspirations of the working classes. This is evident in his pamphlet advocating universal suffrage published in 1839. (A Lecture on Universal Suffrage). In it he attacked those who regarded the working classes as nothing more than rude brutes, not to be trusted with any degree of power or responsibility. (Ibid., p. 12-13). He claimed that in many respects they were more qualified for the franchise than those of rank and birth and wealth who now possessed it -- "Wealth is not intelligence; wealth is not righteousness." (Ibid., p. 10). With real insight, he saw that those without the franchise would always be exploited by the enfranchised classes and that the only way they could secure social and economic justice was to acquire a share in governing themselves. (Ibid., pp. 4-5). He attacked his fellow clergy for failing to side with the poor and oppressed classes and for their failure to subject to Christian criticism the existing laws which favoured the rich and powerful. (Ibid). "Should not those who serve a God of truth and love, lift up their voices against so pernicious a system. . . .? (Ibid., p. 5). He accused the clergy of being "more disposed to ally themselves to wealthy profligacy than to suffering poverty." (Ibid., p.4).

1. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many Dissenting Presbyterian ministers subscribed to this movement which advocated universal male suffrage. It was probably less than half a dozen. Three Secession ministers -- John Ritchie of Hope Park Church in Edinburgh, Andrew Marshall of Kirkintilloch, and his son William Marshall of Kirkgate Church in Leith -- are definitely known to have supported it. Ritchie, who frequently lectured on the subject of universal suffrage, "spoke at the dedication of the Monument to the 'Political Martyrs' of the 1790's, erected on the Calton Hill in 1844." (W. H. Marwick, "Social Heretics in the Scottish Churches", Records of the Scottish Church History Society, vol. XI, part III, 1953, p. 231). Andrew Marshall, who had been moderator of the Secession Church in 1836, delivered a famous address to a gathering of Dissenters in Edinburgh in 1840 which was published the next year under the title, The Duty of Attempting to Reconcile the Unenfranchised with the Enfranchised Classes. In this pamphlet, Marshall sketched a doctrine of Christian equality which he used to justify an extension of the franchise: "I feel that all men are equal -- I mean, all entitled to equal rights. . . there is no man living, no man of good character, how low soever his station, how poor soever his circumstances, upon whom I could turn round and say -- sir, I am entitled to other rights and other privileges than you; I am better educated than you, I possess more property than you, I move in a more respectable sphere of life than you and, therefore, you must be to me a hewer of wood and drawer of water! There is no man alive to whom I could use such language; and, I confess, I should not like to have such language used to me by any fellow subject how great soever or high." (p. 11). He attacked the claim that voters should have property and a superior education before they were 'safe' enough to receive the franchise. This, he said, means "that men who have no property have no rights, and all they have to do with the laws is to obey them, one of the worst and most insufferable of Tory maxims." (p. 11). As far as education was concerned, he insisted that there were thousands of educated men who possessed a vote who didn't deserve it. (p. 12). Character was the important qualification, and the working classes were as moral as any other class. Are they, he asked, less moral than landlords who dishonour and bribe their tenants at the polls; than legislators who pass unjust laws favouring the wealthy as against the poor? (p. 13). Yet after expressing such truly enlightened sentiments, Marshall, while strongly urging the clergy to be more

Magazine, writing in 1848, expressed the basic attitude of those Dissenters who were most sympathetic to some further political reform, when he urged the working classes to give up their abortive efforts to achieve political change through the Chartist movement and instead join forces with the middle classes by supporting the Liberal party. It was not by forming separate working class organizations that reforms could be achieved, he stressed, but by lending their support to the capitalist class:

> "There is no such separation between industrious capitalists and industrious handicraftsmen, as warrants the one to expect that they can carry any great political measure without the co-operation of the other. The sooner they are at one, so much the better for both."[1]

One cannot read through the main organs of Chartist opinion[2] without being impressed by the strongly ethical -- indeed Christian -- tone that permeated all the arguments and activity connected with the movement. Nor, in the light of this, can one fail to be shocked by the degree to which the Church misunderstood this morally-inspired movement whose sole purpose was to give expression to the hopes and aspirations of the common people of Scotland for civil equality, a more just social order and a nobler and happier life. Although the Chartist demands for civil liberty and equality may have owed much to ideals derived from the Enlightenment, their arguments were invariably based not on notions of abstract philosophical rights and ideals but in concrete terms of Christian social justice derived from the Old Testament and the teachings of Christ. It was to the Christian faith that they constantly appealed in order to advance their cause; it was the Bible that taught them that God

> "consigned not the execution of his laws to an aristocracy, knowing that men inflated with absolute irresponsible power would themselves become the greatest transgressors. . . . By his prophets, he tells the rulers of the earth who usurp his powers, and violate his laws, by taking away the life

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sympathetic with the political aspirations of the working classes, said, however, that ministers of the Gospel could not give their support to a political movement such as Chartism because this would make them political partisans and ruin their ministry. (pp. 9-10, 13-15).

1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, May 1848, p. 237.

2. e.g. The Chartist Circular and The Scottish Patriot.

> and property of his people, that he will be the avenger of the wrongs which they inflict, and denounces their tyranny and oppression in language awfully terrible and sublime. . . . Will we presume to worship Him who is justice, mercy, goodness and truth, and at the same time band ourselves with the oppressors of the people?. . . . Will any rational being for a moment suppose that nine-tenths of the human race were created for no other purpose than to gorge the other tenth. . . were gifted with high moral and intellectual faculties, susceptible of every improvement for no other use than to be sacrificed through the length of a dreary existence to the wretched necessities of their possessors? If such is the unworthy, the miserable design of their being, better far they had never been; but the very supposition is heinously impious: it is treason -- treason of an infinitely deeper dye than the worst that could be committed against the highest earth-born potentate -- it is treason against Heaven. Here, then, is the origin of our cause -- here is the omnipotent authority on which we rest the glorious charter of the people's liberties."[1]

In agitating for political rights for the people and a more just social order, the Chartists sincerely believed they were seeking to apply the teaching of Christ and the prophets to the life of society. They naturally felt that they were carrying out a task which rightfully belonged to the Church; a task which the Church, had she been faithful to the Gospel, would never have abandoned. The strength of this feeling among the Chartists helps to explain their bitter disappointment with all the Churches when they opposed both the movement itself and even its aims. Instead of siding with the poor, the underprivileged and the oppressed as did the prophets of old, the modern clergy, they charged, -- "from the sleek parish parson, with his half-thousand a-year, to the sly sneaking sectarian with his hundred pounds"[2] --

> "have become the foes of mankind. They have basely leagued with mammon, and have profanely endeavoured to bind down the Church to the world by a chain of gold. They, who ought to have smoothed the rough pathway of human existence, have heaped up barriers to the way of man's progression."[3]

The Chartists were convinced that they formed part of a great historical succession of Scots -- a radical tradition, a rebel strain in Scottish society -- which, from the time of Wallace and Bruce had struggled for civil and religious

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1. The Chartist Circular, September 28, 1839, p. 1.
2. Ibid., August 29, 1840, p. 197.
3. Ibid., February 29, 1840, p. 89.

liberty.[1] It was freely acknowledged that the Scottish Church, with her democratic tendencies and especially in the activity of the Reformers and Covenanters, had, in the past, played a central role in that historical struggle for liberty and freedom.[2]

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1. Scotland had a democratic, rebel tradition for a long time prior to the awakening of interest in political democracy at the end of the 18th century. An egalitarian spirit, which seems to have owed much of its impetus to the experiences of the simple but hard life which most people had to share, became an early mark of the Scottish character, and became embodied in the life and activity of the Church (e.g. in her impartial application of discipline). Because existence was hard, the Scots were traditionally independent, hard-working, rough and relatively uncultured, but notably intelligent and religious. Until at least 1750, few Scotsmen had time to cultivate the refinements and graces -- nor the class distinctions and social snobbery -- of more leisurely and cultured living. As we have seen, however, by the end of the 18th century this egalitarian sentiment, and with it the rebel strain, had virtually disappeared from the Church and from social life. Until the last decades of the 19th century it found no place in the Church -- apart from a few isolated and unrepresentative individuals -- and was kept alive almost exclusively in the working class radical tradition.

2. In the Chartist press, Knox and the Scottish Reformers were frequently praised as the great champions of the liberty and freedom of the common people against the tyranny of the rich and powerful. (Cf. The Chartist Circular, June 20, 1840, p. 159). One writer likened the opposition to Chartism to the opposition encountered by "Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wallace, Tell and Washington." (Ibid., September 28, 1839, p. 5). The prophetic social teaching of the Reformers and their opposition to the civil 'powers that be' and the aristocracy, was often pointed out in order to contrast it with the present-day preaching of 'passive obedience' to the poor and the clergy's subservience to men of wealth, political power, and social position. Because of his outspoken criticism of 'the powers that be', one writer even declared that "John Knox was a zealous Radical Reformer -- a Democrat -- a Republican, and a physical-force Chartist." (Ibid., April 3, 1841, p. 338). In the Covenanters under Persecution, Hector MacPherson has noted that the Covenanting movement was essentially a popular movement with distinct democratic tendencies (pp. 36-7). The Covenanters were, he maintained, acutely conscious of the fact that civil authority stood under the criticism of the Word of God. They "conceived politics as social ethics, the working out in the national life of the ideas which they held of God and man's relation to Him." (p. 126). The political reformers at the time of the French Revolution, like the Chartists in this period, often appealed to the Covenanters' love of liberty and freedom when seeking to rouse the support of the Scottish people. Like the Covenanters, Chartist choirs sang those Psalms which expressed God's concern for righteousness and justice and which spoke of His judgment upon those who oppressed the people and deprived them of their rights. (T. Johnston, The History of the Working Classes in Scotland, p. 250). At the massive Chartist rally on Glasgow Green in May, 1838 "the Strathaven detachment proudly bore a flag that had been carried at Drumclog." (Ibid., p. 248). It is perhaps not without significance that the main strength of Chartism at this time, and of working class radicalism generally in the 19th century, lay in those areas in the west of Scotland where the Covenanting movement had been strongest. (Cf. Marwick, op. cit., p. 227).

But the fact that it was this Church -- the Church of the Reformers and Coventers; the Church claiming to be 'the Church of the people' -- which had, in this critical period of Scottish history, not merely turned away from her traditional role in the struggle for the people's rights and liberties, but had come to accept and even to defend the aristocratic temper of society, its class structure and its economic inequalities, only made the Chartist disillusionment with the Churches more acute.

It is not too much to say that it is in pages of the Chartist press -- not the church press -- that one encounters something of that biblical note of prophetic protest which had been such a marked feature of the Reformers' attitude to the social order, but which was so lamentably lacking in the contemporary Scottish Church. While the Church's teaching regarding civil authority stressed -- rather, over-stressed -- the biblical duty of submission to 'the powers that be', it was only here -- outside the organized Church -- that there was in this period any significant emphasis on the other vital aspect of biblical teaching on civil authority, namely, the aspect of prophetic protest whereby every existing social order stands subject to Christian criticism because of its inevitable shortcomings and injustices.[1] Nowhere was the Chartist social criticism more biting than in its denunciation of the prophetic failure of the Church and her preaching and teaching of 'passive obedience' to the lower classes. In the churches and schools

> "the people are taught that passive obedience is a virtue, -- that <u>faith</u> is paramount to knowledge, and that fear of hell is more salutary for the poor man's soul, than to confide in the mercy of God. God is portrayed as a God of vengeance, who delights to punish the poor for their transgressions; and that their greatest transgression is to be discontented with their condition, and to repine at poverty. The children of the poor are thus taught to imbibe horrific ideas of God, and to dread him as an angry judge, rather than to love him as a benevolent Father. They are taught to believe that they are mercifully created to endure poverty and that the rich are very unfortunate in being born to the care and trouble of ruling over the poor. They are also taught, that God has created them <u>poor</u> for the salvation of their immortal souls: and that through tribulation they must enter into heaven. They are taught that

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1. Cf. supra, chapter 4, pp. 73-75.

to fret at their earthly privations, is to rebel against the goodness of God, for which they must incur his everlasting displeasure."[1]

Thus, ministers preach contentment to the poor and urge them to be thankful for their humble lot. But what is it, asked this writer, for which they ought to be thankful? Thankful

> "for permission to toil for a selfish master, who cares more for his dogs than for them! for permission to exist in artificial society, moved, and moving like the wheels of a 'machine'. Permission to pay grievous taxes, over which they have no control? Permission to obey laws which they have never made, and which they feel to be oppressive and unjust? Permission to be hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the rich? Permission to reside in hovels, often with a log of wood for a chair, and a bundle of straw, with a ragged sack for a bed, with the wind and rain and sleet beating at the patched casements and broken roofs, and rendering their habitations comfortless and damp; and when on their pallets of straw, they huddle together at night with hungry appetites, and aching heads, exposed to rheumatism and fever? Is it for permission to pine and starve at the loom? or to toil and groan unheard in the bowels of the earth, in danger every moment of being crushed beneath the rocks?. . . Oh! how degrading to insulted humanity. How impious to a just and benevolent Deity, -- and how perverting to the golden rule of Christianity, 'whatsoever ye would that others do unto you, do ye even so unto them'. When the poor hear these doctrines inculcated by their Christian teachers, we cannot be surprised that they become restless under their burdens, and rather incline to spend their Sabbaths by their own hearths, reading their bibles, and praying in secret to God, or listening devoutly to a pious Chartist preacher in some neighbouring house, than to have their feelings insulted with such unchristian maxims, politically mingled with religious worship."[2]

The Chartists also accused the Churches of perverting the Scriptures in order to defend existing social class distinctions. One writer said that the clergy constantly taught that in the lower classes an attitude of dutiful submission and subservience to the higher classes -- including themselves -- was a Christian virtue. It was because of such teaching of social and political veneration that the people meekly accepted their misery and poverty without complaining. Clearly, such

> "veneration for the aristocracy and the clergy is one of the most prominent causes why the doctrine of passive obedience is still so very prevalent in Whig and Conservative society. . . . If political veneration was not so religiously taught in schools and churches, the people would soon throw off their political chains. . . . We love the Gospel of Christ, and we commend it to every individual; but we dislike to hear it abused and made subservient to political deception."[3]

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1. The Chartist Circular, November 30, 1839, p. 39.

2. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

3. Ibid., December 21, 1839, p. 50.

When the doctrine of 'passive obedience' is rejected by the people, then they

> "will love their rulers only in proportion to their honesty. There is nothing in the persons and characters of aristocrats and clergymen more sacred than other men. The peasant is as sacred as the earl -- and the mechanic is as sacred as the minister; anything taught to the contrary is political deception, and it is time that it was spurned from out of the land by public opinion."[1]

A frequent complaint of Chartist lectures and writers was that ministers tended to place the blame for the misery and poverty of the lower classes not on unjust laws and institutions or on the exploitation by the rich and powerful, but rather on the human depravity of the poor victims themselves and upon God's providence. In sermons and prayers

> "the privations and sufferings of the poor, the sickness and death of thousands are ascribed to His dispensations, that ought to be laid at the door of our oppressors. . . you will hear our rotten institutions lauded to the skies -- our corrupt and venal law-makers, who crush the people to the dust by intolerable burdens -- who steep millions to the lips in degrading, life-destroying poverty, by taxes on the very bread which God has sent them as the reward of their own industry -- you will hear these cormorants eulogized as the best and wisest of men. Nay, more, when virtuous disaffection at any time agitates the bosom of society -- when the oppressed seem for a moment to shake off their stupor, and demand their rights, then you will hear the eternal wrath of God fulminated from the rostrum against all who dare to plead for the reformation of their country, and the happiness and virtue of the people:[2] and will you call this the sacred worship of Jehovah? it is a service of solemn mockery -- it is the sacrifice of truth at the shrine of mammon. . . . It would be unpalatable to refined tastes to denounce the cupidity, heartlessness and tyranny of the <u>great</u> and to bring home the misery of the poor to their oppression; consequently, they perceive that it is more politic to asperse the character of God and calumniate the impoverished people."[3]

On the other hand,

> "had the clergy, those professed apostles of peace, been subjected to one half of the privations of working-men -- had they been deprived by aristocratic

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1. <u>Ibid</u>.

2. The Chartist press regularly drew attention to sermons and prayers which contained attacks or slighting references to Chartism and other working class movements. (e.g. <u>The Scottish Patriot</u>, pp. 96 and 171; <u>The Chartist Circular</u>, pp. 40, 54, 193, 205 and 237). The Religious Tract Society was active in distributing free-of-charge in Scotland anti-Chartist sermons which had been preached in England. Some of these were reprinted in Edinburgh for Scottish distribution. (<u>The Chartist Circular</u>, pp. 193 and 237).

3. <u>Ibid</u>., July 4, 1840, pp. 165-6.

> taxation of their comforts and loaded by their oppressors with contumely when they complained, they would have thundered from the pulpit their anathema against their tyrants. . . rebellion against the iniquitous laws by which they were plundered would have luminously proved to be both scriptural and constitutional.[1]

There can be no doubt about the extent of the bitterness and hostility on the part of a large section of the working classes toward the clergy and the organized Churches in this period. Never before, in the whole history of the Reformed Church in Scotland, had the Church sunk so low in the popular estimation of the common people; never before had there been such widespread anti-clericalism. The most thoughtful workers could not understand the opposition of the Church to working class movements which seemed to be demanding only simple justice and basic human rights for the most oppressed and wretched sections of society. The almost universal condemnation by the clergy of the efforts of the people to acquire a voice in the political life of the nation and obtain by corporate action a more just share of the fruits of their labour in an increasingly wealthy society, was a bitter disappointment to the intelligent, socially aroused and politically conscious working class community.

That such workers should react against the Church was inevitable. In this Chartist period, considerable numbers of them left the regular Churches. Some withdrew to form Christian Chartist congregations; some abandoned orthodox Christianity altogether on the ground that the Churches as defenders of the status quo, were obstacles in the path of the social and economic improvement of the people.[2] The

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1. Ibid., October 31, 1840, p. 233.

2. It is probably true that because of the Church of Scotland's close alignment with the forces of social and political reaction during the French Revolution, and the none too sympathetic attitude toward democratic sentiments even in the Dissenting Presbyterian Churches, a considerable section of working class radicalism was alienated from the Church by the 1820's. In fact, throughout most of the 19th century, the Churches, having allowed the leadership in the historic struggle for civil and religious liberty and social justice to fall into other hands, had little place in their ranks for those who were inspired by the rebel strain of Wallace and Bruce, the Reformers and the Covenanters. Thus, in the last century, the radical tradition of Scottish history, was kept alive largely by those who were outside the organized Churches, yet who were constantly motivated by Christian ideals of social justice, brotherhood and equality. By

latter, being highly critical of the existing social order and anxious to bring about basic changes in it, could not hope to find in the organized Churches at that time any outlet for their Christian social concern.

Normally, wherever there was a strong local Chartist group in existence a Christian Chartist congregation was formed. This was especially so in those areas where all the local clergy were hostile to the movement and its aims, and where, because of open attacks in sermons, Chartists could not feel at home in the worship services of the existing churches. These local Chartist congregations were most numerous and active in the same years that the movement as a whole flourished. It is difficult to ascertain accurately how many Sunday services were actually being held at any given time nor the extent of the following they attracted,[1] but we do

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the 1880's, through men like Keir Hardie -- who himself came from Covenanting stock -- this rebel strain came to be embodied in the new socialist and trade union movements. Significantly, like the Chartists, the 20th century tradition of Scottish radicalism remained inspired by the ancient historical struggle of the people for freedom and justice. It "is far more concerned with Bannockburn, Stirling Bridge, Bruce and Wallace, than it is with the dictatorship of the proletariat and Karl Marx. . . . The Scots Labour man sees himself and his party as the living embodiments of the age-old tradition born of ancestral soil. He loves to think that men of his own kin fought in past centuries for ideals that are now, however changed in outward guise, fundamentally his own. To him the defenders of Scottish freedom on the battlefield, in the Council Chamber, at the stake, in the whelming flood, on the misty hillsides, in desolate hollows of the waste, in Tory-dominated Courts, in the mean rows where miners dwell, all these, and more than these, are brothers. And, indeed, though it is probable that a good deal of the historical detail of this view of Scottish history is not very accurate, who can deny the substantial truth of the main inference drawn from it." (The Scottish Socialists, pp. 22-3).

1. Churches sprang up quickly in the west, and Glasgow at one time had at least four congregations. (L. C. Wright, Scottish Chartism, p. 99). "There were at least 20 Christian Chartist Churches in existence in Scotland by the beginning of 1841, when a delegate conference of Chartist Churches was held in Glasgow. In more than 30 localities, Chartist services of worship were regularly conducted." (Wilson, op. cit., pp. 260-61). But it seems clear that services were conducted occasionally in many other towns when the itinerant Chartist lay preachers were available. The Northern Star early in 1841 stated that " 'a Chartist place of worship is now to be found on the Lord's Day in almost every town of note from Aberdeen to Ayr'." (Quoted in Wilson, p. 261). The Chartist Circular had a few months earlier claimed that Chartists "have now planted their humble places of worship in almost every corner of the land." (August 29, 1840, p. 197).

know that the Christian Chartist movement "became so powerful in 1840 and 1841 that it alarmed both the Established and the Dissenting Churches."[1]

Unlike the few socialist churches at the time, or the later Labour churches, the Christian Chartist congregations were not organized on a purely political basis nor were they mere expressions of a creedless religious humanism.[2] Though loosely

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1. Wilson "Chartism in Glasgow," Chartist Studies, p. 249. Since the Relief and Secession Churches contained a larger percentage of the pro-Chartist artisan class in their membership than the Established Church, it seems to have been among these Churches that the emergence of Christian Chartist groups posed the most serious threat. It was because of the drift of the working classes away from the Dissenting Churches that Andrew Marshall delivered his public lecture to Dissenters in December, 1840 on The Duty of Attempting to Reconcile the Unenfranchised with the Enfranchised Classes. In his lecture he claimed that due to the Churches' hostility to political reform many working people were losing all respect for ministers of the Gospel and the ordinances of the Christian Church. (p. 10). While there was nothing new in the fact that the working classes regarded the Established clergy in this way, since they have for long looked upon them as their enemies, now, he said, they were coming to view the Dissenting Churches and ministers in the same light. (p. 10). He was alarmed that at the present time large numbers of unenfranchised workers were leaving Dissenting churches to form Chartist churches or, what was worse, were leaving organized religion altogether. (p. 18). The only way to stop this trend, he said, was for ministers to display more sympathy towards the democratic aspirations of the people, then they will come back to the Dissenting Churches. (p. 19). In the March 1841 issue of The United Secession Magazine, the editor discussed at some length the strained relationship between the Chartists and the Dissenters. He claimed that the present hostility between them was quite unnecessary. (pp. 134-5). Chartists, to be consistent, he said, ought to be Voluntaries -- "Voluntarism and Chartism are indeed quite distinct, but there does not appear to be the slightest inconsistency between the two." (p. 135). In fact, the two ought to be complementary: Chartism in politics, "as professing to secure equality of civil rights, may be analogous to Voluntaryism in religion, which secures to church members an equality of religious rights." (p. 135). But, he lamented, large numbers of Chartists have left the Dissenting Churches to form their own Chartist congregations, because they believe the clergy are not sympathetic to their demand for civil liberty. Like Marshall, he urged ministers to take an interest in the legitimate grievances of the Chartists, and then they will win back the affection and support of the working people. (pp. 135-6).

2. The doctrinal basis of these churches seems to have been perfectly orthodox. (Cf. The Chartist Circular, August 29, 1840, p. 197). The Scottish Patriot on March 7, 1840 printed the regulations governing one of the Glasgow Chartist churches. (p. 153). Although naturally stressing the importance of applying the Christian faith in a practical way to the life of society, the theological basis contained all the orthodox Christian doctrines. (Ibid). The Greenock Chartist Church likewise adhered to all the historic Christian doctrines. The Constitution affirmed that the Bible contained the complete revelation of God to man; that the death of Christ was the perfect propitiation for the sins of the world; it affirmed the divinity of Christ and His resurrection. (Constitution of the Greenock Christian Chartist Church, p. 2). Regulations governing the

organized and not subject to any central control, these Chartist churches were conducted in a reverent and seemly fashion. Nor were they composed of atheists and infidels as the other Churches sometimes claimed.[1] Rather, they "were made up of ordinary working class folk, traditionally religious, who hoped to find something in their own churches suited to the needs and conditions of the nineteenth century."[2] Above all, these churches were "a manifestation of the deeply religious spirit which pervaded the Scottish Chartist agitation in its demands for civil liberty and social justice."[3]

Although it is not so regarded in Scottish Church history -- indeed, it hardly finds any place whatever in such history -- the growth of the Christian Chartist

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church included: no seat rents because unscriptural; baptism of children and adults at any age; Lord's Supper celebrated every three months with unfermented wine; minister chosen by the congregation from among their number. Two questions were asked when people became members of the church -- "Do you believe that the Scriptures contain a complete revelation of the will of God to man? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of lost sinners?" (Ibid., p. 3). It seems clear that the influence of Calvinism on the thought and character of the Scottish people in the past had been such that at this time a system of religious humanism would hardly have gained any substantial support among the rank-and-file of the working classes.

1. As we have noted, the Chartists were often charged with being infidels. This was, however, a false accusation, except, of course, in so far as their criticism of a God-ordained social and economic order could be regarded as a form of blasphemy and infidelity. The Chartist Circular claimed that "our enemies know well that we are not infidels; they know, also that we are sincere Christians, worshipping God like the primitive believers, in our humble churches, without paid priests, or tithes, or tiends or extravagent seat-rents; and this is the secret cause of their pious alarm that makes them cry out with groans and tears, 'The Church is in danger!' and 'The Chartists are infidels'." (August 29, 1840, p. 197). This writer said it was "the uncharitable practice of Tories and Whigs to designate the Chartists infidels, no doubt with the benevolent intention of making them despicable in the estimation of professing Christians, and impeding the progress of civil and religious liberty." (Ibid). Those who attended Christian Chartist Churches were called infidels, he claimed, simply because they refused to attend Tory state churches and Whig dissenting ones. (Ibid).

2. Wright, op. cit., p. 104.

3. Wilson, "The Chartist Movement in Scotland," p. 279.

movement in Scotland, involving as it did the withdrawal of a large body of the working classes from the existing Churches, represented, in a sense, but another in the line of secessions from the historic undivided Church of the Reformers. To be sure, the factors which caused this separation were quite different than the other secessions; it was of a much more temporary nature, lasting at any considerable strength only from 1840 to 1842 and in all only some 10-12 years;[1] and it was relatively small, lacking the widespread appeal and resources of, for instance, the famous Disruption, which took place at this time. But in spite of these limitations, this working class secession had a significance which has been overlooked in conventional interpretations of Scottish Church history.

Primarily, this Christian Chartist withdrawal from the regular Churches represented a most dramatic protest against the tendency in contemporary preaching and teaching to identify Christianity -- in almost idolatrous fashion -- with the social and economic status quo. It was, in reality, a judgment upon the Churches for their social conformity and prophetic failure. "It is a notorious fact," claimed the Greenock Christian Chartists,

> "that for a long series of years the working classes of Great Britain and Ireland have been fearfully oppressed, which oppression is, in our opinion, increasing daily; and it is also an undeniable truth, that those who ought to have been foremost in seeking the redress of these grievances and denouncing tyranny in every shape -- namely the Ministers of the Gospel -- have stood aloof from the contest. . . . This, indeed, they have done under the pretext that it is inconsistent with the office of the Ministry to interfere with politics. Were we disposed, however, we could easily show that this objection to assist the working millions to obtain their just and equal rights, is not founded upon truth, and that when these gentlemen have any sinister purpose to serve, they are never found in the rear in the field of political contest. In these circumstances, the members of the Christian Chartist congregation in Greenock, along with thousands of their brethren in this land, have considered it to be their duty to withdraw themselves from these men."[2]

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1. With the decline of the Chartist movement generally, by 1851 only two Chartist churches remained in Scotland. (Wilson, "Chartism in Glasgow," Chartist Studies, p. 250).

2. Constitution of the Greenock Christian Chartist Church, p. 1.

If ministers of the Gospel preached less from texts such as 'Servants, be obedient to your masters', said another Chartist critic,[1] and instead proclaimed other apostolical injunctions such as 'Masters, give to your servants that which is just and equal', the appalling poverty and distress among the lowest classes would soon be removed; if they took the 'weightier matters of the law', such as justice and mercy more seriously, then "the millions would not be in misery and slavery, nor the hundreds in affluence. The few would not trample on the many, there would be no parish paupers and no monopolizing aristocrats."[2]

However, the development of the Christian Chartist movement represented more than a protest against the Church's distorted social teaching. It also expressed a dissatisfaction with the nature of her theology. From what we have seen of the Chartist criticism of the Church, it is clear that the working classes were looking for a fuller, more radical and dynamic Christian faith than was being offered to them by the over-intellectualized, rigidly orthodox, doctrinal preaching of the time, which concerned itself almost exclusively with spiritual subjectivity, and personal piety and morality. The intelligent, socially-aroused working classes did not want a faith which provided them with a means of 'spiritual' escape from the evils and problems of society -- which was largely what the Church offered them -- but a dynamic faith which fitted them for active involvement in the real life and affairs of the world. They believed that genuine Christianity had to do with politics and economics, with the question of equality and poverty, with all the practical problems of everyday life in the harsh and competitive society in which they found themselves. Therefore, these thoughtful working-men rejected what they regarded as a false tendency in the Church's teaching, namely, to divorce theology and life,

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1. The Chartist Circular, December 28, 1839, p. 54.

2. Ibid., August 29, 1840, p.197.

faith and ethics, theory and practice:

> "We, therefore, as the followers and imitators of Jesus Christ and him crucified, wish more particularly to carry home the freedom of the Gospel to the bosom of everyone connected with our Church, and to extend the basis of the glorious work of man's redemption to the utmost bounds, that we may not be mere theorists but practical workers together."[1]

They -- like their 20th century counterparts -- wanted a Christianity that was down to earth, warm, humane and practical -- an incarnational theology. But all the contemporary Church had to offer was the abstract, cold and barren rationalism of Calvinist orthodoxy.

Thus, although the Christian Chartist movement did not become a permanent feature of Scottish Church life, it served to provide, at a relatively early stage in Scottish industrial development, a sharp warning to the Churches that the working classes who were to become increasingly powerful and militant as the century progressed, would not remain content with a Christianity which seemed to be little more than a spiritual opium dose or an expression of the economic and class interests of the privileged groups in society. Tragically, it was a warning which the Churches took more than another half century to heed. Who will say how many sensitive and socially passionate Christian working-men during the long wait that followed the decline of the Chartist churches, felt compelled to abandon the organized Church in order to be faithful to what they regarded as the deeper insights of the Gospel? How many left the Church because, paradoxically, they sincerely believed she no longer was true to the 'teachings of Christ'?[2] Not a few came to find an outlet

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1. The Scottish Patriot, March 7, 1840, p. 153. From the regulations governing one of the Christian Chartist churches in Glasgow.

2. Even in this Chartist period, there was a tendency among some of the working classes to regard most church-going Christians as hypocrites because their personal piety was not matched by an equal diligence to apply Christian teaching to the crying social evils of the day. Thus, as the century progressed, there gradually developed that almost unique feature of the British working class attitude to Christianity, namely, the acceptance of the example and teachings of Christ combined with an indifference toward the Churches because of their conservatism, their formalism, their stress on complex doctrines and creeds rather than the 'simple' teachings of Christ.

for their Christian-inspired social concern in their trade unions, and after 1880, in the various socialist movements. These came to be the centre of working class interest, just as charitable activity and 'church work' took up the energy and concern of the middle class.

CHAPTER SIX

THE UNIQUE EXCEPTION

We cannot leave this period with its almost unrelieved picture of Christian hetic failure and social conformity without drawing attention to the thought activity of a remarkable minister who was, by any standard, a most amazing ption among churchmen of his time -- Patrick Brewster of Paisley Abbey.[1] We o not only to pay tribute to the greatest prophetic figure in the Scottish ch of his day -- a man who finds little place in recorded Church history and is virtually unknown among modern churchmen[2] -- but in order to illustrate how the main body of Christian social thought had departed from the historic rmed social tradition, and how the Church ought to and could have reacted to the lopment of industrial society had she been more faithful to the Gospel and to own Reformed heritage.

Brewster, a man of great talent and ability, was the younger brother of Sir David Brewster, the noted principal of Edinburgh University. He was minister of the second charge in Paisley Abbey from 1818 until his death in 1859.

It is ironic that the name of Chalmers should be almost universally known in Scotland, not for his great churchmanship only -- for which he is rightly honoured -- but as the greatest Christian social reformer in Scotland in the 19th century, while the name of Brewster, who alone among the ministers of the Church of Scotland maintained the prophetic social tradition of the Scottish Reformers in the first half of the 19th century, should be almost unknown. As we shall see, Brewster's understanding of the social implications of the Gospel was directly opposed to that of Chalmers. He was always an outspoken critic of Chalmers' social and economic teachings, considering them to be false in theory and harsh, cruel and unchristian in their practical application. It is a fact that in spite of the present disproportionate fame of the social teaching of these two men, there is little today in Chalmers' social thought that the modern churchmen could accept, while the social emphasis of Brewster's prophetic approach remains as relevant to contemporary life as ever.

Deeply shocked by the indifference of the privileged classes to the degrading poverty and misery of large masses of the working classes in the last half of the 1830's, Brewster, drawing his inspiration from the prophetic tradition in the Old Testament and the example of the early Scottish Reformers, became a dynamic and forthright prophetic preacher whose sermons frequently touched on great public issues of the day.[1] Alike on biblical and historical grounds, Brewster claimed that it was the privilege and the imperative duty of ministers of the Church of Scotland to subject the laws and activity of governments and all the affairs of national life to the criticism of the sovereign Word of God. At a meeting of his congregation held in June 1843, he declared:

> "It is the duty of Christian ministers, in conformity with the laws and discipline of the Church of Scotland, and with the practice of her ancient worthies in her best days, to instruct the Magistrate in the exercise of his function; and if there shall be found on the national statute book any enactment at variance with the law of God -- that they denounce such enactment, and never cease to expose and condemn its iniquity till they have accomplished its repeal; and if the Christian rights and just claims of the community are disregarded, or put aside, or if the faces of the poor are ground by the Master and Ruling Class, that it is equally the duty of the faithful Ministers of God's word to vindicate those rights and assert those claims, until they have brought the people to a sense of their Christian obligation to deliver their oppressed fellow-subjects, -- and that they are bound to re-iterate such instruction, till 'every yoke is broken', and all iniquity expelled from the statute book, and all oppression banished from the land. . . . This assertion and enforcement of the supremacy of the divine law, as the test and criterion of human legislation -- this instruction of the National Magistracy for the administration of equal justice to the whole community is the true practical application of Christ's headship as King of Zion, and Prince of the Kings of the Earth, and is, at once, in strict and beautiful accordance with the principles of Christianity and the laws of the Established Church of Scotland."[2]

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1. A large number of Brewster's sermons, lectures and miscellaneous documents were published in 1843 under the title, The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses. This remarkable volume reveals a type of prophetic preaching which had been rarely heard in Scotland for over a century. The frank and free style of these sermons, the comprehensive nature of their message, and their keen biblical and theological insight into the causes of the injustice, poverty and social misery of the time sets them apart as unique among the sermons of the period. This volume is, without doubt, the outstanding example of genuine Christian social criticism in Scotland in the first half of the 19th century.

2. Ibid., pp. 423-4.

To his ministerial brethren who frequently charged that such preaching involved him in "worldly and secular affairs and politics,"[1] Brewster replied that

> "there is complete evidence on record -- in Acts of Assembly -- in the Solemn League and Covenant, and in the practice of the leading Reformers, that they regarded such preaching as an essential part of the duty of a Christian Minister."[2]

Those, he said, who preached the Word of God to the souls of men but neglected its application to the nation's life were perverting the Gospel and robbing it of its power:

> "To preach Christ crucified. . . without preaching the UNIVERSALITY of God's law, which Christ 'came to fulfil', would not be to preach 'the truth as it is in Jesus'. To preach a mere fraction of revealed truth without preaching obedience to the divine law in all the affairs of life, would neither be preaching the word of God nor the Gospel of Christ. Christ is 'PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH'; and his kingdom, though not of this world, yet ruleth over all. This is the true HEADSHIP of the Son of God. . . . He must be acknowledged and served as the 'King of kings, and Lord of Lords'. We must take the law of his word as our guide and director in all the affairs of life, holding and asserting its SUPREMACY over every other law, and demanding that all the acts, whether legislative or executive, of RULERS AND MAGISTRATES, shall be tested and judged by his supreme will, and that all human statutes by which nations are governed, shall be brought into harmony and accordance with his holy and unerring requirements."[3]

It is impossible, he claimed in one sermon, to

> "separate religion from Politics. The Bible is full of politics; and to imagine that men can be innocent, in giving their support to the measures of unrighteous and oppressive rulers, or in opposing and frustrating those of a just and paternal government, is a thing that will hardly be maintained; and he who cares not about the character of the men who administer the affairs of his country, or is willing to wink at their iniquities, or to thwart their patriotism, may be a fit tool for the support of a bad government, but cannot be either a good citizen, an honest man, or a sincere Christian."[4]

It is a fact

> "that they who pretend to teach religion without politics have never kept their

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1. Ibid., p. 419.

2. Ibid., p. 417. On pp. 418-9, Brewster supported this claim with numerous examples quoted from early Reformed documents such as the Books of Discipline, General Assembly pronouncements, etc.

3. Ibid., pp. 419-20.

4. Ibid., pp. 63-4.

> own precept; but have always inculcated obedience to those rulers who were for them and their interests; but this was not politics! There was 'power on the side of the oppressor', and they taught submission to his exactions; but this was not politics! They had an interest in the institutions of their country, and they contended for existing abuses; but still this was not politics!"[1]

Brewster was highly critical of the clergy for their preaching of 'passive obedience' to the lower classes.[2] They "teach the people THAT THE AFFAIRS OF GOVERNMENT BELONG ONLY TO RULERS, and that the only duties of the people are OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION."[3] He regarded this interpretation of obedience to the 'powers that be' as a perversion of Scripture and claimed it betrayed a false understanding of God's providence. It is "nothing less than blasphemy proceeding from a stupid inattention to the character of God and to the rights and duties of men"[4] to preach

> "that the will of God is actually done in all the events of life. . . to infer that the condition -- whether prosperous or adverse, comfortable or calamitous, virtuous or vicious -- of each human being is just what God intended it to be, and that there is equal reason, therefore, for exhorting all men to be resigned and contented, in whatever circumstances they may be placed."[5]

Such teaching, Brewster charged, merely played into the hands of the exploiting classes.[6] Understandably, many of the working classes react against it when they hear it,

> "and rashly extend their dislike to the Bible itself, and taking for granted that a true description has been given of it by its too timid and unfaithful

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1. Ibid., p. 64.

2. Cf. his "Essay on Passive Obedience," reprinted on pp. 276-313 of The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses.

3. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

4. Ibid., p. 187.

5. Ibid., p. 183. We have already noted the tendency of the clergy to ascribe distress such as famines, plagues, unemployment, poverty, Highland clearances etc. to the direct and positive will of God.

6. Ibid., pp. 6-10 and 234-5.

expositors, they regard it as a thing of human invention to enthral and oppress them."[1]

On the other hand, the privileged classes who are often aware that such teaching has 'corrupted and adulterated' the divine word, "are pleased with it because it accords well with their worldly views, and temporal interests."[2] In words of prophetic power, he declared:

> "Never will man be restored, permanently, to his rights as a man and never will Christianity be brought back to its native dignity and power, till it is again preached in its unmixed purity, and unshorn strength, -- till it is made to penetrate the PALACE of the rich, as well as the COTTAGE of the poor, -- and the COTTAGE of the poor as well as the PALACE of the rich; and to strike with the thunder of its rebuke and the terror of its frown, the proud heart of him, who, by his consent to a wicked law, is accessory to the daily perpetration of ten thousand robberies. . . . If to preach such doctrines be politics, then such be our politics and our preaching, for they were the politics and the preaching of the holy Prophets and Apostles -- aye and of the great Lord of the vineyard himself, who, descending from the glories and blessedness of eternity, met shame and contempt and death, that he might bring deliverance in time, and salvation through eternity, to the sinful, the suffering, and the oppressed children of men."[3]

Almost alone among the clergy of the period, Brewster perceived that the cause of the widespread poverty and distress in society was the grossly unequal distribution of the nation's wealth. In one of his 'military' sermons he declared:

> "What is the cause of so much poverty and suffering in the wealthiest and most prosperous nation in the world. It is not want of wealth nor want of food. There is enough of both, and more than enough for all. But while some are wasting the gifts of God's bounty and the fruits of man's industry, and actually rioting in luxurious abundance, others, the producers of that abundance, are pining in want, amidst the tears of hungry families, and suffering most painfully, in the midst of plenty, all the privations of an actual famine. Can all be right when such is the condition of the greater portion of those by whose incessant toil the rest are fed, and are maintained in ease and comfort. Cast your eye over the land and count the number of idlers who are each consuming the head of a thousand families, -- consuming what neither their own labour, nor the labour of their fathers even produced; but what they acquired at first by the hand of power alone. They have eaten up the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in their houses and in the houses of

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1. Ibid., p. 14. Here, Brewster had the insight to discern that religion easily degenerated into 'the opiate of the people' long before Kingsley or Marx expressed it in that famous phrase. He saw that not infrequently, even in Britain, "the word of God is mutilated and garbled, and is moulded to the taste and interests of. . . Rulers." (Ibid., p. 13).

2. Ibid., p. 14.

3. Ibid., pp. 33-4.

all who profit by their iniquity. Is this what God's holy word requires, when it declares, that all men are equal in his sight and that he is no respecter of persons. . . when it commands us, in imitation of the love of the Redeemer to mankind, not only to share with the destitute our worldly goods, but if need be, to lay down our lives for the brethren."[1]

In another sermon, he launched a devastating attack on the selfishness, greed and class prejudice of the rich and powerful who were professing Christians:

"Trained up by their habits of thought and feeling to a very different condition of mind from that which is characteristic of the christian spirit, -- so far from regarding mankind as brethren, whom they are bound to love as themselves, and whose well-being, after the example of their great master, they are, at all times, willing and desirous to promote, with the kindness of equals, and the reciprocal service of friends and brothers -- they view them in reality, as creatures made for their special use and elevation, -- creatures, human indeed, but with whom, though human themselves, they have hardly one sentiment in common, or one sympathy in unison, -- nay whom; when it suits their interests, they can oppress and plunder, as if they were beings of a lower order, and different nature. . . . Are they not the willing and conscious violations of the heaven-revealed equality of man? Have they not 'had respect to persons?' Have they not 'despised' and 'oppressed' the poor? Are they not guilty in the sight of a Just and Holy God?"[2]

Elsewhere Brewster denounced the social and economic consequences of the exercise of irresponsible power by the privileged classes:[3]

"That all-grasping selfishness, which, having been successful in the game of life, wraps itself up in its own exclusive privilege, and heaps upon its own person the honours and wealth and comforts of a people, and grudges the elevation of the multitude as an encroachment upon its overgrown greatness --

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1. Ibid., pp. 157-8. 2. Ibid., pp. 218-9.

3. Brewster had an amazingly accurate theological insight into the social nature of sin. As far as one can judge from the preaching of the time, Calvinist orthodoxy had given most ministers only a spiritual, personal, individualized conception of sin. But Brewster was acutely conscious of its corporate nature -- how it manifested itself in laws and institutions and in class and economic self-interest. He claimed that the primary cause of the misery and injustice in society was the irresponsible power exercised by the ruling classes. Therefore, he claimed that all power must be made responsible. But Brewster wisely saw that the sin of self-interest which issued in social injustice and exploitation was not confined to particular social, economic or national groups, but was a universal malady. It "is not indigenous to any country, nor peculiar to any government, nor the crime of any one class of men; but springs spontaneously from the uncurbed selfishness of the human heart. Never, therefore, ought man to be trusted with an irresponsible authority over man." (Ibid., p. 309).

as derogating from the pride of its ancestral name and incompatible with the maintenance of its lordly state, -- is indeed a cruel invasion upon the rights of humanity."[1]

Not surprisingly, such prophetic preaching was hardly pleasing to the ears of the higher classes, nor to the vast majority of Brewster's fellow Church of Scotland ministers. Consequently, not only his preaching but his open advocacy of Chartism and other popular causes abhorred by churchmen, involved him in constant controversy, and made him the object of several investigations by the church courts.[2] While

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1. Ibid., pp. 308-9.

2. Brewster first came into conflict with the church courts in 1835, when he attended a public dinner in honour of Daniel O'Connell, the Irish nationalist leader and prominent radical member of Parliament. Both Paisley Presbytery and the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr condemned Brewster's attendance at this function honouring a voluntary, a Roman Catholic and a 'revolutionist', as being disrespectful and injurious to the principles of the Church of Scotland. Brewster brought his appeal before the Commission of the General Assembly claiming that church courts were out of order in attempting to rule on his attendance at a dinner given for a purely political purpose. (Cf. The Church Review and Scottish Ecclesiastical Magazine, pp. 86-93, ff. July 1836 issue). He claimed that if those present at the dinner had been on the 'right side of politics' he would not have been called to account. (Ibid., p. 88). The Commission of Assembly, however, upheld the censure of Presbytery and Synod by a vote of 46 to 3. (Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, June 2, 1836 meeting of the Commission, p. 87). In 1840, Brewster's Presbytery denied him the opportunity to be a Commissioner to the General Assembly although it was his regular turn by rotation (The Witness, April 8, 1840, p. 4). The reasons advanced for this action were largely political in nature. They included the charge that he was neglecting his parish duties in order to attend political meetings whose object was disapproved of. In this connection, speakers mentioned not only his (Chartist) political activities, but also his advocacy of the repeal of the Corn Laws, a policy which, it was stated, would be ruinous to the landed classes. (Ibid). However, more serious clashes with the church courts arose over the nature and content of his prophetic preaching. The most famous of these controversies lasting for 2½ years arose over a few sermons preached in a Christian Chartist church in Glasgow and several others delivered in his own church. (These sermons form the bulk of his published volume of discourses). Although, as we have seen, these sermons were dynamic and outspoken, they were in every respect in keeping with the type of preaching which marked the prophetic tradition in the Bible and which was so evident among the Scottish Reformers. This controversy began in 1841 when Glasgow Presbytery accused Brewster of preaching in a Chartist church sermons whose 'drift and tendency' was "to excite the humbler against the higher classes of society." (The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses, p. 410). Subsequently, Paisley Presbytery set up a committee to inquire into Brewster's conduct and preaching, and the nature of the charges ultimately brought against him are revealing. The main charge was that his sermons tended to disturb the harmony and peace of society especially at a time of severe unemployment and bad economic conditions. He was accused of using

taking a large share in those middle class reform movements which most progressive Dissenting ministers supported -- i.e. the anti-slavery and Corn Law repeal agitations -- Brewster more than any other minister in Scotland at this time, sought to identify himself with the sufferings and misery of the poor and the hopes and aspirations of the common people. This he did by vigorously championing working class causes which even his more enlightened fellow clergy carefully avoided.[1]

On most of the great social issues of the day, Brewster's views were diametrically opposed to those of Chalmers and the vast majority of his fellow clergy. Not

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strong and insulting language by referring to the heartless and cruel treatment of the poor by the aristocracy and of teaching the lower classes to rouse themselves and demand their just rights and freedom, thus tending to make them discontented and dissatisfied with their lot. (Cf. Ibid., p. 416). Ultimately, the controversy between Brewster and his accusers moved to the Synod level and at length to the General Assembly. Although armed with a petition signed by 1,600 members of his congregation denying the charges of the Presbytery against him, the Commission of Assembly in June 1842 found grounds for a libel against Brewster and he was suspended from his ministerial duties for one year. (Report of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, June 1842, pp. 292-7). As it turned out, however, due to delays in formulating the libel and further developments arising out of the Disruption, the actual suspension was never carried out. It is clear from the substance of the proceedings of the case that once again the charges against Brewster were strongly conditioned by political considerations. His association with the Chartists and other radical elements and the outspoken tone of his social criticism was more than most churchmen could bear and was quite out of keeping with what was "expected from a minister of the gospel of peace." (Ibid., p. 293). Brewster made a brilliant appeal insisting that he could defend every word he had said by the Bible. He rightly saw he was a victim of political persecution and charged that he did not preach 'secular' or 'worldly' politics any more than his accusers did: "They preached submission to the civil power without anyone questioning them; but when he preached justice for the oppressed and bread for the hungry, then he was found fault with." (Ibid., p. 297). Perhaps the noted Free Church Minister, Walter C. Smith writing three decades later, was not far wrong when he observed that: "In those days the clergy were all Tories; a Radical like Patrick Brewster of Paisley was looked on as little better than an infidel." (Good Words, September 1872, p. 511).

1. Brewster criticized those clergy who regarded the Corn Law repeal agitation alone as a religious issue; "It is undeniably a religious question, but it is no more a religious question than any other question of justice and mercy. . . . The ministers of religion in this country, have allowed the people to be oppressed and plundered without seeing it to be their duty to interfere on their behalf, their excuse being, that, as the teachers of Religion their function was spiritual and they have nothing to do with politics. Now, however, a section of them find that they have something to do with politics, and in order to make their plea for interference look a little better, they find that any law affecting the supply of human food has a stronger claim upon their attention, than any other

only was he alone among Church of Scotland ministers in supporting Chartism, but he was actually one of the most prominent of the leaders of the Scottish movement; he was almost alone among Established Churchmen of his time in denouncing the selfishness and cruelty of the aristocracy and the injustice done to the crofters in connection with the Highland clearances;[1] while he was among a small minority in urging a national system of education. Brewster was especially concerned about the plight of the poor and the unemployed. Long before the agitation by the Poor Law reformers led by Wm. Alison in the 1840's, he had advocated a universal compulsory system of poor relief including the granting of a legal right to relief to the able-bodied unemployed. He accused his own Church of betraying the poor and denying them their historic rights by opposing a system of legal relief and by making the receipt of public assistance a degradation.[2] It was because of the opposition of the Church and the aristocracy to poor law reform, he said, that the sufferings of Scotland's "poor from unrelieved destitution are a thousand-fold greater than in England."[3] For

> "the system in Scotland is one of fraud and injustice. It sets at defiance all law and right -- all humanity and mercy. It has a wisdom of its own,

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law, as if the command to deliver the poor and needy did not comprehend every unjust law by the operation of which, the poor and the needy were suffering oppression, and as if they were not equally bound by that command to rid all the poor and needy, -- who were in any way and in any degree oppressed, -- out of hand of the wicked." (Ibid., pp. 213-4).

1. Cf. The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses, pp. 116-7, 202-221. In the libel brought against Brewster he was charged with "stating that the hardy highlanders were frequently driven from the lands they occupied by the cruel landlords, men who claimed a right to God's earth, and that the said highlanders were thus necessitated to become men of war, and so the victims and slaves of their Rulers." (Ibid., p. 416).

2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 79-111, 123-33. Brewster saw the disastrous consequence of the Church's attitude to the poor in Paisley where thousands who were unemployed in the late 30's were unable to obtain relief and consequently were in terrible destitution and misery. Many who were entitled to relief would not condescend to seek it because it had been made a degradation. He knew of cases of helpless poor in his own parish who had been allowed to starve to death. (Ibid., pp. 406-8).

3. Ibid., p. 94.

and a worship of its own, -- the wisdom of the world, and the worship of Mammon. Its constant aim and tendency is to give nothing at all."[1]

Brewster detested the so-called immutable laws of political economy taught by halmers and his followers and almost universally accepted and preached by the clergy. e was particularly critical of Malthusianism which he branded an "Infidel Philosphy. . . whose direct tendency is to break up the elements of society, and to estroy the authority of all law human and divine."[2] He claimed that it was ecause of the worship of this false dogma that the misery and distress of the ower classes was allowed to continue unrelieved. For it tells us when we see uffering to give nothing at all,

> " 'for relief of every kind only reproduces the suffering in another shape'. 'Let the poor suffer that their sufferings may be a lesson to themselves and others, to avoid poverty, by industry and economy, providence and thrift'. 'Leave the poor to their own resources, -- the spectacle of suffering has a salutary effect upon others'. 'The relieving of them at all does mischief by increasing pauperism and encouraging immorality'."[3]

hese doctrines "are as unchristian as they are inhuman. They are the words of an -- of unbelieving, unfeeling man -- and are diametrically opposed to the word nd wisdom of God."[4]

Although Brewster sympathized with the non-intrusion cause and regarded the atronage system as a terrible evil because it had alienated the most progressive lements in society from the Established Church,[5] he could not bring himself to

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. Ibid., p. 100. 2. Ibid., p. 95. 3. Ibid., pp. 98-9. 4. Ibid., p. 99.

. Toward the end of his life, Brewster wrote a pamphlet entitled The Plague of Patronage, which was published in 1860, the year after his death. It was largely an attack on the patronage system for its tendency to make the Church of Scotland subservient to the power and interests of the ruling classes, and the aristocracy. He claimed patronage had turned the Church of the Reformers into a tool of the forces of social reaction. These forces "saw the vast advantage of a weekly platform in every parish pulpit, preaching submission to the powers that be, submission by the people to whatever evils and sufferings befell them." (p. 9). In this way, the pulpit had been shackled and the Gospel robbed of its power. "The great majority of men of all classes are the slaves of self-interest. Ministers are no exception" (p. 11), therefore, they bow to the will of the patron and the ruling classes in order to retain their position. Consequently, he said, the vast majority of ministers reflect the social views of the small ruling elite and refuse to consider the popular rights and just demands of the people. Quite naturally, they will not quarrel with their daily bread. (p. 12). However, Brewster concluded, in spite of all the efforts of the higher classes

join the Free Church. He was unable to do so because of the reactionary social outlook and the anti-popular bias expressed by so many Free Church leaders. He believed he would have less freedom to preach the full implications of the Gospel -- social as well as personal -- in the Free Church than in the Establishment, for the experience of his conflicts with the church courts concerning the content and application of his preaching had taught him that the Evangelical and non-intrusion clergy "with a few of the forty were the leaders in this crusade against the freedom of the pulpit."[1] When the actual Disruption took place, Brewster, moved by the principles and the sacrifice made by the non-intrusionists and tempted to join them, was finally convinced he could not do so when he heard Chalmers' opening address as Moderator of the first Free Church Assembly:

> "I ventured to think it not impossible that I might yet be permitted to cast my lot with the many zealous men who had followed them out of the Establishment. But the door was quickly barred aginst me by their illustrious Moderator, whose opening speech -- cheered to the echo -- painfully convinced me, that I should have still less freedom, in the FREE Church, than ever within the pale of the Establishment; and that wherever my foot might find a resting place, it could not be among those who, without one dissentient voice, had solemnly denounced the millions of their oppressed countrymen, -- to whose liberation I had devoted my humble labours, and who were peacefully and constitutionally seeking the redress of their intolerable wrongs -- as anarchists and rebels."[2]

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to 'use' the Church to their own selfish ends, they have failed, for "in seeking to rule the people through the pulpit, they have demoralized their instrument -- lowered its tone -- secularized its divinity -- broken its charm -- laid bare the cheat -- and thus, have driven the people into dissent, and masses of them into unbelief and heathenism." (p. 13).

1. Brewster, op. cit., p. 420.

2. Ibid., pp. 422-3. This seems to have been a reference to a section of Chalmers' speech where he said: " 'There can be no common understanding, for there is no common object, between you and the lovers of mischief. The lessons which you inculcate are all on the side of peace and social order. . . if on the flag of your truly free and constitutional Church you are willing to inscribe that you are no Voluntaries then still more there will be an utter absence of sympathy on your part with the demagogue and agitator of the day -- so that in golden characters may be seen and read of all men this other inscription, that you are no anarchists'." (Quoted in Mechie, op. cit., p. 113). Brewster rightly interpreted these words as an attack on popular movements such as Chartism which were seeking civil rights for the working classes.

Clearly, it was supremely and almost uniquely through this remarkable minister of the Gospel that the historic prophetic tradition was preserved in the Church of Scotland in the first half of the 19th Century. It was far from an easy or popular task to be a prophet in the Church in these years. The Church did not want an Amos or a Jeremiah in her pulpits preaching social justice and righteousness. No one was more acutely aware of this than Brewster himself:

> "Any Christian minister preaching the word of God in its universal application and attempting to inculcate the exercise of those virtues upon all classes of men equally without respect to persons, and demanding of the rich and powerful, -- not purity, gentleness, peaceableness, and all that beautiful train of virtues. . . but only a single virtue, the virtue of JUSTICE. . . any such minister need not be surprised, if he meet with opposition, reproach and persecution."[1]

The tragedy for the Church was that in these critical years of social, political and economic transformation there were not more ministers who had the courage to exercise their prophetic responsibility in society; who saw the crying need to subject the whole corporate life of society -- its laws, practices and institutions, its centres of social and economic power -- to Christian criticism. Few of the clergy were able to rise sufficiently above the limitations of their own economic and class interests and the conservative tendencies of the institutional Church structure to engage in any serious social criticism. The amazing thing is that a prophetic figure like Brewster could arise and survive in the Church of Scotland considering the climate of social opinion in that body in these decades. Yet he did, and by so doing he kept alive an authentic spark of Christian social criticism in the Scottish Church when it had almost disappeared.

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1. Ibid., p. 248.

P A R T III

THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECOVERY

OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

1850 -- 1950

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PROPHETIC FAILURE CONTINUES 1850 - 1880

This mid-Victorian period has often been described as the golden age of the 19th century -- as the age of Victorian prosperity and optimism. By 1850, the nation was emerging as the workshop of the world. From mid-century until almost the close of this period, Britain enjoyed the rich rewards of the lead which she had achieved over her foreign competitors in the industrial race. Scotland, no less than England, shared to the full in this growing prosperity.

These years saw further rapid industrial progress in Scotland, bringing far-reaching social and economic changes. Her population continued to grow at an amazing rate, increasing by almost one million people -- from 2,888,742 in 1851 to 3,735,573 in 1881; life became more urbanized as the towns expanded and rural depopulation continued; while changes in the means of communication and transport -- especially the opening of the speedy rail connections with England -- did much to stimulate industrial expansion and trade. Perhaps most significant of all, heavy industry, concentrated in the lowland belt between the Forth and the Clyde, came to dominate the Scottish economy in these decades:

> "Blast-furnaces, malleable iron-works, foundries, engineering shops, and iron shipbuilding yards, especially after 1860, completely overshadow the older textile industries. The changes wrought in this period in the economic organization of the west of Scotland are just as important as the transition from the spinning-wheel to the power-driven mill, and the social problems created were even more devastating."[1]

Most of the social evils which had plagued industrial Scotland in the 1830's and 40's continued throughout this period with little or no improvement. Indeed,

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1. Henry Hamilton, The Industrial Revolution in Scotland, p. 1.

they appeared to be more acute than ever because of the greater economic gap that separated the wealthier and poorer sections of the community. The new wealth which society produced and which made Scotland one of the richest nations -- some say the richest nation -- in the world was badly distributed. Although, until the first serious commercial slump came in 1873, unemployment was not so widespread a problem for the working classes as it had been before 1850, most workers shared but little in the growing national wealth. It was almost exclusively the middle classes that reaped the rewards of the new age of prosperity. Thus, while the rich became richer, the poor became relatively poorer.[1] It became more obvious than ever that there were, as Disraeli put it, Two Nations; and few of the higher classes believed it could or should be otherwise. One colliery landowner aptly expressed the sentiments of his class: " 'There must be rich and poor -- there must be fortunate and unfortunate, for blessed purposes; for if there were no poor there would be no sweet and holy charity'."[2]

For one Nation life was pleasant and comfortable, affording ample opportunities for refined and cultured living. For the other Nation life was a perpetual struggle against an environment which constantly threatened to crush and destroy them -- a struggle against the de-humanizing effects of long and hard, dull and monotonous labour; against degrading and soul-destroying existence in dirty, overcrowded, gaunt slum tenements and sordid miners' rows;[3] against poverty and destitution,

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1. After 1845, the amount of pauperism gradually rose until it reached its peak in 1868 when over 130,000 persons or almost 42 per 1,000 of the population were on poor relief. But even this alarming figure did not begin to tell the whole story of the extent of the destitution and hardship among the lower classes, for the able-bodied poor were still not entitled to relief.

2. Mr. Baillie Cochrane of Cambusnethan, quoted in the North British Daily Mail, October 27, 1863. As quoted in Johnston, op. cit., p. 330.

3. As we shall observe in examining the Church's attitude to the state of working class housing, the large increase in population in the industrial towns throughout these decades meant that, in general, housing conditions for the mass of the working classes were even worse than in the first half of the century.

malnutrition, ill-health, disease and early death.[1]

In spite of the Factory and Mining Acts passed in the 1830's and 40's, real improvement in the conditions of labour had only begun by mid-century. Textile workers had not won an effective 10 hour day; there was no protection for the thousands of workers in the 'sweat shops'; miners' hours remained unlimited and their injury and death rate continued at an appallingly high level.[2] Worst of all, child labour was still prevalent in this period for large sections of industry remained exempt from the Factory Acts:[3]

> "In 1856 less than one-third of Scots factory children could read or write; and in 1861 there were alleged to be no fewer than 33,000 children in Glasgow of school age who were not at school; 'many are employed in dye-works and foundries ten or twelve hours daily at the age of eight or nine'."[4]

Statistics revealed that "in the first half of 1850 there were 323 accidents in Scots factories; of these 183 were to children and young persons."[5] In the 1860's, newspaper investigations and factory inspectors detected a tendency among many factory owners to displace adult workers whenever possible with cheaper child

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1. For the lowest classes, life expectation was short. Death was always very near, especially for the children of the poor. In 1863 over "60 per cent. of all the deaths in Glasgow occurred among children under 10 years of age." (T. Ferguson, The Dawn of Scottish Social Welfare, p. 302). The following year "witnessed the highest death rate ever recorded in Scotland -- 23.58 deaths per 1,000 of the population." (Ferguson, Scottish Social Welfare 1864-1914, p. 28). "The major epidemic diseases, though not so dominant as formerly, still caused a great deal of death, disability and disorganization. Cholera, smallpox and typhus fever were still forces to be feared." (Ibid., p. 1).

2. In 1869, "the Liberal North British Daily Mail declared that 1,000 lives were being annually 'sacrificed in the coal mines', and the average miner was physically finished for work at 50 years of age." (Quoted in Johnston, op. cit., p. 343).

3. In 1862, "there were still almost 100,000 British children under one pretext or another outwith the protection of the Factory Acts. In Scotland, a child under 13 in a print works might still be employed from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. all the week. At the lace works. . . there still were children five years old working from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m." (Johnston, op. cit., p. 326).

4. North British Daily Mail, October 21, 1861, quoted in Johnston, op. cit., p. 321.

5. Johnston, op. cit., p. 320.

labour,[1] while throughout these decades, small boys of ten and eleven years of age still laboured underground in the mines. Not until 1887 did Parliament at last prohibit the employment of boys under 12 years.[2]

Clearly, life for the largest Nation remained harsh, brutal and degrading throughout these years. By the latter part of the century, the marks of the working classes' miserable existence in the slums, factories and mines were fully evident in the minds, the spirits and, not least, the bodies of its victims. After such an ordeal, "small wonder," remarks one historian, "that the military authorities were compelled to lower the height standard for Scottish regiments from 5 feet 6 inches in 1845 to 5 feet 2 inches in 1897."[3]

A. The Social, Political and Economic Thought of the Church

(1) Social and Economic Inequalities

By mid-century the Church had become increasingly aware of the existence of Two Nations in Scotland, and how extensively the lower Nation was alienated from the organized Churches and practising Christianity. Every industrial town had its west end and its east end:

> "If we inspect our great towns from one end to the other, how fair the array of dwellings within and without in one quarter! how perfect the arrangements for health, cleanliness and good order! how well arranged the families, well trained the children, well provided the domestics! What Sabbath-day regularity, with well filled churches, and well supplied pulpits! Christianity has doubtless done its work. Piety, learning, good morals, kind and liberal charities, have their station here. But turn into the adjoining lane; make your inspection after a ten minutes' walk in another direction. We need not

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1. Ibid., p. 313. The August 25, 1869 issue of the North British Daily Mail reported that "during the period 1857-1862 adult male labour had decreased by 18 per cent., while child male labour had increased by 53 per cent., and child female labour by 78 per cent." (Ibid).

2. Ibid., p. 349.

3. G. M. Thomson, A Short History of Scotland, p. 280.

> repeat the tale so often told, of sunken ignorance, sordid want, reckless brutality that are close at hand, mixed up here and there with interesting specimens of the better material. Are your people, a foreigner might ask, all of one race? Do they speak the same tongue, live under the same sky? Do they never by any chance come into contact? Are they absolute strangers to each other's persons, thoughts, and habits?"[1]

In these degraded areas, said one Established churchman, those from the 'other side' of town

> "who pass by with rapid step, each absorbed in his own business, form no real part of this scene, except insofar as their apparent indifference to all they see, adds, if possible, to the impressiveness of the picture, marking, as it does, one of its saddest features -- that state of society which, in spite of Christianity, has made 'So wide a difference between man and man'."[2]

However, while churchmen regretted the growing gap between rich and poor, higher and lower classes, churched and unchurched, they remained as blind as ever to the real cause of the social disintegration of society. They still failed to realize, even in these later decades when the nation became increasingly wealthy, that the misery and poverty of the lower Nation was the product of the new social and economic inequalities which had arisen out of the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Rather, they continued to believe that the plight of the lower classes was primarily due to a personal moral and spiritual inadequacy in the majority of those who composed this class. Therefore, in spite of the further drawing apart of the Two Nations -- socially and economically -- in these years, churchmen as yet never questioned the basis of the existing social and economic order. As far as can be ascertained, none of the clergy, even the most progressive and enlightened, seriously doubted the convenient assumption of the privileged classes that it was both right (i.e. God-ordained), and necessary that there should be high and low, rich and poor; that there would always be a large mass of the people at the base of the social pyramid whose function it was to be 'hewers of

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1. The Free Church Magazine, June 1847, p. 199.

2. The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, April 1850, p. 16.

wood and drawers of water' for those whose birth and industry had earned them a cultured existence and a freedom from ordinary common labour. As one of the most liberal and progressive Free Church ministers of the time expressed it:

> "All cannot be ladies and gentlemen; all cannot attain to a refined and easy mode of life; the vast majority must continue to be hard workers, content with mere food and raiment, hewers of wood and drawers of water. This is the inexorable law of Providence, and it were about as wise to change the law of gravitation as to interfere with this."[1]

What was required, therefore, of the working classes -- who formed, as it were, the hands and feet of the body politic -- was not discontent and dissatisfaction with their lowly and laborious lot, but hard-work, thrift, diligence and industry in that place in which God had placed them. Only in this way would they find true contentment and happiness and be able to prevent themselves from falling into destitution and degrading pauperism; only in this way could they fulfil their duty to God and their social function in society. It was absolutely essential that working class parents teach their children the importance of these virtues, for the social peace and harmony of the nation depended upon the obedience and hard work of the masses. After all,

> "it is you who supply our factories with hands, our ships with seamen, our army with soldiers, and our houses with servants. . . . In the name of thousands, I say, Have mercy upon us! -- and give us sober, industrious, honest men and women. . . . Save us, we beseech of you, from the blaspheming infidel, the filthy sensualist, the insane drunkard, the coarse and rude savage, the leader of riots, the contriver of plots, the spouter of nonsense, the preacher of rebellion, the instigator of strikes, and the tyrant of all!"[2]

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1. William G. Blaikie, Better Days for Working People, (1867 edition), p. 85. The same sentiments were expressed in the revised 1881 edition. Blaikie, one of the leaders of the Free Church in the 19th century, was minister of Pilrig Free Church -- a working class congregation -- from 1844 until 1868, when he became professor of Apologetical and Pastoral Theology at New College. He died in 1899. More than any other Free Church minister of his day, apart from James Begg, Blaikie concerned himself with the working and housing conditions of the labouring classes. His social thought was typical of the politically liberal, comfortably situated, middle class clergy of the last half of the 19th century.

2. The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, April 1855, pp. 6-7. From an article addressed to the working classes concerning their children. It is likely that this article was written by the editor, Norman MacLeod. Like many of the contributions to this magazine, this one was signed 'N'.

It is not surprising that there was as yet no indication of a recovery of prophetic social criticism in the Scottish Church,[1] for throughout this period her basic social attitudes and presuppositions, like her theology -- which remained almost uniformly orthodox until the last quarter of the century -- changed very little from what they had been in the 1830's and 40's.[2] If in contemporary sources of church opinion there was somewhat less emphasis on the divine ordination of all existing economic inequalities and much less preaching of an unquestioning 'passive obedience' to existing laws and authority, there was no less insistence that

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1. As in the 1830-50 period, the higher courts of the three Churches in these years took no interest in contemporary social issues apart, of course, from such matters as intemperance, Sabbath observance, etc. The only exception was, as we shall see, the concern of the Free Church General Assembly for several years over the state of working class housing.

2. In these middle years of the Victorian era, the social position of the clergy remained high. The Church continued to draw the overwhelming majority of her ministers from the ranks of the evangelical and prosperous middle classes. However, from various quarters, some concern was expressed over the fact that ministers' stipends had not kept pace with the rapidly increasing incomes of other professional classes, and that fewer of the sons of upper class families were coming into the ministry. In his moderator's address in 1862, Thomas Guthrie advocated higher stipends for the clergy in order to enable them to live in the manner appropriate to their high station on the social scale. (D. K. and C. J. Guthrie, Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie D. D. and Memoir, pp. 565-9). He said it was only proper that ministers' "children should receive a liberal education and be brought up to what is called a genteel life." (Ibid., p. 566). Guthrie, who was a typical, well-to-do middle class churchman, insisted that higher stipends would attract into the ministry more men from the refined upper classes that the Church needed if she was to retain her social pre-eminence: "To me it seems most important and desirable that there should be a fair number of what we call well-born and well-bred men in the ministry, to give it a tone removed from all vulgarity." (Ibid., p. 567). Therefore, Guthrie claimed there should be three or four Free Church livings in Glasgow, three or four in Edinburgh, and elsewhere throughout the Church, with £1,000 stipends. (Ibid., p. 568). This, be it noted, was an annual sum which many of the poor working men who made up Guthrie's own parish in Edinburgh could not earn in a whole lifetime of labour. A layman, writing in The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record in 1867, urged the Free Church to consider the possibility of drawing ministers and missionaries from the working classes because the supply from the middle classes was not sufficient to meet the Church's needs, particularly in the case of missionaries: "It is sufficient to observe that the supply from the middle classes is inadequate, and that we must now look a little lower. Among the poorer classes of the community there are to be found, I think, many men. . . ready to do anything, to go anywhere, if only they may serve him. But it is manifest that these men, how willing soever they may be to become missionaries, are not able to provide for themselves the necessary education, and that if they are to be made use of at all, money must be provided for this purpose." (June 1867, p. 131).

substantial economic inequalities and all social class inequalities were divinely-ordained and essential to the social well-being and proper functioning of society. It was accepted as a self-evident truth that there must always be marked social and economic inequalities; that if there were no rich and poor or if all men were of one rank there would be no subordination and thus none to command and none to serve and obey. In the words of the editor of the largest and most influential Free Church newspaper:

> "To take an interest in life, it is necessary that we have something higher than ourselves to look up to, and something lower than ourselves to look down upon. . . . Make all men of one rank, make all peasants or all peers, -- for either way it is the same, -- and how many excitements to noble effort would you cut off, and how wide a scope for generous sympathy and disinterested service would you foreclose! Whatever, then, levellers may say, or believers in 'equality and fraternity' may teach, we must have variety of rank. We must have the peer at the top in affluence and elegance, but not necessarily in indolence; and we must have the labourer at the bottom performing his daily task, but not necessarily in exhausting toil or debasing poverty. The error lies, not in that some are peers and that some are peasants, -- for this is the ordination of the Creator, and all his ordinations are beneficent, -- but the error lies in that the two should stand apart, and so far apart that the truth is practically forgotten that they twain are parts of one body, -- one corporate body, tied together by sympathetic links which cannot be neglected, without inferring suffering and loss to both."[1]

France, claimed this Free churchman, had made a disastrous mistake in abolishing all rank and class distinctions, for

> "this was to go to war with the ordination of Providence. It is to the honour of the good sense of our working classes that they entertain no such dream as this. . . . They are content that the peer should wear his coronet, and that the peasant should continue to perform his daily task in moleskin and corduroy. The primeval sentence of labour cannot be revoked. The earth must be tilled. There must be nimble hands to ply the loom and brawny arms to wield the forge."[2]

While it is the duty of the higher classes to do all in their power to improve the lot of the 'lower orders', continued this writer, the working man must realize that he cannot ever hope to share in the luxuries, ease and comforts of those placed above him, nor rise to their social rank:

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1. The Witness, October 27, 1858, p. 2. The editor at this time was Peter Bayne. He, like the previous editor Hugh Miller -- who died in December 1856 -- was a Free Church layman. Bayne studied for the ministry at Edinburgh but had never been ordained.

2. Ibid.

> "It is not in having a finer coat or a finer house, or in indulging in pleasures above his station and his means that self-elevation lies. These may drag him down. Let him, in the exercize of a manly independence, accept his position. . . let him be ambitous rather of acquitting himself well in the sphere he occupies, than of rising to a higher. How many have fallen through ill-regulated attempts to rise. Pride is a mean thing, and withal very shamefaced. The working man must have nothing to do with it."[1]

Such a Christian justification of class inequality was a recurring theme in sermons, lectures, and articles directed towards the working classes throughout this period. It was preached by Dissenter, Free and Established churchman alike. This is not surprising as it was believed to be a part of divine revelation. The influential Free Church Magazine explained how God had built a paternalistic social relationship into all the orders of creation:

> "For the purpose of maintaining society in a state of peace and happiness, our Creator has established a variety of relations among men, the principle of which are -- husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, magistrate and people. Examine any or all of these relations, and it will be found that they are characterized by manifest inequality. . . . The principle which the Creator has sanctioned in human relations, with a view to the production of the greatest happiness and benefit may be said to be that of physical inequalities with moral compensations; every kind of natural inequality being designed to be wedded to a corresponding moral feeling, lest the greater measure of power belonging to the one party should become an instrument of oppression and misery to the other. . . scholar and pupil, master and servant, magistrate and subject, employer and employed, are all relations in which one of the parties has more power than the other, and in which there is a danger of that inequality becoming an instrument of wrong, unless its appropriate moral affection accompany it."[2]

It is the task of Christianity, said this writer, to provide the moral power -- the kindly and benevolent feeling -- necessary to make all these natural inequalities function harmoniously. Unfortunately, however, one "of the false guides to whose seductive counsels the labouring classes are exposed at present. . . is the chimera of artificial equality."[3] But such an aim is both impossible -- because "it goes in the teeth of the natural constitution of society,"[4] -- and undesirable, for

> "if all were on a dead level of equality, there would be an end to all those pleasant feelings that arise from the relations of life as they now exist. As

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1. Ibid. 2. The Free Church Magazine, October 1850, p. 298.
3. Ibid. 4. Ibid., p. 299.

any who reflects carefully on the subject will see, the sum of social happiness is mainly made up of feelings of pleasure springing from the different relations of dependence and superiority among men."[1]

The Church of Scotland was equally, if not more obsessed with the need to preserve intact the divinely-ordained social class pyramid. One of her organs, lamenting that "in no other country, in ancient or modern times, has there been presented the spectacle of such splendid wealth and luxury, and deplorable poverty and wretchedness in actual juxtaposition,"[2] insisted that such an alarming state of society had nothing to do with existing class inequalities. The writer claimed that the only way to end the "disaffection and enmity in the inferior towards the superior classes,"[3] was to bring about a renewal of contact and close personal relationship between the classes such as existed in pre-industrial society. However, in urging a bridging of the terrible gulf that separated the higher from the lower classes,

"nothing can be further from our thoughts than the slightest leaning to the revolutionary and unscriptural doctrine of no distinction of orders of society; for we most reverently hold that a difference of ranks is necessary, and that God has not only declared this as consistent with the constitution of man's being here on earth, but has authoritatively sanctioned this by every indication, as the arrangement of his will. We are most decidedly enemies of that modern school of politics, which blazons on its banner. . . LIBERTÉ, EGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ, terms of empty profession, which if carried into practice, would destroy the very existence of the social constitution. No less are we opposed to those, whose notions, we are sorry to think, are largely diffused among the masses of the population, who look with disregard on constituted authority, and have lost all respect, if ever they had any, for those who have been placed by God's providence in a more exalted sphere, -- we allude to the Socialists and Chartists. With such demagogues and their deluded votaries we have no feelings in common; but we desire most earnestly, with all loyalty for authority and law, and all reverence for rank and order, the destruction, -- for in this way do we think that these will be most firmly established and most permanently maintained, -- the destruction of the antagonism of classes, which has prevented and will obstruct the success of the best-intentioned and most wisely devised plans of amelioration. In this antagonistic spirit of the classes, consists, depend upon it, the real danger of the internal condition of Great Britain."[4]

The writer criticized not only the failure of the higher classes to 'mingle' with the lower, but denounced the working classes for spurning and even despising the

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1. Ibid.

2. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, May 1853, p. 214.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 212-3.

charity and condescension of the 'highly placed'. They have

> "equally with the upper ranks disregarded the relative duties of station, and this disrespect has of late years very much increased. They have yielded to and have not resisted the corrupting influences which surrounded them; they have not shown a disposition, as they ought, to rouse themselves; they even rejected all advances towards reconciliation and have thus contributed largely to their own degradation; and have in a great measure, given cause for the withdrawal of the respect, and sympathy, and interest of the other classes of the social fabric."[1]

This reverence for class distinctions distorted the social attitudes even of the most enlightened Established churchmen like Norman MacLeod. Writing on 'The Broken Link in our Social Chain' in the magazine Good Words, which he edited, MacLeod, after pleading for an end to the social separation of the classes, hastened to add:

> "Let none think that the preceding remarks would countenance the levelling principles of the Radical or the Chartist. Equality, in that sense, has no legitimate place in the visible or invisible universe, or that which is to come."[2]

With that naive optimism in the natural harmony of interests which marked 19th century middle class Victorians, MacLeod painted a glowing picture of that happy and contented paternalistic state of society which would result if only the working classes ceased their demands for equality, and instead each class -- high and low, rich and poor -- carried out the duties and responsibilities connected with their particular rank on the social pyramid. If men were

> "to pay 'honour where honour is due', to reverence others instead of asserting their own, and to obey the plain command, to do nothing through strife and vain-glory, but to esteem others better than themselves, and to look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, what a change there would be on the troubled surface of society! -- what treasures would come forth from its depths! -- what righting of wrongs! -- what setting at rest vexed questions! what sure and certain occupation of the 'right places by the right men' ! Would this be levelling? It might level hearts, but it would never level ranks. None will so readily have a high place in society accorded to them as those who, forgetful of themselves, are constantly labouring to help others, not indeed out of their rank, but in their rank."[3]

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1. Ibid., p. 215. 2. Good Words, February 1860, p. 102.

3. Ibid.

In the closing years of the period, Church of Scotland organs in particular were still as zealous as ever in defending existing social class arrangements. Typical was the new Life and Work Magazine.[1] In the initial years of its publication there were numerous articles addressed to industrial workers and farm servants giving 'good advice' on -- among other things -- the relative social duties of their station;[2] and, judging from its pages, there was still many a sermon being

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1. This magazine was a new departure in church journalism. Until this time, official church publications made dull and uninspiring reading and had relatively small circulations. But this magazine, from the outset, was designed to appeal to the average church member by offering a wide variety of reading on general religious topics and church affairs, together with devotional material for home and family reading -- sermons, talks and stories. When it began in January 1879 it was hoped that it would achieve a circulation of 35,000. However, by the end of the year it reached 70,000, and by February 1885 the circulation stood at the amazing figure of 100,000.

2. E.g. Life and Work Magazine June 1879, pp. 82-4 -- 'Occasional Homely Papers for the Working Classes'; August 1879, pp. 122-3; December 1879, pp. 187-9 -- 'Talk with farm servants'. These talks to farm servants were a regular feature of the magazine from 1879 until 1882. They displayed the usual paternalism, individualistic piety and condescending tone which marked the Church's dealings with the lower classes in the 19th century. From these articles it appears that a cardinal 'sin' among farm servants at the time was an insolent, disobedient and irreverent attitude toward their masters and social superiors. The 'good advice' which the Church offered them, therefore, was to be "obedient, willing, diligent, anxious to please." (August 1879, p. 122). Even if mistreated, their Christian responsibility was to follow a life of dutiful submission and obedience to their masters. (Ibid., p. 123). Such self-control may not be easy, but "though the battle be sore and the wounds many, yet, if persevered in, the victory is sure, and the reward, even in this life, experiences of highest pleasure, and in the world to come unending felicity." (Ibid). In another talk to farm servants, a writer argued for an intellectual and cultural elevation of farm labourers. Against those who claimed that such an elevation would make them dissatisfied with their lowly station and the hard nature of their life, this churchman said it would have the opposite effect: "It would make them see their right place in society, and make them keep it in a gentle, courteous, respectful spirit and manner. It is the want of cultivation that makes them uncourteous, coarse, disrespectful, and disagreeable in spirit and manner." (December 1879, p. 187). Turning to the farm servants, he urged them to practice the virtues of industry, hard work and self-help and by an act of self-will to raise themselves in 'mind and manners': "The great obstacles to your improvement and elevation are in your own selves, and so may be overcome. Had you the will, you could and would make the way. What you need is to have wakened up within you the right thoughts and feelings about your elevation." (Ibid., p. 188).

preached which set forth the divine ordination of the social class pyramid and the necessity of hard toil and relative poverty for those at the base.[1]

Even as late as 1880, there was as yet little sign of any challenge to the concept of the Two Nations from the Church. Her basic social message to the lower classes -- that it was their duty to God and to society to accept their lowly, divinely-appointed position in the social scale, and to perform with patience, diligence and industry, without grumbling or class hostility, the humble but honest tasks appropriate to their inferior status -- remained virtually unchanged from what it had been half a century earlier.

(2) Democracy and Political Reform

As devoted defenders of the hierarchical class structure as well as believers in the infinite superiority of inner moral change over outward political change in securing an improvement in the condition of society, it is not surprising that the vast majority of churchmen were lukewarm, if not hostile, to the democratic sentiments which developed rapidly throughout the country after mid-century, and which issued in demands for further political reform. As one would expect from earlier attitudes to reform in the 1830's, the most sympathy towards democratic advance came from the U. P. Church; the most hostility from the two larger Churches.

Few church journals failed to give at least passing notice in the 1850's and 60's to the hotly debated issue of political reform; several took up strong positions on the matter. However, only the U. P. Church publications, especially The United Presbyterian Magazine, gave unqualified support to the movement for 'progressive

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1. Preaching on the significance of Christ's poverty and humility, one Aberdeen minister claimed that Jesus' example teaches the poor that poverty is a blessing and that 'spiritual' wealth is possible without material comforts. This, he said, is a useful lesson for the mass of the people to learn, for although extreme poverty and destitution is an evil, "the poverty which consists in a bare sufficiency of the necessities of life, and that through regular daily toil, is a condition ordained by God as the normal lot of the larger portion of mankind." (October 1879, p. 145. From a sermon by Henry Cowan, then minister of Rubislaw Church, later professor of Church history at Aberdeen from 1889 to 1924).

reform'. As early as 1848, the latter magazine was advocating a limited extension of the franchise,[1] while in 1850, The Christian Journal was also speaking approvingly of a further measure of political reform.[2] However, these demands for reform were not entirely motived by a disinterested concern for democratic advance, but were influenced also by the desire for ecclesiastical advantage. One writer explained that a limited lowering of the franchise would benefit the Dissenters much more than the Established Church because the former included large numbers of the 'more intelligent and respectable portion of the working classes' together with some of the middle classes, whereas in the latter the extremes of society were to be seen -- the very wealthy and the very poor.[3] The new voters would thus strengthen the Dissenting cause in Parliament; they would be on the side of "liberty, reform, retrenchment, peace."[4] As a later article expressed it: "The experience of a hundred years has shown how safe it would be to entrust to the members of Dissenting Churches the elective franchise."[5]

However this magazine later went far beyond the position which this vested interest in limited franchise reform dictated. It took up an advanced position -- at least for a church journal -- on all aspects of political reform. In 1858, it advocated an extension of the franchise to all male owners and tenants in the burghs; to all £10 occupiers at least in the shires; the secret ballot; a more just

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, May 1848, pp. 236-7; July 1848, p. 334; August 1848, pp. 380-1. Of all the official or semi-official monthly church organs of the time, this magazine was the least narrowly ecclesiastical in scope and was most concerned with the relation of the Christian faith to contemporary issues. It had a regular section entitled 'Monthly Retrospect' which discussed important public events and issues of the previous month.

2. The Christian Journal, August 1850, p. 369.

3. The United Presbyterian Magazine, March 1852, pp. 139-40.

4. Ibid., p. 140.

5. Ibid., February 1857, p. 95.

distribution of seats; abolition of property qualifications for members; and a new Parliament every three years.[1] Most significant of all, however, was this U. P. magazine's attitude to the political competence of the average Scots working man. Alone among its ecclesiastical contemporaries, it displayed no fear or dismay at the prospect of the enfranchisement of the working classes. Rather, time and again after the late fifties it expressed its complete confidence in their ability to share in the government of the nation: "We have no reason to believe that working men as a class, are, in proportion to their numbers, more selfish, or more violent, or more revolutionary then others."[2] Referring to the massive working class reform demonstrations held in Glasgow in 1866, the like of which had not been seen in Scotland since the years preceding the first Reform Bill, this journal remarked that in spite of the unreasonably long delay in passing a new measure of reform, the demonstrations had been carried out in a restrained and orderly fashion.[3] It is

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1. Ibid., February 1858, pp. 89-90. These reforms were, as a whole, more advanced than those embodied in the second Reform Act of 1867-8. That Act only enfranchised £14 occupiers in the shires; while the secret ballot, which helped to end the practice of bribery in elections, did not come until 1872.

2. Ibid., May 1866, p. 235.

3. By way of contrast, Established Church opinion of these reform demonstrations betrayed the difference in the basic sympathies of the two Churches. Established churchmen tended to regard these enthusiastic demonstrations as an indication of the fact that the working classes were not yet 'safe', or morally elevated enough to be entrusted with the franchise. Speaking of a rally in November 1866, the General Assembly's Committee on Intemperance claimed that the meeting was marked by disorderly behaviour and a considerable amount of drunkenness among those who attended. (Report of the Committee on Intemperance, 1867, p. 5, included in Assembly Papers of the Church of Scotland, 1866-1919). At this demonstration, "representatives of the working classes were assembled from many parts of the country. These we are often told constitute the bone and sinew of the nation. . . . [However,] if those who took part in this demonstration were what they professed to be, -- fair representatives of the qualities and character of the working classes of our land, your Committee cannot but fear that the hopeful views expressed in many quarters as to the improved habits of the classes in question, are altogether too sanguine." (Ibid).

clear, the writer said, that "what the country has reason to fear is not the enfranchisement of labour, but the enfranchisement of ignorance and servility, which infest, alas, all ranks of society."[1]

If the favourable attitude expressed toward democratic reform in this magazine was representative of the majority of Dissenting Presbyterian clergy and lay leaders -- and there is no reason to suppose that it was not -- the U. P. Church held far more enlightened views on this question than the two larger Churches. In the case of the Church of Scotland, the contrast between the views expressed by her spokesmen and those which we have examined could hardly be more striking. Throughout this period, Established churchmen regularly expressed their fear and alarm at the growth of support for political democracy:[2]

> "The democratic element is largely on the increase in these islands; everyone admits, and almost every sensible man deplores it. In democracy, we all recognize revolution and rapid change, a febrile state bringing on dissolution of the body politic, and yet everything our legislators are doing tends to accelerate instead of to repress the movement. Every reform proposed in the mere representation of what is called 'the people', strides in that direction, and sooner or later will throw the whole elective power into the hands of the poorer sort. Far be it from us to depreciate the poor,

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, November 1866, p. 523.

2. This is not to say, of course, that the average member or adherent of the Church of Scotland shared the reactionary social views of the majority of the clergy. On the contrary, in their opposition to the advance of political democracy, the clergy and influential lay leadership -- coming almost entirely from the upper and middle classes -- were tragically out of sympathy with the hopes and aspirations of the vast majority of the Scottish people. Occasional letters and articles in the Established and Free Church press from Christian working men often revealed their bitter disappointment in the social and political attitudes of their ministers. One such writer lamented that: "Of the church, working-men have much to complain. It is not only fast losing its influence, by its abuses alienating the affections of thinking men, but it is fast filling the land with infidels. . . . The ministers of the gospel generally, instead of being the champions and defenders of the unrepresented -- the down-trodden children of God -- are invariably among the first to oppose and denounce all their efforts at bettering their condition, by obtaining their political rights." (The Free Church Magazine, January 1853, p. 35).

> or to mistrust them, or to class them as a separate species of humanity; but we certainly do think that as matters stand, there is a determined spirit of aggression growing up in their minds, and that they do set themselves in antagonism to all employers and capitalists, whom they look upon as their natural enemies. . . . Admit the lower orders to the franchise, and you are evidently opening the door to interminable changes, and changes that will be both originated in and conducted by a hostile spirit. . . . So long as the poor are unconservative in principle, they cannot safely be admitted to any share whatever in the representation of the country. . . . To the rich we would say distinctly that the only way to make the poor safe is to make them conservative."[1]

This Church of Scotland organ seems to have accurately reflected the mood of Established churchmen. From its inception in 1846 it had always opposed any extension of the franchise. It believed the 1832 Reform Bill gave as large a place to democratic feeling as could safely be allowed. A typical article, noting the widespread dissatisfaction with the first Reform Bill among the people by mid-century, warned that if further democratic advance was permitted it could only lead to the destruction of the monarchy and the aristocracy.[2] The 1832 Bill, it claimed, had upheld the monarchial and aristocratic elements in the constitution while giving limited scope to democratic elements. The preservation of the existing power and influence of the former is essential "in moderating the democratic element and thus perpetuating that well-regulated freedom which Britons have long rejoiced in as their birth-right."[3] But today, the writer lamented, we see great numbers of political clubs and associations "composed of the weakest and most ignorant, and headed by the most worthless or the most misguided of men,"[4] demanding a greater voice for the democratic element in the government of the country. If this trend to democracy is not stopped, he warned, it will eventually lead to revolution, mob-rule and the overthrow of all existing institutions.[5]

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1. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal and Literary Review, July 1860, pp. 344-6.
2. Ibid., October 1849, pp. 135-6.
3. Ibid., p. 136.
4. Ibid., p. 137.
5. Ibid.

Unlike the other clergy, most Established Church ministers were closely linked in sympathy, outlook and often in background with the aristocracy. This made it extremely difficult for them to understand or sympathize with the democratic aspirations of the people. They were markedly paternalistic in their social outlook, tended to romanticize the past, and looked to a revival of social class obligations as the most effective cure for the ills of society. Consequently, they believed that if the people would give up their demands for political rights and would look once more to the higher classes for social leadership and guidance, it was still possible to preserve the best features of the old social order, and reconstruct a society in which all classes would live in harmony and contentment. Since they were convinced that the common people still honoured and revered those above them, it only remained for the higher classes to once again resume their traditional leadership of society by taking an active, personal interest in the moral and temporal welfare of the lower classes:

> "Were the aristocracy of Great Britain to sympathize with their inferiors and dependents, and to testify their sympathy, by taking a lead in every improvement, and especially in improvements calculated to promote agriculture and commerce, their strength and influence would be greater today than at any period in the history of the nation."[1]

Therefore,

> "may a kind Providence remove those barriers which prejudice and pride and error have interposed between the rich man and his poor neighbour! A few efforts made by those to whose station in society this duty belongs, would effect that unity of opinion and action, which we so much desiderate, and in so doing, establish that order of things which alone secures the happiness and prosperity of all classes."[2]

This deeply-rooted belief in the superiority of a paternalistic social structure ran through and coloured all the social and political attitudes of the Established clergy in these middle years of the Victorian era. Since every step forward in the evolution of democratic society seemed to these churchmen to involve a further contraction in the beneficial social influence and power of the higher classes,

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1. Ibid., July 1851, p. 351. 2. Ibid., p. 355.

they found it virtually impossible to understand the basic issues involved in the growing working class demands for social justice and political equality. Throughout this period of democratic progress, the Church of Scotland was unable to rise above the role which she had inherited from the 18th and early 19th centuries -- that of being an established institution in society, with vested interests in the existing order, whose duty it was to uphold and defend existing laws, institutions and structures of society, including, of course, the existing distribution of power and authority which these laws, institutions and structures preserved. In a word, her position inevitably tended to make her a defender of the social and political status quo. As a moderator of the General Assembly, A. H. Charteris, proudly expressed it in 1892: "The ministers of the Church of Scotland from their very position are naturally, for the most part, on the side of those who maintain the institutions of the country."[1]

The Free Church attitude to the development of political democracy in the 1850's and 60's at least, was only slightly more enlightened than that of the Church of Scotland. After 1843, the Free Church was the most narrowly evangelical and rigidly orthodox of the three Churches. Perhaps for this reason, there was a tendency among her clergy, more than among Dissenting ministers, to place too exclusive a stress on spiritual change as the sole means of achieving social betterment, and to underestimate the importance of political change in improving the condition of society. They were especially influenced by the belief -- which we have noted was powerful in the Chartist period -- that an interest in politics, especially by the working classes, diverted their attention from more urgent personal moral reform and was damaging to the 'spiritual life'. As the famous Horatius Bonar expressed it in 1880:

> "I decline pulpit politics altogether, and dread the engrossment of political questions anywhere or in any shape. I remember the words of

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1. Moderators' Closing Addresses 1836-1905, vol. 3, address by A. H. Charteris, 1892, p. 27.

> Mr. Harrington Evans, 'Ardent engagement in political disputes is one great hindrance to the spirituality of the soul'; and I have seen in a long ministerial experience that when politics come in, religious life goes out. I suppose people would call me a Conservative; yet I have once and again refused to give a Conservative vote when I was doubtful as to the Christian character of the candidate. I never came across an atheist who was a Conservative, for atheists call themselves 'Liberals'."[1]

Not all Free churchmen would have shared Bonar's views on this matter -- most, being inclined to Liberalism in politics, would have disagreed with his party bias -- but the suspicion that an active concern with social and political questions was a substitute for evangelical concern, and, therefore, in a sense 'worldly' and 'unspiritual' was deeply rooted in a large section of the Church for a generation after the Disruption.

The cautious attitude to democratic advance even of more progressive Free Church publications and leading churchmen who favoured some extension of the

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1. Horatius Bonar, quoted in James Rankin, A Handbook of the Church of Scotland, pp. 228-9. Significantly, like most Christians who disclaim all involvement in politics, Bonar was unconsciously a social and political reactionary of an extreme type. His views and those of the ultra-evangelical wing of the Free Church found expression in the pages of the weekly Christian Treasury magazine which began in 1845 and was edited by Bonar until 1879. It was easily the most pietistic, 'otherworldly' Scottish church publication of the period, avoiding all reference to secular topics and contemporary issues, except, on occasion, to denounce those who sought to remove the evils in society by social reform or through legislation. (e.g. November 1851, pp. 527-8, where the English Christian Socialists like Maurice and Kingsley are accused of 'secularizing the Gospel'; February 1853, p. 60, where the depravity of man is said to be the reason why all attempts to improve society by social and political reform will fail). An indication of Bonar's own theological and political thought can be seen in the following: "Satan has his 'great ideas' which he scatters abroad. . . . According as they are sown in the theological, or philosophical, or political soil, they assume diverse forms. Thus, for instance, we have in philosophy, scepticism; in theology rationalism; in religion latitudinarianism; in politics liberalism; doubt being the type. . . . Again, in philosophy, we have free thinking; in theology, Pelagianism; in religion, antinomianism; in politics, democracy or despotism, for both of these latter are one in genius; self-will being the common type." (Ibid., August 1863, pp. 402-3). Bonar's attitude to secular culture can be seen in his book, Man: His Religion and His World published in 1851. There, his attitude to the world can best be described as one of fruitless abandonment -- all the efforts being made to purify and reform the world are failing and will fail because they are of man and not of God. Both Horatius Bonar and his brother Andrew were premillenialists, however, such views were not held among all adherents of this ultra-evangelical wing of the Free Church.

electoral franchise, is in marked contrast to the advanced views expressed by representative U. P. Church opinion. In 1848, the leading Free Church newspaper, The Witness, admitted that in view of the democratic developments in other countries, further reform in Britain could not be safely resisted much longer.[1] This editorial by Hugh Miller insisted, however, that the proposal by reformers to give the vote to £10 tenants -- an extremely modest measure which would have enfranchised only skilled, better-educated, higher-paid workers -- was a dangerous move, and that the safest reform was to lower the franchise from the present £10 to £5 property owners. Though some of the £10 tenants may be better-paid, the editorial continued, the £5 property holder's stake in the stability of the national institutions would be greater.[2] Thus such franchise reform would be a 'safe' and 'conservative' measure: "It would broaden the base of the social pyramid and enable it to resist without the danger of overflow, the coming tempest which is so visibly darkening the heavens."[3] In 1851, Miller repeated his plea that the franchise be restricted to property owners,[4] and in 1856, he said that whereas the demands for universal

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1. The Witness, July 7, 1848, p. 2.

2. Ibid. 3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., April 23, 1851, p. 2. By this time Miller had been joined by James Begg -- the leading social reformer in the Scottish Church in the 1850's and 60's -- who likewise advocated limited electoral reform based on property qualifications. Begg, who actively involved himself in the task of improving the lot of the higher, more industrious section of the working classes, championed the cause of the 40/ freehold movement. This movement sought the franchise for those proprietors -- mostly in the counties -- who were in possession of freeholds for which they paid an annual rent of 40/ or more. It was hardly a novel or advanced proposal inasmuch as it was merely a demand for a restoration of a right which freeholders in Scotland possessed until 1681 and which had always existed in England. In 1857, Begg published his pamphlet, Scotland's Demand for Electoral Justice, which outlined his views on this question. The United Presbyterian Magazine, in February of that year expressed its disappointment in the conservative nature of Begg's attitude to political reform: "As far as Scotland is concerned, there might safely be a much wider extension of the elective franchise than Dr. Begg contemplates." (p. 95).

male suffrage would enfranchise the unskilled, shiftless, Roman Catholic Irish and the great unchurched masses in the industrial towns, his proposals were far safer for Church and state: "As opposed to the Papists, however, the Protestant party would gain in strength, and that very considerably, by such a limited extension of the franchise as the one we specify,"[1] for the new voters "would be found to comprise the great bulk of the membership of all the Evangelical Churches, but few indeed of the lapsed classes."[2] The Witness, after Miller's death, continued to favour the same narrow approach to franchise reform under its new editor Peter Bayne.[3]

However, the views of the other Free Church journal that advocated limited political reform, The North British Review,[4] were even more cautious. In particular, they displayed in a shocking degree that middle class fear of political democracy and the latent power of the working classes which distorted virtually all Free and Established Church opinion on social and political questions in this period.

In the first reference to the possibility of franchise reform, this journal expressed its approval of proposals for "extending the franchise without lowering it."[5] This involved enlarging the electorate to include any remaining unenfranchised sections of the middle class without admitting the working class. The same proposal was advocated again in 1856 when referring to the changes needed in Britain after the Crimean War:

> "Then there is the question of Parliamentary Reform -- less in the old traditional sense, as involving the admission of new classes to the franchise, and so an extension of our constitution in the direction of democracy, than in the new sense as involving the means of restoring the character and invigorating the functions of Parliamentary government in

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1. The Witness, February 16, 1856, p. 2. 2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., March 18, 1857, p. 2.

4. This publication was strongly pro-Liberal in politics and 'laissez-faire' in economic policy.

5. The North British Review, August 1852, p. 581.

all its branches. . . by opening Parliament to the best political minds of the nation."[1]

Two years later, when various proposals for reform were being considered by both political parties, this journal expressed itself in favour of a modest measure of reform which would enfranchise a number of the skilled, better-paid artisan class. This limited reform, it was affirmed would 'liberalize' Parliament while stemming the tide of democratic advance:

> "What we apprehend to be now requisite, is at once to render the House of Commons a more exact reflex of the social estate than it is at present; and to correct the inequalities of representation, without increasing the democratic element."[2]

It was in 1866 and 1867, however, on the eve of the second Reform Bill which enfranchised most of the working classes in the towns, that the anti-democratic, anti-working class views of this journal -- which were doubtless representative of most middle class dominated Free Church opinion -- became fully manifest. An article appearing in 1866 which discussed at some length the burning issue of political reform, while expressing the desire to see a few of the better type of working class representatives in the House, insisted that such a reform would not open the door to democracy:

> "It is, to our thinking, utterly incomprehensible that such a measure as this should be regarded as leading surely to the triumph of democracy. . . . Its utmost effect would be, that in the new Parliament a few members would find a place, representing, more faithfully than any at present do, the feelings and opinions of the working classes."[3]

Such a measure, continued this writer, would subject to public scrutiny the absurdities of most working class views,

> "and what would be the harm in this? What danger would come to the constitution from the fact that arguments in favour of trades' unions, and in defence of the foolishness of strikes, should find exponents in Parliament? On the contrary could such matters be discussed in a safer place? If the views of the working classes are wrong, would it not be of the best consequence that they should be stated and refuted in the great Council of the nation?"[4]

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1. Ibid., May 1856, p. 280.
2. Ibid., May 1858, p. 454.
3. Ibid., March 1866, pp. 238-9.
4. Ibid., p. 239.

However, this superior, condescending attitude was quickly transformed into one of dismay and alarm in the following year when the new Conservative government, in order to outdo the Liberals, brought in a Bill which enfranchised the majority of the workers in the urban areas:

> "There can be little doubt that the elite of the operatives in the great manufacturing and commercial centres of industrial and intellectual activity would have exercized the franchise on the whole creditably and beneficially. There can be just as little doubt that the newer and poorer electors in small boroughs and in county towns will not do so."[1]

This writer predicted that "whereas our policy heretofore has gone too much in favour of the propertied class, it will go henceforth too much in favour -- or rather according to the fancies -- of the proletariat."[2] While admitting that the influence of the common people in Parliament should promote some beneficial reforms, such as improved sanitation, housing and educational facilities for the masses,[3] he was convinced that this would be much more than offset by the foolish legislation that was certain to issue from the misguided and erroneous views held by the working classes on other important matters. These classes, he warned,

> "have some queer notions -- quite unsound, but by no means unplausible or without a grain or two of truth at the root of them -- about the distribution of wealth and the incidence of taxation; and we may therefore be pretty certain that land will be made easily and cheaply saleable (which will probably be no evil), and that great efforts will be made to substitute direct for indirect taxation, and perhaps even to pass a graduated income-tax, so that the rich shall contribute the revenue which the poor will vote and spend."[4]

One of the most disastrous consequences of working class influence in government, argued this writer, will be the encouragement it will give to the development of trade unions. He warned that the trade unions may turn to political action and

> "in the perpetual contest or competition between capital and labour, labour may insist upon legislation taking up its side of the controversy, and sanctioning, if not assisting the oppression it desires, in its passionate blindness, to exercize both over its employers and its members, till its economical blunders, sooner or later, but possibly too late, shall bring their own punishment, teach their own lesson, and work their own cure."[5]

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1. Ibid., September 1867, p. 222.
2. Ibid., p. 234.
3. Ibid., p. 235.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 236.

However, the most fearful and threatening aspect of the new Reform Bill, continued this writer, is that the ignorant, uncultured masses of the people now have political equality with the educated, respectable middle classes:

> "The incompetent, the unqualified, those whom by no attainable education we can render competent or qualified, those whom, with all the unfeigned respect or esteem we feel for them, we will not flatter or delude by telling them that they can ever become as competent or qualified as men of leisure and of training, will form the majority of the new electoral body. Those who leave school at fourteen will be able to overpower the votes and neutralize the convictions and reverse the policy and control the destinies of those who remain at school till twenty-four. Those who toil, in the last resort, will be able to govern those who think. Those whose intelligence and moral perceptions have been disciplined, enlarged, strengthened, and purified by all the influences that culture, leisure, and the most finished wisdom can bring to bear upon them during the whole of life, will be liable at any moment to be outvoted by those who have snatched a most imperfect instruction in early youth, and whom the hard necessities of their lot have almost forced to pass their later years in forgetting what they have learned. . . . Under no democratic pressure, we have inaugurated, volunteered, a democratic revolution; in the passion and blindness of party strife, in the hot contest for victory, popularity and power, we have done what few demanded and what fewer still desired;[1] and now we propose to undo our work, to disarm, or emasculate, or humanize our Frankenstein, by a school-rate."[2]

The article concluded with a frenzied appeal to the higher classes to educate, pacify and control the newly enfranchised classes and preserve the existing social order, by maintaining their traditional right -- based on their social and intellectual pre-eminence -- to rule and govern the people:

> "They must mingle with the masses, educate them by personal intercourse, convince, persuade, and influence them by face-to-face discussion wherever men congregate for action and for controversy, and assert their right to be still their governors and leaders, by showing thorough comprehension of all questions which concern them, and unselfish devotion to whatever measures are truly salutary and beneficient. . . . (They) must go in and win, and boldly assert their preferential claim to leadership and office as the most cherished portion of their birthright."[3]

In closing, the writer conceded, however, that

> "in expressing our conviction that the working classes, from the very circumstances of the case, never can become fully competent, nor as competent as those above them, to form sound judgments on questions of policy, government,

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1. The writer charged that Disraeli passed the Reform Bill merely in order to win working class votes for the Conservative party and not because there was any significant demand for such radical democratic reform.

2. Ibid., pp. 238-9.

3. Ibid., pp. 240-1.

> or law, we by no means wish to be understood as believing that education may not, and by degrees will not, render them more competent than they are at present."[1]

Such was the attitude of the Scottish Churches in these years to the evolving of modern political democracy. Apart from evidence of more enlightened opinion in the relatively small U. P. Church, it is clear that, in general, the Scottish Church was opposed to the granting of full political rights to the working classes, and fearful of the possible consequences of the growing democratic sentiment in society.

(3) Political Economy and 'Laissez-faire'

Turning to the economic thought of the Church in these decades, it is sufficient to note that there was no significant change from the views held in the 1830's and 40's. As we shall observe in connection with her attitude to the question of poverty, trade unions, and social reform generally, the teachings and assumptions of classical political economy remained virtually unchallenged by the Church before 1880. Indeed, such was the feeling of optimism and growing prosperity in the country generally after 1850 that there seemed to be even less reason for doubting the validity of 'laissez-faire' and economic individualism than there had been in the two previous decades. In addition to the support of political economy and natural religion, the gospel of economic self-interest now received the blessing of the new social Darwinism. For, whether the findings of the new science were altogether accepted or not, Herbert Spencer's theory of the 'survival of the fittest', for example, seemed to lend but additional support to the accepted notion that 'laissez-faire' was an immutable divine 'law of life'.[2]

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1. Ibid., p. 241.

2. Spencer's application of biological theories to social organization proved a boon to contemporary conservative apologists who sought to rationalize existing institutions. Believing that acquired as well as inherited traits were genetically transmitted, he sought to prove, for instance, that the private possession of all inherited wealth was both natural and morally just. He opposed public assistance for the destitute and even public sanitation, for both tended to perpetuate the less useful and more vulnerable members of society.

All sections of the Church uncritically accepted 'laissez-faire' because all accepted the basic theory of government which lay behind it. The proper task of government, as the Free Church North British Review once expressed it,

> "is gradually to render its own office unnecessary; to teach its subjects, not merely to obey it, but to do without it; to be, in short, truly paternal, by educating its children into sons, who may go forth and labour freely for themselves, and on their own responsibility, according to the laws which have been taught them."[1]

The Dissenting Presbyterians, so enlightened in their attitude to political democracy, were at least as captivated -- if not more so -- by 'laissez-faire' as other churchmen. This was so because the essential Liberal theory of government differed little from the Tory view. The Tories believed in the unqualified rights of private property; the Liberals in the unqualified rights of free competition. While the Liberal view, unlike the Tory, held that the law ought not to intervene to protect the privileges of the rich, it also held, on the other hand, that the law normally ought not to intervene to protect or advance the cause of the poor. Consequently, churchmen -- Liberal or Tory; Dissenting, Established or Free Church -- remained blinded from seeing the need for the state to intervene in economic life on behalf of the weaker side in order to achieve social justice.[2] The fatal error

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1. The North British Review, May 1847, p. 230.

2. The error in the naive view that the removal of all restrictive laws and the reign of pure 'laissez-faire' would issue in social justice for the poor, is illustrated in the critical attitude to the poor law adopted by 'laissez-faire' churchmen in the 1850's. For example, the Free Church North British Review insisted that: "One only circumstance can make such a poor-law as ours not unjust as well as not unwise; and that is where it is obligatory upon us as a compensation for previous injustice. Where destitution has been caused by the sole fault or misfortune of the destitute, a poor-law, i.e. compulsory charity -- is, we conceive, wholly indefensible. But where pauperism and destitution have been caused or stimulated by bad laws, by unjust social arrangements, by the sin of the community in short, then the indigent and incapacitated have a claim on public aid, not an inherent right, but as compensation for a committed wrong." (November 1852, p. 300). But now, continued this writer, we have removed all these injustices that crushed the working classes and we have given them a new freedom: "We have abjured our blunders, and retraced our steps. We have done much towards educating the people in better habits and sounder views. . . . We have removed all restrictions on trade, and all taxes on food. The working classes have now, in all respects, fair play." (Ibid). Therefore, concluded the writer, compulsory poor relief can now safely and justly be abolished. (Ibid., p. 300-1).

in this naive confidence in the 'Unseen Hand' -- the natural harmony between social good and economic self-interest[1] -- has nowhere been more aptly described than in the words of one of Dickens' characters: 'Everyone for himself and God for all of us, as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens'.

Throughout this period, therefore, the Church never doubted that those social evils which plagued society could be cured without any need to tamper with the automatic workings of the competitive industrial system. Indeed so hypnotized was she by the current economic dogmas that any attempt by the state to control or limit the free play of economic enterprise she would have regarded as unjust and unwise. It cannot be said that the Church at any time or in any respect stood in opposition to the existing economic arrangements; nor that her attitude to such arrangements was productive of any changes in economic life. Rather she rendered an uncritical and effective sanction to the motives and impulses of the acquisitive spirit which activated economic individualism. In a society marked by a ruthless competition for wealth and power, which issued in unparalleled prosperity for one Nation -- the well-placed and well-educated, the ambitious, the agressive and shrewd -- but untold misery and hardship for the other Nation -- the victims of unemployment and ill-health, the aged, the poorly educated, the mentally dull, the meek and others deficient in the acquisitive instincts, and the hosts of other 'losers' in the competitive race -- the Church, as yet, had no relevant word of

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1. Articles in the church press constantly lauded employers and business concerns who were wise enough to see the natural harmony between the wellbeing of society and their own economic self-interest. Discussing 'a visit to Dalmellington Iron Works' one writer praised the enlightened self-interest of the employers who saw that 'godliness is profitable': "We were told that all the expensive arrangements for the good of the workers were entered into with an eye to ultimate profit -- the principle being, that a moral and religious class of workers were the most profitable, however expensive the requisite machinery might be. It is to the enlightened wisdom which can recognize the profit of godliness in the masses of our population that we are to look for social progress." (The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, October 1856, p. 218).

criticism. With her emphasis on the private virtues, and her belief in the inevitability of individual spiritual regeneration producing just social structures and institutions, she left tragically undisciplined those corporate areas of life -- particularly that of economic activity -- which required searching scrutiny and constant criticism. In these years of Victorian 'laissez-faire' prosperity and optimism, with her prudential theology and her economic thought harmoniously at one in teaching the same 'moral truths', the Church experienced little inner or outward conflict as to the rightness of things. Before long, and without any interfering with the natural operation of the economic system, it was confidently expected that, with Christianity

> "leavening the education of our children -- pervading our literature -- and faithfully preached in our pulpits, we may be certain that men will make progress in their social welfare -- that oppression and vice will gradually disappear -- that society, though exhibiting irregularities, will be one vast family whose members are united to each other by love, and all by the same tie to one God, and that peace and prosperity will thus become universal."[1]

B. The Church, the Working Classes and the Poor

With the Church's basic thought and presuppositions having changed little from what they had been in the preceding generation, it is not surprising that, for the most part, her response to the critical movements and problems of the period should likewise remain unaltered. This was particularly evident, as we shall see, in her attitude to the widespread alienation of the masses of the industrial population from the churches, to the trade unions, and to the question of poverty.

(1) A Middle Class Church and the 'Lapsed Masses'

By 1850, it was obvious that large numbers of the poor and the industrial

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, December 1854, p. 536.

working classes were alienated from the life and worship of the Church.[1] In the course of half a century a situation had developed whereby the Church's direct influence over a vast section of the Scottish people had been lost. Whereas at the end of the 18th century virtually all the people had at least a nominal connection with the Church, now, especially in the large industrial towns, a major section of the working population -- in some places over half -- was completely outwith her life and worship.[2] At the same time, the Church in this mid-Victorian

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1. The causes of this working class alienation are many and various, but it is evident that the main cause of the loss of the poorest classes and the higher working classes was normally quite different. For the former, it was usually rooted in their economic condition -- their poverty, and their miserable, degraded and harsh existence which made genuine faith difficult. A few of these people, influenced by the evangelistic revivals of 1858-61 and 1873-4 and by the efforts of the Churches to reach the 'lapsed masses', did become attached to the mission halls and churches in the slum areas. But even these poor, by their status and appearance, were excluded from any meaningful participation in respectable patterns of normal church life. "Their thinking, based on a life of insecurity and early death, with little individual privacy and a growing sense of solidarity in misery and rights, could not be assimilated to the thinking of the Church. Their needs were different. So were their virtues." (Ralph Morton, The Household of Faith, pp. 73-4). The alienation of the better-paid, more highly educated working classes, on the other hand, especially those active in radical political groups and trade unions, was more often due to the social irrelevance of most contemporary Christianity and church life, or to the reactionary, anti-working class bias of most clergy and influential laity.

2. According to a survey of church attendance in Glasgow on an average Sunday in 1851 only 19% of the population was present. In 1881, it was almost unchanged at 18.7% (C. A. Oakley, The Second City, p. 113). Since the middle classes were faithful church attenders in these years, it is not difficult to estimate how few of the working classes regularly attended worship services. Although, because of the appalling social conditions, the alienation of the lower classes was probably more extensive in Glasgow than elsewhere, other surveys indicated a similar loss of the working classes from the Churches. One published in 1853 covering five towns of varying sizes, indicated that, apart from Paisley, the situation was little better than Glasgow: In Dundee, church attendance was 15,000 in a population of 70,000; in Paisley, 22,000 of 50,000; Dumfries, 4,000 of 16,000; Bo'ness, 1,000 of 6,000; and Lochgelly, Fife, 500 of 3,000. (The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland, April 1853, p. 226). As Ralph Morton has noted: "We have been brought up in the tradition that in Victorian Scotland everyone went to Church twice a Sunday. And that was probably true of the middle class in Scotland. But there was another section of the population who were never in Church. . . . We often say that in recent years the working man of Scotland has given up the Church. It would be far more true to say that he had never been in it." (The Household of Faith, pp. 71, 73). There is much evidence to suggest that this view is essentially accurate: that the urban working classes -- as a class -- were lost to the Church in the

era became even more middle class dominated than she had been in the 1830's and 40's. She became increasingly middle class in composition, in mind, manners and morals, in social and political outlook and in the pattern of her congregational life. It is not too much to say that in almost every respect, the prosperous and respectable middle classes succeeded in making over the Church in their own image. Successful business men -- the products of 'laissez-faire' individualism -- flocked to the churches, liberally supported them financially, and filled the influential positions of lay leadership in the church courts. This was the class who possessed the instruments of economic and political power in society; who were receiving the rich rewards which capitalist industry was producing; and who had every intention of retaining such privileges. Needless to say, it was this class of 'self-made' men who were most satisfied with the existing order of society. Inevitably the dominance of such a rich and powerful bourgeoisie within the Church played a large part in making her a loyal ally of a vigorous capitalism, and in militating against the possibility of any genuine social criticism.

Although leading churchmen were only too well aware of the absence of large numbers of working people from the churches, they still clung to the belief that the causes of this alienation -- like the causes of poverty -- were basically moral and spiritual. Only a few of the more perceptive ministers saw that the loss of the industrial classes was due to more complex causes, such as the Church's anti-working class bias, her social aloofness, and her middle class pattern of church

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initial stages of the development of industrial society; that most of the poorest and lowest classes had never been in the churches from the time they first arrived in their degraded environment in the slum areas; that, in addition, by 1850, a large percentage of the skilled industrial working classes were also outside the life and worship of the Church. It would appear that, thereafter, the slight growth in membership and attendance, especially from 1880 to 1914 was largely due to the rapid increase in population and the relative increase in the size of the church-going middle class section of the nation; and that any drop in church attachment and attendance since the first World War has been due to a loss of support from the middle classes and not, as is commonly supposed, the working classes. Indeed, it can even be argued, as Morton has suggested, that there are more of the working classes in the churches today than there were a century ago. (Ibid., p. 73).

life. One of these more enlightened clergy was the parish minister of Newbattle, who claimed in one sermon, that it was largely because of the Church's indifference to the physical condition of the working classes that such "a great gulf separates the Church -- I do not mean the Established Church only, though perhaps wider in regard to it, but all Churches -- from the masses."[1] As a consequence of this neglect, he said, "infidelity is at present claiming to be the champion of social reform, and foremost in such movements are many who make no pretensions to holiness, but who though they fear not God, are eager in shewing their love to men."[2] Inevitably, he lamented, many workers have falsely come to regard organized Christianity as an enemy

> "of all social and political reform, -- the church as a contrivance for keeping the people in ignorance, -- and the clergy as mere state tools, who care not for the poor. Socialism and secularism are held up as levers, by which the working classes may be freed from their present hardships and obtain a fair share of those profits of which they are at present defrauded. The aristocracy and the clergy, masters and capitalists, are represented as combining to enslave and starve them."[3]

By far the most searching and thought-provoking analysis to appear in the church press throughout these decades on this matter was an article published in The Free Church Magazine in 1850. In this lengthy article an unidentified writer examined the deeper causes of the alienation of the lower classes from the churches and its relation to the feebleness of the Church's impact upon the life of contemporary society. Here was a revealingly accurate picture of the social and theological weaknesses of the 19th century Church:

> "The poor, the miserable, the oppressed, the weary and heavy-laden drudges of a busy age, are the very parties to whom Christianity should specially recommend itself, and yet, for the most part, the parties who are most indifferent to it. To them the Christian Church rather appears an institution kept up for the benefit of an order of men -- the clergy -- or for the administration of certain services, in which the wealthy and middle classes somehow feel an interest than for the benefit of the poor. . . .

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1. The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, March 1856, p. 355. From a sermon by Thomas Gordon.

2. Ibid., p. 356.

3. Ibid., p. 355.

> They do not find her profession of regard to the comfort and welfare of the working man sufficiently borne out by her ordinary procedure."[1]

Therefore, to them the Church "seems rather an appendage of the upper and middle ranks of the community, than the guardian and benefactress of the oppressed and the poor."[2] This writer claimed that such workers' criticisms of the Church were essentially accurate: Have the Churches

> "not used too little exertion to leaven the higher classes with the spirit that would smooth the condition of the lower? May they not have but partially attended to that part of their mission which consists in removing the pride, selfishness, and tyranny that fall like whips and scorpions on the more helpless members of the community? May they not have been more ready to denounce these parties as sinning than to sympathize with them as sinned against? May they not occasionally have shown an ignoble and ungenerous dread of the displeasure of the powerful? And may not all these things have contributed to produce that state of indifference and trustless apathy, with which masses of the population now regard the Church of Christ?"[3]

With amazing insight for his time, the writer went on to condemn the prevalent separation of theology and individual piety from the practical affairs of society, particularly business and commercial life:

> "We see a divorce between the spirit of Christ and the actual affairs of life; there is a palpable reluctance to concede to Christ any authority over the ordinary actions of men; religion is hemmed into a corner; and to assert that she has any authority beyond the limits of that corner is held to be spiritual tyranny and insufferable fanaticism."[4]

He claimed it was precisely because professing Christians failed to bring their personal faith to bear upon contemporary problems that Christianity was brought into disrepute and robbed of its power. Many of those alienated from the Churches had come to regard it as a mere theory which did not deserve to be taken seriously. "How is it", the writer asked, that the Church "has failed to impress men with at least the intellectual conviction that the authority of Christ ought to extend to everything -- to the whole transactions of life, great and small?"[5] The answer was to be found, he insisted, in an inadequacy in the Church's theological emphasis

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1. The Free Church Magazine, May 1850, p. 129. 2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 130. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid.

which stressed orthodox doctrinal belief but neglected the importance of an obedient ethical response in the life of society. This issued in preaching which was "too exclusively doctrinal and abstract"[1] and to the

> "prevalent notion that if spiritual life can only be introduced into a soul, it will develop itself in all proper directions, and lead to the production of all necessary fruits. It is very true that you can have no right practice without spiritual life; but that does not clash with the other truth, that spiritual life must be carefully developed and trained if you would have a man thoroughly furnished unto all good works."[2]

It is, he concluded,

> "our firm and settled conviction that in the region of Christian ethics or practical religion, Scotland has yet much to learn. Nobly pre-eminent as she has long been for the soundness of her doctrinal creed, she has not attained a similar pre-eminence in the beauties of Christian character."[3]

This refreshing note of Christian self-criticism was, unfortunately, rarely -- one could almost say, never -- heard in the Church in this period. It is nothing less than tragic that as yet such a questioning spirit was lacking. For, as we have seen in the case of this writer, such informed self-criticism would have gone a long way to illuminate the basic weaknesses in the Church's social and theological approach which were crippling her ability to reach the masses alienated from the

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1. Ibid. The inevitable reaction of the working classes to an orthodox theology and preaching which was overly doctrinal, abstract and unrelated to real life, and to the separation of personal faith from social action in the lives of most Christians, was to emphasize good works to the exclusion of faith, doctrines and creeds -- an attitude so characteristic of the working classes to this day. As one working man expressed it: " 'Seeing that the church is not fulfilling her mission, the people respect not her authority -- believing that much of what passes for religion is a mockery -- a mere passport in good society -- a respectable conventionality: working men being less studious of that kind of etiquette, have in a great measure turned their backs upon the church, and make no pretension to any kind of religion. We believe that the practice of morality in this life will be more acceptable to Deity, and prepare us better for the life beyond the grave, if there be one, than any possession of faith or belief in certain mysterious dogmas which we cannot comprehend. In a word, our belief is that we shall be judged by our works, not by our faith'." (The North British Review, November 1855, p. 146. From 'Leaves from the Lives and Opinions of Working Men').

2. The Free Church Magazine, May 1850, p. 130.

3. Ibid., p. 133.

Church, and which were making her ethically insensitive and thus unaware of her prophetic responsibility.[1]

The Church as a whole ignored these deeper causes which had led to the existence of large numbers of 'lapsed masses'. The alienation was seen to lie almost exclusively in a breakdown of moral and religious instruction. The effective cure for this was simply to bring the Gospel to bear on the unchurched masses by means of a greatly extended and revitalized parochial system.[2] The Church still believed that it was possible by this means to win back the estranged masses of the people -- including the poverty-stricken degraded slum-dwellers caught up in a harsh competitive, soul-destroying environment -- to a life of respectable morality, personal piety and 'sabbath-day regularity'. Such a 'christianization' would, at the same time, inevitably raise the social and economic condition of the masses.

Consequently, the period 1850 to 1880 was pre-eminently the 'golden era' of home mission work. With a mixture of evangelical concern, philanthropic zeal and social alarm, the Christian middle classes undertook the enormous task of 'christianizing' the lower classes. We have come to realize, said the editor of

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1. It is clear, as E. R. Wickham has well expressed it, that "a failure of prophecy always spells a failure of sensitivity." (Church and People in an Industrial City, p. 193).

2. The Church in this period tended to place too much blame for the alienation of the poor and working classes on a lack of church accommodation. This was certainly an important factor earlier in the century, but after 1850 it was much less so. While the nation's population increased by 500,000 between 1831 and 1851 -- from about 2,400,000 to 2,900,000 -- the number of Presbyterian churches almost doubled. In 1831 there were approximately 1,400 places of worship -- some 975 Established and 425 Secession and Relief. By 1851 this had increased to 2,537 -- 1,183 Established, 889 Free and 465 U. P. (There had been 518 U. P. churches at the Union in 1847, but presumably local unions after that date had reduced the number). (Cf. G. S. Pryde, Scotland from 1603 to the present day, p. 264, and W. MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church, pp. 36-41). There is some evidence to suggest that by 1851, Scotland was already beginning to be overchurched in certain areas, and that in places there were more church sittings than total adult population. Although existing churches were not always located where they were most needed, yet with the population at less than 2,900,000 -- of all denominations -- and some 1,600,000 sittings in the three Presbyterian Churches alone in 1851 -- 767,000 Established, 495,000 Free and 288,000 U. P. (Cf. Pryde, op. cit.) -- there must have been, in the country as a whole, almost as many church sittings in these three Churches as adult non-Roman Catholic Scots.

one church magazine, that it is "impossible to govern human masses -- at least the human masses of Britain -- by mere repression."[1] What must be done, he continued, is to educate and civilize the democratic elements of society, that is

> "to make democracy conservative . . . . They will not and cannot be repressed. What remains and what MUST be done, is to medicate and humanize them; to elevate the character and tastes, to improve the principles and habits of those classes whose existence cannot be ignored, whose power cannot be denied, whose momentum WILL make itself felt for good or evil, and who, if longer neglected, may upheave society its foundations, and hurl a flourishing empire to the dust."[2]

Above all, "the greatest blessing which can accrue to men of every rank is to be 'Christianized' in the full and proper sense of the word; and assuredly this is the thing which, above all others, is necessary and profitable for the masses."[3] As Thomas Guthrie expressed it:

> "When will those classes of the community who have something, even much, to lose by those barbarian hordes who hover on the outskirts of the nation's religion, virtues, and property, awake to the necessity of arming in defence of these?"[4]

For clearly, he continued, the higher orders cannot expect to preserve their position and power "unless measures are employed to change the habits of this class, and arrest its formidable advances."[5] Indeed, Guthrie warned, the whole social structure, together with our noble empire, will fall unless the poor are 'christianized', for men will only live in obedience to the law and be loyal and useful members of society, and respect the property, privileges and freedom of others if they are trained in religion and morality.[6] We must learn "that the Bible is the cheapest, and in every way the best instrument of Government,"[7] for

> "I believe the world has no such security against the progress of Socialism, Communism, and such dangerous doctrines, as the Holy Faith which teaches us in the different orders and various lots of men to recognise the providence

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1. The Free Church Magazine, September 1853, p. 390. 2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 393. 4. T. Guthrie, A Second Plea for Ragged Schools, p. 38.
5. Ibid. 6. Ibid., p. 45. 7. Ibid., p. 47.

> of God, and which tells the aspirant after a better world, to lift his languid eye above the ills and inequalities of this, and in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content."[1]

It was in this period that several notable nation-wide evangelistic campaigns took place, and a great multiplication of schemes of social amelioration and philanthropic endeavour sprang up.[2] The Church taught well-to-do Christians that it was their duty to bridge over the threatening social gap between themselves and the lower orders by visiting the poor, teaching them the Bible, taking an interest in their welfare, giving them advice, alms, unwanted clothes and soup. These Christians responded with great zeal and earnestness by throwing themselves into the task of raising the spiritual and moral condition and relieving the physical hardship of the lower classes. In these years many noble and dedicated men and women spent their lives in evangelical and charitable work. The tragedy was that so few of these Christians ever directed their energies to rectifying the system that was causing such poverty, misery and spiritual apathy. Indeed, such worthy activity was too often regarded as a substitute for the changes which social justice demanded.[3]

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1. Ibid.

2. The two great periods of religious revival were in 1858-61 and in 1873-4, the latter being associated with the Moody and Sankey campaign. Although the evangelical enthusiasm generated by revivalism gave a great impetus to philanthropic endeavour and to the home mission movement among the poor, its theological tendencies militated against the awakening of any genuine social criticism. The emphasis on personal salvation and spiritual experience only increased the already overstressed individualism in Calvinist theology and in contemporary religious life. It inevitably strengthened the all too prevalent notion that social reform could only come through individual Christian regeneration and not by modifying the arrangements of society -- that the task was to change individuals, not to change laws, social institutions or economic arrangements.

3. How much of this philanthropic endeavour was consciously or unconsciously carried out in order to forestall basic social and economic changes in society is difficult to ascertain. But it was an important factor. As in the earlier part of the century, sermons and articles in the church press -- like the plea of Guthrie already noted -- frequently appealed to the higher classes to 'christianize' the lower orders if they wished to preserve their power and privileges. Sometimes these classes were sharply criticized for failing to aid the Church's evangelistic efforts among the poor. Yet in these appeals,

In the 1850's and 60's all the Churches, but more especially the Free Church, engaged in considerable evangelistic work among the growing numbers of 'lapsed masses'[1] in the industrial towns. It was at this time that the down-town mission churches came into existence, many of them supported by wealthy established congregations and staffed by active workers drawn from the supporting churches. Since few of the poorest classes would attend the existing churches, it was hoped that they could be won to regular habits of church attendance through the establishment of territorial churches in their own districts.[2]

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churchmen had to avoid being overly critical of the rich, because in their remarks, they might be accused of undermining the authority of the higher classes. Someone might say, as one writer suspected, that "the strain of these remarks is very bad, calculated to do anything but stop democracy, lawlessness, or any of the evils to stop which the philanthropic shew their care of the poor." (The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, August 1852, p. 150).

1. The extent of the Free Church concern can be gathered from the fact that in the year 1851, there were no less than 17 overtures, from 4 Synods and 13 Presbyteries sent to the Assembly on the matter of the spiritual destitution of the people in large towns, mining, and iron and steel areas. (Cf. Assembly Papers of the Free Church of Scotland, 1851, pp. 5-10).

2. The social and economic division of the country into Two Nations was clearly reflected in the setting up of special churches for the poor distinct from the middle class dominated churches. Social class consciousness was deeply rooted in the Churches in these decades, and seriously affected the social relations of various classes of Christians. Speaking of the new churches for the poorer classes, one churchman warned that unless respectable members from other churches attached themselves to these poor congregations, "to be connected with such congregations may come to be felt as almost equivalent to the reproach of pauperism." (The Free Church Magazine, December 1848, p. 372). As far as the ministers of congregations composed only of members from the lower orders were concerned, he was certain that their social standing would seriously decline. They would "be placed in circumstances tending to hamper the exercise of the influence and authority that should belong to them. That the position of ministers of such charges would be too low on the social scale." (Ibid). He also predicted that some of the more respectable of the poor in the new congregations will eventually wish to leave their churches to attend elsewhere where some of the superior classes are to be found: "The very increased self-respect which these institutions form in the minds of those whom they benefit may probably lead them in a few years to connect themselves with congregations where some at least of the worshippers are of higher rank and respectability in the world." (Ibid). In order to prevent all these things happening, the writer urged the well-to-do congregations to send a few of their respectable families to be members of the poorer churches: "To endow a poor congregation with money may be very well; but to endow it with a few select and active pious families is far better. Thus to make provision for the permanent good of some miserable district of the town, would be as high an honour as any congregation could possibly enjoy." (Ibid., p. 374).

Liberally supported financially by wealthy industrialists in the west of Scotland, the Free Church was particularly active in Glasgow where she carried on an extensive work in the wynds among the slum-dwellers. The accounts written by ministers who worked in the wynds reveal a frightening picture of unbelievable misery, poverty and degradation among the people. Yet the appalling sights of human suffering which they witnessed daily never raised in their minds any doubts about the rightness of the existing order of society. Such human degradation, so revolting to middle class standards of decency, merely confirmed for them the depths and extent of human depravity, and the crying need for increasing the facilities for preaching the Gospel to the poor.[1] Thus the movement in the wynds concerned itself exclusively with the spiritual condition of the poverty-stricken masses. This was doubtless one of the reasons why the extensive efforts that were made to reach the 'lapsed' in these areas bore so little permanent fruit.[2] By the 1870's, the Free Church was aware that in spite of her long campaign of evangelism in Glasgow no real progress had been made in reclaiming the unchurched masses. Indeed the numbers without any church connection of any kind had, by 1871, risen to 130,000. A writer sadly admitted that these people were largely the descendants

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1. Cf. the 400 page volume Work in the Wynds by Dugald MacColl, minister of the Wynd Church, where a detailed account is given of the work among the slum-dwellers. Here and in the annual Reports to the General Assembly of the Committee on the Evangelization of Glasgow, the physical and spiritual destitution of the people is largely attributed to the moral failure of the victims themselves.

2. Another factor which militated against its success was the middle class orientation of the campaign. It is clear from the above-noted sources, that the Christian middle classes who directed and carried through the work in the wynds were bringing to the poorer classes not only the Gospel, but a whole new way of life -- a middle class way of life. They offered the poor a new set of habits, standards and values, most of them not essentially Christian values, but values peculiar to their class culture. If the poor were to be fully 'christianized' they had not only to accept the Gospel but middle class morality and respectability as well. This was an important factor in the failure of the Church to make any permanent impact on the poor, or the mass of the industrial workers, as a class.

of those who had never been in the churches:

> "A large portion of the 130,000 indifferent classes destitute of all connection with the Church of God, are doubtless the growth of past ages of neglect -- the children and children's children of a past century of ungodliness. Thirty-five years ago the state of Glasgow was relatively much the same as it is now."[1]

(2) Trade Unions

By 1850, with the failure of the Chartist movement to obtain its goal of universal male suffrage, the working classes began to turn from political action to industrial action in order to achieve an improvement in their social and economic condition. In these decades 1850-1880, therefore, the working classes sought to advance their interest through the activity of trade unions rather than by direct involvement in political activity. As a consequence, Scottish trade unions grew considerably in number and in strength during these years, and by the 1870's they were a legally recognized and firmly established element in industrial society.[2]

As far as the Church was concerned, it can hardly be said that she welcomed this growth and increased power of the organized labour movement. Generally speaking, her views with regard to trade unions in the mid-Victorian era altered very little from what they had been in the 1830's and 40's, and this was true of all branches of the Church. If certain differences can be detected in the attitude

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1. The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record, April 1871, p. 69.

2. Not until 1871 did trade unions win some measure of legal recognition. In that year their funds were protected and they were exempted from liability for persecution as conspiracies. In 1875, peaceful picketing was legalized, and a year later the purpose of unions was defined. In this mid-Victorian period well organized national unions were formed in the heavy industries such as engineering and shipbuilding. In 1852, the Scottish Miners' Association came into being under the inspiration of Alexander MacDonald, the noted miners' leader. It was MacDonald and another miner, who became the first workingmen to be elected to the House of Commons when they were returned for English constituencies in 1874. This same period saw the permanent foundation of local trades councils in the large towns such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The Glasgow council played a large part in promoting the preliminary conferences which led to the setting up of the first annual British Trades Union Congress held in 1868, and itself played host to the T.U.C. in its 1875 meeting. (Cf. W. H. Marwick, Labour in Scotland: A Short History of the Scottish Working Class Movement, pp. 7-13).

of the three Scottish Churches towards such matters as the advance of political democracy or, as we shall see, the housing of the working classes, no difference is evident in their attitude to the trade unions.

Most churchmen in this age of optimism and prosperity looked favourably on the primary goal of all trade union activity, namely, an improvement in the material condition of the working classes, provided, of course, that the achievement of this end did not mean disturbing the social and economic position of the middle and upper classes.[1] What they wished to see, as Chalmers often used to say, was an elevation of the base of the pyramid without a disturbance of the upper storeys. But while churchmen may have agreed with trade unionists about the need for social improvement, they completely disagreed about the best means of achieving this desirable end. The average industrial worker came to believe in these decades that the most effective way to improve his lot was through corporate action with his fellows. He pinned his hopes, therefore, on his trade union, upon the power which arose out of working class group solidarity -- a solidarity born of shared hardships and suffering, of common ideals and aspirations. Churchmen, on the other hand, believed that the social improvement of those at the base would only come by

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1. Blaikie's view of the degree of social improvement desirable for the workers was typical of the more progressive middle-class clergy. He insisted that it was the duty of Christians to do all they could to lessen the burdens and hardships of the labouring classes. We wish, therefore "to do our humble part in encouraging the working man to bear his burdens. We would gladly lessen them if we could; but if we cannot lessen them, we may at least suggest to him how he may bear them more easily. . . . True, we are to 'be content with such things as we have; that is, we must not grumble, nor get soured, nor envious, even when we are much oppressed; but at the same time, we may, we must use all lawful methods for bettering our condition, even in a temporal point of view." (Better Days for Working People, pp. 6-7). Nevertheless, while wishing to see the workers enjoying better living and working conditions, "we don't wish to make them dissatisfied, or to awaken or inflame their jealousy towards those who are better off. We don't wish to see them in such luxury as shall tempt them to forget that they are but 'strangers and pilgrims here'. We don't wish their life so changed that it shall no longer furnish that noble spur to industry, and that inestimable training in habits of self-denial and regularity, which are among the highest fruits of a life of labour." (Ibid., pp. 7-8).

implanting and stimulating in the individual worker the personal moral and economic virtues of self-reliance, independence, thrift and industry. It was held that as long as the worker looked outside himself for assistance -- to the higher classes, legislation, or even to his fellow-workers -- he would never exert the maximum effort necessary to raise himself. The Christian means of social progress, remarked one churchman, was based on the principle that each worker should be left 'free' to exercize his own resources for self-improvement: "That state of society we, therefore, conceive to be best which affords the freest scope for individual exertion and holds out the strongest inducements to industry, moral worth and mental attainments."[1] Only in such a society, this writer stressed, will the worker learn to be self-reliant and independent, for

> "so long as he depends on the kindness of others, his powers are cramped; he is never fairly forced in to fight 'the battle of life'. . . . The aphorism that 'God helps them who help themselves', enshrines the highest truth. When this is rightly apprehended, man does his utmost."[2]

It followed that in the eyes of the Church, the ideal industrial worker -- the one praised by the clergy in sermons and addresses -- was not the man who sought to combine with his fellow-workmen in order to raise the condition or standard of living of his whole class, but the man who, through the exercize of the virtues of personal initiative and self-help, sought to raise himself above his fellow-workers and the condition of his class.[3] Since Churchmen believed the

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, October, 1854, p. 439.

2. Ibid., p. 442.

3. This period 1850-80 has sometimes been called 'the age of self-help'. The virtues that were cherished and extolled in these years by the middle classes are nowhere more clearly evident than in the writings of a man like Scotsman Samuel Smiles. His famous works Self-help and Thrift enjoyed an immense popularity, being read by millions of people. The former book, published in 1859, was still being republished annually -- sometimes 2 or 3 times a year -- until 1885. This popular teaching was, of course, at one with the Calvinist prudential ethic and was welcomed by the clergy and re-echoed by them in their dealings with the working classes and in their sermons. Probably the best example of this self-help teaching in pseudo-Christian form was Blaikie's Better Days for Working People. This was an immensely successful volume written for the benefit of the working classes indicating how they could improve

worker's primary responsibility was to raise and better himself, they could not understand and even distrusted the sense of group loyalty among the workers which made them so often place the interests of their union and their class above their

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their social condition by their own moral efforts. The advice offered in this work had already been proven valid by the experience of the middle classes, therefore, it was being offered to the workers as the remedy for their bad social state. We have already had occasion to note something of the contents of this volume. It appealed to the individual worker to work out his own economic salvation by diligence, hard work and patient devotion to his labouring task. Although Blaikie did not believe there could ever be a significant improvement in the economic condition of the working class (They must be content with the bare necessities of life -- simple food and plain clothes -- p. 85), he stressed that by thrift and careful management of what little they had, their life could be made less burdensome and more tolerable. While there were constant references in the book to the many appalling social evils that plagued the working classes -- bad housing, poverty, ill-health, disease -- there was not the slightest hint that anything was wrong with the existing order of things. Indeed, he explicitly rejected the argument of those who claimed that a social and economic reorganization of society could improve the condition of the lower classes and bridge the great gulf between rich and poor. He said social evils were due to human selfishness and could be cured only by Christianity and not by altering the system. (pp. 177-80). Blaikie readily admitted that the wages of the workers were too low but did not feel that trade unions could remedy the situation. Writing in his autobiography in the 1880's, he expressed the view that the rise in wages often attributed to the action of trade unions could have come 'naturally' without their intervention. (Recollections of a Busy Life, p. 152). For an example, he referred to the wages of the domestic servants which he employed, and said that these had doubled since he first set up house and yet this class never combined nor went on strike, but instead appealed to the sense of justice and fair-play of their masters and mistresses. (Ibid). Likewise, he said, in other trades and occupations if "the reasonableness and sense of justice of employers had been appealed to, might not a similar result have been attained?" (Ibid). Little wonder that the middle classes and the employers of labour welcomed the sort of prudential wisdom embodied in the Church's social teaching in these years. That the misery and hardship of the workers was largely due to their own moral inadequacies and not to a faulty social and economic system; that their social condition could not be changed by legislation nor through the activity of trade unions, was a lesson which they wished to see firmly impressed upon the minds of the lower classes. A book such as Better Days for Working People was, therefore, widely acclaimed in Scotland and enjoyed a vast readership. First published in 1867, it was republished on several occasions in later years and appeared in a new but basically unchanged edition in 1881. So desirous were the employers to have their 'hands' read this book that a special cheap workers' edition was actually subsidized by one of the wealthy Glasgow merchant princes, so that it might be more freely distributed among the industrial workers. (Recollections of a Busy Life, p. 163). By 1882, over 80,000 copies of the bood had been sold. (Ibid., p. 161).

personal self-interest and self-advancement.[1] To the typical middle class churchman, who viewed society as a collection of independent, competing individuals and who idealized the virtues of the self-made rugged individualist, such an attitude was virtually incomprehensible. In a world where, to his knowledge, industry and initiative won their just reward and where every man ultimately got his due, it seemed both unwise and unjust to elevate and reward whole classes without regard to the moral worth and economic contribution of the individuals involved. It was not too much to say, complained a Free Church writer, that the whole spirit engendered in industry by the activity of trade unions was disruptive, and violated the basic moral virtues:

> "Its whole tendency is to paralyse industry and enterprise. It reverses the moral conditions on which prosperity and progress depend. We have been accustomed to think that the hand of the diligent maketh rich. It has been our fancy that the conscientous servant watches the interests of his master as if they were his own, and that, according to the New Testament doctrine, he will be rewarded for doing so by the Great Taskmaster."[2]

But now, this writer went on to lament, workers were more attached to their union and their class than they were to the interests of their master; they were more concerned about seeking higher wages than of fulfilling their duty to be diligent and industrious workers.[3]

However, if the Church believed the trade unions were diverting the time and energies of the working classes from more effective means of elevating their

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1. This individualist bias was evident, for example, in the praise given to those workers who, during a strike, refused to 'come out', because they were 'wise enough' to see the foolishness of strikes, and in the condemnation of attempts by strikers to prevent employers from hiring unemployed men to take their places, Churchmen felt that it was only just and right that those who were willing to take up work which others had rejected by going on strike should be 'free' to do so: "Every man should be free to sell his labour wherever he pleases, and at whatever price he pleases." (The United Presbyterian Magazine, September 1872, p. 429). This was an accepted corollary of free trade in labour.

2. The North British Review, March 1867, p. 31.

3. Ibid., pp. 31 ff.

condition, this was not her only criticism of the organized labour movement. The traditional economic, social and moral arguments against trade union agitation were as prevalent in church sources of the time as they were in the earlier period.

At least until the late 70's no individual minister or organ of church opinion seems to have doubted the validity of the economic dogma known as the 'iron' law of wages.[1] No matter what trade unionists might claim to the contrary, churchmen were convinced that wages could not be permanently raised 'artifically' (i.e. by labour agitation or by government regulation[2]), above their 'natural' level dictated by the market price of labour. Consequently, striking, they insisted, if a rise in wages was its purpose, was an economic heresy and could not be successful. Workers who engaged in such futile activity merely displayed their ignorance of the economic laws. The editor of The Witness explained that striking for higher wages was unnecessary even if masters had huge profits. Indeed, workers

> "ought to rejoice that the capitalist derives large returns, because these large returns afford them a security that their labour will be employed, and that their wages will be as high as the competition in their particular branch of business will prudently afford. Strikes, then, for a rise of wages are destructive resorts to an extreme and hazardous remedy. Theoretically they are wrong and unnecessary in a free country, where everything is

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1. Cf. supra, chapter 5, pp. 177-8 footnote.

2. This bondage to 'laissez-faire' notions of non-intervention in 'natural' economic processes, meant that even when churchmen knew that workers were being exploited by employers and degraded by the workings of the system they could not demand justice or call for some form of interference. A typical example of this dilemma was an item appearing in 1860 in the magazine Good Words, edited by Norman MacLeod. In this article, the writer -- possibly MacLeod himself -- drew attention to the starvation wages being paid to slop-workers and needle-workers in London. (June 1860, p. 365). He referred to a meeting of 1,000 of these female workers where it was discovered that only 5 of them had above 6/ a week, and over 500 had less than 2/6 a week, including 98 at 1/ and 92 with under 1/. (Ibid). The feelings of the writer were so aroused that he almost suggested legislative interference, but in the end fell back on a safer remedy: "Facts like these, while they would almost sanction any legislative interference to secure a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, call at least unmistakeably for individual and collective benevolence." (Ibid).

> open to free competition; and practically they have, we believe in every case on record shown themselves to be perfectly useless. They have never done good; they will always do more harm to the workmen who strike, than to the masters who are struck against. We would, therefore, calmly but seriously recommend working men to refrain from strikes."[1]

An improvement in the condition of the industrial classes, declared another Free Church organ, could never come through trade union agitation. It could never come

> "by striking for higher wages, or by enacting shorter hours of labour, and endeavouring to obtain equal payment for those shorter hours: these are futile and suicidal schemes, suggested by ignorance of economic laws, and recommended only by blind guides. On the contrary, waste no money in turn-outs; as little as may be in contribution to union funds; turn a deaf ear to all leaders who advise limitation of productive industry, or artificial curtailment of a labourer's faculty and freedom in any shape whatever."[2]

This writer favoured the adoption of some repressive measures to break the power of the trade unions:

> "We shall be surprised if it does not turn out and become evident that these organizations devised by the working men for their own interests, are the worst back-friends the working man ever had. The state of the public mind at the present moment is favourable for dealing with them and the opportunity should not be suffered to slip away. . . . When once trade unions are directed to legitimate objects and confined to legitimate weapons, they will become harmless, and possibly beneficent; for they will no longer be able to oppose violence or tyranny to the natural operation of economic laws."[3]

Even in the 1870's when the trade unions had been 'legalized', and had considerable support among the more radical section of the middle classes, there was never any sign of sympathy in the church press toward their efforts to obtain higher wages by means of strikes. Whatever the cause of particular strikes each one was universally condemned. Although, declared the usually enlightened

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1. The Witness, May 13, 1854, p. 2. This editorial was by Hugh Miller. The same criticisms of labour agitation and strikes were to be found in this newspaper under the succeeding editor, Peter Bayne.

2. The North British Review, September 1867, p. 242.

3. Ibid., pp. 249-50.

United Presbyterian Magazine, we desire to see a rise in the workers' standard of living,

> "we cannot ignore what we conceive to be false in their policy, and foolish in the sympathy which is lavished upon them. . . . We hold that every man is justified in selling his labour to the best advantage; but we hold as firmly that a forced rise by means of combination is false in principle, and must in the long run be disastrous."[1]

This magazine criticized the miners' strike in September 1880 for the same reasons. The editorial was sympathetic with the desire of the miners for higher wages (They received 15/ a week take-home pay and were striking for 1/ a day more) because of the nature of their work -- injurious to health, few see old age, very uncomfortable and above all very dangerous.[2] However, the writer declared "it is impossible to justify the means they take in order to get it."[3] He said all strikes were futile and were doomed to failure before they began. Although, significantly, he offered the miners no alternative method of achieving their end, he advised them never to seek increased wages by means of strikes. This present strike had demonstrated once again their futility, for

> "after a great deal of foolish speaking, and foolish and worse than foolish acting, specially in the way of intimidating those who were willing to work, the movement collapsed, and the poor miners were obliged to return to work on the old terms."[4]

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, September 1872, p. 428. This writer criticized those who urged the Churches and the state to give special consideration to the demands of the labour movement because it was seeking to advance the cause of the weakest and most oppressed section of the community. (Ibid). He attacked trade union leaders as agitators and demagogues, and accused them of exploiting and misleading the ordinary workers for their own personal gain. (Ibid). Others, presumably middle class radicals, were similarly criticized: "We frankly confess that we distrust those who give themselves out as the special friends of the working classes, and who manage all the while to fatten on this special friendship." (Ibid). The same contempt for union leaders was manifested in other sources. One Church of Scotland magazine described them as "conceited, ambitious, designing men with some cleverness, great impudence and furnished with a large assortment of political slang and inflammable phraseology." (The Edinburgh Christian Magazine, November 1953, p. 250).

2. The United Presbyterian Magazine, October 1880, p. 472.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

It is clear that the basic reason why the Church had no sympathy with the methods and activity of the organized labour movement was that she regarded all labour agitation as, at best, unnecessary -- because as the productive capacity and wealth of the nation increased the workers would 'naturally' receive their just share without the need of pressure from unions -- and, at worst, morally bad for the workers,[1] and socially disruptive in embittering class relationships. These latter social and moral arguments commonly advanced against union activity seem to have been as compelling to churchmen as the economic ones.

The real blindness of the Church in this period was that in spite of the new political and economic power that was coming into the hands of the people, she still cherished and defended the old order of society. She was still more concerned with defending existing rights than abolishing existing wrongs. The sins she denounced were mostly those against good order and private property, rather than those committed against a suffering and exploited humanity. Consequently, there was little in common between the social teaching offered the workers by the Church and by the trade unions. The one taught them patience; the other impatience. The one taught that personal self-help, hard-work and devotion to duty would 'naturally' provide them with the share of the nations's wealth to which they were entitled; the other that only if the workers combined, suffered and fought together would they ever obtain their rights and a just share of the increasing national wealth.

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1. One of the charges levelled against trade union activity was that it tended to make the workers materialistic. Comfortable middle class churchmen regularly warned the workers how morally and spiritually harmful it was to be always concerned about achieving higher wages. Said one writer: "It is a terrible ordeal to any man, or body of men, to be engaged in a perpetual struggle for money. It may be a duty; that we cannot deny; but God help the man on whom the duty is laid! How shall he be protected from the secularizing, pulverizing influence of such a conflict? How shall he be made to feel that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth'?. . . We cannot find evidence that the mere agitation for wages tends to urge them forward in any of the higher walks of attainment and character." (The North British Review, March 1867, pp. 40-1).

Not surprisingly, therefore, as labour unrest and general social discontent and dissatisfaction grew among the more thoughtful and radical sections of the working classes in these decades, there was considerable apprehension and alarm aroused in the Church. In the eyes of many churchmen, the growing spirit of freedom and independence manifested among industrial workers, farm labourers and domestic servants, simply made them insolent, disobedient and less careful about 'keeping their place',[1] while the upsurge of industrial unrest and labour agitation, which

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1. A frequent subject of sermons and articles published in the church press in these decades was the relative duties of masters to servants and servants to masters. One gathers from the substance of these sources that the employer-employee relationship was undergoing a period of transition under the impact of democratic sentiment; that the older attitudes of submissiveness and deference were being questioned from 'below'; that those ' above' were resentful of the demands for new privileges and liberties which were being made; and that, consequently, there was considerable unease, tension and outright hostility between employers and their employees. Even the higher courts of the Church joined in attempts to subdue the growing class hostility. On several occasions, pastoral letters were addressed to church members dealing with the subject. Invariably, the root cause of the workers' unrest -- the growing desire for equuality and demand for justice -- was ignored, while the usual need for a revival of the paternalistic social attitudes was stressed. In 1858, a Free Church pastoral address called on masters to treat their workers with kindness, benevolence and Christian charity, as if they were part of their own family. Among servants and labourers, on the other hand, there should be "faithfulness, conscientous service -- not eye-service -- truth, civility, a studying of the interests of their master or mistress, or employer -- a thankful value put on their privileges when they find themselves comfortably or profitably placed. And when they find themselves situated otherwise, a patient endurance till the proper season of change comes round, and a quiet performance of duty, as unto God, and not unto man, to which it becomes them, on every account to give themselves." (Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1859, p. 182). Unfortunately, the latter advice to workers to see their vocation as a service to God was too often interpreted in terms of patient submission to unjust treatment and hardships 'for the sake of Christ'. So Blaikie could urge workers not to complain or rebel when treated harshly but to imagine that Christ, not their masters were so treating them: "By what we call a mental substitution, it places another Master before them, one whose 'yoke is easy and whose burden is light'. It directs them to view the hard exactions of their earthly masters as if Christ, not man, were making them; and it requires that the same cheerful compliance be rendered which would be given if Christ personally were asking it." (Blaikie, Better Days for Working People, p. 72). Welcome as such teaching must have been to the higher classes and the employers of labour, to thoughtful and intelligent working men, the Christ portrayed here must have seemed strangely like the mill and factory owner rather than the carpenter of Nazareth. This sort of teaching simply brought Christianity into contempt among the more socially-aroused workers.

was disrupting the social peace and harmony of society, was regarded as little better than a gigantic act of insubordination on the part of the rebellious workers. Such a situation seemed inexplicable except in terms of human depravity. A typical expression of the Church's bourgeois social alarm was voiced by the Free Church moderator in 1873:

> "The spirit of lawless insubordination, wilful independence, and contempt of all authority -- a spirit, of which warning is given in Scripture, as especially characteristic of the 'last days' -- is coming upon us like a flood. Hence the wild dreams and insane projects of Radicalism and Communism -- the disobedience of children to their parents -- the uprising of domestic servants against their masters and mistresses. Hence, too, in conjunction with the spirit of mannon, the epidemic rupture between employers and employed in every department of mining, trading and manufacturing industry -- all, all tending to inaugurate the reign of universal anarchy and misrule, and threatening to unhinge, if not dissolve, the entire fabric of society."[1]

Although the Church in the face of the mounting industrial conflict and class hatred between capital and labour, attempted to be critical of both sides for failing their social duty, it was inevitable that the weight of her condemnation should fall on the trade unions who were responsible for disturbing industrial peace and stirring up a feeling of discontent among the workers. Unfortunately, the Church did not recognize the new working class awakening as an expression of the legitimate stirring up of the Christian conscience, but rather saw it as further evidence that society had broken loose from all moral and Christian restraints. Therefore, while ignoring the source of industrial conflict -- the growing demand for social and economic justice among the workers -- the Church sought to soothe the troubled waters of discontent by urging a reconciliation between masters and men on the basis of the existing order. She believed that all that was necessary to restore social harmony and industrial peace was for both capital and labour to practice benevolence, kindness and Christian charity in their dealings with one another.[2]

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1. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1873, p. 23. The moderator was Alexander Duff, professor of Evangelistic Theology at New College.

2. Another book by Blaikie -- whose views it must be remembered were liberal and advanced among the churchmen of his time -- provides the best example of this prevalent Christian social teaching. In 1865 Blaikie published Heads and Hands

When this is done,

> "there will be no strikes then, no putting of class against class. Ignorance, the source of these, once removed, the interest of all will be felt to be the interest of each. The dreams of a utopian socialism and equality will vanish into thin air."[1]

By thus crying 'peace, peace' when there could be no peace, and rightly ought not to be any peace, it was the Church that was being utopian and naive. Such advice was as immoral as it was ineffectual.

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in the World of Labour, which set forth the Christian principles which ought to govern relations in industry between masters and men. The aim was to have "masters and men living in brotherly union, rejoicing and aiding in each other's welfare; all bright and kindly feelings radiating from heart to heart, as pleasantly and peacefully as the light of the stars is darted from one to the other all over the firmament." (p. 6). Throughout the book, both the basic conflict of interest between capital and labour, as well as the innumerable sources of tension which gave rise to industrial disputes were ignored, and both sides were naively urged, in effect, to forget their differences and work in peace and harmony without thinking of their own economic or class self-interest. The paternalistic emphasis here was strong. As far as employers were concerned "by all practical means let them be urged to act unselfishly, to take a generous and Christian view of their relation to their workpeople, to sympathize with them, to bear with them, to encourage them in the battle of life, to cheer and hearten them in their trials and temptations. Let the men be assured that they are really loved, cared for, sympathized with by their employers and let them too, on their part, give stronger evidence of attachment and fidelity, and of a conscientious desire to advance their masters' interests." (p. 15). It was stressed that God created inequality into the structure of the universe so that the gifted and privileged might help those who were not so blessed. Thus it was the duty of masters to help the workers with the burdens of their lot: "What is the design of Providence in arranging society in classes, and giving to some so many advantages over others, if it be not that the more favoured shall consider the case of the less favoured, and wisely and kindly help them to fight the battle and run the race?" (p. 184). Blaikie was convinced that industrial peace would be restored if both capital and labour were to honour their responsibilities to one another and were "to recognize their respective positions, as assigned to them by One whom of all beings they are bound to respect." (p. 263). Then, "after years of strifes and strikes, of tumult and tossing, the dove with the olive leaf would at last settle on the ark, and even of masters and men who have never ceased to be ranged in warlike attitude against each other, it will be said at last, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity'!" (p. 263).

1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, May 1853, p. 208.

Tragically, even the most progressive and liberal churchmen in these years failed to see that by opposing all trade union agitation and condemning the growing social and industrial unrest among the working classes, the Church was playing into the hands of the possessing classes. They were blind to the fact that the existing order -- its laws and practices, institutions and structures -- was heavily weighted in favour of the possessors of property and the employers of labour, and that, consequently, the dispossessed classes could only advance through criticism and disturbance of that order which preserved the existing distribution of wealth, privilege and power in society.

So it was that throughout these decades the Church -- in the persons of the clergy and lay leadership -- continued to oppose the only effective instrument of power the workers had for achieving a fuller and more equitable share of the growing fruits of industrial enterprise. There can be no doubt that this hostility to the organized labour movement was bitterly resented by large numbers of intelligent working men. It must have seemed obvious to many that in spite of all the clergy's expressions of sympathy for the workers and the efforts of many Christians in philanthropic work, the organized Churches were, in the final analysis, nothing more than the staunch allies and the obedient spokesmen of the capitalist class. What effect this anti-trade union sentiment had in alienating active and dedicated trade unionists from the Church is, of course, impossible to determine. But even those union members who were committed Christians and loyal church members could hardly have regarded the Churches as an ally of the oppressed and underprivileged classes, nor of any assistance whatever to the labour movement in its long and uphill struggle to obtain social and economic justice for the working classes. To the achievement of that end in these years, the Church was, at best, useless, at worst, a hindrance.

(3) Poverty and Working Class Housing

The nineteenth century had reached its middle years before any significant attempts were made to investigate the causes of the social evils which plagued an otherwise optimistic and prosperous society. But by the 1850's the most socially-minded elements of the middle classes began to take a serious interest in the social condition of the classes below them. At this time groups such as the National Social Science Association and the Scottish Social Reform Association came into being, whose aim it was to analyse systematically and 'scientifically' the nature of contemporary social problems, and to promote through voluntary action the gradual alleviation of their worst effects. The latter was to be accomplished mainly by stimulating the benevolent feelings of the well-to-do and the disposition of the lower classes to help themselves, through co-operative building associations, friendly societies, charity organizations, ragged schools,[1] provident and savings

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1. The best-known name in this field was, of course, Thomas Guthrie. Beginning at the end of 1847, his ragged schools for the children of the poor were well established by 1850. This new policy of setting up separate schools for the poorer classes in the large towns with an inferior type of education 'suited to their lowly station in life', marked a significant departure from the educational ideal of the Scottish Reformers. Knox and the other Reformers had set up a compulsory system of education for all the people -- rich and poor alike -- and had decreed that all classes had access as a right to the local parish schools. However in the mid-19th century, in the urban centres like Edinburgh, many well-to-do churchmen departed from this historic 'classless' tradition of the Church's educational system by setting up special schools for their own children distinct from the traditional church schools (thereby aping the undemocratic English system), and special 'charity' schools for the children of the poorer classes. (Already "by the 1860's there were over 80 'higher class' schools as they were beginning to be called" -- G. S. Pryde, Scotland from 1603 to the present day, p. 269). In this way social class distinctions entered even more deeply -- and apparently more permanently -- into a section of the Scottish educational system than they did into the life of the Churches themselves. It is worth noting here some of the factors which motivated Guthrie's desire to found ragged schools. Since the children of the poor could not attend regular schools because they had to spend their time begging or stealing in order to keep themselves alive, it was necessary for ragged schools to feed these children as well as teach them the Bible, morality and industrial training that would fit them for some humble but useful work: "Since he cannot attend your school unless he starves, give him food; feed him, in order to educate him; let it be food of the plainest, cheapest kind; but by that food open his way to school; by that powerful magnet to a hungry child draw him to it." (A Plea for Ragged Schools, p. 13). Such schools were also needed because the children of the poor -- the "sweepings of the neighbourhood" (Ibid., p. 25) or 'city arabs',

banks, and other such means. However, in addition, by the 1860's largely through the work of sanitary reformers and medical men, society had become increasingly aware of the connection between the incidence of epidemics and disease and that of bad sanitary and housing conditions. Consequently, it was at this time that the first cautious steps were taken by the large municipalities to improve the basic conditions of health, sanitation and housing.[1]

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as Guthrie called them -- even when they were able, could not be allowed to attend the regular schools: "We do not propose to contaminate our hospitals with such children. Surely it would be one thing to rear the children of the wicked in affluence, -- to provide them with a finished education, -- to house them in splendid palaces; and another thing to save them from the pangs of hunger, and the crimes to which hunger tempts and drives them, -- to bless them with a simple education by which they may live decently in this world and taught the way to a better." (Ibid., p. 22). Finally, there was the evangelical reason for the schools. Among the many thousands of poor children it was believed there may well be some who, if taught the truths of religion and morality, could be brought within the pale of salvation: "Call them, if you choose, the rubbish of society; only let us say, that there are jewels among that rubbish, which would richly repay the expense of searching; and that bedded in their dark and dismal abodes, precious stones lie there, which only wait to be dug out and polished, to shine, first on earth, and hereafter and forever in a Redeemer's crown." (Ibid., p. 35). Guthrie who was enslaved by the usual deuteronomic theology of the period, was convinced that his schools could help poor children without benefitting their parents, whose misery and poverty was the deserved punishment of God on their sins. This "is no scheme to relieve those whose vices have brought them to ruin, or whose indolence keeps them in poverty. We fully accord with this sentiment of the apostle, 'He that will not work should not eat'. This is both the judgment of Scripture and of reason. In very mercy to this world, God has linked crime and suffering together; and it were a short-sighted benevolence which, interfering with that law of Providence, would dissolve the connection. Let guilty parents suffer: they have eaten some sour grapes, -- let their teeth be set on edge." (Ibid., p. 21).

1. Thomas Ferguson, by dividing his 2 volume work at 1863-4 (Cf. The Dawn of Scottish Social Welfare and Scottish Social Welfare 1864-1914), emphasizes the fact that these years marked the beginning of a new era in the public attitude towards questions of social welfare. Medical officers of health were appointed in 1862 in Edinburgh, and in 1863 in Glasgow, while in 1867 municipalities were given wide powers to regulate sanitary conditions and public health. Although a beginning was made at slum clearance in Glasgow after 1866, because all new building was left in private hands, no adequate housing replaced the slums torn down. Sometimes no replacement housing was erected and, therefore, the overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in the existing slums became even more acute. The new housing that was built by private enterprise became squalid and congested in a few years because it was overcrowded and ill-equipped from the start. Indeed, 70% of all houses built in Scotland in the period 1866-74 by private enterprise were one or two-roomed apartments. They became the slums of the 1880's and 90's. (Cf. Pryde, op. cit., pp. 255-9; W. H. Marwick, Economic Developments in Victorian Scotland, pp. 218 ff).

As far as the Church was concerned, in her attitude to contemporary social problems, her greatest failing in these decades was her continuing inability to give due consideration to social and economic factors as the cause of such problems. In the main, because of her class bias and her moralistic and individualistic presuppositions, the Church still attributed the poverty and misery of the socially and economically underprivileged to God's providence or their own moral and spiritual failings.[1] This was by far her most serious blind spot throughout the whole of the 19th century. Moral and spiritual causes -- intemperance, vice, immorality, indolence, improvidence, infidelity, church 'lapsing' -- were constantly attacked in sermons and in the church press as the factors lying behind poverty; the deeper, more complex causes -- degrading, drab, soul-destroying physical conditions, acute economic insufficiency due to factors such as prolonged ill-health, physical disability, old age, unemployment, and wages which, even for the most thrifty, would not provide a subsistence living -- were ignored, or, at best, regarded as

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1. The Church still emphasized that there were two clearly distinguishable classes of poor -- those whom God had made poor and who ought, therefore, to be helped; and the much larger number -- nine-tenths of the cases, according to the Church of Scotland's Committee on Intemperance (Report of the Committee on Intemperance, 1867, p. 3, included in Assembly Papers of the Church of Scotland, 1866-1919) -- who brought poverty on themselves, because of their sins, and who ought, therefore, to be left to the 'natural' punishment of God's righteous laws. In the words of Thomas Guthrie: "There is no line of separation between peer and peasant so broad as divides the two classes of the poor. There are God's poor. . . the poor of providence; and a much more numerous class, the poor of improvidence -- the devil's poor, who reaping as they have sowed and drinking as they have brewed, are suffering under these righteous laws: 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand'; 'If any will not work, neither should he eat'; 'He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man'." (Good Words, October 1861, p. 588). After showing in this way that the Bible and the Calvinist prudential ethic were at one, Guthrie in this article went on to indicate that in his earthly ministry, Jesus also carefully distinguished between the deserving and undeserving poor. Indeed, from this noted Free churchman's description, Jesus was a thorough-going Malthusian who deliberately avoided helping, healing or feeding the poor indiscriminately because he knew it would make them improvident, lazy and destroy their initiative to help themselves. Jesus, he said, unlike so much present-day effort to relieve the poor, never allowed his compassion for the undeserving poor to act as an encouragement to laziness and sloth: "Such philanthropy is mischievous; and finds not the semblance of encouragement in our Lord's example. . . . He did not maintain the poor in idleness but [after his miracles] sent them back with renovated powers to their respective spheres of labour. It is as instructive as it is remarkable that on only two occasions did our Lord create food; and money on only one -- leaving

superficial, secondary causes.[1] Inner spiritual and moral inadequacies were always regarded as the root and source of social evils; their outward social and economic manifestations which 'worldly' reformers attacked could only be cured by getting at the source of evil and sin embedded in the human heart. Thus, too often churchmen made a false dichotomy between individual and social means of improving society. Spiritual and moral regeneration of the individual, rather than reform of social,

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the law of God not only to its righteous, but its beneficent course, 'in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'." (Ibid., p. 589). In all his dealings with the poor, concluded Guthrie, he did nothing to pauperize them but instead he employed "his miraculous powers to help the poor to help themselves." (Ibid).

1. For this reason, many churchmen continued to oppose compulsory relief for the poor. To them, it seemed like an outrage that the 'useless and costly inefficients' of society -- those whose own sins had placed them in their destitute state -- should be a burden on the virtuous and industrious section of the community. As one Free Church journal expressed it: "A poor law which taxes the industrious for the support of the idle -- the frugal and provident for the sake of the wasteful and improvident -- those who have accumulated property by diligence and self-denial for the behoof of those whom recklessness and self-indulgence have kept poor -- is per se, a sin not a virtue, in those who have enacted it." (The North British Review, November 1852, pp. 299-300). Even enlightened churchmen like James Begg had what can only be described as a harsh and cruel attitude to the pathetic rejects of the capitalist system. He claimed that the poor in poor-houses were living in palaces and being treated like kings. (Pauperism and The Poor Laws, pp. 51 ff). Those who sought to reform habitual criminals and paupers by liberal and humane methods he denounced as "infidel visionaries, denying the depravity of human nature, and imagining that the evil spirit would be charmed out by mere acts of kindness." (Ibid). Instead, what is needed, he said, is "a whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass and a rod for the fool's back." (Ibid). He said all paupers should be put out to work in clearing waste land. "Men speak of 'able-bodied' paupers, but every creature, not either an infant or ill can work." (The Ecclesiastical and Social Evils of Scotland, p. 27). As late as 1870 he was still praising the practice of making the receipt of poor relief an indignity and disgrace. (The Causes and Probable Remedies of Pauperism in Scotland, p. 6). "Any other feeling is most dangerous to the best interests of the country, whilst a naked right in full exercise on the part of every man to live on the fruits of his neighbour's industry is nothing short of communism. If any man will not provide for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. It is of no use to try and evade this by saying the man and his children are poor." (Ibid). Although Begg gave bad social conditions a greater place as a cause of poverty than most of the clergy, he still believed that 75% of the present expenditure on the poor could have been avoided if Chalmers' scheme had been carried on. Today pauperism "would have been arrested, and to a large extent dried up." (Ibid).

political and economic institutions was proclaimed as the Christian method of improving society. These two remedies were frequently contrasted, invariably to the detriment of the latter. There are

> "first, those which consider the evil to exist in society, to spring out of its arrangement, its policy, laws, forms of government, the distribution of political power and the like: and second, those which trace the evil in question to the individual; and hold that this is the real seat of the disease; and that the evils of society spring out of this, which they believe to lie deeper than the other. It is evident enough that the remedy which anyone proposes for this admitted distemper, will correspond to his conception of the distemper itself. If he fancy its proper seat is society, he will expect to remedy it by changing the laws which regulate: if, on the other hand, he supposes that not society but the individual is the true subject of the malady, and that society exhibits certain symptoms, only by sympathy, or because society is another name for the combination of many individuals,[1] he will hope for restored health to the world in no way, but by a restoration of moral health to individuals: he will begin with them; and his success with them he will account his only real progress towards his great object."[2]

This writer left no doubt but that the latter remedy alone would be effective.[3]

It was inevitable that this strong and persistent predisposition toward schemes of personal moral reformation rather than those of outward social change, toward individual rather than social action, prevented the Church from wholeheartedly attacking even those social evils which, quite apart from their crippling effect on the health and physical welfare of the people, were an obvious barrier to any effective elevation in their moral and spiritual condition. In this period, the most obvious example of a social evil which had a clear and direct bearing on the moral and spiritual condition of the people was the appalling housing conditions among the working classes.[4] Like the effects of long hours and bad working

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1. Note that society is here regarded as nothing more than a mere collection of individuals. Significantly, at this time there was no real understanding of society as a corporate entity, therefore, no awareness of corporate sin -- of sin in society -- of sinful laws, institutions and structures transcending the sphere of individual personal morality.

2. MacPhail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Magazine and Literary Review, January 1849, pp. 391-2.

3. Ibid., pp. 391-3.

4. In this mid-Victorian era the housing conditions for the mass of the industrial workers became even worse than they had been in the 1830's and 40's, for the

conditions in the factories and mines, the consequences of existence in the overcrowded, dirty, unsanitary disease-ridden tenement slums should have roused the whole Church to concern and action, if for no other reason than the fact that the moral and spiritual state of the victims was lowered and thus they were more difficult to 'christianize'. The inability of an increasingly rich and prosperous nation to provide the great mass of her working people with a decent home -- a basic necessity of civilized human existence -- was perhaps the greatest single indictment of the capitalist system from the Christian standpoint. If the Church was unable to condemn this failure on grounds of humanity and justice, she ought at least to have condemned it on the ground that degrading conditions of home and family life frustrated her efforts to elevate the moral and spiritual tone of national life.

However, the Church, as a whole, gave but scant attention to this critical problem throughout the 19th century. Although from the 1830's onwards, the state of the working class housing in the Scottish industrial towns was generally worse than in other parts of the United Kingdom, and was probably inferior to that in any advanced European country of the time, only a handful of churchmen regarded it as a

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inadequate housing thrown up around the factory walls in the earlier part of the century became the overcrowded, disease-ridden slums of the 50's and 60's. The census of 1861, the first to include statistics on housing in Scotland, revealed a situation that shocked even the most complacent sections of the nation, although, to be sure, another half century was to elapse before any remedy radical enough to meet the situation got under way. The census revealed that the great majority of the working classes were badly housed; that, indeed, some 72% of all the houses in Scotland were of only one or two rooms. There were 246,601 houses of two rooms, 226,723 of one room and another 7,964 single-roomed houses without a window, making 481,288 one or two-roomed houses in all, out of a total of 666,786 houses in the whole country. The census revealed that over 1/3 of the Scottish people lived in one-roomed houses. The extent of the overcrowding in these houses was unbelievable, with 40,703 of them containing anywhere from 6 to 16 persons: 18,983 had 6 persons living in the one room, 11,770 had 7 persons, 5,994 had 8 persons, 2,538 had 9 persons, 936 had 10 persons, 295 had 11 persons, 123 had a dozen inhabitants, while another 64 houses had between 13 and 16 persons living in the one room. Conditions in the large centres like Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee were even worse than these national figures suggest. "In 1867, Edinburgh's Old Town had one close, with 59 rooms all served by 'a steep, dark stone stair, common to the whole', and occupied by 248 persons belonging to 56 families, although 'in this huge congress of dens there is no water, no water-closet, no sink'." (Pryde, op. cit., p. 253).

moral or social problem of major importance. Significantly, as in the case of those favourable to the Factory Acts, almost all these churchmen were to be found in the Free Church.

Neither the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland nor the Synod of the U. P. Church devoted attention to this question during the last century.[1] On only one occasion throughout those years did any court of the Established Church concern itself with urban housing conditions, and that was not until the late 1880's when an investigation of the housing of the poor in Glasgow was carried out by the Presbytery of Glasgow.[2] With the exception of The Edinburgh Christian Magazine edited by Norman MacLeod, the same indifference to this pressing social evil is

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1. In 1871 an overture to the General Assembly from the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale on the bad moral effects of the bothy system, asked the Assembly to appoint a committee to inquire into the nature and extent of the evils of this system and the best means of removing them. (Assembly Papers of the Church of Scotland, 1871, p. 11). This was the first suggestion from a lower church court that the Church take up any aspect of the question of the housing conditions of rural or industrial workers. However, the terms of even this narrow and limited overture were not approved, and no such committee was ever set up.

2. In 1888, the Presbytery of Glasgow set up a Commission to study the housing of the poor in Glasgow. (The poor were defined as those families earning under 20/ a week). After 3 years of intensive study, it presented a large 250 page Report to the Presbytery in 1891. (Cf. Report of the Commission on the Housing of the Poor in Relation to their Social Condition). Although it was noteworthy that a Church of Scotland court was at last taking up the study of such a subject, the recommendations of the Commission were disappointing. The Commission was aware of the basic problem: that families with less than £50 a year could not afford more than £5 a year for rent, and that virtually the only housing available for such a rent was one-roomed houses. (Cf. ibid., pp. 8-18). However, since the overwhelming majority (21 out of 25 members) of the Commission rejected socialist proposals that the corporations build houses and let them to the poor at rents they could afford (only 4 members of the Commission favoured such proposals -- cf. ibid., pp. 36-7), the Report concluded that until they received higher wages, the poor (estimated at over 200,000 persons in Glasgow) -- whose families, being generally large, ranged from the average of 5 persons up to a dozen or more in some cases -- would have to continue to be content to live in one room: "So long as the wage standard remains as at present, single-apartment houses are a necessity, as men and women with low wages cannot pay a higher rent than £5, and the only practicable policy is to make the best of things as they are." (Ibid., p. 8). Ten years later, in 1901, over 26% of Glasgow families still lived in one room; another 44% lived in two-roomed houses.

evident throughout the 1850-80 period in the official and semi-official publications of these two Churches.[1]

In an important section of the Free Church, however, largely due to the efforts of men like George Lewis, Wm. Blaikie, Hugh Miller, and above all, James Begg,

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1. MacLeod, whose views on contemporary social issues we have had occasion to examine in this and earlier chapters, was easily the most famous and respected minister in the Church of Scotland in the middle years of the century. Although, as we have observed, he was, like Chalmers, a staunch defender of the social class pyramid and was hostile to all forms of democratic advance, he was one of the most compassionate of churchmen, with extremely broad sympathies for his time. Quite unlike Chalmers, one of his greatest gifts seems to have been an ability to understand and sympathize with the working classes, to enter into their problems, to appreciate the noble points of their character, and to communicate the Gospel effectively to them without that patronizing tone and attitude of condescension which marred the dealings of most clergymen with the working classes. (Cf. his Simple Truth Spoken to Working People. These sermons on doctrinal and practical subjects are also refreshingly free from the usual 'otherworldly' piety and false spirituality which marked contemporary sermons to the poorer classes). MacLeod had a genuine concern for the temporal well-being of the working classes, and although he was unaware of the economic causes of poverty, he was critical of the Church for placing too much emphasis on the sins of the poor. At one General Assembly, he made a speech "vindicating the working classes from the charge of drunkenness. The spectacle of the rich citizen, expert in vintages, raising his glass, 'the beaded bubbles winking at the brim' and denouncing the toilers for taking their drop of whiskey, filled him with scorn." (John Wellwood, Norman MacLeod, pp. 77-8). Although he had little success in his own Church, MacLeod tried to get his fellow ministers to take a broader view of the Gospel and its relevance for the life of society. Above all he wanted to relate the faith meaningfully to the common life of men. Characteristic of him was the speech he made at a public meeting in 1852:
" 'The common idea at present is that the whole function of the Church is to teach and preach the gospel; while it is left to other organizations, infidel ones they may be, to meet all the other wants of our suffering people! And what is this but virtually to say to them, The Church of Christ has nothing to do as a society with your bodies, only with your souls, and that too, but in the way of teaching? Let infidels, then, give you better houses and better clothing, and seek to gratify your tastes and improve your social state; -- with all this, and a thousand other needful things for us as men, we have nothing to do. . . . [Therefore], let congregations take cognizance of the whole man and his various earthly relationships, let them seek to enrich him with all Christ gave him, let them endeavour to meet all his wants as an active, social, intellectual, sentient, as well as spiritual being, so that man shall know through the ministrations of the body, the Church, how its living Head gives them all things richly to enjoy. . . . I see no way of meeting Socialism than this'." (Donald MacLeod, Memoir of Norman MacLeod D.D., vol. 2, pp. 7-8). With such a comprehensive view of the Gospel, it is not surprising that MacLeod took a keen interest in the housing conditions of the people and in other matters that affected their social well-being.

some attention was given to the adverse moral effects of bad sanitary and housing conditions, in the 1850's and 60's.[1] Initially, in the 1840's, the concern of progressive Free churchmen was largely directed toward the evils of the bothy system,[2] but by the middle of the century, the housing conditions of the industrial workers were also coming in for attention, especially in the pages of The Witness, where Miller and Begg wrote many articles on the subject. By the mid-50's, it is evident that a growing number of Free churchmen had come to see that the degraded moral state and the 'spiritual destitution' of the lowest classes was aggravated by bad living and housing conditions. Perhaps again, as in the case of the question of the long hours of factory labour, the more marked concern in the Free Church than in the other Churches, can be attributed to her stronger awareness of her evangelical task and a keener sensitivity to the influence of factors which seemed to be impeding it.[3] But whatever the reason for this greater concern, by 1856 a progressive minister like George Lewis in speaking of the means of evangelizing the poor could declare in the General Assembly that:

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1. Begg, Blaikie and Wm. MacKenzie minister of North Leith Free Church were all active in the 1850's in promoting various schemes in Edinburgh for providing houses for better-paid working men. Begg in particular was a strong advocate of voluntary co-operative building societies. (Cf. his Happy Homes for Working Men).

2. The pre-Disruption Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale in 1840 set up a committee, of which Begg was a member, to investigate the effect of the bothy system upon the morality of the people. Thereafter, for the remainder of the century, the Free Church often expressed opposition to this system of housing farm servants, because it was one of the main factors contributing to the high illegitimacy rate in the rural areas.

3. In contrast to the evangelical enthusiasm in the Free Church, the Church of Scotland was sadly shorn of her strength and vitality for a quarter of a century after the Disruption. In these years her life and work in every area was notably lacking in vigour and purpose. Only after 1870 did she begin to revive and assume again her responsibilities and duties as the National Church. In the case of the U. P. Church, as we have noted earlier, though dynamic and popular, she never felt the same sense of responsibility for the unchurched masses as did the two larger Churches.

> "We are seeing now what we did not even in Dr. Chalmers' days, that to honour the whole of human nature as God's production -- man's soul and his body -- and to seek to raise the whole at once, is the only possible way of solving this problem. . . . We now see that we must not only have churches and schools, but we must have cleanliness next to godliness from our magistrates and from our Government; we must have the dwellings of our people improved, and our people must have a pleasant home on earth before we can raise them to the thought of a home in the heavens."[1]

This point of view was certainly an advanced one for the time and was not accepted by many churchmen,[2] but it does reveal something of the strong evangelical motivation which underlay the Free Church's interest in matters such as sanitary and housing improvement.

The most prominent advocate of this advanced view was James Begg. Throughout the 1850's, he laboured hard and long to stir up his fellow-clergy to take an interest in those social and political problems which had clear moral and spiritual implications, especially the state of industrial and farm workers' housing. He was particularly critical of that section of his own Church which regarded all involvement in such activity as 'unspiritual':

> "The earlier class of Protestant ministers, including the Reformers, were sensitively alive to the connection between things temporal and spiritual. But we have passed through a cold period since, and a mawkish notion of spirituality has led many of our modern ministers to stand aloof from all such movements, and allow the people to be gradually enslaved."[3]

Among the many factors which allowed the appalling social conditions among the poorest classes to continue was, he said, the prevalence of "a dumb and unfaithful

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1. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1856, p. 144.

2. After Lewis had spoken, several later speakers expressed reservations about the sentiments he had expressed, and felt that he was belittling the power of the Gospel to save the poor and elevate them. (Ibid., pp. 143-7).

3. The Witness, September 21, 1853, p. 3. Begg's biographer notes that among his ministerial brethren there were many "who regarded him as descending from the evangelic to the philanthropic level, and failing to follow the apostolic example of knowing nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (Thomas Smith, Memoirs of James Begg D.D., vol. 2, p. 95).

pulpit."[1] He believed "that one probable cause of modern infidelity may be found in the torpid indifference of many ministers to the temporal interests of the people."[2] With unusual insight for his time he saw that social and political issues could never be separated from moral and spiritual ones:

> "The idea of certain feeble dreamers that religion and politics have no connection is scarcely deserving of notice. It is refuted by all our past experience, and although sometimes appearing under the garb of superior sanctity, it is often the mere refuge of cowardice, and a self-seeking spirit."[3]

It was largely due to the efforts of Begg that the Free Church General Assembly set up a Committee to look into the moral implications of bad housing in 1858.[4] Begg himself was made convener and his views are plainly evident in the substance and wording of the 8 Reports submitted to the Assembly before it was discharged in 1867. The appointment of this Committee was significant in that it helped to demonstrate to society at large and to social reformers in particular that the Church was not indifferent to the social condition of the people as was often charged.[5] It also indicated the growing awareness among some Free Church

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1. The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland, September 1860, p. 37.

2. James Begg, Scotland's Demand for Electoral Justice, p. 4.

3. Ibid., p. 26.

4. The terms of the overture from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale presented by Begg were accepted by the Assembly. The Committee was empowered to "inquire into the dwellings and condition of the working classes throughout Scotland, with special reference to the existence and extension of the bothy system, the bearings of this on the morality of the people and the best means of securing a remedy for existing evils." (Assembly Papers of the Free Church of Scotland, 1858, p. 22).

5. One writer admitted that the Church was being loudly criticized for allowing such inhuman and demoralizing living conditions to exist in a Christian land: "Because the gospel cannot alter these arrangements, she is accused, and loudly accused in some quarters as the author of the evils flowing from them. . . . Let us never rest until we have restored Scotland to her former place among the nations. . . . Let us save the body of man as well as his soul; let us cleanse his dwelling as well as his heart. . . . Let us, in short, shew that Christianity is not simply a dogma but a life." (The Home and Foreign Record of the Free Church of Scotland, September 1859, p. 48). The 1862 Report declared: "It is surely melancholy to think that after three centuries of Christian light in Scotland, and immense intellectual and social progress, the dwellings of many

leaders that bad environment was an important stumbling-block to the Church's evangelistic outreach. In addition, the Reports presented annually to Assembly brought to light a great deal of valuable social data on living and housing conditions in various parts of the country,[1] and focussed the attention of the Church and the nation on the problems with which the working classes had to deal.

The Committee devoted considerably more attention to rural housing than it did to the more acute matter of urban housing. With regard to the former, it had many constructive suggestions to offer in the way of improvement. Indeed, in the face of considerable opposition in the Assembly, the Committee, on several occasions, condemned the bothy system and called for its complete abolition because it issued in widespread immorality among farm servants.[2] However, in connection with the far

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of our people, even of our well-paid artisans, should be worse than those of Indian savages; that, justly boasting of liberty, the homes and habits of thousands of our countrymen should be worse than those of African slaves." (Report of the Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes in connection with Social Morality, 1862, p. 16).

1. The Committee claimed it was responsible for having the questions on housing included in the 1861 census. These questions did not form part of the census in England.

2. The Reports, and Begg in particular, were criticized several times in the Assembly by those who regarded the Committee's criticisms of the bothy system as unjust. In the 1862 Assembly, for instance, one tenant farmer who used the system, said that the fault lay with some farmers who neglected the moral and spiritual supervision of their workers and servants and not with the system itself: "Dr. Begg might in the future direct his artillery more against the farmer than the system." (Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1862, p. 196). He was followed by several speakers who agreed that the Report was too critical of the bothy system, and that such criticisms might tend to make farm servants dissatisfied with their humble condition. Among them was the Earl of Dalhousie who warned that: "Some things had been said by Dr. Begg which, he thought, ought to be received with caution. They should take care that they did not fall into this difficulty -- that whilst they were preaching to their people on the subject of the improvement of their condition, they did not run the risk of making them discontented with it (Hear, hear). . . they were likely to raise up a feeling among the humbler orders which might prove to be extremely dangerous, not to the higher classes alone, but to the middle classes, who stood between the higher and the lower." (Ibid., p. 197).

more serious problem of bad housing in the industrial areas, the Committee was largely unaware of the acute and complex nature of the situation. Helpful suggestions were made which would enable some of the highly-paid artisans to acquire their own homes, but as the basic economic factor in the problem was ignored -- that the incomes of the great majority of the lower classes were so meagre that private enterprise could not build adequate housing with minimum standards which the poor and low income groups could afford to rent -- no effective remedy could be offered for the worst aspects of the housing problem.[1] In spite of the fact that the census

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1. This was the weakness of Begg's own approach to the problem. However commendable Begg's schemes were for improving the housing conditions of the working classes, he was, unfortunately, not sufficiently aware that the gross economic inequalities in society made the prospect of achieving his aims impossible; that only a small percentage of workers -- the highest-paid with steady employment -- could afford to pay the rent of fully-adequate privately built houses, much less build and buy their own homes; that for most of the rest -- the economically underprivileged section of society -- they could never afford more than the overcrowded, unhealthy, one and two-roomed houses which private enterprise provided for them throughout the century. (50% of the nation still lived in such houses in 1911). Although Begg was the most active social reformer in the Scottish Church in these years, his means for accomplishing the social elevation of the people, said a writer in The Witness, never consisted in altering economic or social arrangements. (October 9, 1861, p. 2). "All his instincts were conservative," his biographer tells us (Smith, op. cit., p. 55), and he had no desire to level ranks or disturb existing economic institutions. His one aim was to strengthen among the working classes the traditions of Christian family life which had become eroded by changes brought about in urban and rural society. The most important single improvement toward the achievement of this aim was, he believed, the raising of the condition of working class housing. In the towns, therefore, he wanted to see a pious, contented, property-owning working class comfortably, if modestly, housed. In the rural areas, he wanted to see sections of the huge landed estates broken down into small family farms. His rural social ideal "was that of a contented, industrious, religious peasantry living in happy concord with a genial and kindly aristocracy." (Ibid). He believed that having a stake in the land or being a home-owner would give the workers a stable and secure interest in society, make them conservative, and preserve the rights and property of the higher classes: "The unpropertied are generally the uneasy, and, in times of trouble, always the dangerous classes. . . . The great multiplication of these small owners, instead of interfering with the just rights of the larger ones, would form an impregnable buttress around their estates." (Happy Homes for Working Men, p. v). Begg was opposed to the government or the higher classes building houses for the workers, and had no faith in legislation achieving any improvement in their social condition apart from removing barriers which prevented them from helping themselves. As late as 1875, when 'laissez-faire' was beginning to be questioned in many quarters, he declared: "We must not be foolish enough to suppose that this can be secured by mere legislation. Legislation may remove difficulties, it may help men to help themselves, but it is a mere dream to imagine that it can do much more." (Workmen's Houses -- an address in the City Hall, Glasgow, January 26, 1875, p. 6). Nevertheless, in spite of his limitations and shortcomings Begg remains the most

of 1861 had indicated that the majority of the Scottish people were living in overcrowded housing conditions, churchmen believed there was no economic reason why the working classes should not be comfortably housed. Through their own industry, frugality and self-help, they were perfectly able to achieve this goal: "It is but for the working classes to say that they want better houses, and they will have them."[1] The Committee declared that there was no need for the higher classes or the government to intervene, apart from helping the workers to help themselves, by removing those unnatural obstacles such as bad laws (e.g. those of entail and primogeniture which made it difficult to acquire land for building purposes), which hindered them from building and buying their own dwellings: "It has been demonstrated that the greater part of the existing evils could be removed by the unaided efforts of the people themselves, and that they would learn an important lesson of frugality and self-reliance by the struggle."[2] Later, the Report warned that

> "there is a growing and rather dangerous tendency in this country to look to the Government for everything -- a tendency which has greatly injured Ireland, and which generally keeps pace with the growth of centralization on the one hand, and the diminution of self-reliance on the other."[3]

In 1867, with Dr. Begg's approval the Committee on Working Class Housing was permanently discharged. With the housing problem in Scotland still very far from being solved a whole century later, the reason given at the time for discharging the Committee is more than a little revealing: "It was not necessary to continue this committee, on the ground that public attention was thoroughly alive on the subject."[4]

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notable Scottish churchman in the sphere of social matters throughout this mid-Victorian period, and credit must be given to him for attempting to rouse the Church to take an interest in social questions at a time when few clergy were inclined to do so.

1. The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record, April 1863, p. 208.

2. Report of the Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes in connection with Social Morality, 1866, p. 2.

3. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

4. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1867, p. 485.

Such is an indication of the Church's optimism at this time, that she could believe the problem of adequate housing for the working classes was virtually solved.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that no matter how unaware the Free Church was of the serious nature of the housing problem, and how short-lived her official interest, the appointment of a Committee to study this question at this time was a unique accomplishment for the 19th century, quite unparallelled, as we have noted, in other Churches. More important still, the interest in such social problems as sanitary and housing conditions in this period 1850-1880, even if limited to a small minority within the Scottish Church, represented the beginnings of a significant change in Christian social thought from the earlier decades of the century when few churchmen were prepared to admit that social problems -- as distinct from moral problems -- even existed. Although in these years even the most enlightened churchmen were concerned about social problems only because they had come to see that the spiritual and moral condition of the people was closely bound up with their social condition, this limited concern was an important step forward in the development of an attitude to society which made the recovery of social criticism possible. The next step was to become aware of the need to remove social evils simply because they were evils in themselves and not merely because they were hindrances to the evangelization of the poor; to strive for social justice as a worthwhile end in itself and not just as a means to a spiritual end. In a word, the Church had to become interested in the well-being of society and not just the well-being of the Church. However, this further change in the Church's attitude to society did not begin to take place, as we shall now observe, until the closing years of the century. Only then did the recovery of a genuine prophetic social criticism at last become possible.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FIRST INDICATIONS OF A PROPHETIC AWAKENING, 1880 - 1900

The last quarter of the 19th century brought a sudden halt to Britain's ramarkable economic growth and the rapid expansion of her export trade which had formed the basis of the industrial prosperity -- and much of the optimism -- of the 3rd quarter of the century. From the mid-70's until almost the close of the century, the country entered upon a long period of falling prices during which she faced greatly increased competition from foreign rivals. This prolonged economic slump, known as the 'Great Depression', lasted until 1896, except for a temporary and partial lifting between 1880 and 1882, and 1886 and 1889. Perhaps to a greater extent than England, Scotland, especially in the west, was badly hit by the depression, for already the predominance of heavy industry had led to an unbalanced economy which made her highly dependent on foreign markets.

Scotland's population continued its rapid upward movement in these two decades, growing from 3 3/4 million people in 1881 to 4 1/2 million in 1901. The drift of population was still to the large industrial towns which at this time began to take on their modern appearance and size. By 1901, Glasgow, including suburbs, had one million people, Edinburgh 413,000, Aberdeen and Dundee almost 160,000. By the end of the 19th century 74.3% of the population lived in urban areas.

As the nation entered the 20th century, the basic social problem of the previous century -- the one that stood at the root of virtually every other social evil -- remained unsolved. This was the existence of mass poverty in the midst of the wealthiest society in the world. Social conditions among the poorest classes in

the 1880's and 90's remained as degrading and corrupting as ever. Although there had been some improvement in the living conditions of skilled, steadily-employed workers over the last half of the 19th century, the plight of the lowest classes at the end of the Victorian era was as desperate as it had been at any time since the coming of industrial capitalism. Sidney Webb, after a thorough investigation of the state of the poor throughout the country, "came to the conclusion that there existed in 1897 'a greater sum, though a smaller proportion, of hopeless destitution than at any previous time'."[1] In Scotland, though there had been a reduction in the numbers of paupers from the peak year of 1868 -- partly, perhaps largely, through the more stringent application of the poor-house test to the destitute[2] -- there were in 1899, 99,947 paupers, 43% of whom were elderly people over 65 and 11% of whom were children.[3] However, since this figure included only those entitled to regular relief and not applicants for occasional relief, it has been estimated that there were at least 200,000 in a more-or-less permanent state of destitution.[4] Nor does even this figure include the able-bodied poor, such as the unemployed, who were still denied relief. Going still further, some idea of how many hundreds of

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1. Quoted in T. Johnston, The History of the Working Classes in Scotland, p. 297.

2. Before 1845, there were almost no poor-houses in Scotland, and outdoor relief was the accepted means of dealing with deserving poverty. After poor relief became compulsory, however, there was an increase in the numbers eligible for relief, and both the number of paupers and the relief funds required to relieve them mounted steadily until the peak year of 1868 was reached. To counteract this increasing burden on the poor rates, the wealthier classes came to favour more extensive use of indoor relief through a system of poor-houses. By rigidly applying the infamous poor-house test to applicants for relief, many of the self-respecting poor refused to apply for the assistance to which they were entitled; others who were granted indoor relief refused to go or stay at the hated poor-houses -- which were deliberately stigmatized in order to bring out the 'independent spirit' of the poor. These pathetic creatures, if they were not willing to accept indoor relief and pass their lives within the confines of the poor-house, were not eligible for outdoor relief. With 62 poor-houses built in Scotland by 1868 (by 1914 there were 70), it is not surprising that after that date the number of poor on the pauper roll declined.

3. J. Marshall Lang, The Church and its Social Mission, p. 149.

4. Ibid.

thousands of other Scots families lived on the 'outskirts of poverty' in these years can perhaps be gathered from the appalling statistics relating to the health, living conditions and incomes of the working classes in the industrial towns.

Studies conducted by Charles Booth and others at the turn of the century revealed that no less than 30% of the British population (13 million people) were living at or below the poverty line.[1] This meant that in Scotland at least 1,400,000 people -- probably more, because the Scottish percentage would almost certainly have been higher than in England[2] -- lived at or below the bare subsistence level. This third of the population comprised families whose total income was 21/ per week or less. It was discovered that virtually all of these families -- and especially those with several children -- were suffering from chronic malnutrition and ill health, and lived in insanitary and overcrowded housing conditions.[3] The health statistics of the time furnish an equally revealing indication of the poverty of the lower of the Two Nations. It is generally acknowledged that the most sensitive barometer of the fitness of the social environment for human life is the infant mortality rate. No single statistic reflects more accurately the social and economic condition of a community or social group. Consequently, it is significant that in Scotland, in spite of the advance of medical knowledge and the vastly increased wealth of the country in the last half of the 19th century, which made higher standards of health possible for the privileged classes, the national infant mortality rate, which stood at 125 per 1000 in 1855, was still 126 per 1000 60 years

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1. David Watson, Social Problems and the Church's Duty, p. 20; Wm. Muir, Our Church and Social Questions, p. 1.

2. The general condition of the poorest classes, and the standards of health and housing in Scotland almost always compared unfavourably with England.

3. Watson, op. cit. The 'poverty line' in these surveys was based on an income of 21/ per family of five -- a moderately sized family of father, mother and three children. Of course, a smaller family with 21/ a week was above the 'poverty line', while a larger one with even 25/ was below it.

later in 1915.[1] Indeed, this figure reached its peak in Scotland as late as 1897 when it stood at 138 per 1000.[2] The considerable contrast between the infant death rate in the middle class areas and the corresponding figure in the working class districts indicated the extent to which sheer poverty and all that it involved -- bad housing, inadequate medical attention, lack of elementary sanitary arrangements, malnutrition and improper feeding -- posed a special threat to the well-being and even the survival of a great mass of the people from the very beginning of their lives.[3] Nor did this lower Nation ever escape from the physical marks of its social ordeal. A survey of school children in Edinburgh in 1903 revealed that no less than 70% of the children were suffering from some kind of mental or physical defect;[4] in Dundee in one school in a good district 61.04% of the children were classified as physically fit, while in another school in a poor district only 6.48% of the children were found to be fit.[5] Such was the fate of those who were unfortunate enough to be born into poor families on the 'wrong side of town'.

With the continuation, almost unrelieved, of the worst abuses and evils of the capitalist system even after a whole century of phenomenal growth in the nation's industrial capacity and wealth, it is not surprising that when the economic depression came in the last quarter of the century there should be fresh and hitherto unseen signs of industrial unrest and social tension. Unemployment was particularly

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1. Johnston, op. cit., p. 297.

2. T. Ferguson, Scottish Social Welfare 1864 - 1914, p. 536.

3. Sometimes the infant mortality rate was over twice as high in the poorer districts than in those inhabited by the well-to-do classes. In some impoverished areas a child had only one chance in 5 of surviving until age one; only one chance in 2 1/2 of surviving until age 5. In 1902 in London, 55% of the children in the East end had died by age 5. The figure for the West end was 18%. In 1888, it was reported that of all the children who died in Glasgow before age 5, 32% died in houses of one apartment, and not quite 2% in houses of 5 apartments and upwards. (Cf. Watson, op. cit., p. 11 ff., Muir, op. cit., p. 1, Johnson, op. cit., p. 297, Ferguson, op. cit., pp. 533 ff.).

4. A. M. MacKenzie, Scotland in Modern Times 1720 - 1939, second ed., p. 193.

5. Watson, op. cit., p. 18.

critical in the years 1879, 1886 and 1894. In 1886, the unemployment figure in Britain reached 10.3%, one of the highest on record prior to the 1920's. Consequently, among large numbers of working men a more critical attitude developed toward the existing social and economic order. In the boom period of the 1850's and 60's with its security and solidity, such criticism seemed somewhat out of place, but in the last two decades of the century a new situation was emerging. A more militant brand of trade unionism evolved; a revival of socialist thought took place and, for the first time, numerous small but vocal socialist movements of various kinds appeared; in addition, the first signs of significant changes in the political mood of the workers began to manifest themselves.[1] By the turn of the century, it became clear that the political and social dominance of the middle classes was soon to be seriously challenged by the working classes. The latter were no longer content to be 'made over' in the image of the middle classes, and, therefore, a more distinctively working class pattern of life and thought was taking shape. By 1900, a considerable section of the workers were opposed to the existing political parties[2] as well as to the social and economic ideals of bourgeois middle class liberalism.

However, not only the workers but influential groups of intellectuals and the more radical sections of the middle class began at this time to question the basis of the existing order, and to discuss and propose schemes for altering and transforming capitalist society. It was in these years also that the first signs of an awakening of Christian social criticism in the Scottish Church became evident.

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1. Although most Scots working men continued to support the Liberals until the end of the century, by the 1890's the left wing threat to the Liberals was already apparent. In 1888 the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party was formed by Keir Hardie and R. B. Cunninghame Graham. In the same year Hardie unsuccessfully contested the mid-Lanark seat as a straight Labour candidate, and four years later, he and John Burns -- a Londoner of Scottish parents -- were elected to Parliament for English constituencies, and became the first two Labour members in the House.

2. In that year the Labour Representation Committee in England, and the Scottish Workers' Representation Committee were formed. Their purpose was to promote the election of Labour members to Parliament. After the election of 1906, they became the modern Labour Party.

A. Factors Contributing to a Renewed Christian Social Awareness

In many respects, the 'mind of the Church' in relation to the existing social and economic order underwent considerable change in these closing years of the Victorian era. It is true, of course, that throughout this period the traditional social, political and economic concepts and presuppositions which had militated against any prophetic criticism earlier in the century, still dominated the thought of a large section of the Church. It is also true that, as yet, neither the General Assemblies of the two larger Churches nor the Synod of the U. P. Church concerned themselves with the vital social questions which were being keenly debated in the country at large in the closing years of the century.[1] Nevertheless, the significant feature of this period is not the widespread prevalence of the earlier social attitudes within the Church, or the continuing silence of the ecclesiastical courts, but rather the growth of a body of churchmen in all denominations -- including a few of the most influential clergy -- among whom a new and more critical attitude to existing social and economic arrangements was plainly emerging. For two generations churchmen had accepted the worst features of industrial society -- its slums, depressions, poverty, and the general degradation of the wage-earning class -- as an unfortunate but incidental flaw in the otherwise harmonious and beneficial operation of the unregulated capitalist system. Now, at last, it was evident that an increasing number of them were beginning to question both the ethical validity and the economic soundness of the system.

Many diverse factors, both sociological and theological, were at work in producing this gradual alteration in the Church's social outlook in the last two decades of the century. There was, for example, the stimulus provided by the rapid

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1. As we shall see, the only occasion on which a higher court devoted any special attention to a contemporary social question was in relation to the situation in the Highlands, when the physical condition of the people and the question of land reform inevitably arose in the Free Church Assembly in connection with the Reports of the Highlands and Islands Committee.

growth of socialist thought and influence, especially after 1890. With its radical criticism of 'laissez-faire' individualism, the iron laws of the classical economists, and the notion of a divinely-ordered social class hierarchy, socialism had a profound effect upon large numbers of churchmen, including even those who were convinced anti-socialists. Its influence upon Christian ethical thought was far-reaching. In the words of Troeltsch:

> "It laid bare the worm-eaten condition of the previous conventional Christian ethic, which, at its best, offered something for the ethics of the family and the individual, but which, on the other hand, had no message for social ethics save that of acceptance of all existing institutions and conditions, much to the satisfaction of all in authority."[1]

By thus undermining the notion that the existing order was sacrosanct, socialist criticism of society played a vital role in helping the Church to rediscover those elements within her own prophetic tradition which had been neglected for so long.

Another important change which contributed to an awakening of Christian social criticism at this time was the growing awareness in society generally of the part played by environmental factors in producing social evils. In the closing years of the century, "not only Socialists but society as a whole was becoming interested in the inquiry into the state of the 'submerged'. From 1884 onwards, Commissions on Sweated Trades and on Housing. . . examined depths hitherto unplumbed. Investigation was the watchword of the hour, and the results were not consoling."[2] This scientific study of society and the crucial effect of social conditions on persons made clear the considerable extent to which men were moulded for good or evil by their social environment. It was no longer possible, therefore, for the Church to place the whole blame for existing social misery on the personal moral failings of the individuals involved, or on the 'all-wise providence of God'. She was now forced to face up to the fact that unjust social and economic arrangements were at the root of many of the evils in society. Consequently, although most of those in

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1. E. Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, vol. 2, p. 728.

2. G. M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century (1782 - 1901), p. 400.

the Church were still content to rely on palliatives like philanthropy and charity to meet the social problems of the time, more advanced churchmen were coming to see that it was an essential part of the Church's duty to work for a more just social order through criticism and alteration of those arrangements in society which contributed to the social misery of the people. An early expression of the dramatic change which the investigations of the 'social sciences' had made on traditional 19th century Christian social thought is evident in a sermon preached by John Caird in 1874. Speaking of the new light which contemporary social studies had thrown on the condition of society, Caird said that such studies have

> "shown that very much of the destitution and vice that exists is due to causes that are preventible, or which new and improved social arrangements might modify. Much misery, disease, vice, and sin, is due to ignorance and neglect of the laws of health, and arrangements for preserving it. Hence the Christian benefactor has to investigate the physical causes and conditions of living among the poorer classes, their employments, food, house accommodation, and the ways these can be improved. . . . The very advance of civilization and science, which increases the comfort and prosperity of some classes, tends to depress and render destitute those who depend upon mere manual labour for their living, and who may gradually sink so low as to become unaffected by prudential, moral or religious motives. To meet such a social malady, religion needs to ally itself with political and social wisdom. To enquire and discover if there be any readjustment of the mechanism of society which shall remedy or prevent such a state of things; any deeper conception of the rights and duties of property, any modification of the conditions that affect the distribution of wealth or the relations of capital and labour; which might arrest or prevent the existence and growth of social barbarism."[1]

These views of Caird, although advanced for the 1870's, give some indication of the nature of the influence which scientific investigations of society were to have on conventional Christian attitudes to social evils by the closing years of the century.

There was one other factor, closely related to the above, which gave great impetus to a change in the Church's attitude to the social and economic order. This was the decline of classical political economy. By the beginning of the 1870's, for a variety of reasons, this decline had set in, and by the 1880's the classical

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1. The Christian Treasury, February 1875, p. 79. Caird was one of the outstanding figures in the Church of Scotland in the last half of the 19th century. After a notable career as a preacher and professor, he became, from 1873 until his death in 1898, Principal of Glasgow University.

economic dogmas were under strong attack not only from socialist critics but from new schools of political economy. The fundamental criticism which underlay all the attacks on classical economic theory was the growing realization that its so-called economic laws were not rigid, static, immutable laws built into the structure of the universe, but were generalizations drawn from the experience of particular social situations, capable of alteration by the will of man and by the influence of non-economic factors. By 1890, leading orthodox economists, such as Alfred Marshall,[1] had rejected the classical view that self-interest was the only effective and relevant economic motive, and were insisting that ethical considerations could not be ignored in the formulation of economic theory. Marshall blessed the efforts being made to eliminate social misery, claiming that extreme poverty was not inevitable but could be removed. Such notions completely transformed the older political economy. By the end of the century, the belief in the 'invisible hand' -- the divinity which shaped men's selfish interests to public purposes -- was widely discredited. There was a new awareness that the self-interest and prosperity of the individual could be, and often was, in direct conflict with the well-being of society; that, therefore, it was essential that there be a restraining power placed upon irresponsible freedom; and that this restraining power could be vested nowhere else but in the state.

This decline of 'laissez-faire' economics had profound implications for the Church's attitude to society. No longer could it be argued -- although some churchmen still attempted to do so -- that the existing economic order -- and by inference, the social class pyramid -- merely because it existed, was divinely ordained; nor that immutable laws of economics decreed that the poor should always live on the brink of destitution. Instead, it meant that it was now possible to safely interfere with economic arrangements in the interest of a more Christian social order; that since social and economic institutions and structures were not 'divine'

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1. Marshall's famous work, Principles of Economics, appeared in 1890.

or immutable, they could be, and indeed ought to be, subjected to Christian criticism. Above all, it meant that at last it was possible to bring an end to that almost idolatrous identification of the social and economic status quo with the will of God and the cause of Christianity which had marked 19th century Christian social thought. By the closing years of the century, the majority of churchmen were prepared to acknowledge at least the possibility -- if not the advisability -- of altering existing social and economic arrangements. Thus, another major obstacle preventing a recovery of genuine social criticism had been removed.

Many other factors played a part in producing a change in the Church's social outlook in the 1880's and 90's -- the recurring periods of economic depression and mass unemployment; the influence of a more democratically based electorate, and a more militant and socially-aroused labour movement; the liberalizing trend in the Church of Scotland which accompanied the decline of the landed class influence following the abolition of patronage in 1874; and the emergence in all the Churches -- as a result of wider educational opportunities -- of a ministry more representative of all classes in society. These diverse developments, each in its own way, had a significant effect upon the Church. It only remains to consider now the one decisive theological factor -- the change in the Church's theology in these years -- which played a crucial part in making possible a recovery of prophetic social criticism.

The new theological trends which were stirring all branches of the Scottish Church by the beginning of the last quarter of the century did not, in themselves, necessarily or directly issue in a recovery of Christian social criticism. However, in two vital respects, these new developments in theology did play an essential part in making such a recovery possible. First of all, they successfully modified certain elements in the old Calvinist orthodoxy which had militated against the possibility of the Church exercizing her prophetic responsibility. Secondly, they

re-asserted and emphasized elements in the Christian faith which had been long neglected and which had an important bearing on the Church's social witness.

As we have noted in earlier chapters, the influence of Calvinist orthodoxy on 19th century Christian social thought was a key factor in the tragic prophetic failure of the Church. With its pietistic moralism and 'otherworldliness', its exaggerated individualism, its rigid, scholastic categories and deterministic view of God and the natural order, this later Calvinism was incapable of acting as an adequate instrument for the expression of the living, prophetic Word of God; was totally unequipped to convey the dynamic truth of the Gospel in a relevant way to the whole corporate life of man in an industrial society. Instead, with its prudential tendencies, such a theology proved to be a natural and loyal ally of economic individualism and 'laissez-faire', and a most effective sanctifier of the social and economic status quo. Clearly, therefore, however numerous and powerful the other factors making for change in the Church's social outlook after 1880 might be, as long as Calvinist orthodoxy remained dominant in the Church, there was little hope of any genuine recovery of Christian social criticism.

By the 1870's, however, under the impact of theological influences from Germany and England, there were strong indications that the rigid doctrines of scholastic Calvinism were undergoing considerable change in all three of the Scottish Churches. For 15 years after William Robertson Smith published his first controversial article in 1875, the Scottish Church was rocked by a struggle over the question of biblical and historical criticism between the more liberal and progressive elements in the Church and the conservative defenders of the old orthodoxy. Yet soon after the struggle began, the final outcome was never in serious doubt. In the Free Church, although the conservative forces proved they were still dominant in 1881 by removing Robertson Smith from his Chair, the strength, and still more the calibre and influential position of the opposing liberal elements, indicated that the conservative victory was incomplete and would be short-lived. As

early as 1890, it was clear that the new views derived from biblical and historical criticism were widely held in all branches of the Church and were being regularly taught, without callenge, by most of her theological professors.

Another indication of the change that was taking place in the Church's theological thought in these years was the passing of the Declaratory Acts. The first Church to pass such an Act was the U. P. Church in 1879. This Declaratory Act was significant in that it was "the first formulation of the points on which liberal Scottish Presbyterianism was prepared to modify the traditional Calvinism."[1] The same desire to modify the scholastic notions of predestination and the other harsher elements of Calvinist orthodoxy was evident in the two larger Churches. The Free Church passed a Declaratory Act in 1892, while the Church of Scotland in 1889 and 1903 passed Acts -- later confirmed by Parliament in 1905 -- which relaxed the subscription to the Confession.

With the gradual weakening of Calvinist orthodoxy, the way was finally open for the emergence of a Reformed theology which at least attempted to relate the fullness of the Gospel to the needs and problems of industrial society. While no single theological 'system' replaced the old orthodoxy, the diverse theological tendencies which arose in this period all made use of the findings of the new biblical and historical scholarship.[2] Therefore, in varying degrees, all shared in those new insights relevant to the Church's social witness which such scholarship re-discovered and re-asserted. We shall have occasion later to note concrete

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1. J. R. Fleming, A History of the Church in Scotland 1875 - 1929, p. 18.

2. These new liberal 'schools' cannot be categorized or readily defined. While there was, for instance, a Broad Church party in the Established Church before 1880, and a High Church party in the same Church in the 1890's, most of the new theological tendencies cannot be conveniently 'labelled'. Except for the remaining supporters of the old orthodoxy, however, all were 'liberal' in the sense that they were prepared to accept the results of modern criticism.

examples of the manner in which the change in the Church's theology contributed to the growth of social criticism when an examination is made of the social views expressed by representative churchmen. But for the present, certain obvious social implications arising out of the new theological emphasis which dramatically affected the traditional Christian attitude to society ought to be mentioned here.

Among the most important contributions of modern scholarship to Christian social thought was the rediscovery of the Old Testament prophets and the teachings of Jesus. Easily the greatest contribution of Old Testament criticism to the social awakening of the Church was the rediscovery of the contemporary relevance of the central message of the great prophets -- particularly their concern for social justice and righteousness in national life. Whereas earlier in the century this vital aspect of their message had been lost in the emphasis upon their predictive office, in Robertson Smith's first article in 1875, one of the points he emphasized was that "the Prophets were preachers to their times rather than predictors of future events."[1] This rediscovery of the contemporary relevance of the prophetic message, and the strong note of radical social criticism which it contained, came to have a significant influence on Christian social teaching by the closing years of the century.

A similar but more extensive contribution was provided by New Testament scholarship through the rediscovery of the historical Jesus as portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels. It is difficult to overestimate the profound effect which this new literary criticism had upon Christian social thought through the renewal of emphasis on the humanity of Christ. Whereas the cold and austere scholastic Calvinism had presented a Christ in whom the real manhood, gracious humanity and divine compassion of Jesus had been lost or at least obscured, the more liberal theology which asserted itself in these years rediscovered once again this historical Jesus of Nazareth. It was this recovery of emphasis on the humanity of Christ

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1. Fleming, op. cit., p. 10.

which played such a large part in weakening the hardened scholastic framework of the old Calvinism. In the words of T. F. Torrance:

> "It was only with the massive attention given to the historical Jesus in the nineteenth century that the hardened Covenant idea broke up, its formalistic grip upon Reformed theology was loosened, and the way was cleared for thoroughgoing obedience to Jesus Christ."[1]

With the renewed interest in the historical Jesus came a renewed interest in his teachings, including his social message. At the core of this message was Jesus' teaching concerning the Kingdom of God. In the new theology, it was the significance of the Kingdom of God for the present world that was almost exclusively emphasized. It was given a central place in the reinterpretation and proclamation of the 'religion of Jesus'. The social relevance of the new emphasis on the Kingdom can be seen in the fact that the most liberal exponents of this theology believed that the primary task of the Church was to bring in the Kingdom of God on earth.

However, while it is true that much of the early biblical and historical scholarship and many of those who embraced the new liberal theology were inclined to present the historical Jesus largely in terms of 19th century idealism -- as the genial, kindly Nazarene, who was the proclaimer of a paternal theism -- and did tend to ignore certain vital aspects of the biblical teaching concerning the Kingdom of God, there can be no denying the tremendous contribution they made towards the Church's recovery of her prophetic task in society. For instance, the new emphasis upon the contemporary relevance of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God -- a Kingdom of love and peace, righteousness and justice -- had far-reaching implications for the Christian attitude to society. It re-asserted the reality of the living, dynamic reign and rule of God now on earth, and the fact that the real sphere of Christian obedience was in the every-day events and affairs of men in the world. This fresh recovery of biblical teaching undermined much of the 'otherworldliness' and pietistic individualism of the old orthodoxy which regarded the present world as of little importance for Christians -- those who were 'strangers

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1. T. F. Torrance, ed., The School of Faith, p. LXV.

and pilgrims on the earth' -- compared with the world to come, and which concerned itself almost entirely with personal sin and the salvation of individual 'souls'. By the end of the century, due to the influence of the new theological thought, most Christians had come to see that Christianity was a religion of obedience to God in the world, and not a religion of escape from it; and that, consequently, the Gospel was social as well as personal, and had definite implications for the corporate life of society.

One final point should be made here regarding the effect of the change of the Church's theology on the emergence of Christian social criticism. It has been well said by a noted 20th century Christian social critic, that "to kick over an idol, you must first get off your knees."[1] This vividly illustrates the fact that as long as the 19th century Church identified the will of God and the cause of Christianity with the existing social and economic order; as long as the present arrangements in society -- whether the hierarchical social class pyramid or the existing economic inequalities -- were regarded as expressly determined and ordained by God, and thus as sacrosanct; in a word, as long as the Church 'idolized' and worshipped the status quo, there could never be any genuine social criticism. Therefore, perhaps the greatest contribution made in these years to the eventual recovery of such social criticism was the manner in which the re-affirmation of the message of the Kingdom of God in the teachings of Christ helped the Church to see that the Gospel could never be identified with any earthly kingdoms or existing orders. This it did by providing her with a standard and norm -- a body of Christian principles and teachings -- by which existing social and economic arrangements could be tested, evaluated and criticized.

It had been the lack of just such ethical criteria that lay behind much of the Church's prophetic failure earlier in the century. Since "an institution which

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1. R. H. Tawney, The Attack and other Papers, p. 67.

possesses no philosophy of its own inevitably accepts that which happens to be fashionable,"[1] the 19th century Church, having herself no distinctively Christian social and economic teaching applicable to the changed relationships and conditions of the new industrial society, had unconsciously filled the vacuum by accepting uncritically current theories, practices and institutions which, because of an excessive determinism, she too easily regarded as part of the revealed will of God by mere virtue of the fact of their existence. By emphasizing man's natural knowledge of the Divine order of creation, and by neglecting the irrational elements in the various structures of human thought, and the pervasive influence of sin in all aspects of human life -- not merely in the individual human heart -- the Church, highly influenced by her rationalistic Calvinist orthodoxy, had unconsciously regarded as eternally valid cultural and social patterns which were, in fact, the product of particular historical circumstances. Consequently, with the nation's existing social and economic arrangements, for example, generally regarded as an integral part of the biblical revelation, it was inevitable that any criticism of such arrangements and institutions was regarded as not only unnecessary, but as essentially blasphemous. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Church was predisposed to ally herself with the forces of reaction.

By the end of the century, however, with the new emphasis upon the social message of Jesus and the prophets; with an understanding of the Kingdom of God as as expression of the divine will and purpose for man in this world, and, therefore, as a Christian ethical criterion for judging society, it was at last possible for the Church to recover the other aspect of biblical teaching concerning the social order -- namely, that note of prophetic protest and criticism whereby all constituted authority and existing institutions stand under divine judgment because of their sin and their inability to reflect the true glory of God.[2] Thereafter, since social

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1. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, p. 189.

2. Cf. supra, chapter 4, pp. 73-75, where the two paradoxical elements of biblical teaching on the social and political order are noted.

and economic institutions and arrangements were seen to be a consequence of historical development -- as the product of human activity and design -- and, as such, not directly ordained by God in their present form, they could at last be regarded as proper objects for Christian criticism and reformation. Henceforth, it was increasingly difficult to use Christianity to support the notion of a providentially-ordained status quo, nor appeal to the inscrutable will of God as a justification for the existing arbitrary and capricious class and economic inequalities in society.

B. Signs of Change in the Social Thought of the Church

(1) The United Presbyterian Church

Although there were many signs of a social awakening in the Scottish Church in the 1880's and 90's, the new interest in social questions made little impression as yet on the concerns and activity of the church courts. The fact that none of the higher courts of the three Churches devoted any special study or attention to the burning social issues which had gripped the interest and enthusiasm of the nation at large, seems to indicate that before the turn of the century, the majority of churchmen felt that such matters were not properly the concern of the Church in her official or corporate capacity.

It is significant, however, that in the U. P. Church -- in these years the most socially-aroused of the three Churches -- one attempt was made to set up regular congresses or a committee to consider contemporary social questions. In 1890, the U. P. Synod received an overture from the Presbytery of Falkirk asking that the Synod appoint a permanent Committee on Public Questions and inaugurate an annual church congress to discuss such questions.[1] The overture read in part:

> "Whereas there have arisen in recent times many public questions, social and moral, intimately connected with the spiritual and ethical well-being of

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1. Proceedings of the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church, May 1890, p. 395.

> the people, and affecting largely the members and adherents of the United Presbyterian Church; and whereas it is the duty of the Church, as well in her corporate capacity as through her ministers and other office-bearers, to endeavour to furnish suitable guidance to those under her charge in all matters that affect, either directly or indirectly, their Christian discipleship, and to afford as well her united testimony in respect of such questions. . . ."[1]

This Presbytery wished the new Committee to study not only the traditional questions such as intemperance, gambling and immorality, but

> "subjects of a wider character, bearing on the moral and social welfare of the people, and to provide by an Annual Congress or in some other manner for such deliberations and decisions on the Reports of said Committee as may be necessary."[2]

In the same year, the Synod received overtures from the Presbyteries of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Greenock, and Kilmarnoch also asking for the setting up of an annual autumn conference or congress to discuss current social questions.[3]

Unfortunately, having been submitted to the Presbyteries of the Church in 1890-1 and rejected by the majority of them, none of these overtures were accepted by the 1891 Synod.[4] Nevertheless, they are significant for their time in that they represented the first attempts made in any of the Scottish Churches to set up permanent bodies for the study and discussion of various contemporary social questions. While no further overtures along these lines were forthcoming in the remaining nine years of this Church's separate existence, many sections of the annual Reports of the Church Life and Work Committee indicated that a large number of U. P. churchmen wished to see their Church take up some of the controversial social issues of the day. The 1895 Report, for example, called on the Church to

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1. Ibid., appendix, p. 467.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 395 and appendix, pp. 467-9.
4. The Presbyteries voted against the appointment of a standing Committee on Public Questions by 15 to 3, and against holding a regular autumn conference to discuss such questions by 17 to 10. (Synod Papers of the United Presbyterian Church, May 1891, pp. 295-6).

study, from a Christian standpoint, some of the vital social and economic questions, such as the

> "relations of Christianity to the various forms and phases of Socialism; the word which God has spoken in regard to the relations of employers and employed, and the great moral questions which emerge amid the strifes and competitions of the labour world and mercantile life; the place which faith in Christ has in the elevation of the masses, and in guiding the democracy in its social and political responsibilities; the answer which the Church has to give to the involved issues presented to it by the conditions of manufacturing, commercial, intellectual, and social life as they now exist."[1]

In order to make known the Church's views on such questions, the Report asked

> "whether means might not be devised for organizing special services in our large cities, to be conducted by ministers or members of the Church whose qualifications for dealing with them might command a specific appointment by the Synod to this work."[2]

The 1896 Report of this Committee warned that the

> "silence of the Church may be the greatest of moral evils. The apathy of Christian men and women on social questions may be a serious hindrance to the Church's progress. The ignorance of those in better circumstances in regard to the sufferings and wrongs of their poorer brethren, may be a means of perpetuating sins and sorrows which Christian love and civic faithfulness could easily alleviate or abolish. . . . The Church must not only stand free from all complicity with social, industrial and political wrong, and from all entanglement with class prejudice or party spirit; it must deliver its testimony and apply gospel teaching in relation to every form of evil which hinders the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Yea, it must be faithful to search out the evil, to examine carefully the actual condition of affairs, to tell the people and the rulers what ought to be done, and to bring to bear upon the work the highest Christian intelligence, devotion and sacrifice."[3]

Although the Synod took no definite action in response to the various recommendations and questions raised in these annual Reports, the sentiments expressed by such a responsible and representative Committee gives some further indication of the renewed interest in the Church in social and economic questions, as well as the greater awareness of the relevance and application of Christianity to the whole corporate life of society.

It is when we turn to the pages of The United Presbyterian Magazine, however, and the views of Presbyterian Dissenters there and in other independent journals

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1. Ibid., May 1895, p. 32. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid., May 1896, pp. 37-8.

and sources of the period, that the signs of an emerging social criticism in the U. P. Church are most apparent. The change in the Church's attitude to society is evident in the content and application of contemporary sermons, addresses and lectures, in religious articles and editorials, in the publication of pamphlets and books by ministers on social questions,[1] as well as in the enlarged interest and activity of churchmen in public events and current affairs.

The United Presbyterian Magazine, which had always been the most enlightened -- socially and politically -- of the official or semi-official church pbulications, continued to be the most progressive magazine of its kind throughout these last years of its publication.[2] Editorially, this journal continued its earlier support for progressive extension of the franchise in the direction of full democracy. It was a strong supporter of the Third Reform Bill of 1884 and of Chamberlain's liberal Radicalism against the less advanced Liberals.[3] Indeed, it criticized the proposals of the 1884 Bill for not giving the vote to women householders.[4] Extremely significant was the fact that of all the Scottish ecclesiastical publications, it was the only one which condemned and opposed Britain's participation in the Boer War.[5] This magazine also kept close scrutiny upon public affairs and commercial life generally. When the tragic City of Glasgow Bank failure took place in 1878, it denounced -- to a much greater extent than the other church journals -- the dishonesty and fraud of the directors, many of whom were prominent church members,[6]

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1. One clear indication of the new interest of the Church in social and economic questions was the large number of books written by ministers in these years on such subjects.

2. In January 1901, it was merged in The Union Magazine under the editorship of James Orr and James Denney. However, this new magazine of the United Free Church was not successful, and it ceased publication in February 1904.

3. The United Presbyterian Magazine, February 1884, p. 91; April 1884, p. 186; and May 1884, p. 235.

4. Ibid., February 1884, p. 91; and July 1884, p. 332.

5. Ibid., October-December 1899, p. 480, 528 and 576; January-April 1900, pp. 1-4, 49-53, 144 and 192; June 1900, p. 288; and November 1900, p. 527.

6. Ibid., November 1878, pp. 525-6; December 1878, pp. 567-8; February 1879, pp. 78-80; and March 1879, p. 131.

and raised some searching questions about the ethical validity of many business practices:

> "What is the legitimate sphere of speculation -- to what extent and on what grounds may it be carried on? Is there not something too much akin to gambling in the manner and spirit of much of the business transactions of the day? And has not the hasting to be rich -- the love of possession and display of wealth, with the indulgences and influence which it commands -- much to do with this?"[1]

However, it was in the prominent place it gave to the new social emphasis in the Church that this magazine was most noteworthy. As early as 1870, it published a series of articles by an unidentified writer entitled, 'The Social Mission of the Pulpit'.[2] Although such a theme was to become a familiar one in the church press generally after 1880, its appearance at this early date is an indication of the fact that among some Dissenting ministers a new theological liberalism and social gospel was already taking hold. In the articles, the writer urged ministers to deal in their sermons with some of the pressing social questions with which their members were concerned. He rejected the prevalent view that the mission of the Church was only to the souls of men[3] and called for a more inclusive conception of the Gospel:

> "We labour for ends, some of which, at least, are to have their realization on earth. We are set, like the Prophets of old, to proclaim the righteousness of God to nations and kingdoms. . . . The temptation of the Church at present is to demit what belongs to the regeneration of society in her functions, and to abandon to outside organizations a burden which the Lord has laid chiefly upon herself."[4]

In the new spirit of theological liberalism, the writer declared that one of the primary tasks which lies before the Church is that of "leading the poor, the lost, and the ignorant up out of their debasements and sufferings, and setting open for them the gates of heaven on earth."[5]

While an article of this type was rare in this early period, after 1880 sermons and addresses by U. P. ministers, stressing the social mission of the

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1. Ibid., November 1878, p. 526.
2. Ibid., January-April 1870, pp. 5-10, 49-55, 101-108 and 145-153.
3. Ibid., January 1870, p. 7. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid., p. 10.

Church, found a prominent place in contemporary church sources. On every hand there were signs that large numbers of churchmen were acutely conscious of the Church's past and present prophetic failure, and the imperative necessity that she now repent, reform herself and take up the cause of social justice:

> The Church has not kept hold of the public conscience on these matters, but has withdrawn to monastic habits in the interests of a so-called peace and undisturbed spirituality. It has aimed to do more for man in the next life than for the life that now is. . . . One of the gravest and most ominous facts of our time is, that the great proportion of the people are outside all churches, alienated by misunderstanding or neglect; and the outsiders grow impatient, believing that in the idea of the Kingdom of God there must be hope of a justice not yet made explicit, and of which the avowed preachers of that kingdom have not said all that might be expected of them. . . . Such enlargement of outlook as shall embrace social questions, along with problems of spiritual life, is imperative, in order that the Church may bear a living message to the people. They are asking for a Gospel that shall make this life healthier and brighter, and are no longer content to toil like slaves for a few commercial potentates, and patiently wait for compensation in another world. Let us have full sympathy with everything human in the present, and while holding firm the central truth as it is in Christ, let us be as much aglow with social interests as are the most ardent reformers of our time."[1]

Another minister, in calling upon the Church in her corporate capacity to condemn the social evils and injustice in society, claimed that "because the Church does not utter a clear protest, and offer a resolute opposition, she is assumed, by most of the sufferers, to be either helplessly neutral, or actually on the side of wrong."[2] Revealing a most enlightened viewpoint, he urged the Church to acknowledge the existence of sin and evil in social institutions and economic self-interest, to reject 'laissez-faire' notions, and to regard the state as a positive instrument for achieving social justice:

> "The State is no longer a power standing outside the popular will, but is merely the expression of that will. . . . If the evil is one that requires legislative remedies, then, surely, it is the duty of the Church to

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1. A. Scott Matheson, The Church and Social Problems, (1893), p. 8. Matheson, who was minister of Dumbarton High Street U. P. Church, wrote several books on the relationship of Christianity to social and economic questions, including, in addition to the above, The Gospel and Modern Substitutes in 1890, and The City of Man published in 1910. As we shall see later, he was a leading exponent of the new Christian social radicalism in the Scottish Church.

2. The United Presbyterian Magazine, September 1891, p. 411. From an article on 'The Church and the Community' by John Cullen, minister of West U. P. Church, Leslie.

address herself to the Legislature. The thing the Church must not do, is to neglect the wrong, to ignore the evil that is done in the community of which she forms a part. For us to take up the position of only dealing with individuals, is to shut out from our view that large class of wrongs which are committed by society as a whole, and also to forget that what may not be consciously recognized by an individual as a wrong action, owing to the blinding effect of custom or class interest, may, nevertheless, be a very real evil in its practical effect upon the lives of many, and an evil of colossal magnitude in its cumulative influence upon the morality of the nation as a whole."[1]

Some ministers stressed in sermons and lectures that Christians had a responsibility to press for legislative reforms that would remove social evils. In a paper delivered to a conference of northern Presbyteries at Peterhead on 'The Relation of the Pulpit to Politics', the speaker, appealing to the example of the prophets, Jesus himself, and Knox and the Reformers, urged his fellow-ministers to study the complex social and economic issues of the day so that they might deal with them in their preaching and teaching. In this way, "the pulpit might do not a little to press to legislative solution some of our more urgent problems."[2] Unless ministers relate the Gospel to contemporary issues, he said, "more and more will the labouring classes estrange themselves from an institution whose teachers seem to have no message suited to their most pressing needs."[3] The same advice came from another churchman, who insisted that it was the Church's duty to discuss and pronounce on controversial issues:

"If the Church of Christ is only to deal with those things upon which men are agreed, her mission is useless, and her influence effete. . . . The world is jealous of interference. But the healthiest Christian sentiment will

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1. Ibid., pp. 411-2.

2. Ibid., September 1888, p. 404. The paper was delivered by Wm. H. MacFarlane, minister of Keith U. P. Church.

3. Ibid., p. 405.

> always demand that the light of the revealed Word be shed upon every dark subject under discussion, so that the whole of human life may be illumined by divine justice, truth and love. . . . Because a great social question has a political side, the Church must not ignore it. The religious, social, and political life of the people is complex. The one shades into the other. Many of our social reforms cannot be secured without the aid of laws enacted by Parliament. . . . The Church must never become entangled in the strifes of party, but she cannot give up her interest in all those questions of righteousness, truth, justice and purity which concern the well-being of man."[1]

It was in this period that some of the most socially-aroused clergy began to condemn the existence of mass poverty and other aspects of the social and economic inequalities in society. One Dundee minister, calling for equality of opportunity for all, said that the opportunities which wealth and social position afford should be made available to all and not just to the privileged few.[2] An Edinburgh minister criticized the social class distinctions in society in the light of Jesus' teaching on the brotherhood of man. He declared that the accepted principle of natural selection in commercial competition whereby the weak and the helpless go to the wall was thoroughly unchristian and ought to be condemned by the Church. The time was coming, he said, when this selfishly based economic and commercial system must go.[3] A Glasgow minister, in a powerful sermon, condemned the willingness of comfortably-placed Christians to tolerate poverty and starvation in the midst of a wealthy society:

> "God has made provision in nature to supply the wants of all men. Every child born into the human family has an inalienable right to board and lodging in the great family-house. In the selfishness and sin of men, and not in the will and design of God shall we find the cause of misery and woe. . . .

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1. The Scottish Pulpit, July 1, 1891, p. 226. From a sermon on 'The Church and Social Questions' by Wm. Dickie, minister of Dowanhill U. P. Church, Partick. Dickie's social views were set forth at some length in his book, The Christian Ethics of Social Life published in 1903.

2. The United Presbyterian Magazine, April 1893, p. 146. From an article on 'Christianity in Relation to the Social Problems of the Day', by James Aitken, minister of Ryehill U. P. Church, Dundee.

3. Ibid., February 1895, pp. 53-4. From an article on 'The Brotherhood of Man', by J. B. Hastings, minister of Palmerston Place U. P. Church, Edinburgh.

> In our land there are tens of thousands who lack even the bare necessities of life, who are not properly fed, or properly clothed or properly housed -- whose lot is as hard as if a famine and plague were together stalking through the land."[1]

Even while he was speaking, he declared, multitudes in the city were starving and were naked in February weather in fireless rooms. Nor can we escape condemnation by blaming the individuals themselves, because "there are thousands and tens of thousands who have gone down through no fault or sin of their own."[2] This churchman criticized those who believed that charity and alms would meet the problem:

> "Bad laws have had much to do in the production of this social misery. These bad laws must be repealed, and good laws take their place. . . but there is a need for more legislation; and it is the duty of every Christian citizen to contribute what he can, either by information or suggestion, or by the use of the franchise, towards the making of such legislation. . . . The claim of the toiler is not for charity, but for justice. . . it is monstrous that the labourer should be dependent upon charity for his livelihood. He has worked for and deserves a living -- deserves enough, at the very least, to supply all ordinary and reasonable wants. Starvation wages are a crime, and should be treated as a crime."[3]

Concluding his sermon, he declared:

> "I know the danger of the church's meddling with politics, -- the danger of divisions through the displeasure of those whose prejudices or interests are assailed; but there will be a greater danger if the church raises no testimony, and makes no effort to secure social reforms which are urgently needed."[4]

In an address delivered in 1898, one of the younger U. P. ministers questioned the value of most traditional Christian charitable endeavour, claiming that a more radical approach was needed that would alter existing social and economic arrangements. It has become increasingly clear, he said, that it is not

> "a palliative here and there that is needed to heal social wrongs, but a change in the spirit, and many changes in the form and constitution of the social

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1. The Scottish Pulpit, March 4, 1891, p. 401. From a sermon on 'The Poverty of the Poor', by A. F. Forrest, minister of Renfield Street U. P. Church, Glasgow.

2. Ibid., p. 402.

3. Ibid., p. 403. For an example of the starvation wages being paid to sweated workers in Glasgow, Forrest referred to one group of 15-18 year old girls who laboured for 50 hours a week for only 2/. (Ibid).

4. Ibid.

> organism. It may well be a question in the mind of many a social worker whether the Church is really helping society to reach a better condition when it makes itself the dispenser of the doles of the employer who pays many of his servants a wage that will barely serve to keep a wife and family with the strictest thrift. . . . The same misgiving will apply to the whole system of dispensing the alms of many who are, in the main, well satisfied with things as they are in society, because things as they are suit their convenience."[1]

This minister insisted that the social function of the Church was to be a critic and not a defender of 'things as they are'. Its task

> "is not to keep the peace by glossing over social wrongs and 'prophesying smooth sayings', as if such social wrongs did not concern it, or were to be accepted simply as a part of the providential order. . . . I do not think we, as Christians, ought to be content with a social system which requires a very large proportion of our fellow-countrymen and women to spend ten hours a day for most of the days of their life in close and heavy and monotonous toil, and to spend their other hours in places whose ugliness it is an oppression and a weariness to think of! I do not think we have any right to rest satisfied with a system of things of which this is a necessary part."[2]

It is quite apparent, even from this brief consideration of contemporary church sources, that a remarkable change had taken place in the social attitudes and outlook of large numbers of U. P. churchmen in the closing years of the last century.[3]

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, December 1898, pp. 544-5. From a paper read at a conference of northern Presbyteries on 'The Christian Church and Social Improvement', by John D. Sinclair, minister of Midmar U. P. Church.

2. Ibid., p. 545.

3. David S. Cairns was a typical example of a young minister whose social and theological views underwent considerable change in the closing years of the 19th century. Cairns -- who in 1907 was appointed to the chair of Apologetics and Systematic Theology, and in 1923 to the principalship of Aberdeen U. F. Church College -- describes in his autobiography those influences which led him to a new social and theological awareness while a young U. P. minister. He recalls how he had swung away from the individualism of Evangelical Christianity with its emphasis on personal and otherworldly salvation to a more objective theocentric piety; and how he had become concerned about the Kingdom of God as interpreted largely in terms of a nobler form of human society towards the restoration of which in earth as in heaven the Church was conceived as being the means. (David Cairns -- An Autobiography, p. 149). He goes on to describe the accompanying growth of a new social awareness: "I, like many others, had awakened to the non-Christian element in our so-called Christian civilization." (Ibid). He recalls how the socialism of a close friend had done much to awaken him to a greater social concern, and how his own persistent battle for health put power into his social conviction, for it helped him to see that "if I was right in fighting for it [i.e. physical recovery] rather than 'submitting', then it was right for others [i.e. the working classes] to fight for healthier social conditions, and for education and for adequate means of livelihood." (Ibid).

Strongly influenced by the spirit of the new theological and social liberalism, there had emerged among many ministers a new and more critical attitude to existing social and economic arrangements, and a growing awareness of the need for the Church to recover her prophetic responsibility in society.

(2) The Free Church

The social awakening which gripped the Scottish Church in the 1880's and 90's manifested itself powerfully in an influential section of the Free Church. Although there is no evidence to suggest that any efforts were made in these years to have the Church at the national level -- through her General Assembly -- take up the consideration of the numerous social issues being debated in society at large, as had been attempted in the U. P. Church, other sources of Free Church opinion reveal that large numbers of churchmen were coming alive to the new social relevance of the Gospel.

One significant sign of the social awakening in the Free Church -- and indeed in the other Churches as well -- was the growing practice of including addresses by qualified ministers and laymen, dealing with the application of Christianity to contemporary social, moral and economic questions, among the topics discussed at regional or Synodical conferences sponsored by Home Mission or Life and Work Committees. There are numerous references to such conferences in the church press although, unfortunately, seldom is the content of the lectures and addresses which were delivered on these occasions given in any detail. Several of the Synodical Life and Work conferences of the Free Church held in the west of Scotland in these years made provision for at least one address on social questions. This was true of the annual conferences held by both the Synod of Dumfries and the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in the mid-1880's.[1] Most noteworthy of all in these years was the Synodical congress held in Glasgow by the latter Synod in 1884. The closing meeting of this

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1. The conferences held in 1886 and 1887 by the Dumfries Synod, for example, devoted some attention to social problems. A paper was delivered in 1886 by W. Smith, minister of Halfmorton, on 'The Duty of the Christian Church in relation to the Social Questions of the Time'. (The Year Book of the Free Church of Scotland, 1888, p. 100-1).

congress was devoted entirely to the discussion of the topic, 'The Church and Social Questions'. It was addressed by several prominent Free Church ministers and -- most surprising of all -- by a Glasgow trade union leader. Unfortunately, we know little about the actual content of the papers delivered by the various speakers because, strangely enough, the official Free Church magazine made no reference to the event. However, The United Presbyterian Magazine did give a brief description of some of the social radicalism that was expressed at the congress:

> "The growth of Radical sentiment within the Free Church, especially as regards the Land Question was clearly illustrated by the discussion at the closing meeting of the Conference. . . . Rev. George Reith of College Church, Glasgow spoke on the Church and Social Questions. The paper which he read on this subject was strong and decided in the views it expressed -- so strong that some of its statements were characterized by a succeeding speaker as verging on Communism. Mr. Reith denounced the Scottish Land Laws in unsparing language. He also protested against the monopoly of capital, repudiated the idea that in business self-interest ought to be the supreme law, and declared that so long as the law of unrestricted competition was made the basis of our political economy, so long would the chasm yawn between rich and poor. These sentiments, coming from a minister who presides over a fashionable congregation in the west end of Glasgow, were loudly cheered by the audience,[1] and a

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1. George Reith, one of the leading ministers in the Free and United Free Church, was minister of College Church (after 1908 College and Kelvingrove Church) from 1866 to 1918, and moderator of the U. F. Church General Assembly in 1914. Some indication of the prophetic tone of this address in 1884 can be gathered by noting something of the radical nature of his social criticism later in other contexts. Throughout his long ministry he was known as one of the strongest critics of the existing social and economic system. Reith's prophetic fervour was nowhere more evident than in his moderator's address, where he launched a powerful attack on the present capitalist system which, he said, stood condemned by its fruits -- "its sharp and shocking contrasts, its poverty and its wealth, its east ends and west ends, its hard and monotonous toil, and its superfluity of idleness, its chronic clashing of interests -- class against class, labour against capital -- its monopolies of land and means of production, its seething and frankly revolutionary discontent." (Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, 1914, pp. 43-4). With a keen insight, he saw the paradox of 'moral man and immoral society' -- that "a system may be radically unsound, while men involved in its operations may be personally upright and unconscious of infraction of moral law." (Ibid., p. 44). In this case, he insisted, personal morality is of no avail; it is the system that must be changed. (Ibid). Reith went on in his address to denounce the present system with its unrestrained individualism and unrestricted competition as unchristian, and said that, consequently, the Church could not take up a neutral position but must condemn the existing order. (Ibid., p. 45). Reith's biographer, Wm. Clow, has gathered together into the concluding chapter of his book (Cf. Dr. George Reith: A Scottish Ministry), the substance of Reith's views on the social order. The following excerpts will indicate something of the prophetic nature of his

warm reception was also given to a leading local Trades' Unionist who spoke vigorously on the necessity of Land and Labour Reform. Even the professors

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social criticism: "It is difficult to convince one who has achieved position or wealth by assiduous industry, and maintained an unimpeachable integrity all through, that an economic order which favoured his opportunities is false in principle, and probably false in proportion to the extent to which he has himself benefitted from it. It can fairly be said from this point of view that the rich are no more to be blamed than the poor. It is the evil in the system that enables the one to be rich and forces the other to be poor." (p. 268). "Surely it is not God's intention that the few should be at the top of the tree of life, sitting secure, and that the many should be struggling to get, or keep, a mere foothold on its lowest branches." (p. 270). "Christian and philanthropic workers appear to me to be simply physicians and nurses tending the wounded on the field of battle. They are doing noble work. But what we want is: no wounded, and no battle to inflict wounds. We do not believe that God intended humanity to become a field for the never ending struggle of the weak against the strong. . . . I cannot see that the Church ought to view this unhappy condition of things with equanimity, and abstain from pronouncing the social and economic order that produces it to be contrary to the will of Christ. . . . She would not stand in line with the old prophets of Israel, or even be a sympathetic exponent of their trenchant utterances, if she declined to deal with a social order that bore hard on the mass of the men and women under it." (pp. 271-4). Reith blamed the Church's passivity and silence for the loss of great masses of workers from the Churches. (p. 276). He said it was not necessary to know all the remedies for social evils before the Church spoke out: "At least the Church can say: such and such things are wrong; they contradict the spirit of Christ; they traverse the fundamental principles of our faith; even though she may be unable to indicate how they are to be put right." (p. 277). As proof of the immorality of the system, he pointed out how devout Christians who defended the existing economic order had to act immorally: "It is pathetic to hear these very men at times apologetic for the lines along which they are reluctantly compelled to move because 'business is business'; they are caught in the swirl of the stream." (p. 280). Whether Reith would have regarded himself as a Christian socialist or not, he had certainly adopted much of the socialist criticism of capitalism. He predicted that with its injustices and inequalities "the time may well come when the present system of wage-earning shall seem as out-of-date, perhaps as anti-christian, as slavery seems today." (p. 283). Granting the justice of all that the working classes were demanding, he quoted figures to show that 1/10 of the population owned 9/10 of the accumulated wealth; that 1/3 of the wage-earners had scarcely a bare subsistence living and that the other 2/3 were hardly removed from this low level. (pp. 286-7). He said that because the workers had to fight for every gain and every improvement in their condition, they were bitter and hardened against the higher classes and the employers of labour. In this great struggle for social justice, "I do not see how the Church can be content with a passive neutrality." (pp. 288-9). "I say that a system which hinders masters and men from meeting each other on equal terms with the conviction that their mutual interests are not antagonistic but identical; a system in which market value is one thing and human need another, leads to nothing more or less than human servitude. Then the worth of human life is expressed in coin: men and women are regarded as means, not as ends; the opportunity to make the best of themselves, to enjoy all that is worth enjoying in life, to rise to the level of true, intelligent, self-respecting manhood and womanhood is virtually denied to them. They are kept captive in an iron,

caught the prevailing Radical tone. Professor Lindsay urged that the Church should look at these political subjects in the light of the brotherhood of mankind.[1] The Rev. A. C. MacKenzie read a valuable paper on 'The Relation of the Church to the Wage-earning Classes'."[2]

This congress and the other conferences which discussed social questions were important in that they were the forerunners of several significant national church congresses held in both Churches between 1899 and the beginning of the first world war, at which the consideration of such questions was given a much greater, even dominant, place.

Another similar indication of the social awakening common to all the Churches was the practice among socially-concerned congregations and ministers of holding

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remorseless economic system; and I ask: Can the Church, which claims to be the mouthpiece of Him who said: 'It is not the will of my Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish', asserting the inestimable worth of the individual, a new ideal for society, and a new view of social duty; can the Church, I ask, pass by on the other side, and turn a deaf ear to their claims? Can she afford to take up the ground that this is a province outside her proper sphere?" (pp. 291-2).

1. T. M. Lindsay, who became professor of Church History at Glasgow Free Church College in 1872 and Principal of the College in 1902, was one of a number of distinguished Glasgow Free Church professors -- A. B. Bruce, George Adam Smith and Henry Drummond were others -- who was strongly affected by the spirit of the new social liberalism. He was radical in his political views and was a friend of advanced political thinkers such as Ben Tillett -- the noted trade union leader and socialist -- and R. B. Cunninghame Graham -- one of the founders of the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party. He also took an active part in the meetings connected with the Highland land reform agitation. (Cf. P. C. Simpson, The Life of Principal Rainy, vol. 1, p. 466). Lindsay was one of those whose theological and social views had altered dramatically. An article appearing in a church magazine in 1906, said that in his student days he was a conservative in politics, literature, philosophy and theology. A few years later, he was "an advocate of reform in almost all spheres of human activity. He advocated the right of women to an entrance into the University. He was identified with the movement which led to the Highland Crofters' Act. He stoutly defended the right of historical criticism in the Church. In fact, he lived a life of activity, political and social, and was in the front rank in all these questions." (The United Free Church Magazine, January 1906, p. 7).

2. The United Presbyterian Magazine, January 1885, p. 22. MacKenzie, who was minister of Bridgeton Free Church in Glasgow, quoted statistics in his address which revealed that 70% of the whole Scottish population were working class, and that the total average family income of this 70% of the population was only £57 a year. (Ibid., p. 23).

Sunday evening meetings in their churches at which the relation of Christianity to contemporary social issues was discussed. The church press frequently drew attention to such meetings, and often the most important of the lectures and addresses delivered on these occasions were collected and published in books and pamphlets for wider distribution.

A typical example of the new practice of lecturing on social subjects was a Sunday evening series delivered in 1885 in Queen's Cross Free Church, Aberdeen, and St. John's Free Church, Dundee, which was published under the title of Christianity and Social Life. The substance of these lectures reveals how dramatically the social thought of representative churchmen had changed from what it had been even 10 years earlier. A. B. Bruce,[1] delivering the first lecture on 'The Kingdom of God', emphasized the relevance of the rediscovery of this element of Jesus' teaching for the social mission of the Church:

> "The term kingdom conveys the idea that Christianity is a social thing, that man in religion is not an isolated unit, but a member of a social organism, and that his well-being and perfection, or in one word his salvation, is to be sought and found only in communion with his fellows. . . . A kingdom of God is a perfect society, probably too perfect for this world, hovering over all actual societies. . . not to be found on earth, but in heaven. . . not to be identified with any church or any state, but of essential importance both to church and to state, tending, insofar as it is operative to make the one a truly 'holy commonwealth', and the other a truly righteous nation."[2]

If this standard of the Kingdom of God were applied to the life of society, he said,

> "what social improvements in the condition of the million would come! We should no longer see human beings treated as if after all a man were not so valuable as a sheep, an ox or a horse; half-starved in a wealthy land, housed like swine, regarded simply as labour-drudges, their life of no consequence, seeing when they die their places can easily be supplied from an overstocked labour-market. Thank God there are many among us of all ranks and occupations to whom such a state of things appears intolerable, and who

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1. Bruce, who was professor of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis in Glasgow College from 1875 until his death in 1899, was an outspoken advocate of the new social liberalism.

2. A. B. Bruce, "The Kingdom of God," Christianity and Social Life, p. 2.

will not rest until remedies or ameliorations have been found. Let the doctrine of the kingdom only have time to work, and eventually it will leaven the whole lump."[1]

Since Bruce believed the Kingdom could not be equated with the Church, he attacked the self-righteousness of those in the Church who believed they were 'of the elect' while those outside were 'godless infidels':

> "There may even be less of the kingdom of God in the church than in secular society. Jesus told the Pharisees that they were further from the kingdom than the very publicans and sinners whom they despised, and it must be admitted to be possible that even the churchless are nearer the kingdom than many of those who sit in pews and pay for missions to their careless brethren. Nothing can be further from the kingdom of God than counterfeit piety, and a wrong spirit in religion."[2]

Those who take Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom seriously, declared Bruce, will become prophets in society. Under the influence of this teaching

> "the gift of prophecy, as distinct from mere routine preaching will abound. Men with a clear vision of the ideal and with intense longings for social welfare will speak freely and fully their minds, preaching not merely a 'simple' gospel, but an applied gospel. . . . Prophecy in this sense, healthy, vigorous, wise speech about the composite religious and secular life of the time, is not so common as it ought to be. . . there is always a tendency to shirk the task of the prophet just when it is most called for. The prophet's vocation is proverbially a dangerous one. . . . He who has the vision is under constraint to tell it to his fellows, and that leads to trouble. It is certainly not conducive to what the world calls success."[3]

However, concluded Bruce, every minister of the Gospel needs to have this prophetic temper, with

> "a burning passion for righteousness, a genuine humanity, taking a lively interest in all that relates to the general well-being. . . he can be of little use if he lacks them. Especially needful is it that every man who takes it upon him to speak to his fellows in the name of Christ, should be endowed with His 'enthusiasm for humanity'. Every preacher should be, beyond doubt, a lover of men. That is a much more important requirement

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1. Ibid., p. 6.

2. Ibid., p. 12. Bruce once remarked "that he was 'disposed to think that a great and increasing portion of the moral worth of society lies outside the Christian Church, separated from it not by godliness, but rather by exceptionally intense moral earnestness. Many, in fact, have left the Church in order to become Christians'." (Quoted in E. Hughes, ed., Keir Hardie's Speeches and Writings, p. 140).

3. Bruce, "The Kingdom of God," Christianity and Social Life, p. 14.

than wide acquaintance with theology. Where that is, a little theology will go a long way. . . . The man who loves his kind, be he clergyman or layman, is a living epistle and embodiment of the kingdom. But the love, as already hinted, must be real and indubitable. It must be a love of men, not merely of souls. A soul is an abstraction, and the love of souls, per se, is a ghostly thing, which repels rather than wins. It must be a love of men, not merely of church members. . . . Heaven protect us from clerical shop-keeping and from all counterfeit humanities."[1]

Another lecture in this series was given by David M. Ross[2] on 'Christianity and Socialism'. In his treatment of this subject, Ross, while critical of revolutionary brands of socialism, was sympathetic towards religious socialism. He readily admitted the validity of much of the socialist criticism of society as well as the fact of the Church's tragic social failure in the past:

"The church, indeed, has often shown scant sympathy with the aspirations of the working classes for an economical, political and intellectual life worthier of their humanity. She has been too often the retained advocate of the favoured few, the bulwark of the privileged classes. She has sometimes seen the injustice and oppression under which the less fortunate classes have laboured, and preached to them nothing but the duty of contentment and submission to superiors, as if, someone has said, when you have knocked a man into the ditch, the best advice you can give him is to tell him to remain content in that position in which it has pleased Almighty God to place him."[3]

Drawing upon the social insights of the new theological liberalism, Ross declared that the task of Christianity

"is not merely to save individuals, but to regenerate society. One of the most characteristic phrases in Christ's teaching was the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven. It occurs more than a hundred times in the Gospels. The repeated use of such a word is a striking intimation of the emphasis which Christ laid upon the establishment of a perfected society or divine kingdom. . . . There is an ideal kingdom of God -- laid up, as Plato would say, in heaven -- which Christianity can hold up as the goal to be reached, and by which it can test the value of actual institutions and systems. . . . If, then, Christianity looks towards a kingdom of God or a perfected society as the goal to be striven for, it cannot rest satisfied with an imperfect state of society; it must, if it is true to its own genius, work for a greater

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1. Ibid., pp. 15-16.

2. Ross, who was at this time minister of St. John's Free Church, Dundee, was widely known for his interest in social questions. There are numerous references to his public addresses and lectures on such matters in the church press. In 1898, when he left Dundee to become minister of Westbourne Free Church in Glasgow, The British Weekly remarked that for 20 years he had been a leading advocate of social Christianity. (March 17, 1898, p. 425).

3. D. M. Ross, "Christianity and Socialism," Christianity and Social Life, p. 84.

social perfection. Socialists of all types allege that there are serious evils connected with the present distribution of the advantages of civilization. Christianity cannot be indifferent to these evils if they really exist. There are persons who refuse to admit the reality of these alleged evils. . . . They hold that the present industrial arrangements work admirably; they have worked admirably for them. They are well off themselves: why should there be any reforms? They prefer to stand by the good old ways. But if, according to the present constitution of industrial and commercial relations, class is set against class, and animated each against the other not by a spirit of mutual sympathy, but by a spirit of narrow selfishness; if many of the rich use their riches to lessen their interest in their less fortunate brethren, and to pamper themselves in a life of vanity and self-indulgence; and if multitudes of the poor are compelled to live in circumstances little favourable to the growth of a worthy life, Christianity cannot accept this as the best possible of all worlds; but, true to its desire to realize the ideal laid up in heaven, and to its belief in the possibility of realizing it, must proclaim the necessity of reaching a social state which will be more in harmony with the ideal."[1]

Another contributor to this series of lectures was George Adam Smith,[2] who spoke on 'Christianity and Labour'. Taking up a sympathetic position with regard to

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1. Ibid., pp. 76-7.

2. Smith, who was only 29 at this time, had just recently begun his ministry at Queen's Cross Church in Aberdeen. In 1892, he was appointed professor of Old Testament at Glasgow College, and in 1909, he returned to Aberdeen as Principal of the University. Smith is a prominent example of one whose concern for social righteousness was derived from the rediscovery of the contemporary relevance of the message of the great Old Testament prophets. He, in turn, through his lectures, preaching and, above all, his widely read books on Isaiah and the other prophets, exerted a profound influence on the Church in Scotland and far beyond. In his famous expositions of the prophetic books, he constantly drew out the application of the prophets' teaching for contemporary life. The following example of a dynamic social criticism formed part of his exposition of Micah 3:1-4 written in 1896: "Among the living poor today are there not starved and bitter faces -- bodies with the blood sucked from them, with the Divine image crushed out of them? Brothers, we cannot explain all of these by vice. Drunkenness and unthrift do account for much; but how much more is explicable only by the following facts! Many men among us are able to live in fashionable streets and keep their families comfortable only by paying their employees a wage upon which it is impossible for men to be strong or women to be virtuous. Are those not using these as their food? They tell us that if they are to give higher wages they must close their business, and cease paying wages at all; and they are right if they themselves continue to live on the scale they do. As long as many families are maintained in comfort by the profits of businesses in which some or all of the employees work for less than they can nourish and repair their bodies upon, the simple fact is that the one set are feeding upon the other set. . . the truth is clear that many families of the middle class, and some of the very wealthiest of the land, are nourished by the waste of the lives of the poor." (The Book of the Twelve Prophets, vol. 1, pp. 394-5). Smith was especially concerned about the exploitation of unorganized workers who were unable to defend themselves against the harshness of the competitive system. "He became especially a champion of the oppressed and ill-paid women workers, joining the Scottish Council for Women's Trades. . . . He learned about the conditions of labour, hours of work, rates of pay, health

organized labour, Smith lamented the traditional hostility of the Church to the labour movement which had made many workers suspicious of the Church:

> "It is a fact that a large number of working men are, in the interests of Labour, hostile to Christianity, that they regard it as a religion identified with the classes immediately above them, and with the dominant economy of society, under which they believe they have never had fair play."[1]

Smith placed the blame for this working class hostility to the Church on the fact that the latter had blindly and foolishly given her blessing to an economic system which had exploited and degraded the workers. He said it was the Church's identification of the iron laws of political economy with the will of God which had given the oppressed workers a feeling of bitter resentment against organized Christianity:

> "He who has read the history of the Industrial Century, which opened by the appearance of 'The Wealth of Nations', and in the closing year of which we already stand, is well aware how plausible such feelings are. He knows that the terrible faults in a civilization, which the Church herself has rashly led men to identify with Christianity, have been chiefly expiated by the sufferings of the working-classes. . . . In lifting too quick hands to bless this system as the Providence of God, many representatives of our English Christianity forgot that they were giving sanction to an unlimited selfishness and reign of force. The so-called gospel of non-interference with individual liberty was, in Christian quarters, actually esteemed as of greater sacredness than the gospel of protecting the weak from the strong. Only forty years ago, in the midst of great revivals of religion and philanthropy, employers of Christian repute were keeping little children at work in mines and metal factories, twelve, fourteen, sixteen, even eighteen hours a day, as the Reports of Her Majesty's own Inspectors for the time testify, and Christian philanthropists still of name among us were resisting from their place in Parliament the carriage of such Bills as sought to make these ghastly cruelties criminal. That was only one instance in which the names and influence of Christian men were employed to sacrifice the interests of Labour and of the poor for the sake of an economic theory; and he who knows how many more there were will not wonder that when working men were led to suppose that Christianity was identified with a political economy, whose one indisputable virtue had been that of largely increasing material wealth, but whose final message for labour was the notorious 'iron law of wages', they became hostile to the representatives of Christianity, and found opportunities

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and housing, and he led a campaign against sweated labour among women. Later he was appointed chairman, and he held that post during all his time at Glasgow." (L. A. Smith, George Adam Smith, p. 68).

1. G. A. Smith, "Christianity and Labour," Christianity and Social Life, p. 52.

of exhibiting against them some of the finest displays of moral feeling, of which the history of mankind has left any record."[1]

From the three lectures in this series which we have examined,[2] it is clear that among more progressive churchmen a remarkable social awakening was taking place. It is not too much to say that most of the more advanced sentiments expressed here in 1885 would not have found acceptance in the Church, still less been uttered in a public lecture, even a decade earlier.

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1. Ibid., pp. 52-3. Later in his lecture, Smith praised the success of the labour movement in undermining and discrediting the false dogmas of the old political economy. As far as their law of wages was conceived, "working men's societies and unions increased, and raised wages in spite of the wage-fund theory. And at last, in 1870, that theory was finally admitted to be a fallacy." (Ibid., p. 69).

2. Four other lectures on social subjects were delivered in this series by leading Free Church ministers, including T. M. Lindsay and Marcus Dods. Dods, who was minister of Renfield Free Church in Glasgow, became professor of New Testament in New College in 1889. He was one of those Free Church leaders who frequently wrote and lectured on social subjects, and who was critical of many of the existing social and economic arrangements in society. (Cf. The British Weekly, November 10, 1892, p. 33, on 'The Church and the Working Classes'; January 4, 1894, pp. 169-170, on 'Socialism'). One journal, referring to a sermon he had preached on the relation of Christianity to the social questions of the day, said that "he admitted that poverty had now assumed a more serious aspect than it once had. Much of it was plainly due to the competitive system of society, being apparently 'the inevitable result of the principle upon which our entire social fabric is built.' Individual charity, he contended, is unavailing in dealing with poverty so produced; what is required is an alteration in the system out of which this poverty has been born. 'What the working classes at present demand is not charity but justice. They do not wish to seem to be indebted to others for a support they feel they have toiled for and earned. They require a social system in which the honest toil of a lifetime shall be sufficient to secure the toiler and his family from the dangers and degradations of utter poverty'." (The Christian Socialist, May 1889, p. 67). Dods was particularly alarmed at the widespread alienation of the working classes from the Church caused by her unconcern about their social and economic plight. In a speech to the General Assembly on the subject, he referred to the marked hostility to the Church on the part of so many socially-aroused workers: "I have received private letters from working men which would surprise you with the intensity of their bitter feeling against the Church and would create just alarm in your minds that we could never win back these men to our fold." (Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1892, p. 185).

Even a churchman like Wm. G. Blaikie seems to have adopted somewhat more advanced social views in the last years of his life. In his Cunningham lectures on preaching delivered in 1888, he urged ministers to deal with some of the burning social questions of the day in their sermons. Remarking upon the recent change in the Church's social outlook, he said that the Church was now

> "becoming familiar with social relations on a wider scale. The questions that have arisen are often delicate and the preacher needs to be careful of the privilege of the pulpit. Questions between capital and labour; questions regarding the possession and occupancy of land -- why, the very mention of them sets suspicion on edge, as if we were already trespassing on forbidden ground. And yet there is a deep conviction in fair and intelligent minds that Christianity has to do with these questions, and that there is something in its principles which is more favourable to the poor man than many of us preachers have had the courage to avow. Yes, in the heart of Christianity there is a spirit of brotherhood, a spirit hostile to all class interests, a spirit that aims at securing fair and comfortable conditions of life especially for the toiling multitude, a spirit of sympathy for the lovely and him that hath no helper. . . . Is the pulpit, then, like the priest and the Levite in the parable, to pass by these social disturbances on the other side? . . . Are the perpetual struggles of labour to improve its condition to be set down to sheer greed and covetousness? If the pulpit shuts its eyes to all such matters, they will fall into other hands, and the Church itself will be classed among the institutions (as indeed it often is) which are hostile to labour and ought therefore to be swept away."[1]

In view of all the manifold signs of a social awakening in the Free Church, it is surprising to find, however, when we turn to the social thought expressed in the church press, that in these years the official Free Church magazine[2] in no way reflected this awakening. In contrast to its U. P. Church counterpart, it devoted virtually no attention to contemporary social issues or public affairs. Indeed, on the rare occasions when it did discuss such matters, it almost invariably adopted an illiberal, if not reactionary position.[3] Whether this magazine's

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1. W. G. Blaikie, The Preachers of Scotland, pp. 312-3.

2. In 1880 and 1881 the magazine was called The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record; from 1882 to 1885, The Free Church Monthly; from 1886 to 1900, The Free Church of Scotland Monthly.

3. This magazine was highly critical of the growing influence of socialism as well as the socially disturbing influence of trade unions. The former was accused of wishing to abolish class distinctions by demanding a foolish equality. The editor -- Norman L. Walker of Dysart Free Church -- did not believe that social equality was possible even in the Church. Criticizing

outlook was merely a reflection of the views of the editor and those who contributed to it, or whether it was an indication that the older, more conservative elements were still dominant in the Free Church is difficult to determine. However, enlightened social attitudes were to be found in the pages of unofficial and independent organs which can be said to reflect, in general, Free Church opinion.

One of these was The British Weekly, which, although published in London, had from its beginning in 1886 a Scottish edition, had Free Church (or U. F.) ministers for its first three editors,[1] and many regular contributions from noted Free Church ministers. For the purpose of this study therefore, it may be regarded as generally representative of the views of the socially advanced elements in the Scottish Dissenting and Free Churches. As can be surmised by its subtitle -- A Journal of Social and Christian Progress -- this weekly newspaper was a leading exponent of the new social (and political) liberalism within the context of liberal evangelical Christianity. Said Nicoll, outlining the paper's creed in the first issue:

> "We are believers in progress because we are believers in the advancing reign of Christ. . . . His day has only dawned, and great as has been the influence on human happiness of the principles of Christianity, we believe that from these principles will yet issue almost unlimited developments, even for the physical life of man."[2]

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those who wished to abolish all seat rents and adopt the radical idea of "throwing open of all our church doors to whoever may choose to enter" (The Free Church of Scotland Monthly, June 1891, p. 179), he said that such an attempt to achieve social equality in Church was impossible: "It is no more possible to get rid of class distinctions, so far, in the Church than it is to get rid of them in the world." (Ibid).

1. William Robertson Nicoll, the first editor and leading architect of the paper, was a Free Church minister in Scotland for 12 years before moving to London to take up the editorship in 1886. When Nicoll died in 1923, another former Free Church minister, J. M. E. Ross, became editor. Upon his death 2 1/2 years later, John A. Hutton, a U. F. Church minister, became editor until 1947.

2. The British Weekly, November 5, 1886, p. 1. Before the first World War, there was a tendency in this paper to represent political liberalism as the valid social and political expression of Christianity. A typical expression of this tendency was an article in the December 10, 1886 issue by Henry Drummond (the identity of the author was not revealed until the March 25, 1897 issue, p. 403) -- professor of Natural Science at Glasgow Free Church College -- on 'Liberalism,

From a Christian standpoint, this newspaper took a keen interest in all aspects of British life and public affairs, and by stressing the social implications of the Gospel in relation to such matters, it endeavoured to maintain in the nation a strong Christian social conscience. Over the years, it undoubtedly exerted considerable influence upon the social and political outlook of large numbers of Scottish Christians in the U. P., Free and later U. F. Churches.

Another weekly publication which reflected advanced social views in the 1890's was The Modern Church. Although this Scottish journal was not officially related to the Free Church both its editor, A. B. Bruce, and most of those who contributed to it were Free churchmen. Bruce himself was a leading advocate of the new social liberalism and often defended it editorially against attacks by conservative critics who said it was diverting the Church from her proper task of converting individuals. In one editorial on 'The Church and the Social Movement', he declared:

> "We cannot but think that such anxiety is premature, and that religious organizations may bring to bear upon social problems a vast deal more enthusiasm than has yet appeared before they can be in any danger of neglecting their primary vocation."[1]

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the Christianity of Politics'. (pp. 1-2). Drummond claimed that Christian progress was bound up with the individual freedom, personal responsibility and self-development of man and that Liberalism fostered these attributes more effectively than Conservatism. The Tories, he said, pressed the authority of the state rather than the restraints of conscience and public feeling and responsibility. He concluded that Liberalism gave the best expression to the true spirit of Christianity. (Ibid., p. 2).

1. The Modern Church, May 21, 1891, p. 120. Preaching in the Glasgow University Chapel, Bruce made a similar criticism of those who opposed the social movement. Of the Church's increasing interest in social questions, he said that "already cautious men are beginning to address to enthusiastic members of the social movement words of warning -- 'Take care you don't go too far; remember the Church's main business is to preach the Gospel of redemption by Christ's death'. Granted; but who are to be the preachers, pray? Men sympathetic with their hearers all along the line of their earthly life, or persons ignorant of and indifferent to all the struggles and sorrows of the poor; members of the Pharisaic cast in heart, in sympathy with the well-to-do classes, rather than all those who toil; ministers of churches in which the social cleavage of the community is recognized, and rich and poor do not meet together for worship, but are separated from one another as far as the East-end is distant from the West-end. Oh! there is little fear of our going too far in genuine human love of men. What we have to fear is not going far enough." (The Scottish Pulpit, November 19, 1890, p. 162).

Rather than criticizing the Church's growing interest in social questions, he said, Christians should be heartily lending their support. Not many years ago churchmen left all

> "such business alone without having a bad conscience, or without incurring blame from the public. It is a sign of the times that churchmen have no disposition now to shirk such duties; and it is still a happier omen that they undertake them from no mere reasons of policy, but with sincere interest and earnest conviction."[1]

This journal, both in its editorial remarks and in its contributed articles, was sympathetic to the trade unions and organized labour, looked favourably on the various proposals being advanced at the time for old age pensions,[2] spoke approvingly of many of the aims of socialism and was highly critical of the traditional dogmas of classical political economy.[3] Throughout its short career of less than two years, it displayed enlightened views on most of the public issues of the day.

While there is some evidence to suggest that perhaps the Christian social awakening which was taking place in the 1880's and 90's did not pervade the Free Church as widely as the U. P. Church, there is ample indication that among a large and particularly influential section of the Free Church a dramatic transformation of the earlier 19th century Christian social attitudes was already well advanced.

(3) The Church of Scotland

Although over the past half-century the Church of Scotland had been traditionally the most socially conservative of the three Churches, there were in the last two decades of the century, the same unmistakable signs of a new social awakening among representative Established churchmen as among other Scottish churchmen. While

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1. The Modern Church, May 21, 1891, p. 120.

2. Cf. ibid., November 3, 1892, p. 494. Also, December 17, 1891, p. 612, where an article entitled 'Socialistic Legislation in Practice' gave sympathetic treatment to a government sponsored old age pension scheme in Germany.

3. In one sermon criticizing the tragic social consequences of the older political economy, D. M. Ross affirmed that its teaching was thoroughly unchristian in its basic assumption that "if every man would only look sharply after his own selfish interests in the acquisition of wealth, the well-being of the community would be best promoted." (Ibid., September 24, 1891, p. 412).

in these years the General Assembly did not endeavour to study or pronounce upon any of the crucial social questions of the day, there was, as in the other Churches, considerable discussion of such questions by the most socially-aroused clergy at the congregational level -- in sermons, at regular diets of worship, and in Sunday evening lectures and addresses;[1] in certain sections of the church press; and in pamphlets and books dealing with social ethics and practical social problems.

One of the most striking features of the social views of representative Church of Scotland ministers in this period was the hostile attitude displayed towards any purely individualistic interpretation of the Christian faith. Of the three Churches in the 19th century, the Established Church had always been the least narrowly evangelical and 'otherworldly' in her theological and ethical thought. Undoubtedly this proved to be a great asset in helping her, by the 1880's to accommodate herself to the new theological and social liberalism with its emphasis on the 'this-worldly' application of the Gospel and its deeper understanding of the corporate nature of society.

Two examples of theological 'schools' that developed in the Church of Scotland in the latter part of the century which were highly critical of the pietism and individualism of the old Calvinism were the Broad Church party and the High Church

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1. For example in Aberdeen, in 1886, the year after the notable series of lectures by Free Church ministers on social subjects was delivered in Queen's Cross Church, a similar series of lectures was delivered in St. George's-in-the-West Parish Church by five Church of Scotland ministers. These widely acclaimed Sunday evening addresses, designed to 'enlarge and broaden the popular conception of the real province of the Church', were published in 1887 under the title The Church and Questions of the Day. In Glasgow, in 1889 an extensive series of lectures on the 'Social Creed of Christianity in the Light of the Lord's Prayer' was delivered in Maxwell Parish Church by several prominent Established church ministers including at least one who was a Christian socialist. The host minister, W. W. Tulloch (the son of Principal Tulloch of St. Andrews), in introducing the lectures, stressed the fact that the Church had a social mission to fulfil in society, and that in order to do so, " 'her ministers must address themselves more than they often do, to the consideration of social questions, and treat them in a liberal and Christ-like spirit'." (The Christian Socialist, November, 1889, p. 172).

party.[1] The latter group of whom men like John Marshall Lang -- minister of Barony Church in Glasgow -- and John MacLeod -- minister of Govan Parish Church -- were typical representatives, was closely related to the Scottish Church Society which came into being in 1892. This party stressed the sacramental and corporate nature of the Christian faith, and protested against the evangelical tendency to separate spirit from matter -- the salvation of the 'soul' from the salvation of the 'whole man'. While such a theological position did not necessarily make its adherents advocates of social reform -- much less prophetic critics of society -- it did make them aware of the fact that a concern for the material conditions of life was, in itself, quite apart from any evangelical possibilities, a valid sphere of Christian ethical activity.[2] With their high doctrine of the Church as a corporate organic community rather than as a mere collection of saved individuals, these High churchmen, although usually opposed to socialism itself, tended to look more favourably on many collectivist tendencies in social life and certain specific socialist measures of social reform, than did those adherents of the older individualistic evangelicalism who tended to hold an atomized view of society as a collection of freely competing individuals in pursuit of their own social, economic and religious self-development.[3]

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1. It is significant that in the Church of England most of those who adopted a critical attitude towards the existing capitalist system in the last quarter of the century belonged to the Broad and High Church parties. Such churchmen composed the bulk of the membership of the Christian Social Union formed in 1889 and the more radical Guild of St. Matthew formed in 1877. Broad churchmen like F. D. Maurice had, of course, dominated the pioneer Christian socialist movement in England which flourished between 1848 and 1854. All of these groups protested against the ruthlessly competitive nature of capitalism, and the whole notion of society as composed of disconnected and competing atoms engaged in a life and death struggle for personal gain and self-advancement.

2. Cf. supra, chapter 7, p. 296.

3. Most of the High Church party appear at this time to have been staunch Tories. However, like the socialists, many Conservatives were critical of 'laissez-faire' individualism, and favoured some limited measures of state action in the interests of social well-being. Therefore, while rejecting the economic aims of socialism, they had considerable sympathy with its social and humanitarian aspects.

The Broad Church party in the Church of Scotland, whose best representatives were men like John Caird and John Tulloch,[1] embodied the first significant protest in the Scottish Church against the traditional 19th century Calvinist orthodoxy. This movement

> "declared a gospel that was universal, spoke of the Fatherhood of God more than of His sovereignty, and led the way back from the traditionalists and their cast-iron dogmas to the study of the Person, Life and Teaching of Christ."[2]

In its theological thought, this Broad Church party was strongly influenced by idealistic philosophy originating in Germany. The best example of this theological tendency was the controversial volume Scotch Sermons published in 1880, which contained representative sermons from a large number of Broad churchmen. While these sermons revealed at times a Hegelian tendency to reduce Christianity to a system of religious ideas or an expression of the religious consciousness, they also indicated the extent to which the individualism and false spirituality and 'other-worldliness' of the older Calvinism was being undermined. Whatever one may think of the theological presuppositions contained in the following excerpt from one of the sermons contributed by John Caird, the social implications for the Church's attitude to society are obvious:

> "The supreme aim of Christian endeavour is not to look away to an inconceivable heaven beyond the skies, and to spend our life preparing for it, but it is to realize that latent heaven, those possibilities of spiritual good, that undeveloped kingdom of righteousness and love and truth, which human nature and human society contain. . . . To whatever world death introduce you, the best conceivable preparation for it is to labour for the highest good of the world in which you live. Be the change which death brings what it may, he who has spent his life in trying to make this world better, can never be unprepared for another. If heaven is for the pure and holy, if that which makes men good is that which best qualifies for heaven, what better discipline in goodness can we conceive for a spirit, what more calculated to elicit and develop its highest affections and energies, than to live and labour for our brother's welfare? To find our

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1. Tulloch, who was Principal of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews from 1854 until his death in 1886, was one of the earliest representatives of the more liberal theology in the Scottish Church.

2. A. J. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland 1707 - 1929, p. 284.

> deepest joy, not in the delights of sense, nor in the gratification of personal ambition, nor even in the serene pursuits of culture and science, nay -- not even in seeking the safety of our own souls, but in striving for the highest good of those who are dear to our Father in heaven."[1]

Here we see an example of the type of thought and preaching which, by weakening the hard divisions which had been made between faith and reason, between the Church and the world, between the religious and the secular life, had a considerable part to play in awakening a social concern in the Church. However, it must not be supposed from what has been said here of the Broad and High Church movement in the Church of Scotland, that the churchmen who adhered to these parties, because of their theological principles, thereby became the most socially radical in the Church, nor the leading promoters of a recovery of the Church's prophetic witness. Nevertheless it is true that by the very nature of their social and theological emphasis, these movements, albeit unconsciously, played an important part in directing the Church's thought and activity to the affairs of the world and, in particular, to the evils and injustices in contemporary society. Above all, they helped to create in the Church at large the conviction that churchmen could work for social reform in the name of Christianity not merely because it would raise the moral and

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1. John Caird, "Corporate Immortality," Scotch Sermons, pp. 16-7. Members of the Broad Church party were frequently attacked in evangelical circles for departing from the orthodox doctrines. One of the commonest criticisms was that they minimized the 'otherworldly' aspect of the Gospel by overstressing the necessity of humane and right conduct in the affairs of society. In 1874, for example, the editor of the official Free Church magazine attacked George Burns, minister of Glasgow Cathedral, and Caird for statements they had recently made in public addresses. Burns had said: " 'Believe me, vital life in Christ, hard earnest work for Christ, are far better than any, even the most orthodox beliefs'." (The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record, November 1874, p. 242). Caird was attacked for expressing similar sentiments to those contained in the above sermon: " 'I do not hesitate to say that the first and paramount aim of religion is not to prepare for another world but to make the best of this world; or more correctly stated, to make this world wiser, better, happier'." (Ibid., p. 241). Although one of the most famous preachers of his time, Caird had never been a preacher of the orthodox Calvinism. Even before 1855, when he preached his famous sermon on Religion in Common Life, which had a huge circulation and was translated into several languages, Caird's sermons displayed a much less dogmatic, more practical type of Christianity than did the rather arid, doctrinal preaching of the scholastic Calvinism of the time.

spiritual condition of the people -- which was the sole justification for such activity with so many evangelicals -- but because any service to humanity was regarded as a truly religious act. In the final analysis, not until the conviction was firmly established in the Church that every aspect of human life and activity was of real and ultimate significance, could there be any genuine recovery of Christian social criticism.

In the Established Church in these years, there were many indications of a growing concern regarding the social and economic inequalities in society. Many churchmen began to criticize the ethical validity of a social order in which some enjoyed abundant ease and wealth while others knew only the pangs of hunger and the burden of constant toil:

> "It is a sad reflection on our christian civilization, that, while the thousands and tens of thousands of the upper and middle classes are enjoying their comforts and their luxuries with only healthy labour, or with such gentle exercize of mind or body as promotes their comfort and happiness, there are many in these destitute localities ground down to the dust by unremunerative labour, pining out their short lives in daily slavery and pain."[1]

For the first time a few of the more radical ministers even began to criticize the social class pyramid which, before 1880, had always been stoutly defended by churchmen as appointed and ordained by God. One Glasgow minister -- John C. Stewart of St. Bernard's Parish Church -- now went so far as to declare in a sermon that those Christians

> "who cling to antiquated ideas about rank and title and property have yet the first principles of the Gospel to learn. They may honour Christ, the carpenter's son with their lips, but they deny him in their conduct. And all who are labouring to keep alive the ancient falsehood of upper and lower classes, and building their structure on broad acres and sounding titles, and not on personal worth, are doing their level best to retard the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon the earth, and are therefore the enemies of Christ."[2]

One of the most notable indications of the growing interest in social questions

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1. Robert Milne, The Problem of the Churchless and Poor in our Large Towns, p. 47. Milne was minister of Towie Parish Church.

2. The Christian Socialist, September 1887, p. 134. Quoted from a sermon preached in St. Bernard's Church.

in the Church of Scotland, was to be found in the attention given to such questions in the annual moderators' addresses to the General Assembly in the 1890's. By no means all the sentiments expressed in these representative addresses were socially enlightened, but it is significant that no less than 5 of the 6 delivered between 1891 and 1896 devoted some attention to the Church's attitude to contemporary social questions. In the first of these, James MacGregor of St. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh, urged the clergy to study and form Christian judgments on the great social and economic issues which were agitating the minds of Scottish working people:

> "If the Church chooses to keep clear of these great questions; if, unlike its master, it has no message for weary and toiling men but to point them to the rest beyond the grave; if it has no substantial comfort, and guidance, and help to give them in the hardships and perplexities of the world in which they find themselves, it will be quietly shunted aside, and in a few years the larger and better part of the working classes will be outside its walls."[1]

Speaking of the Church and socialism, he declared that there would be no need for socialism if Christianity was taken seriously in social life. Churchmen should emphasize that

> "Christianity is the highest and purest Socialism; that the Bible is the text-book of Socialism; that Jesus Christ was the greatest Socialist who ever trod this lower world -- Himself a poor hard-working man; that He was the Healer of all diseases, the Saviour of the body as well as the soul; and that what He was his Church ought to be -- the implacable foe of injustice, oppression and wrong."[2]

The moderatorial addresses delivered in 1892 by A. H. Charteris -- professor of Biblical Criticism at Edinburgh University -- and in 1896 by Archibald Scott -- minister of St. George's Church, Edinburgh -- both devoted some attention to the

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1. Moderators' Closing Addresses 1836 - 1905, vol. 3, address by James MacGregor, 1891, p. 41.

2. Ibid., p. 42. As we shall presently observe when consideration is given to the Church's attitude to socialism in this period, this claim put forward by MacGregor -- that all that was valid and best in socialism was already inherent in Christianity, and that, therefore, there was no need for new schemes of socialism -- was one of the commonest arguments used by churchmen against the proposals and policies of the various socialist groups that arose after the mid-1880's.

Church's attitude to contemporary social questions, although both tended to be rather negative in tone and largely unaware of the challenge which the social, political and economic changes of the period presented to the Church.[1] However,

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1. Charteris in his address deplored the fact that more and more of the working classes were forsaking the Church for an interest in social and political questions; that whereas in the past they could be guided and led by the parish clergy, now "they not only think for themselves, but for two generations have been steadily coming to think politics more important than churches." (Ibid., address by A. H. Charteris, 1892, p. 25). Charteris, who played a major role in reviving the life and work of the Established Church after 1870 and in preparing her to assume her social service work shortly after the turn of the century, believed that the working classes could be won back to an allegiance to the Church if the latter would take an active interest in the condition of the poor and needy. Unfortunately, however, Charteris' strongly paternalistic social outlook -- a fault of many Church of Scotland clergy in the last years of the century -- prevented him from appreciating the new demands of the poor and the working classes for social justice and equality. For instance, his amazing suggestion in 1891 that the Church take back from the state her traditional task of caring for the poor in order "to save them from the stigma of State pauperism" (The British Weekly, December 3, 1891, p. 83), was severely criticized in the church press as impractical, unjust and retrograde. (Cf. ibid., also The Modern Church, December 3, 1891, p. 581). The latter reference in The Modern Church pertains to a letter to the editor of this journal from an unidentified minister. It deserves to be quoted here not only to show the inadequacy of Charteris' views, but more significantly, as an example of the radical change in the traditional 19th century Christian attitude to poverty and pauperism which had already taken place among enlightened ministers: "Sir, it is a pity that Dr. Charteris, who often gives a wise lead to the Church should have lent his authority to so antiquated ideas on the subject of the relief of the poor at the opening of the session of the Deaconness's home. He is reported to have said that every congregation should aim at 'maintaining its own poor members and keep them from the brand of State pauperism'. The object -- the saving of the deserving poor from disgrace -- is good; but there is a more excellent way of attaining it. Let the Church use her influence to dissipate the superstition that any stigma should attach to the exhausted workers who draw their modest pensions from public funds, and she will do more to preserve the self-respect of poor members than by offering them Church doles. Why should the aged poor be asked to look to charity for the maintenance for which they have a righteous claim on the community? Dr. Charteris himself would not thank the Church for starting a fund to relieve the University purse of the prospective of his own pension. As regards the further problem of surrounding poor members with more substantial comfort than they at present enjoy, it is safe to say that it is more likely to be solved by demanding double the present slender public provision than surrendering it. . . . No doubt Dr. Charteris expects the system to strengthen the tie between the Church and the poor. To my mind the interests of the poor are of more importance. -- I am, etc., A MODERN MINISTER." (Ibid.).

in contrast, the addresses to the Assembly in 1893 and 1895 displayed much more advanced social views. The moderator in 1893, John Marshall Lang, dealt at considerable length in his address with the miserable social condition of great masses of the industrial population. He emphasized the disastrous effects of low wages and unemployment in producing such social misery, and seems to have been among the earliest Established Church ministers to stress the fact that economic insufficiency -- not a moral lack -- was the major cause of poverty.[1] Lang commended the efforts being made by the working classes to raise their social and economic condition through their trade unions and by pressing for social legislation. The trade unions, he said had proved a great blessing to the workers in developing among them a spirit of co-operation, in furthering their moral and intellectual progress, and in helping them to achieve more adequate wages and greater economic security: "There is a relation between character and wages -- well-to-do-ness and well-doing-ness. And by placing wages on a surer footing, the union has blessed society in general."[2] He also insisted that the workers' efforts to use their democratic influence upon government to achieve social reforms which they desired -- "an effort by the people for the people to realise better

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1. Moderators' Closing Addresses 1836 - 1905, vol. 3, address by John Marshall Lang, 1893, pp. 7-11. Lang, who was minister of the Barony Church from 1873 to 1900, and Principal of Aberdeen University from 1900 until his death in 1909, was one of the leading figures in the Church of Scotland. A man of broad interests and sympathies, he took a keen interest in social problems and frequently wrote in the church press, lectured and preached on such questions. (E.g., cf. The Scottish Pulpit, September 24, 1890, p. 35, where reference is made to a series of lectures which he delivered on social subjects in his Church on Sunday evenings). In 1901, he delivered the Baird lecture at Glasgow which dealt with the relation of the Church and Christianity to contemporary social questions. It was published in the following year as The Church and its Social Mission.

2. Address by Lang, op. cit., p. 12. Lang was greatly concerned about the inadequate wages of large numbers of the working classes and was a strong advocate of the concept of a 'living wage'. In an interview he gave while moderator, he said that men earning only 13/ or 14/ a week could barely afford to exist if they had families. He said a standard minimum wage should be paid to workers which was high enough to enable them to care adequately for the needs of their families. (Cf. The Scottish Weekly and Scottish Pulpit, November 15, 1893, p. 579).

distribution of wealth and more equitable adjustments in condition"[1] -- were essentially just and praiseworthy.

In the moderator's address delivered in 1895 by Donald MacLeod, the noted minister of the Park Church in Glasgow, similarly enlightened views were expressed. MacLeod pointed out that great numbers of the working classes had been alienated from the Church because for too long she had preached an 'otherworldly', individualistic religion and was indifferent to the appalling social condition of the people. Today, he said, when the workers are alive to the importance of social questions and to the possibility of changing society, they manifest an indifference toward the Church:

> "I do not say an indifference to Christ or to the Gospels, but that questions which are likely to affect everyday life have gained a supreme importance in their lives. When Christ is worshipped it is because He is regarded as Saviour from the evils which press upon the poor now, as much as from those which belong to sin and redemption in the life to come. Social amelioration is what they chiefly care for, and, rightly or wrongly, they hold that the clergy have been culpably unsympathetic with them in their struggles after self-betterment. Rightly or wrongly, they assert that the competition between churches is a purely selfish and wholly unchristian affair, that seat-letting and attractive preaching has become a mere trade, and they crave for a church life which will more fully express Christ as He was when in the world."[2]

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1. Address by Lang, op. cit., p. 13. Although he was no socialist, Lang was a believer in a considerable extension of the powers of the state in order to achieve a more just distribution of the nation's wealth and a higher standard of living for the working classes. He thoroughly rejected all notions of 'laissez-faire' and maintained the state should play a positive role in promoting the material and moral well-being of all the people. (Cf. The Church and its Social Mission, pp. 145-7, 219). In one sermon preached in the Barony Church, he called for a major redistribution of the nation's wealth from the few to the many: "We dwell on the enormous wealth of Great Britain, and it is enormous. A thousand millions a year are marked as our national income, but what of the distribution? Of thirty-six millions in these realms, thirty millions and a half belong to the poorer and lower middle classes, and the average of the units is miserably small. To reduce the thirty and a half millions -- to spread out what is in the hands of less than six millions -- so as to increase the average of the thirty millions and a half, that is a mark for legislation worth all the Home Rule schemes that torment our constituencies." (The Scottish Pulpit, July 6, 1892, p. 247).

2. Moderators' Closing Addresses, 1836 - 1905, vol. 3, address by Donald MacLeod, 1895, pp. 25-6. MacLeod, a younger brother of the famous Norman MacLeod, was another leading Glasgow Church of Scotland minister who took an active interest in social questions. This interest is reflected in his sermons and in the

MacLeod urged the Church not to be alarmed at the dramatic social changes which were taking place in society. Instead, she should rejoice in the passing of the old individualistic religion, and welcome the new stirring among the people for a higher standard of life and a more just social order:

> "We must refuse to accept the exaggerations of a few fanatics as indications of what the future influence of a sober Christian socialism is to be. . . . Surely for the Christian who understands the Spirit of the Gospels there is something of highest promise in what we hear claimed on every side in the name of Human Brotherhood. We cannot forget that the Gospel which has been preached in this country for centuries has been too exclusively one of selfish salvation while the barbarism and cruelty of society around excited no more thought than if these had nothing to do with religion at all. . . . A few years ago the slave trade excited no indignation, and the miseries of the poor created little interest. It is not long ago since Howard and Elizabeth Fry exposed the horrors of every prison in Christendom. There are still persons alive who recollect the inhuman condition to which women and children, little more than infants, were doomed in our factories and coal-mines. All these evils and many more, went on side by side with religion, and were often perpetrated by most religious people as the word was then understood. Ought we not then, to look onwards to the new time that is before us with strong faith and unbounded hopefulness."[1]

When we turn to an examination of the social thought contained in the publications expressing Established Church opinion, we find that, as in the case of the Free Church, the official journals -- The Church of Scotland Home and Foreign Missionary Record and Life and Work Magazine -- display little evidence of the new social awakening that was taking place in the Church in these years. In the former magazine virtually all the space devoted to home affairs was taken up with the disestablishment controversy which raged between the Established Church and the Free and U. P. Churches. In the new Life and Work Magazine, as we have noted earlier,[2] those sermons, stories and devotional articles which touched on subjects of practical concern, almost invariably reflected the older 19th century social

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magazine Good Words which he edited for over 30 years after the death of his brother in 1872. In 1893, he published Christ and Society, a collection of sermons dealing with the wider application of Christianity to the life of society. It contained several sermons on Christianity and various contemporary social issues.

1. Address by MacLeod, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

2. Cf. Chapter 7, pp. 241-2.

attitudes. Until the closing years of the century, for example, this magazine continued to display a strong note of paternalism and condescension in addressing the working classes. There were still articles stressing that it was a Christian duty to be content with one's station on the social pyramid;[1] that labour agitation was useless, and had a harmful influence on the workers;[2] that economic inequalities were God-ordained and that, therefore, the elimination of poverty among the lower classes by social action was impossible.[3]

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1. One article signed A.K.H.B. (Andrew Boyd, the famous minister of the first charge at St. Andrews), spoke of God's election of some men to wealth and lofty social position which the mass of mankind could not expect to achieve. (Life and Work Magazine, May, 1893, p. 81). The writer insisted that obedience to God implied that we accept patiently and without murmuring the status which God had assigned to us. As obedient Christians, "we look at our fellow-mortals who live in superabundant comfort, who live in extravagant luxury: and merely think, That is not for us at all." (p. 83). In typical 19th century fashion, the writer pointed to Jesus as the example to Christians of one who was a poor working man but who was content with his lot. (p. 83). "Yes, we are content: though grand things are not for us at all. We do not want them. They would fluster us. We know Who put us here: His will be done." (p. 84).

2. E.g. Ibid., August 1884, pp. 122-3; April 1894, p. 68. In the latter article a writer was concerned to show how, without unions, female farm servants had achieved satisfactory working conditions and fair wages. (They received, he said, £9 to £11 per half year although sometimes they had to work from 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.). Yet, he lamented that union agitators, by setting employee against employer and class against class, had made them dissatisfied with their condition, and that, consequently, the old loyal devoted and obedient member of this servant class was fast disappearing. The writer admitted however, that relations between servants and masters on farms were better than in industry where labour combinations stirred up the workers to make large demands on the masters. He urged farmers to encourage their servants to attend Church, for there they were taught their proper Christian duties and responsibilities. The most loyal and obedient servants who were ever in his employ, he said, were those who attended Church.

3. Throughout the 19th century, Jesus' words in Matthew 26:11 (For ye have the poor always with you) had been used to provide the privileged classes with scriptural support for the belief that all attempts directed towards the complete elimination of poverty were contrary to the will of God. This convenient scriptural interpretation was still in evidence in these years. (E.g., ibid., May 1893, pp. 83-4). One writer criticized the socialists for seeking to eliminate poverty by an economic redistribution of wealth. (Ibid., April 1888, pp. 52-4). He claimed that very little poverty was due to economic factors; that most of those who were permanently poor had brought it upon themselves by intemperance, improvidence and vice. (p. 53). Moral improvement, not socialist schemes was the answer to poverty: "The homely Christian virtues of honesty and sobriety, industry and thrift will continue to be the only path to riches and honour, when the wild dreams of the socialist are forgotten." (p. 54). Therefore, "we must starve out the vagrant class, relieve for a time the virtuous poor, and take the drunkard from his cups." (p. 54).

In contrast to the official U. P. magazine, where articles dealing with the relation of Christianity and the Church to social questions found a prominent place, not until the end of the century did more enlightened articles of this type begin to appear in this Established Church magazine. The first article on 'The Church and Social Questions', written by A. Wallace Williamson, minister of St. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh, appeared in 1899. This writer stressed the fact that there were large numbers of social evils which were beyond the reach of individuals and which could only be changed at the national and municipal level.[1] He listed seven major criticisms of the present state of society:

> "There is the grinding of ceaseless competition, there is the consequent mutual suspicion, there is the oppression of the old and unskilful, there is the grave evil of overcrowding -- one of the most fruitful sources of moral degradation, -- there is the deep-seated class bitterness, there is the demon of intemperance, and there is the rank paganism."[2]

Williamson called upon the Church to interest herself in all schemes of social reform, and to sympathetically listen to all the suggested remedies -- even the wildest of them. He said the Church had been too individualistic in the past. Now she was becoming interested in all aspects of human life; she was coming to

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1. Ibid., December 1899, p. 228. Williamson, who left St. Cuthbert's to be minister of St. Giles' Cathedral in 1910, took an active interest in contemporary social questions. One of his lectures on the subject was published in 1895 under the title Social Unrest. In this lecture he advised the Church not to become unduly alarmed at those signs of social unrest which only indicated a stirring among the people for more tolerable social conditions. (pp. 15-16). He strongly disagreed with those who claimed that the growing demands for legislative enactments and the new emphasis on social action would destroy individual freedom and personal liberty: "Those alarmed by them should remember that the full attainment of personal freedom involves the full acceptance of personal responsibility and that such responsibility carries us far beyond individual ends, and compels us (even for the attainment of individual ends) to seek the realization of the social ideal. . . in which for every man there will be a fit place in the whole body, a full equipment for his work, and a just recompense of reward." (p. 16). Williamson entirely rejected the view that the Church's task was spiritual and that she ought, therefore to leave social questions alone: "To say that religion has to do only with individuals and that all social problems are essentially secular, is to renounce the religion of Jesus Christ and to substitute for it a sentimental imagination of our own." (p. 24).

2. Life and Work Magazine, December 1899, p. 228.

see that social redemption was her calling as well as personal salvation.[1]

But by far the most significant article appearing in this magazine in this period was one by A. R. S. Kennedy, professor of Hebrew at the University of Edinburgh, entitled 'The Prophetic Ideal in the Church'. Writing in the March 1900 issue, Kennedy outlined a truly biblical basis for modern Christian social criticism based on the message and example of the great Old Testament prophets. He pointed out that the vocation of the latter was to speak God's Word to the contemporary situation; that for them all aspects of life -- politics, economics, social life -- were subject to the criticism of the Word of God. Calling on ministers and lay Christians alike to assume the role of prophets in society -- not 'foretellers of the future' but 'forthtellers of the will of God' for contemporary life -- he said that in addition to a living 'priesthood of all believers', the Church needed a dynamic and forthright 'prophethood of all believers'.[2] This contribution by Kennedy was a remarkable illustration of the manner in which Old Testament scholarship's rediscovery of the contemporary nature of the prophetic message contributed to a recovery of social criticism in the Church. The appearance of this article and others of a more socially enlightened nature in this magazine at the turn of the century represented a notable change in the magazine's social outlook from what it had been even 10 years earlier.

Other unofficial and independent journals, which can be said to reflect, in varying degrees, Established Church opinion, were, with one exception, more advanced in their social attitudes in the 1880's and 90's than the official organs. The single exception was The Scottish Church, a magazine published in the Church of Scotland interest but lacking any official connection with the Church. Though its pages were largely taken up with defending the principle of establishment, several articles of wider concern were included each month. Claiming at its inception to

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1. Ibid., pp. 228-9.

2. Ibid., March 1900, pp. 41-3.

give expression to solid 'conservative' opinion on matters of Church and state,[1] this journal greatly surpassed its intention by displaying some of the most reactionary social views of any contemporary church publication on such matters as the housing of the poor[2] and, as we shall later observe, the crofter agitation in the Highlands.

An entirely different type of publication was Saint Andrew, a weekly paper likewise published unofficially in the Church of Scotland interest. This publication was remarkably like The British Weekly in its format and in its broad interest in public events and contemporary affairs generally. Even its subtitle -- A Journal of Religious Thought and Social Progress -- was similar. Like the function performed by its more famous counterpart within Free and Dissenting Church circles, this paper seems to have reflected the opinion of the more progressive and

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1. Cf. The Scottish Church, June 1885, p. 2.

2. This journal was a strong opponent of any municipal or state assistance to build housing for the poor. Although for decades private enterprise had demonstrated its inability to provide adequate housing at a price which the low income groups could afford to pay, this journal denounced all proposals that the state should assist the poor in this regard. Such schemes amounted to unjust 'class legislation' designed to benefit the poorer classes at the expense of the rich. (Ibid., July 1885, p. 119). The recommendation of a current Royal Commission that the state purchase land and make it available at a low price to municipalities for rehousing slum-dwellers was attacked as "an unfair, one-sided kind of socialism, which the common sense of the community would not tolerate. If the wants of the poorest are to be met at the expense of others where will the line of modified pauperism be drawn?" (Ibid). A later article on the subject declared that all such social legislation designed to benefit only one class -- the poor -- amounted to "an interference in social affairs incompatible with the accepted theory of personal freedom." (Ibid., September 1885, p. 278). Proposals to provide slum dwellers with houses at less than cost price was declared to be "a hurtful and unworkable expedient unless our whole social system is to be revolutionized, and we start afresh on the basis of a complete redistribution of wealth and communism pure and simple." (Ibid., p. 285). The Working Classes Dwellings Act of 1885, which made it easier for local authorities to purchase cheap land for building houses for the poor, was severly criticized in this journal. By it, even 'the constitutional party' which composed the present government, was "henceforth committed to principles directly subversive of the existing constitution of society." (Ibid., p. 287). A large section of the February 1886 issue of this magazine (pp. 195-206) was taken up with a heated attack upon the new Act.

socially advanced elements in the Established Church at the end of the 19th century. While critical of state and municipal ownership, it was a strong advocate of better housing for the poor, old age pensions,[1] and generally increased state action on behalf of the less privileged sections of the community. In one editorial on 'The Church and Social Problems', the paper claimed that although state action was now performing tasks that formerly belonged to the Church, the latter has

> "no reason to regret that the State and the great civic communities are attempting to solve the even yet appalling problems of physical and moral sanitation which the materialistic advance of the nation has compelled them to face. . . . The Church rejoices that the community, through its secular organizations, should be seeking to accomplish the Christianization of the masses by the improvement of their environment in active life, and their outlook when old age comes."[2]

It was the Church's task to aid the state in her social task, not merely by supporting practical efforts in the way of social reform, but through the "aid of criticism, information, and advice to Parliament and the Town Councils."[3] In 1901, this paper ran a long series of weekly articles under the general theme 'The Church and the Social Question' dealing with the Church's duty in relation to a large variety of social and moral questions.[4]

Reference may be made here to other two magazines which, although independent journals, were edited by Church of Scotland ministers and contained many articles by more socially-advanced Established churchmen. The most famous of these was Good Words, a magazine with a large English as well as Scottish readership, which was edited by Donald MacLeod throughout these years. Reflecting the views of its

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1. E.g., cf. Saint Andrew, March 24, 1899, p. 8; April 27, 1899, p. 1.

2. Ibid., March 24, 1899, p. 9. 3. Ibid.

4. Over a dozen different ministers and lay members contributed these articles which appeared weekly from early February until the beginning of May 1901.

editor, this magazine consistently displayed broad liberal sympathies in relation to contemporary social issues. MacLeod's own editorials were particularly noteworthy in this regard. Typical of his enlightened social views was an editorial on 'Inequality' published in 1885. Strongly criticizing the class divisions in society, he said that while absolute equality was impossible, equality of opportunity for all ought to be a Christian ideal:

> "There are many forms of inequality which are not necessarily inherent in society, nor in harmony with its ideal, and which it ought to be the work of the Christian spirit to remove. . . . The social demarcations which permeate every grade of life in this country often present features as cruel, groundless, and even absurd as the petty tyrannies of caste in India."[1]

Because of class inequality, he said, we have in our industrial towns

> "conditions of existence that are a disgrace to our civilization. . . . Here is an inequality which meets masses of our people at their very birth, and gives them small chance of attaining the refinements of Christian culture. . . . Brought up in kennels, ill-clad, ill-fed, and exposed from infancy to sights and language which any mother or father who reads this paper would rather suffer any sacrifice than have their children exposed to for a single day. It is no use for us to quote the law of supply and demand as our warrant for permitting the degradation produced by crowding in deep cellars and attics. We limit, in many directions, the law of supply and demand to favour the helpless. Nor is it enough to appeal to other laws, whose vengeance may be traced in the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon their children. . . . Are we not forced to go a step further back, and inquire whether there be no preventible causes for much of the sin of these bygone generations?. . . . That society can scarcely be called Christian which can stand on one side of the gulf, busy with the salvation of its own soul, while it leaves to the law of supply and demand the miserable thousands who, on the other side of the gulf, are crowded away in dens, where salvation of any kind is the hardest of problems."[2]

MacLeod charged that the Church had been guilty of perpetuating social class divisions and of driving the lowest classes from the churches. Consequently, he said, the working classes had found expression for their desire for brotherhood, equality and service in their own organizations. It would

> "be no exaggeration were the words 'Social Inequality' written over the doors of the vast majority of our Protestant churches, so exclusively do they seem

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1. Good Words, August 1885, p. 460. Cf. also MacLeod's sermon on 'Christianity and Social Inequality', published in his volume Christ and Society, pp. 39-49.

2. Ibid., pp. 460-1.

> to be reserved for people who are 'better off'. . . . The arrangements which usually prevail in our churches, as well as the customs of society, make Equality, even in the house of God, almost impossible. That place, which should be a witness for the common brotherhood of rich and poor, and a visible testimony to the loving relationship in which all mutually stand who are in the communion of Christ, has in too many instances become only too true an exponent of the separateness and the pride and the selfishness which are the curse and the peril of the community at large."[1]

The most socially radical of all the church journals of the time was a weekly magazine published in the 1890's entitled The Scottish Pulpit. Although this publication was independent and undenominational in the sense that it contained sermons and articles by ministers from all the Scottish Churches, it was edited by a Church of Scotland minister[2] and strongly defended the Established Church against those who sought disestablishment. As can be observed from the sermons and addresses previously quoted from this magazine, those contributions by various ministers relating to social issues displayed real evidence of an emerging social criticism in the Church. A strong note of radical criticism of the existing social and economic system, as well as thoroughgoing criticism of the Church's social witness, was a distinctive feature of this magazine. The following are typical examples of its outspoken editorial comments:

> "We believe it is the refusal or unwillingness of the Church to treat these vital social questions in the spirit of Christ which is weakening its hands and sapping its vitality. More is wanted than to preach resignation and patience to the poor. . . . The social and labour troubles of the day spring from the same cause [i.e. failure to apply Christian principles], and to the spirit of the Cross alone we look for a remedy. When the people of this great country, especially the rich, shall have been touched with the spirit of the Cross to a largeness of sacrifice of which they have not dreamed as yet there will be an atonement between the rights of property and the rights of labour."[3]

What the Church desperately needs, said another editorial, is a

> "keener sense of the defects and radical errors of our present social system. Here, if anywhere, plain and strong speaking is absolutely necessary. Society, as now constituted, is utterly unchristian and the churches lend

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1. Ibid., p. 461.
2. Unfortunately, the identity of the editor was not revealed.
3. The Scottish Pulpit, October 29, 1890, p. 121.

> themselves in great measure to stereotype its conventionalities and hypocrisies. In how few churches do we ever hear any condemnation of the true causes of social evils which afflict our country, except what is couched in the vaguest generalities and honeyed over with the exemption from personal responsibility. . . . Let them [i.e. Christians] pause, and seriously ask themselves why the poor are daily lapsing, and why church attendance is decreasing. And in answering their own question, let them not put it down to the perversity and innate depravity of human nature, but let them satisfy themselves that their hands are clean in this matter. We know that the common people heard Christ gladly -- why has his word not the same attractive power now? Is his word being preached in all its fulness?"[1]

Concerning the economic system, the editor claimed that the ruthless competition of the present system violates the spirit of Christ, for

> "the sum of its law is to buy in the cheapest market and to sell in the dearest. It matters not what the commodity is -- goods, manufacturers, labour -- the bodies of men and women, and their souls, too, for that matter -- 'sweat of the brow and of the heart', all must obey the law. The capitalist and the middleman trade upon the necessities of the poor; they fight like incarnate fiends to take away each other's contracts, and grow rich at their neighbour's expense."[2]

Another article -- likely by the editor -- denounced the unjust distribution of the nation's wealth:

> "When we remember there are 4 millions of permanent paupers in Britain, and 10 millions more tottering on the brink of pauperism; when we read that out of a population of 36 millions, only one and a half millions get over £3 a week; that more than half of the total national income is in the hands of a very few persons, that 80 per cent. of wage earners today are getting on an average 5/ per week less than is capable of supporting life decently at all; that 90 per cent. of the producers of our vast national wealth have never a home which they can call their own beyond the end of the week. . . when these facts stare us in the face, we are forced to admit that there is something radically wrong somewhere."[3]

In the same issue, an editorial contained a brilliant but biting attack on the antiquated and reactionary social views expressed by the courts of the Scottish Churches:

> "There are, without doubt, many individual churchmen who have thrown themselves, heart and soul, into the various movements making for social

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1. Ibid., November 11, 1891, p. 135.

2. Ibid., May 18, 1892, p. 149.

3. The Scottish Weekly and Scottish Pulpit, April 25, 1894, p. 948. Beginning with the June 28, 1893 issue, the name of this magazine had been altered.

> regeneration. But, strange to say, however bold these men are outside the precincts of their official gatherings, inside them, their silence is no less conspicuous than their previous activity. Whether this circumstance is brought about by the fear that, as yet, the new ideas have not sufficiently permeated their brethren, or by some equally politic motive, the fact is incontestable. . . . Evidence of this can be seen from the reports of the various meetings which are held so plentifully throughout the year. In not one of these is there ever found any real attempt to grapple with the momentous issues which, every day, are rising into greater prominence, and calling with ever increasing urgency for solution. In place of this we are regaled with the stock speeches which have done service for generations. Idle lamentations over the vanguished past, Jeremiads over the tone and temper of the present age, suggestions whose only feature is their irreproachable insufficiency, and their utter incompatibility to the needs they are intended to satisfy, are the only contributions officially made by the ostensible teachers of the people, in these days of storm and stress. . . . The Churches are still too much impregnated with the idea that the be-all and end-all of Christianity is to be content with the station in life which Providence has assigned, and preach resignation to the one with never a word against the egotism and selfishness of the other. This view of life will not do. To advocate it is but to offer the expectant crowd the remainder biscuit of an effete ecclesiasticism, dry as dust and as satisfying."[1]

Here was a church journal expressing in the 1890's a new and dynamic social criticism which had been quite unknown in the Church earlier in the century.

In comparing the change in Christian social thought in the three Churches in these decades, it appears to be the case that in the Established Church, the social awakening, while as extensive, perhaps took a less radical form than in the other two Churches, especially the U. P. Church, which was the most socially radical. However, in view of the fact that by her constitution and status the national Church was bound to be the most conservative of the Churches, it is clear that a very considerable alteration in her social thought had taken place by the end of the century.

C. The Church, Socialism and the Labour Movement

In the earlier part of the 19th century, the Church's attitude to socialism had never been in doubt:

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1. Ibid., p. 952.

> "The rapid progress of the abominable doctrines of Socialism, in both ends of the island, calls for interference of the civil authorities, to defend the community from opinions subversive at once of religion, morality and social order. . . . The system is, in its very nature, essentially atheistical and blasphemous; and its practical effect has been -- to reduce its votaries below the level of the brutes."[1]

However, by the 1880's and 90's, with the change in the Church's attitude to society -- whereby attempts to alter existing social and economic arrangements were no longer regarded as attacks on a divinely-ordained status quo -- and with the changes in socialism itself -- whereby its tendencies towards atheism and ethical immorality were, in its dominant form, displaced by strong moral and religious elements -- there was no longer the same general fear of socialism as involving the threat of revolution, bloodshed, anarchy and the destruction of religion. Consequently, although the Church in these years was still critical of many aspects of socialism -- particularly what she called its materialistic and 'levelling' tendencies -- there was a new openness to the influence of socialism, and a greater willingness to listen to its moral and ethical criticisms of existing capitalist society.

The main difficulty involved in any attempt to assess the Church's attitude to socialism in the closing years of the century is that there was no agreement among socialists themselves, nor among anti-socialists, about what socialism implied, either as to its aims or its methods. Since this period was pre-eminently one of social, economic and political flux -- of changing and loosely defined social philosophies, economic theories, and political convictions and movements -- socialism meant different things to different people. Therefore, the average churchman's reaction to socialism was largely determined by his definition of it. This is clear from the attitudes adopted in the innumerable pamphlets, books and

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1. The Scottish Christian Herald, February 1840 (supplement), p. 23.

magazine articles of the time dealing with the Christian attitude to socialism.[1]

The implications for the Christian Church of the rapidly growing strength and influence of socialism was one of the most heatedly debated topics of discussion in the Church in these years, especially in the 1890's. Many prominant church leaders devoted considerable attention to this question. Robert Flint, the noted professor of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh from 1876 to 1903, was one Scottish

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1. Typical examples of this vagueness about what socialism -- including Christian socialism -- implied were contained in two series of articles published in The British Weekly in 1894 and The United Presbyterian Magazine in 1899. In the former journal, for the first 7 months of 1894 hardly a week passed without an article or letter to the editor on Christianity and socialism. All the writers defined socialism in a different manner, and consequently, their views ranged all the way from enthusiastic support in the case of Keir Hardie (The inclusion of an article -- cf. January 18, 1894, pp. 201-2 -- by such an outspoken critic of the Church reflects the broad sympathies of this journal), to outright opposition in the case of others. Several Scots ministers contributed articles, including Marcus Dods and Hugh Black of Sherwood Free Church, Paisley (later of Free St. George's, Edinburgh). Black's views were typical of many clergy. He said that socialism's efforts to improve society by outward social change were less effective than Christianity's method of improving society through the inward moral and spiritual reformation of individuals. He, therefore, dismissed socialism as an ineffective substitute for Christianity. (Cf. February 1, 1894, pp. 233-4). The United Presbyterian Magazine in 1899 published two long articles containing the answers of 8 Scottish ministers to the question 'Is there a practicable Christian Socialism?' (Cf. June 1899, pp. 241-5, and July 1899, pp. 289-93). The answers revealed that while none of those questioned were satisfied with society as it was, there was no agreement about what could or should be done to change it. Some said that if Christianity was practised in daily life this would be Christian socialism; several said that Christian socialism did not call for an economic reorganization of society, but was merely a protest against an overstressed individualism in social life, and that in this respect it was quite different from what was called 'state socialism'. Like Black, most ministers emphasized the primacy of moral over social change. John Kelman of New North Free Church, Edinburgh (later of St. George's U. F. Church, Edinburgh), said socialist schemes were impossible because of human nature and that Christian socialism wasn't practicable because even Christians were still sinners. Nevertheless, although socialism "Christian or otherwise -- is impossible, Christianity owes much to those who have pressed for it." (July 1899, p. 289). Adam Welch of Helensburgh U. P. Church (later professor of Old Testament at New College), emphasized that in the past the Church had been guilty of identifying particular social and economic systems with the interests of Christianity. He said, however, that if the present order of society was altered so as to remove existing social evils one might call such a society Christian socialism. (Ibid., p. 290).

churchman who was known throughout Britain for his lectures and writings attacking socialism.[1] His massive volume entitled Socialism published in 1895, was widely acclaimed by non-socialists as one of the most trenchant criticisms of socialism both from an economic and religious standpoint.[2]

Flint's views on socialism are important in that they represented the attitude of a large number -- in view of the universal acclaim of his book, perhaps the vast majority -- of Scottish churchmen in the 1890's. Although Socialism purported to be an objective study of the subject, Flint's initial definition of the term betrayed the writer's extreme liberal individualism which distorted all his subsequent judgments: "Socialism, then, as I understand it, is any theory of social organization which sacrifices the legitimate liberties of individuals to the will or interests of the community."[3] Obviously, if the reader was prepared to accept such a definition of socialism, he too had to condemn it as Flint proceeded to do in the remaining 450 pages of his book. The first and largest section of this volume consisted of a thorough criticism of the economic aspects of socialism. However, it was not a criticism of the type of evolutionary socialism advocated by the Fabians or the Independent Labour Party, but of a continental type of Marxist socialism which had little influence in Britain, least of all in Scotland. Working class readers would hardly have recognized their own brand of socialism in the long

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1. Flint contributed a long series of articles on various aspects of socialism to the widely-read religious journal Good Words in the years 1890 and 91. In 1887, he delivered lectures on the subject in the Tron Church in Edinburgh. (The Free Church of Scotland Monthly, April 1887, p. 98). In 1891, he was reported to have lectured on socialism to the Edinburgh Trades Council. (The Christian Socialist, February 1891, p. 17). He also lectured to his Divinity students on 'The Relation of Christianity to Socialism'. (Cf. David Lowe, From Pit to Parliament, p. 71).

2. This detailed work, which Flint tried to make intelligible to working class readers, was widely praised in reviews in church periodicals. It had a large circulation in England as well as Scotland, and appeared in a new and slightly revised edition in 1908, two years before Flint's death.

3. Robert Flint, Socialism (1895 ed.), p. 17.

and detailed attacks upon the economic theories of continental socialist writers. This, indeed, was the greatest weakness of virtually all the criticisms of socialism by Scottish churchmen in these years: -- that their criticisms were largely irrelevant because they judged socialism on the basis of the academic writings of continental socialist theorists rather than on the basis of the living and evolving movement taking root among the Scots working people among whom they ministered; that they tended to view Scottish socialism as a rigid system of particular dogmas rather than as a moral crusade of social protest.[1]

In the last part of his book, Flint, again relying almost entirely on the writings of continental Marxists, attacked the moral and ethical teachings of

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1. The dominant type of socialism in Scotland was marked by a high moral and ethical tone and was neither Marxist nor anti-Christian. Not surprisingly, however, it did tend to be anti-clerical and critical of the institutional Church's past and present social passivity, her subservience to the privileged classes, and her acceptance of capitalism. Keir Hardie, one of the founders of the modern Labour Party, was a typical representative of this type of socialism. His basically Christian criticisms of the evils and injustices in the capitalist system were marked by a notable prophetic passion for social justice and righteousness. His attitude to the Church may be taken as representative of that large and increasingly militant and socially-aroused section of the working classes who formed the new labour and socialist movements, and who were largely hostile or lukewarm towards the institutional Church because of her prophetic failure and social conformity. The following remarks by Hardie express something of the feeling of such workers towards the Church: " 'Of all places the pulpit of the Christian Church is where temporising with wrong is least defensible; and yet I know no place where it more abounds. Were it not so, there would be neither social nor labour problems in our midst. Christ's teachings are clear and unmistakable. . . . I lay it down as a broad, unchallengable Christian principle that any system of production or exchange which sanctions the exploitation of the weak by the strong or the unscrupulous is wrong and therefore sinful. My plaint is not so much against poverty, but the deterioration of character, the servile acquiescence in degrading conditions, the loss of spiritual power which are strongly marked characteristics of the present day, and which the economic conditions now prevailing necessarily entail. . . . I do not claim any monopoly of virtue for the working classes. They are, as others are, what they have been made by their surroundings and life conditions. But I do protest emphatically against the assumption that they stand in need of having the surplus graces of the intellectual classes bestowed upon them. It is this insulting spirit of patronage, overt or covert, which makes the clergyman stand in the mind's eye of so many of the workers of all that is canting and unreal. . . . The whole tendency of Church teaching is toward the assumption that the working man is an inferior creation who stands in need of being elevated. . . . Make the application of Christianity to present-day life a reality, and none will support it with more zeal than the workers'." (Lowe, op. cit., pp. 74-5).

socialism. He claimed that socialism amounted to nothing less than slavery for the individual. It was, he said, basically undemocratic and would lead to the sacrifice of justice, liberty and freedom.[1] In a chapter on 'Socialism and Religion', he severely denounced Christian socialism as a contradiction in terms:

> "The great majority of so-called Christian Socialists are, in my opinion, really not Socialists. They are simply good Christian men anxious that society should be imbued with the spirit and ruled by the principles of Christ, and that Christ's Church and its members should faithfully discharge their duties to society."[2]

Since socialism entailed an attack on private property and was thus a gigantic form of robbery,[3] he said that no true Christian could be a real socialist and no true socialist could be a real Christian: "What is called Christian socialism will always be found to be either unchristian insofar as it is socialistic, of unsocialistic insofar as it is truly and fully Christian."[4]

In these last two decades of the century scores of other Scottish churchmen set forth their views on socialism. John Marshall Lang in his Baird lectures in 1901, while much more sympathetic to many aspects of socialism than Flint -- particularly its protest against the false individualism in society and its desire to raise the condition of the poor -- was no less critical of it as an economic and political programme. He said that socialism was too materialistic, 'earthy' and selfish;[5] that its notion of brotherhood was a class brotherhood aimed at the furtherance of class aims.[6] He warned that socialist schemes for expropriations came very close to violating the commandment against stealing, and that if put into

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1. Flint, Socialism (1895 ed.), pp. 299 ff.

2. Ibid., p. 434.

3. Ibid., pp. 438 ff., 446.

4. Ibid., p. 441. Upon hearing of Flint's criticism of socialism as irreconcilable with Christianity, Hardie characteristically remarked of him that " 'the more a man knows about theology the less he is likely to know about Christianity. . . . I wonder where Professor Flint obtains his supply of Christianity. Certainly not from the New Testament'." (Lowe, op. cit., pp. 72-3).

5. John Marshall Lang, The Church and its Social Mission, pp. 264-9.

6. Ibid., p. 272.

practice such schemes would destroy the springs of individual liberty and energy.[1] Lang lamented the fact that the rise of socialism had meant a decline in the influence of religion among the working classes, and criticized most socialists for having abandoned the Church.[2] Thus, in spite of its good points, he believed socialism was having a harmful effect on the working classes:

> "This earthliness in prospect, aim and motive is injecting the life of the working classes in our country, and indeed is infecting all classes. . . . What can this [Christian] worship mean to those whose whole interest is narrowed by the vision of a mere earthly paradise. . . . In working-class centres, labour-churches are offered as a substitute for the churches which are denounced; and in these assemblies the 'terrestrial religion', in the form of addresses on the rights of labour and the wrongs of the labourer, and on the principles and methods of the new economy, is preached."[3]

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 275.

3. Ibid., pp. 277-8. In spite of Lang's inference here that Labour churches were numerous in the Scottish industrial working class areas, it is a fact that, unlike the Christian Chartist movement of the late 1830's and 40's, the Labour Church movement in the 1890's made little progress and had almost no influence in Scotland. (For a detailed study of the Labour Church movement in Britain, cf. David F. Summers, "The Labour Church and Allied Movements of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries." Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of Edinburgh, 1958). Apart from two relatively active churches in Glasgow, one a Labour church, the other a Socialist church, there appear to have been at one time or another only 6 other congregations, and undoubtedly some, perhaps all of these, were weak and short-lived. They were located at Aberdeen, Arbroath, Brechin, Caithness, Dundee and Paisley. (Cf. Summers, p. 317). Labour leaders like Keir Hardie frequently lectured and preached in the Labour churches. Unlike the Chartist churches, they tended to be more akin to political gatherings than religious ones, and gave expression to an idealistic, creedless, religious humanism, whereas the Christian Chartists had been essentially orthodox theologically. Yet, like the earlier working class churches, the Labour churches represented a protest against the social failure and the middle class bias and assumptions of the regular Churches. As A. B. Bruce, in discussing the Labour Churches, remarked: "It may be said that a society thus avowedly representing a class interest and seeking a secular good is miscalled a Church. But all the Churches have special interests and secular ends, which give them their distinctive names and basis of fellowship; and the maintenance of a particular form of church government is perhaps even a less worthy distinctive end, for a Church, than the reform of all social government and the social elevation of the working classes. It is something to be thankful for that labour-leaders thus avow their belief in religion as the true basis of fellowship in work for social improvement, although it is distressing to think that they should feel constrained to go outside the pale of all existing Churches, in order to find religious expression for their social aspirations. . . . And the very name of Labour Church is a challenge which the pre-existing Churches cannot afford to ignore -- a challenge to show, if they can, that the 'claims of labour' to a larger share of the good things of this life receive all the consideration and sympathy which can be fairly expected on religious grounds from religious organizations." (The Modern Church, May 10, 1892, p. 800).

Yet, Lang concluded on a more liberal note by declaring that socialism amounted to a judgment upon the Church for her social failure,[1] and he admitted that there was much truth in the typical socialist criticism of conventional Christianity and the evils of capitalism:

> "They sneer at the capitalist, with his long and solemn face on Sunday, and his keen rasping, grasping way on Monday; praying for the heathen abroad, but ignorant of the condition of those whom he employs. They sneer at the clergy, doing their statutory work, and keeping apart from the sins and miseries of their fellows. They point to the stock exchanges and trust companies, and many sorts of business with their tricks and deceits, their grinding of poor toilers, their gospels of cheapness. They dwell on the gaps between what is believed and what is actually done, and protest that a religion that dwells on another world and does not reform this, that has tides of praise to God and feels not the tides of discontent that are surging around, that passes by the poor and defers to the rich, is not for them; that it is a clog on the wheels of progress, and is a gigantic untruth."[2]

Alan Menzies, professor of Divinity at St. Mary's College, St. Andrews, was another leading churchman who was a bitter foe of socialism. He contributed nine successive monthly articles on the subject to The Scottish Church in 1889-90.[3] Devoting most of his attention to a detailed criticism of the type of socialism prevalent on the continent, his views differed little from those of Flint and were just as irrelevant to the situation as it existed in Scotland. He admitted that insofar "as Socialism is a scheme for improving the condition of life for those who are now at a disadvantage, it is inspired by a distinctively Christian motive, and is a child of Christianity."[4] But, he said, it is in the means used that the child differs from the parent. While the one is voluntary based on individual love and charity, the other is compulsory based on state legislation; the one seeks to improve society by stressing the performance of duty, the other through the assertion of rights; the one believes in an equality based on giving, the other in an equality based on taking.[5] Menzies claimed that all that was valid in socialism was already in Christianity and, therefore, there was no need for socialist

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1. Lang, op. cit., pp. 278-81. 2. Ibid., p. 339.

3. These appeared each month from September 1889 to May 1890.

4. The Scottish Church, October 1899, p. 154. 5. Ibid.

schemes.[1] Regarding all such schemes as a form of slavery, he concluded that

> "liberty has been fought for and defended in this country against many foes; should it come to that, liberty will be fought for and defended again, when the attempt is made to reduce the people under this baneful despotism. Socialism is not the inheritor of the promises, it cannot fulfil them, and can never be allowed to try. . . . We can afford to wait with confidence till the temporary agitation it has caused will subside, and be reckoned with things past."[2]

The charge that socialism sought social reform by compulsion, while Christianity sought it by voluntary effort was a common one. Whereas, said one writer, the Christian says, " 'my abundance is not mine, it is another's, not to be given by force or wrung from me by law, but to be granted freely through goodwill and love'," [3] under socialism, "the wealthy man, the sympathetic man, the man of talent and leisure would, in the new social order of which we are speaking, be compelled to give of his wealth, sympathy, talent, leisure to his less fortunate neighbours."[4] Many churchmen in these years, therefore, still opposed such a socialist proposal as the elimination of poverty by compulsory means through legislative action. In its 'Note of the Week' column in 1886, The British Weekly claimed that:

> "Some Christian leaders, echoing the absurdities of Socialism, have declared that in this country no one should ever be in want of bread. But such a principle would lead us far astray. When vice brings poverty, its sting is remedial; and it is not the business of Christians to interfere with the wise methods of Providence and protect people indiscriminately from even the most dreadful results of persistent laziness and crime."[5]

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1. Ibid., May 1890, pp. 68-9.
2. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
3. Saint Andrew, June 22, 1899, p. 9.
4. Ibid.
5. The British Weekly, December 17, 1886, p. 11. While this journal displayed advanced views on most contemporary social questions, including a great sympathy for the organized labour movement, before 1900 its lingering 'laissez-faire' liberalism distorted its views in regard to poverty and socialism. It was particularly disturbed at the inroads which Christian socialism had made in the Church of England. Those Church of England clergy and laity who had formed themselves into the socialist Guild of St. Matthew came under strong criticism. (Ibid., June 17, 1887, p. 105). The paper was thoroughly shocked when the Church of England Congress in 1887 asked a noted socialist -- H. H. Champion -- to address them. (Ibid., October 14, 1887, p. 376).

In another article in the same journal, a writer charged that the one great commandment of socialism is " 'Thou shalt let no man be poor'."[1] But this, he said, was not a Christian commandment and although they often refer to the Carpenter of Nazareth, would "Socialists accept the work and wages of Jesus Christ?"[2]

Flint, in his volume already referred to, insisted that all efforts to eliminate poverty by means of socialist schemes would prove unsuccessful: "There is no class of creatures in the world of which some do not die of starvation. Why should man be an exception?"[3] Another Church of Scotland minister in an address on 'Socialism and Poverty', condemned the socialists for seeking to remove from among the lower classes such a spiritual and moral blessing as poverty. He said that in the case of many of the poor

> "if they had no poverty to bring them to their senses, it is questionable if they ever would come to their right mind, and repenting, turn to God. Would it not be a thousand pities then if the social state were so altered, that such men would be entirely without this great stimulus to virtue?"[4]

This able exponent of the common 19th century Christian attitude to poverty, namely, that poverty was a virtue -- provided, of course, that one was not poor oneself -- denounced the socialists who

> "overlook greatly the spiritual nature of man, and do not consider that oftentimes those very things in the social state which they regard as evils, and the removal of which they are so anxious for, may be instruments which God makes use of -- the best instruments, perhaps, to advance man's spiritual good, and to remove stains and defects which now defile his soul. . . . In a state of society in which there are so many evils, poverty is among the least, if it can be described as an evil at all. And its entire removal before society is completely regenerated, would retard rather than accelerate the regenerating process. The presence with us of the poor, by drawing upon the sympathies of those who have plenty and to spare, helps to expel from the hearts of these prosperous ones that hardness and selfishness which are so deeply ingrained in our nature, and are so difficult to get rid of, while the poor themselves may find, although their poverty may be hard to bear, that it has no considerable compensations. . . . We know that many of the

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1. Ibid., June 17, 1887, p. 105. 2. Ibid.

3. Flint, op. cit., pp. 259-60.

4. The Scottish Pulpit, May 9, 1894, p. 985. From an address by Norman F. MacFie, parish minister at Tighnabruaich.

> greatest men, and the best that the world has ever seen, were nursed, and had their characters formed in poverty; and so far as we can tell they would not have been the great men they were but for that circumstance. To the honest poor man there is always one great consolation in the thought that the lot our Saviour chose for Himself was a lot of poverty, and that He said, 'Blessed are ye poor'."[1]

The majority of churchmen who claimed that Christianity and socialism were irreconcilable and who, therefore, most strongly condemned Christian socialism, appear to have been those who -- like Flint -- held most firmly to the old individualistic liberalism, and who too often interpreted Christian ethics in terms of their own rather limited understanding of personal freedom and individual responsibility. In the eyes of such liberals, socialism amounted to an unwarranted attack on the personal and economic freedom of individuals and a violation of the sanctity of private property. It was, therefore, regarded as unethical, and hence anti-Christian. Henry Calderwood, the noted U. P. minister and professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University, expressed views of Christian socialism in the official church periodical which were typical of the attitude of such liberals:

> "There is no such thing in faith or in action as Christian Socialism. . . . Enmity to the capitalist, denunciation of wealth, antagonism to inequalities in property. These are characteristics of Socialism; they have no place in Christianity. . . . There is no such thing as Christian Socialism. Christianity and Socialism are opposed in principle."[2]

He claimed that early Christianity "did not teach Socialism; the Bible does not contain a sentence capable of being so interpreted."[3] Clearly,

> "the evil in Socialism is such as to warrant the full force of Christian antagonism, even while the breadth of Christian sympathy for suffering and difficulty is maintained as it ought to be. . . . It has encouraged narrowness of thinking, impatience of feeling, and enmity towards those who have been successful in their industry."[4]

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1. Ibid., pp. 985-6.

2. The United Presbyterian Magazine, October 1891, p. 434. Calderwood also contributed articles on this subject to the November (pp. 484-7) and December (pp. 534-7) issues of this magazine.

3. Ibid., p. 435.

4. Ibid.

Although these condemnations of socialism did not go unchallenged in the pages of this magazine,[1] such views were widely held in these years, particularly in certain U. P. and Free Church circles.[2]

Nevertheless, in spite of the outspoken criticism of all forms of socialism, including even Christian socialism, on the part of large numbers of churchmen in the 1880's and 90's, there were other churchmen who refused to adopt such a hostile attitude to this rapidly growing movement among the working classes. A. B. Bruce,

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1. There were several enlightened criticisms of Calderwood's views in subsequent issues. One from T. S. Newlands, minister of Craigend U. P. Church, charged Calderwood with presenting a completely false picture of socialism as it existed among the working classes. He said he could understand what made workers become socialists and why they were dissatisfied with the existing system. Their envy and class hatred were "begotten of an intolerable sense of wrong. . . hungry men are angry men. . . . Their hatred of the existing order of society is radical and undisguised." (Ibid., November 1891, p. 505). He said that Dr. Calderwood seemed unaware of the fact that large masses of the people are in a state of semi-starvation, "and this in a land of boundless wealth; in a period of profound peace; in the midst of infinite wastefulness on the part of the luxurious classes." (Ibid). Although he said he was not a socialist, the writer urged that socialism be given fair treatment by ministers. They should not, like Dr. Calderwood, give "shallow and ill-considered criticism of a great and increasing movement." (Ibid).

2. A classic exposition of liberal individualism's criticism of Christian socialism was set forth in a widely circulated booklet entitled, A Study of Christian Socialism, written in 1898 by John M. McCandlish, a noted Free Church layman and elder. In this study, the writer claimed that in all its aspects and forms socialism was basically anti-Christian, and that those clergy who called themselves Christian socialists were sadly deluded. He warned ministers who embraced socialism that they "accord not their personal sanction merely but the sanction of religion to ideas and practices which are immoral, and that will seriously injure rather than benefit the classes in whom they are interested. If they meddle with economic, social and political questions on which the community are divided in opinion, and deal with subjects of which they have not been called on nor prepared to be teachers, they may, of course, have the concurrence of some of those whom they address, but they will incur the distrust and condemnation of others, and these feelings will be apt to extend to their religious as well as to their economic teaching. That man is not likely to accept with readiness the religious teaching of a clergyman even when he feels he has need of it, who believes that his teaching on other subjects, with which his hearer is probably better acquainted than himself, is both erroneous and dangerous, and of an immoral tendency." (Ibid., p. 40). The views contained in this booklet were probably representative of the successful, middle class business and professional classes -- normally Liberals in politics -- who provided most of the lay leadership in the Church, especially the Free and -- perhaps to a lesser extent -- the U. P. Churches.

in an editorial in The Modern Church, protested against the prevalent interpretation of British socialism in terms of atheistic European socialism:

> "That in a particular country socialism is largely associated with materialism and atheism is no conclusive proof that it is a bad thing. There is no necessary connection between socialism and antagonism to Christianity. . . . And we have no dread of any socialism which accepts Christ's order in the desiderata of humanity: First, the Kingdom and Righteousness of God; second, food and raiment. We are prepared for all changes compatible with the principle: life more than meat; still more for all changes in our present industrial and social condition demanded by the ethics of Christ."[1]

Another article in this journal pleaded with ministers to give fair and sympathetic treatment to socialism in order that working class Christians who had become socialists would not be driven from the Churches. Such Christians

> "crave from the Church, because they love the Church, something more than vague deprecations of extreme views and hopes -- they think they have the right to expect from Christian ministers some well-informed and systematic criticism of their views, in the light of Christian principle, and some guidance to what is truly desirable and practicable if their schemes of social reform are not. A working-man Socialist, not very long ago, said to a minister whom he heard lecture on Socialism in a church in the East-end of Glasgow, that he had come to hear him with very little expectation of any fair or well-informed treatment of the subject, that more of his comrades would have come to the lecture but for the same sad expectation of little, and that he and others had reluctantly parted with the Church, though not with the Christian faith, because they despaired of getting from the pulpit even well-informed and sympathetic criticism of their views. . . . 'I was glad', this Socialist wrote, 'that you pointed out to the people that the Socialist leaders are not ignorant men, as is too often supposed by my fellow-Christians, and allowed to be thought by their ministers, who ought to know better. And I am persuaded that if Socialism has taken an atheistic tinge, it is their fault very largely'."[2]

Donald MacLeod, in an address on 'Political Economy, Socialism, and Christianity', claimed that socialism was a much needed corrective for the false economic individualism of the old political economy, of which he was severely critical.[3] He praised socialism for undermining the harsh economic dogmas, and for challenging the Church to awaken to her social mission. Only a few years ago, he said,

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1. The Modern Church, May 5, 1892, p. 76. 2. Ibid., December 10, 1891, p. 588.
3. Cf. Donald MacLeod, Christ and Society, pp. 193-210; Good Words, December 1885, pp. 770-6.

Christianity, "crystallized into creeds and ecclesiasticisms, 'slumbered and slept', while its true mission lay to a terrible extent unfulfilled. . . . We are, therefore, thankful for the trumpet-call which has challenged Christendom."[1] MacLeod's views on socialism and state interference in social and economic life -- which were probably typical of more enlightened Conservatives in this period -- revealed the considerable extent to which representative Christian social thought had altered from earlier in the century. He said that Christianity

> "must be in sympathy with that State compulsion whose object is the prevention of what is cruel and demoralizing, or the promotion of what is humanizing and elevating: limiting the hours of labour, granting protection to women and children, compulsory education, support of the poor, enforcement of sanitation and improvement of dwellings, public libraries, and such like. All these may be regarded as expressing a national feeling inspired by Christian principle."[2]

On other occasions, MacLeod, while critical of what he termed 'absolute State Socialism', often warned churchmen not to condemn all British socialism by what they knew of continental socialism.[3] He claimed that he was not alarmed at the prospect of what a truly Christian type of socialism might accomplish in society,[4] for after all, "the spirit of Christianity is essentially socialistic -- not the socialism of the Nihilist assassin or the Communist petroleuse -- but the socialism of the New Testament."[5]

Although, before the end of the century, they do not appear to have been as numerous or influential as their Christian socialist counterparts in England, it

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1. Good Words, December 1885, p. 770. 2. Ibid., p. 775.

3. Cf. MacLeod, op. cit., p. 202; Good Words, February 1881, pp. 95-6.

4. Cf. supra, p. 346.

5. Good Words, February 1881, p. 95. After 1880, this magazine, which was edited by MacLeod, gave sympathetic treatment to various types of religious socialism. In 1882, for example, 4 articles appeared dealing with Christian socialist movements in Britain and Europe. They were written by a Rev. M. Kaufmann -- presumably an English or European clergyman -- who praised the movements as valid attempts to apply Christian principles to industrial life.

was in these years that, for the first time, a number of the more socially aroused Scottish ministers began to call themselves Christian socialists.[1] It is true, of course, that for some of these churchmen, the term meant little more than a vague application of Christianity to social and economic life, and certainly did not signify their approval of any socialist economic programme. But a few of the more radical clergy were genuine socialists who became active members of various contemporary socialist movements.

The most famous Christian socialist clergyman in Scotland was John Glasse, the minister of old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh. Glasse was a central figure in virtually all the socialist movements which were formed in Edinburgh in the last two decades of the 19th and the early years of the 20th century. He was an active member of the Scottish Land and Labour League, the Socialist League which superseded it,[2] and, in 1907, he became the first president of the newly-formed Edinburgh branch of the Fabian society.[3] This radical churchman was a frequent contributor to The Christian Socialist, the official journal of the Christian

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1. It is a commentary upon the extreme individualism of 19th century Scottish Calvinism and its uncritical acceptance of 'laissez-faire' capitalism, that there had been no equivalent in Scotland to the Christian socialist movement of the late 1840's and early 50's in England. Nor, indeed, as yet in the 1880's and 90's was there any equivalent in the Scottish Church to movements in the Church of England such as the socialist Guild of St. Matthew founded in 1877 (which advocated land nationalization, a progressive income tax, universal suffrage, and the abolition of the hereditary House of Lords), or the less radical but powerful and influential Christian Social Union founded in 1889.

2. David Lowe, Souvenirs of Scottish Labour, pp. 110-1, 127.

3. The British Weekly, January 16, 1908, p. 405.

Socialist Society in Britain,[1] wrote several books and pamphlets on socialism,[2] lectured widely on the subject in public gatherings and in churches,[3] and was an active champion of the trade unions and a personal friend of most of the Scots labour leaders of his day.[4]

Another prominent socialist minister in this period was James Cruickshank, minister of St. Rollox U. P. Church in Glasgow. A founding member of the Christian Socialist Society in Glasgow,[5] he was also a member of the St. Rollox

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1. The Christian Socialist Society was a small movement whose only Scottish branch appears to have been in Glasgow. This branch was formed on January 27, 1887, shortly after Glasse had delivered an address on Christian socialism in that city. (The Christian Socialist, March 1887, p. 43). This Society advocated the complete transformation of capitalism involving the "public control of Land, Capital, and all means of production, distribution and exchange." (Ibid., May 1886, p. 190). The Society was active in the 1880's, but did not long survive after its official journal ceased publication in December 1891. Most of its members passed into the Christian Socialist League which was not committed to such a complete programme of nationalization as its predecessor. Founded in 1894, this movement also had a Glasgow branch. (The Glasgow Echo, June 26, 1894).

2. Cf. Robert Owen and His Life Work, Modern Christian Socialism, The Relation of the Church to Socialism, and Pauperism in Scotland, Past and Present, which gave strong support to the socialist-inspired Minority Report of the Poor Law Commissioners.

3. Glasse was a prominent lecturer on Christianity and socialism in various parts of Scotland. As we shall observe in the next chapter, he delivered an address on the subject at the first official church congress held by the Church of Scotland in October 1899. Though popular outside Edinburgh, he was notably unsuccessful in winning much support for Christian socialism in the capital city. In 1891, The Christian Socialist lamented that of all the large Scottish towns, the cause of Christian socialism had made the least progress in Edinburgh: "Edinburgh was composed, in quite an abnormal degree, of persons who lived on annuities, pensions and interest generally. . . . The clergy, almost without exception, do not seem to be troubled with any great aspirations after social welfare. A kind of blend of evangelical doctrine and teetotal living would, for the most part, pretty well satisfy them. Otherwise they seem but to exist to pronounce a benediction on the social status quo." (January 1891, p. 4).

4. Glasse, who frequently entertained Keir Hardie and other trade union and socialist leaders at his manse when they were attending conferences in Edinburgh, was loudly praised by Hardie for his efforts on behalf of the growing labour movement and for his public support for the 'leaders of the new democracy'. (Cf. Lowe, op. cit., pp. 110-1).

5. The Christian Socialist, July 1890, p. 92.

branch of the Scottish Land Restoration League and was a delegate of that branch to the 5th Annual Conference of the Scottish Labour Party in Glasgow in 1894.[1]

Although there is no evidence to suggest how many other Presbyterian ministers -- if any -- were actually members of the Glasgow Christian Socialist Society or any other socialist movement of the time, it is clear from contemporary sources that a few other clergy, if not committed socialists, were at least genuine social radicals. Two such churchmen were A. Scott Matheson and John Cullen,[2] both U. P. ministers, whose socialist-like views contained in sermons and addresses were frequently noted by The Christian Socialist. Cullen, in an address delivered to the local trade union in Leslie, Fife, condemned the present industrial system as unjust and unchristian. He was convinced "that they were rapidly approaching a period when the community in its corporate capacity would become the principal or sole holder of land and capital and director of labour."[3] Matheson, one of the severest critics of the capitalist system, was a leading exponent of the new social and theological liberalism: "The Kingdom of God which Christ came to found, contains all the elements of the highest social regeneration. Its conception of order and progress is not individualistic but socialistic. . . a reign of justice, love and brotherhood among men."[4] This radical churchman was one of the few who perceived that poverty was essentially an economic problem and called for a radical redistribution of wealth in the country in order to root out starvation wages and mass poverty.[5] He insisted that an increase in public

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1. Lowe, op. cit., p. 165. 2. Cf. supra, pp. 318-9.

3. The Christian Socialist July 1890, p. 99.

4. A. Scott Matheson, The Church and Social Problems, p. 17.

5. Ibid., pp. 165-8; The Gospel and Modern Substitutes, pp. 221-2. Matheson condemned the view that poverty was due to the vices and sins of the poor. This, he said, is the position adopted "by the Individualist of the economic world, and acquiesced in by many clergymen and philanthropists." (The Church and Social Problems, p. 165). Those who say 'it is their own fault', "would be equally incompetent if they were sucked into the vortex of the struggle for existence." (Ibid., p. 168).

property at the expense of private was desirable in accordance with the Christian principle that personal interests should be subordinated to the common good.[1]

The above-noted clergy were not the only ones who could be classified as socialists or social radicals -- a few other ministers, as we shall observe, adopted radical views in connection with the Highland land reform agitation -- however, prior to 1900, such churchmen composed only a tiny minority in the Scottish Church. Nevertheless, the influence of socialism cannot be measured in terms of socialist converts. If the overwhelming majority of the clergy in the 1880's and 90's dismissed socialism as impractical and ruinous to the nation socially and industrially, few of them could avoid being influenced by its humanitarian aims, its moral protest against the evils of capitalism, and its righteous demand for social justice for the working classes. Although the Church's traditional 19th century social views died hard, there can be no doubt that under the impact of radical and socialist thought they were considerably modified in these years. As one editor expressed it: "The churches move with the tendency of the age. They are influenced by a kind of religious Socialism. Not of a kind that wrecks thrones and overthrows dynasties, nor of the Socialism of the early Church, but a something between."[2] Consequently, in these years, many ministers came to take an interest in social questions and even to favour moderate reforms which not long before would have been vigorously opposed and condemned by virtually every churchman in the land.

As far as the Church's attitude to the trade unions and the labour movement in general was concerned, during this late Victorian period there were numerous indications that as a consequence of the general social awakening in the Church, more enlightened and sympathetic views were slowly displacing the suspicion,

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine, June 1899, pp. 244-5.

2. The Scottish Pulpit, January 21, 1891, p. 313.

hostility and condemnation which marked her earlier attitude. Whereas in the previous half-century, apart from Brewster, no Scottish churchman openly identified himself with organized working class movements, after 1880, several ministers became associated with and actively championed the cause of labour, while many others were openly sympathetic with it; whereas earlier, the attempts of the workers to improve their condition through combinations and strikes had been vigorously denounced in the church press, in the closing years of the century, for the first time, articles and editorials in church publications began to speak approvingly of trade unions, and upon occasion even sided with them in connection with particular strikes.

The most noteworthy example of this new sympathy for the just claims of labour was to be seen in connection with the famous Scottish Railway strike of 1890-1. In that paralysing 5 week long dispute, the striking railwaymen, whose main demand was for a reduction in the 12, sometimes 14 or 15 hour day to a universal 10 hour day,[1] won considerable sympathy from representative church opinion and active support from numerous ministers. From such differing sources as The British Weekly and The Christian Socialist, it was reported that religious opinion in

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1. Cf. James Mavor, The Scottish Railway Strike (1891), for the background and details of this strike. The general conditions of work among the Scottish railwaymen had been notoriously bad for years. A 10 hour day had been general in factories and in other trades for decades, and by the late 1880's, under the impetus of the new trade unionism, the T. U. C. was calling upon the government to enact a universal 8 hour day and 48 hour week. Yet in 1890, 94% of the Scottish railwaymen still worked 12 hours a day or more. (Ibid., p. 8). Normally the workers, including engine drivers, had to work stretches of 18-24 hours without a break, sometimes to be followed by only a few hours sleep and another 12-15 or even 24 hour period of duty. (Ibid., p. 27). The workers had long agitated for a 10 hour day but the companies refused to bargain with the union on the matter. At last, in October 1890, the union proposed arbitration and threatened to strike if this was not accepted. The companies refused to go to arbitration, the strike was called on December 21st, and for 5 weeks public rail transport was halted and industry paralysed. (Cf. ibid., p. 6). The railway companies deliberately tried to obscure the basic issues in the strike -- the bad working conditions, especially the long hours, and the refusal of the railway directors to bargain with the union -- by pointing out that the union had technically broken contract with the railways. (Ibid., p. 25).

Scotland was favourable to the strikers.[1] The most remarkable indication of this was the fact that at the public meetings held in Edinburgh and Glasgow in support of the workers, several prominent ministers took a leading part. In Glasgow, a large meeting was addressed by James Stalker, minister of St. Matthew's Free Church, Glasgow, and by John Marshall Lang of the Barony Church.[2] In Edinburgh, U. P. clergy such as Principal John Cairns[3] and William Morison, minister of Rosehall Church,[4] publicly supported the strikers.

But the most notable of the ecclesiastical champions of the strikers' cause in the capital city was Principal Robert Rainy of New College, the leading Free churchman of his day. Rainy's biographer describes how he was approached by a body of strikers and asked to preside at a public rally in the city.[5] After some deliberation, he consented, and at the meeting made a bold speech in which he said that the hours of labour which the men were compelled to work were intolerable and indefensible. "He appealed to the shareholders to think 'not only of cheapness, and speed, and returns', but 'of the men who worked'."[6] This speech, as one commentator remarked, " 'focussed the situation and lifted the movement to a position it would never have otherwise attained'."[7] This meeting, which asked the railway directors to agree to arbitration, was followed on January 17th by a great citizens' rally at which 10,000 attended. Rainy again spoke, and this time

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1. The British Weekly, January 15, 1891, p. 191, and January 22, 1891, p. 205; The Christian Socialist, February 1891, pp. 18-9.

2. The British Weekly, January 15, 1891, p. 191.

3. Cf. ibid., January 22, 1891, p. 205.

4. Morison, who was also noted for his outspoken opposition to the Boer War, has been described as "an active clerical champion of the political Left." (W. H. Marwick, History Society, vol. XI, part III (1953), p. 233).

5. P. C. Simpson, The Life of Principal Rainy, vol. 2, p. 106.

6. Ibid., pp. 106-7. 7. Ibid., p. 107.

moved a motion approving the 10 hours' day. He strongly criticized the directors and said the main blame for the strike lay with them.[1] This biographer points out that Rainy's part in the strike raised considerable discussion. Some were shocked that a minister should espouse the cause of men who had, strictly-speaking, violated the law by breaking their contracts.[2] However, he said, "Dr. Rainy's action shows his boldness and also his real sympathy for labour -- a sympathy which was far deeper in his heart than the opportunities of his too crowded ecclesiastical career gave opportunity of expression."[3]

By and large, the railwaymen also won support from that section of the church press which commented upon the strike. Unlike the Scottish daily press which was largely hostile to the strikers,[4] the sympathies of church publications tended to be with the men rather than the railway directors. When the dispute ended and the strikers were forced to return to work without any guarantee that their

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1. Ibid. 2. Ibid., p. 108.

3. Ibid. Rainy expressed his views about the working classes and the trade union movement in a personal interview reported in Saint Andrew in 1901. (Cf. May 9, 1901, p. 3). Although hardly as pro-labour as Simpson here infers, his views do reveal how much the attitude of leading churchmen had altered from the mid-Victorian period. Rainy did not believe the working classes in Scotland were totally separated from the Church but admitted that those most active in the labour movement were suspicious of her because they did not believe she had a genuine concern for the just claims of the working classes. He said church members should be more devoted and disinterested in their social service or else the workers would become even more a class by themselves with their own values and standards, looking only to their own organizations for their social elevation. While Rainy was pleased at the social progress which the working classes were making and approved of their aspirations for a fuller and happier life, yet he still displayed the traditional church view that the labour movement's concern for higher wages and better conditions tended to make the workers less 'spiritual' and more materialistic: " 'I am afraid', he continued, 'that the working man of the prevailing type, connected with trade unions and engaged in questions such as trade unions are concerned with, comes to be absorbed in material interests and enjoyments'." Nevertheless, he concluded, "for all that, there is a great deal at the bottom of our working men, both in England and in Scotland, that is better than it seems. I have a great belief in them somehow at bottom. There is a better side of them if you could get at it. Look at the men in England that they send to Parliament!"

4. All but three of the daily newspapers opposed the strikers. (Cf. Mavor, op. cit., p. 18).

grievances would be redressed, The British Weekly, which had consistently sympathized with the strikers, sadly lamented that "the result is undoubtedly a defeat for the men."[1] This defeat, it said, was largely due to the fact that the "union was much too weak."[2] However, rather hopefully, the article believed that now that public opinion had been directed towards their unfavourable conditions, "it is probable that long stretches of work on the Scottish railway lines will be discontinued."[3] Nevertheless, the writer concluded with a warning that

> "if the directors fail to do justice to the workers, the next strike will be a different and decisive kind. . . . The winners of a victory at best barren will be wise not to taunt to exult over the men they have for the moment been able to humiliate and defeat."[4]

Although some grievances were corrected, conditions did not greatly improve on the railways, and two years after the strike, an article in the socially radical journal The Scottish Pulpit remarked that: "It is a very astonishing thing, however, that long before this our railway system has not been nationalized."[5] This writer said that the conduct of the railway companies during the strike

> "ought to have attracted the attention of the State to the fact that they were endowed with too much power to oppress and coerce their employees. Most of our great railway disasters have been traceable, not to the ordinary incapacity of the men, but to their inability to stand the long hours during which they have been compelled to labour. And all this comes of the greed of the companies for gain, and their brutal callousness to the sufferings of the men, for whom they have less consideration than they have for their horses."[6]

The writer concluded that only if the railways were brought under public ownership would the railway workers obtain humane conditions of labour.[7]

There were many other indications of a more liberal attitude in the Church to the trade unions, and of the willingness of ministers to interest themselves in labour questions. In 1885, Donald MacLeod suggested the formation of trade unions

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1. The British Weekly, February 5, 1891, p. 239.
2. Ibid. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid.
5. The Scottish Pulpit, March 15, 1893, p. 27. 6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 28.

among female sweated labour in order to prevent their oppression and expolitation.[1] In 1894, the parish minister at Newbattle, J. C. Carrick, was reported to have taken "the lead in bringing to a settlement the Newbattle Colliery dispute in the last week of the year."[2] In the Presbytery of Elgin, John Wellwood, the parish minister of Drainie, played a leading part in helping "to organize the fishermen of the Moray coast on trade union lines in the Northern Sea Fisheries Association."[3] Speaking in Greenock in 1891, John Caird praised the trade unions because

> "they had gained for working men a degree of independence and unity that could not have been otherwise gained. They had not only enabled them to make better bargains for themselves in the struggles of trade, but they had, as well, done a great deal to educate and discipline men for the great political work thrown upon them now by the institutions of the country. Women had not yet learned to combine with others of their own sex to promote their interests, and this weakness of theirs, and the way they were isolated as labourers, was undoubtedly taken advantage of. He did not wish to make any strong charges, but. . . he believed that there were more of the worst kind of sweating, paid cruelty, and oppression, and all kinds of injustices done to the women workers of this country than ever were attempted with men."[4]

Aberdeen boasted one of the most active clerical champions of the labour movement in Scotland in the person of Charles MacDonald, minister of St. Clement's Parish Church. Although he was not a socialist, MacDonald favoured radical land reform, and was a strong advocate of independent working class representation (i.e. independent of the Liberal party) on town councils and in Parliament. In 1882, running independently of Church sponsored candidates, he was elected as a Trades Council representative on the Aberdeen School Board,[5] and in 1892 he publicly supported socialist H. H. Champion against Tory and Liberal candidates in the election in South Aberdeen.[6] In 1884, when the T. U. C. for the first time

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1. Good Words, January 1885, p. 39.

2. The Church of Scotland Home and Foreign Missionary Record, February 1894, p. 369.

3. Marwick, op. cit., p. 234. 4. The Scottish Pulpit, November 4, 1891, p. 115.

5. K. D. Buckley, Trade Unionism in Aberdeen 1878-1900, p. 121.

6. Wm. Diack, History of the Trades Council and the Trade Union Movement in Aberdeen, p. 25. Cf. also, Marwick, op. cit., p. 234.

held its annual meeting in Aberdeen, MacDonald delivered the opening sermon. The radical sentiments which he expressed at the Congress won him universal acclaim in trade union circles. As one labour historian claimed:

> "The really remarkable feature of the Congress, however, from the point of view of the new Labour movement, was neither the chairman's speech nor the actual business transacted by the delegates. . . . No. The Congress became a landmark in the Aberdeen Labour movement, because of Dr. C. C. MacDonald's outspoken Congress sermon."[1]

MacDonald addressed the delegates as

> " 'men and brothers, representatives of the toiling millions of our countrymen who are heirs of the oppression and repression of centuries, the victims of class legislation and of a long dominant feudalism, unrepentant and unyielding, even in its death throes'."[2]

He urged trade unionists to work for social and economic justice in Britain. To achieve this end, he said, you must not merely

> " 'give your votes to the best and largest-hearted men of the classes who have hitherto controlled legislation. You must represent yourselves. You must do your own work in Parliament and in the other councils and governing bodies of the nation. It is thus, and thus only, that you will reap the fruits of the sufferings and struggles of centuries; thus and only thus, that you will come fully to understand and worthily to discharge the sacred obligations of citizenship; thus, and only thus, that the commonwealth will attain its full strength and grandeur in the union and interaction of the interests and energies of the whole people'."[3]

The above-noted historian concluded that, "so far as I have been able to gather, that sermon was the first proclamation by a representative Aberdeen citizen in favour of the independent representation of Labour in Parliament and in the councils of the nation."[4]

Articles and editorials in church publications also reflected a more sympathetic and enlightened attitude towards the organized labour movement. In one editorial, A. B. Bruce declared that

> "in the simplest sense of the words, the theory of Trades' Unions must be above criticism from the point of view of the Christian Church. The faith of the Church is a principle of union, and the aim of the Church is to

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1. Diack, on. cit., p. 16.
2. Ibid., p. 17.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

bring all men into a true union of mutual love. From the point of view, therefore, of the Church, any union of men for innocent or lawful ends must always be in theory approved; and her sympathies, like those of her Master, must lean to the side of the relatively poor and weak."[1]

Bruce disagreed with an anti-union spokesman who declared that unions caused social bitterness and class hatred. He said that such feelings among the workers were due to the hostility of employers to unions and to the men as a class. The problem was "that too many employers are still unwilling to recognize the fact that trades' unions have come to stay."[2] If the present industrial strife throughout the nation continues, he said,

"the blame cannot be laid upon the labourers alone, for they have shown themselves more and more temperate and reasonable the more they have been frankly and reasonably dealt with. The greater blame must be theirs who, like Mr. ------, hanker after anti-combination laws, instead of seeking timely conference and making timely concession."[3]

The British Weekly, although it was hostile to socialism before the turn of the century, displayed considerable sympathy for the organized labour movement.[4] It often spoke approvingly of the decisions reached at the annual T. U. C. meetings, and during at least two important industrial disputes, in addition to the railway strike, its sympathies lay with the strikers.[5] This paper believed that in the case of nation-wide industrial disputes, where serious moral questions --

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1. The Modern Church, March 31, 1892, p. 848.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 849.

4. This strongly liberal journal on several occasions in the 1890's urged the labour movement not to adopt socialism. This was, of course, the view of those publications which favoured the Liberal Party. Towards the end of the century, when the T. U. C. was becoming increasingly socialist, The United Presbyterian Magazine warned labour not to embrace socialism because "it can only alienate sympathy, and introduce division and disintegration into its own ranks." (February 1898, p. 96).

5. The paper tended to side with the strikers in the famous London Dockers' strike in 1889 (Cf. The British Weekly, September 8, 1889, p. 305), and with the miners in their strikes in the 1890's against a reduction in wages. (Cf. ibid., March 17, 1892, p. 335; November 9, 1893, p. 35).

such as that of a 'living wage' -- were involved, the Church should weigh the issues and take a stand on the side of justice.[1] It lamented that on these great issues Christians look like 'dumb dogs' while the socialists rally to the side of the poor and oppressed: "What we deplore is the nerveless and cowardly apathy against which the stones are crying out."[2] This paper frequently criticized the Churches for their past and present indifference towards the condition of the working classes and the just cause of labour. It insisted that the Churches should now be sympathetic to labour in order to redeem their past social failure. If they did not, it warned that they may destroy the few remaining links with the workers:

> "We do not hesitate to say that it should be a matter of great regret for all the churches that they had so little to do in bringing the labour question to its present position. The churches should remember also that they are dangerously near a permanent cleavage with the leaders of the new democracy. A word just now might precipitate it, and once effected, it would be the task of generations to bring together what had been rent asunder."[3]

One other ecclesiastical publication which was clearly sympathetic to labour was The Scottish Pulpit.[4] It approved of the unions' method of seeking to improve conditions and raise wages by collective action, and criticized those who opposed all labour agitation: "Without agitation in the centuries long ago, we should still be serfs, and be branded with the trademark of our masters. Agitation has done that, and more."[5] This weekly paper was especially critical of those political economists who still argued that the iron laws of supply and

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1. Ibid., September 8, 1889, p. 305. 2. Ibid., p. 306.

3. Ibid., October 13, 1892, p. 395.

4. This journal likewise supported the Scottish miners in their strike in the last months of 1893. (Cf. The Scottish Weekly and Scottish Pulpit, December 13, 1893, p. 642).

5. The Scottish Pulpit, July 22, 1891, p. 277.

demand made the provision of a 'living wage' for all impossible. Fortunately, the editor declared,

> "the knell of this iron system has struck its last. Now we see representative men from all the Christian Churches cordially uniting to defend the inalienable right of every willing worker to a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, and we know that the dawn of a new and better day has come at last."[1]

A later editorial rejoiced in the undermining of the old economic dogmas. The reign of the political economists

> "is coming to an end. It has been a day for the employers, of which the one great aim was the accumulation of capital in the hands of the individual. In the day which is to come, there will be a more equal distribution. If there are fewer millionaires there will be more happy homes, and the world will be all the better."[2]

However, although, as we have here noted, there were numerous signs of a change in the attitude of many churchmen towards the organized working classes in this period, it must not be supposed that, within the space of a few years, the whole Church had completely abandoned her former antagonism towards working class movements and suddenly become vigorously pro-labour in her outlook. As in the case of the Church's social attitudes generally, alongside the new signs of awakening, there was ample evidence in contemporary sources of the continuing influence of the older views. For example, even at the end of the century, an official Report of the U. P. Church -- the most socially enlightened of the Churches -- could still display the earlier 19th century bourgeois fear and distrust of the working classes -- the same inability to understand their hopes and social aspirations, their strong sense of brotherhood and solidarity under the burden of common hardships and sufferings, and the basic cause of their indifference to and alienation from the Churches:

> "The Church should not be surprised if a considerable section of the working classes, specially those engrossed with industrial and political problems, becomes alienated from its services. Schemes for securing the

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1. The Scottish Weekly and Scottish Pulpit, November 15, 1893, p. 584.

2. Ibid., November 29, 1893, p. 609.

> supremacy of class interests, vast combinations for trade purposes, skilfully organized efforts for far-reaching changes in the constitution and government of society are captivating the imagination and awakening the enthusiasm of masses of our countrymen. A materialistic and worldly socialism is busy alongside the Church, with its own services and societies, with a widely read literature, and with ample opportunities of impressing the minds of men. . . . Alongside of mission halls with their gospel services are halls occupied by audiences listening to lectures and speakers on a variety of subjects full of present-day interest, appealing to selfish or class aims, but wholly of the earth earthy."[1]

It should not be surprising that a strong middle class bias against the articulate, socially and politically aroused element of the working classes still found a prominent place in representative church circles. Even if there was a new openness in this period to the needs and aspirations of those in society who had least power, the fact remains that the clergy and especially the lay leadership were still drawn overwhelmingly from the ranks of the well-to-do classes, most of whom were genuinely fearful of the threat to the stability and security of their privileged way of life arising out of the workers' growing demands for social and economic justice. Consequently, at the turn of the century, there was a large and powerful section of the Church -- probably the majority of the clergy and influential office-bearers -- who still retained most of the earlier anti-trade union prejudices and who continued to insist that the workers must 'keep their place'. Even among churchmen who believed themselves to be enlightened, a vague sympathy for the workers was quite a different thing than supporting those social and economic changes which were essential if labour was to achieve a larger and fairer share of the national wealth.

Nevertheless, in spite of this important qualification, it remains a fact that in the 1880's and 90's a remarkable change in the Church's attitude to the organized labour movement had begun to take place. No longer bound by the now discredited economic dogma of the 'iron' law of wages,[2] it was no longer axiomatic

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1. Synod Papers of the United Presbyterian Church, 1899, pp. 23-4. From the Report of the Church Life and Work Committee.

2. Cf. supra, chapter 5, pp. 177-8 footnote.

that all churchmen would side with the masters and capitalists in denouncing the workers when they sought to raise wages through strikes. Henceforth, among progressive clergy and lay leaders, labour was always to have a few, sometimes many champions within the Church.

D. The Church and Highland Land Reform

As we have seen in that section of chapter 5 which dealt with the Church's reaction to the Highland clearances in the earlier part of the century,[1] it was not until after the Disruption in 1843 that there was any sign of criticism in the Scottish Church of the past or continuing practice of forced evictions in the Highlands. It has also been noted that even after 1843, it was only within a section of the Free Church that such criticism of the Highland aristocracy was to be found; that the refusal of building sites to the new Free Church was the occasion of the rise of this criticism; and that, consequently, whatever criticism was expressed about particular landlords seems to have been directed against only those members of the aristocracy who were not Free Church supporters.[2]

In addition to specific criticisms concerning the refusal of sites, attacks upon the Scottish aristocracy for the continuance of fresh clearances[3] and for their general neglect of their responsibilities and misuse of their power, found expression in Free Church publications for several years after the Disruption. Declared The Free Church Magazine:

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1. Cf. ibid., pp. 164-175.
2. Cf. ibid., pp. 173-175.
3. Although they were on a smaller scale than the infamous Sutherland clearances, many of these later clearances in the 1840's and 50's were carried out with no less cruelty and harshness. "In Uist, many of the people fled to the hills to escape being taken away, and they were pursued and brought down to the emigrant ship, hand-cuffed like felons." (P. C. Simpson, The Life of Principal Rainy, vol. 1, p. 464).

> "Ever since the Reformation, Scotland has been ruled by a rod of iron by the great mass of her nobility. . . . In looking back over our whole history since the days of Knox, the aim of the Scottish nobility, with a few noble exceptions, seems to have been to retain their own possessions and to crush down every other power, civil and ecclesiastical, which they could not convert to an obsequious instrument."[1]

This same periodical lamented that "we are ruled in this country by the aristocracy. The ministry is shifted from Whig to Tory, but the aristocracy always rules. Their rule has always a tendency to become despotic and inexorable."[2] Referring to several new clearances which had just recently taken place, the editor exclaimed:

> "We cannot denounce too strongly that system of wholesale expatriation by which the difficulty has hitherto been met. Men may call it voluntary emigration; but, as a poor fellow in Benbecula remarked to a friend of ours, -- it is only voluntary in the same sense as it is voluntary to run away from a mad bull."[3]

Many similar criticisms, quite unheard of before 1843, were to be found in these years in other Free Church publications such as the missionary magazine, The North British Review and The Scottish Guardian. Among the most outspoken critics of the aristocracy were James Begg, and through the pages of The Witness, Hugh Miller. In 1845, Begg was active in promoting an association one of whose aims was the "preventing or lessening, chiefly by moral influence, the ejectment of numbers of small tenants, especially in the Highlands, and for mitigating the distress consequent on such ejectments."[4] He objected to the feudal state of Scotland whereby all the land was in the hands of only some 3,000 persons, and advocated the abolition of the law of entail which, he believed, would greatly increase the number of landlords.[5] Concerning the aristocracy, he said that "Scotland to be the freest country in Europe in regard to religion, is nearly as

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1. The Free Church Magazine, February 1844, pp. 47-8.
2. Ibid., January 1849, p. 27.
3. Ibid., January 1850, p. 26.
4. T. Smith, Memoirs of James Begg D.D., vol. 2, pp. 53-4.
5. James Begg, Pauperism and the Poor Laws, p. 28.

feudal as Russia in the spirit of many of its upper classes. They are afraid of any popular enlightenment or general elevation."[1]

From 1844 to 1851, Hugh Miller carried on a sustained attack on the Scottish aristocracy and the injustice of the forced evictions. In 1849, for example, he wrote many editorials on the subject. He condemned the many evictions which had taken place in that year -- those by the Duke of Argyll; Mr. Baillie of Glenelg who sent 500 to America; Col. Gordon who cleared off 1800 from South Uist; Lord MacDonald who removed 600 to 700 from North Uist and who was now threatening 3000 more in Skye.[2] He vigorously denounced the evicting landlords for their harshness, greed and false pride:

> "They want fine fields and fine forests. What care they for men? They want on their estates something worthy of their patrician greatness. What though hundreds or thousands of human beings should be wrenched from their beloved homes, and cast for subsistence on the cold world!"[3]

He warned that

> "nine-tenths of the rural population of this country have no interest in the cultivation of the soil, except as mere serfs. . . . Here is a hot-bed for revolutions. Do we wish to make men Conservatives? Let us give them an interest in the soil. But it is monstrous to expect men to be conservative of a system that crushes them, and precludes the very cherishing of a hope."[4]

Yet, even churchmen like Miller who were sympathetic to the plight of the poor highlanders, did not sufficiently realize that without basic reform of the land laws, there could be no marked improvement in the social condition of the Highlanders. While they favoured a minor reform, such as the traditional 'laissez-faire' liberal proposal to abolish the laws of entail and primogeniture, they were opposed to any legislative measures to sub-divide the land such as had been

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1. Begg, Happy Homes for Working Men, pp. 48-9.

2. The Witness, September 12, 1849, p. 2. 3. Ibid., September 19, 1849, p. 2.

4. Ibid.

rried out in Prussia and France.[1] Therefore, although the few dozen men who
ned half of Scotland -- the Duke of Sutherland in 1856 owned the whole of
therland from 'sea to sea' -- could exercize despotic power over the freedom,
e property, the happiness, even the lives of hundreds of thousands of their
llow citizens, these churchmen did not wish to interfere with the 'rights' of
e landlords: "In the spirit of true conservatism, we wish to touch no man's
operty."[2]

Soon after the middle of the century, the Free Church hostility toward the
istocracy subsided, and with the number of evictions becoming less frequent and
mewhat more humane, the church press had little to say about conditions in the
ghlands throughout the latter part of the 1850's, the 60's or 70's. Not until
e 1880's, when the north-west was aflame with discontent and agitation over the
nd question, was the Free Church again stirred by events in the Highlands.

Earlier in the century, as we have seen only too clearly, men had been gripped
that most terrible and perhaps most universal of human maladies: the belief
at principles, doctrines and dogmas were more sacred than human beings. Thus it
as that while men could lament the occurrence of such acts of inhumanity as the
learances, they could do nothing about them. During the last two decades of the
entury, however, as has been noted elsewhere in this chapter, the old beliefs in
ron laws of economics and divine rights of property were being undermined. In the
ighlands, in the face of the continuance of periodic acts of eviction in the early
880's,[3] the wrongs inflicted upon a longsuffering, law-abiding and loyal people

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. Cf. ibid., September 22, 1849, p. 2; The Free Church Magazine, October 1851, p. 333. Whereas in Scotland there were only some 3000 proprietors, in France the number had been recently increased to 15 million. In Prussia, the system of owner occupancy had also been widely introduced.

. The Witness, September 22, 1849, p. 2.

. These small evictions were usually due to the inability of the poverty-stricken crofters to pay the sharply increased rents often demanded by the landlords in these years.

or over a century at last boiled up and overflowed in defiance and resistance.

Agitation against the land laws was widespread in the Highlands, particularly etween 1882 and 1886. Several land reform associations sprang into being with ranches in various parts of the Highlands and in the south.[1] In 1882-84, ttempts which were made to evict or arrest crofters on Skye and the Outer Isles ed to a general wave of resistance on the part of the people, and some violence esulted. Consequently, as a result of the disturbed condition of the Highlands, Royal Commission was appointed in 1883 to study the grievances of the crofters nd suggest remedies. After some delay, during which the agitation in the north ontinued unabated, at last

> "in 1886 the Bill[2] was enacted which gave to the people of the Highlands and Islands protection in the lands they occupied, as statutory tenants. In what little land remained in their hands the Celtic people of Scotland

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. The main organization was the Highland Land League, a moderate group which was not officially committed to land nationalization, but sought the restoration of the crofters' ancient rights to the land as freehold tenants. It acted as a political pressure group by bringing forward crofter candidates to fight the 1885 and 1886 elections against Tory and Liberal candidates. Several of these candidates were successful, especially in the 1886 election. (Cf. D. W. Crowley, "The 'Crofters' Party', 1885-1892," The Scottish Historical Review, vol. XXXV, no. 120 (October 1956), pp. 110-126). Some of these crofter members had connections with the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party. This 'Crofter Party' "constituted what may be regarded as the first British independent 'common people's' political party, and in many respects may be considered a precusor of the British Labour Party." (Ibid., p. 110). The other major land reform group was the Scottish Land Restoration League. It was a smaller and more radical body which advocated nationalization of the land.

. The two main features of the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886 was the security of tenure granted the crofters and the provision made for the independent fixing of fair rents. With certain additional benefits added in later years, this legislation brought great benefits to the Highlands, and satisfied the demands of most of the crofters. Yet it gave no compulsory power to acquire land, did nothing to further the ideal of owner occupancy and, therefore, left the problem of the large concentration of land in the hands of a few men unsolved. The Christian Socialist pointed out in 1887 that "The total area of Scotland is about 19 million acres. One individual owns 1,326,000 acres or a little over 5 per cent. of the whole country. Two others own over 400,000 acres each and one 300,000 acres. Twelve human beings own between them one quarter of Scotland; seventy own about half; three hundred and thirty own two-thirds; and one thousand seven hundred own nine-tenths." (January 1887, p. 6).

obtained in 1886 the security that the Indian peasant enjoyed under British rule, that most Scandinavian peasants had always enjoyed, that had been conceded to the Prussian serf in the eighteenth century. The power of the factor, based on the threat of instant eviction, was destroyed. It was exactly seventy years since Patrick Sellar had been acquitted in Inverness."[1]

As far as the Church of Scotland was concerned, it cannot be said that she played a very noble part in the long struggle to achieve this important, if limited, measure of justice for the much oppressed Highland people. The pathetic reaction of the parish clergy to the clearances in the earlier part of the century was matched by a complete silence regarding the fresh evictions carried out in the middle years of the century, and a most amazing passivity and indifference towards even the manifestly just cause of the crofters during the period of unrest in the 1880's. One searches in vain in the proceedings of the Assembly throughout the century -- including the critical years of the 1880's -- for any indication of concern over, much less criticism of, the exploitation and oppression of the highlanders. The Church's Highland Committee, called, significantly, the 'Committee in aid of the Church in the Highlands and Islands',[2] in its annual Report to the Assembly, concerned itself solely with church matters -- the state of religion, the condition and state of repair of church buildings, financial concerns, etc. -- and never betrayed even the slightest interest in contemporary conditions in the Highlands -- whether the continuing practice of forced evictions, the social and economic condition of the people, or the basic question of land reform. The same general indifference concerning conditions in the Highlands marked the official Established Church press. On the very rare occasions when a church periodical did touch on this matter it almost invariably attempted to defend the rights of the landlords against the claims of the people.[3]

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1. Ian Grimble, The Trial of Patrick Sellar, p. 126. 2. Underlining mine.

3. An example of this pro-landlord sentiment was to be seen in a series of articles on 'The Highland Question' in the Established Church monthly The Scottish Church in 1885. The writer, lamenting the present hostility of the crofters towards the landed classes, blamed it on 'foreign agitators': "It is deserving of the severest reprobation. . . that, in the course of the agitation

No doubt there were many Established clergy who were genuinely concerned about the plight of the crofter population in these years. Yet there was among the Highland parish ministers in the 1880's the same unwillingness to side with the people against the landed interests as there had been 70 years earlier. As in the case of the Sutherland clearances when only one parish minister was known to have spoken a word on behalf of the people, so in the case of the popular agitation and social unrest in the northwestern Highlands in the 1880's, only two parish ministers -- Donald MacCallum and his brother Malcolm[1] -- are known to have

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which has been at work for some years past in the Western Highlands, some of the people -- those people whose glory and merit it hitherto has been to be accounted the most peace-loving, law-abiding, and moral of Her Majesty's subjects -- should have been deluded by the unprincipled action of men, outside their own communities, into a position of antagonism to their landlords and to the law." (June 1885, p. 64). He praised "the introduction of sheep-farming, and the gradual coming into vogue of the Highlands as a field for wild sports, and a resort of wealthy strangers in quest of health and recreation." (Ibid., p. 65). The article in the October issue was taken up almost exclusively with an elaborate justification of the wholesale evictions which took place earlier in the century. (October 1885, pp. 342-350). In a later article, the writer attacked all proposals for land reform such as land nationalization or other schemes to redistribute to the crofters the arable portions of the land used as sheep-walks and deer-forests. To do so, he said, would come "little short of the abolition of the principle of individual property, and a practical admission of the doctrine of common property rights." (November 1885, p. 433). Rather, concluded this writer, let the people give up their "contentious and turbulent courses; ceasing to be misguided by those self-seeking and evilly-disposed persons outside their own body, by whom they have been so grievously deluded; abandoning the pursuit of that which in reality is unattainable." (Ibid., p. 439).

1. Donald MacCallum was minister at Waternish in Skye from March 1884 until December 1887 during one of critical periods of crofter agitation on the island. Of all the Scottish ministers in the Highlands, he was famous for being the most outspoken critic of the cruelty and injustices of the landlords and of the Highland land system. Malcolm MacCallum, who was minister at Strontian from 1882 until 1886 and at Muckairn from 1886 until 1921, was, like his brother, an outspoken social radical. He was well-known as a champion of the crofters in the 1880's; sat on the Deer Forest Commission appointed by Gladstone in 1882; and was later elected to the county council of Argyll. In 1920, he unsuccessfully contested the Argyllshire seat for the Labour Party. His book Religion as Social Justice published in 1915, which was the substance of sermon-lectures delivered to his congregation at Muckairn, reflected the strong influence of a liberal social gospel theology, and also set forth the writer's 'left-wing' social views.

openly championed the cause of the people.[1] So completely were the Highland parish clergy at one in social outlook and sympathy with the landed classes and so obsessed with their duty as state clergy to teach obedience to authority and to assist in the preservation of law and order -- which always meant the existing laws and the existing order however unjust and oppressive -- that during the agitation in the 1880's, they inevitably took up their customary place with the landlords and the evicting authorities against the people.[2]

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1. Cf. Joseph MacLeod, Highland Heroes of the Land Reform Movement, p. 168; 'Fionn', in preface to 1888 edition of Donald MacLeod's Gloomy Memories, p. ii.

2. This anti-popular bias was evident, for instance, in the attitude adopted by the Established clergy on Skye during the period of severest agitation and unrest arising out of the attempts made to carry out fresh evictions in 1884 and 85. The clergy's indifference to the people's cause and the ill treatment they accorded Donald MacCallum, the only one of their number to side with the oppressed crofters, has been vividly described by Norman MacLean -- who became parish minister at Waternish ten years after MacCallum -- in his autobiography Set Free (pp. 52-67). MacCallum, who was the son of a poor crofter, first aroused the hostility of the landlords and his fellow clergy when he addressed a public meeting organized by the Highland Land League in his own parish. In his speech he denounced the lairds, factors and lawyers for their oppression of the people. He said the crofters were no better off than Russian serfs -- "the slaves of an unjust and iniquitous system." (p. 53). With that speech he became a hero in his parish, and from all over the island people flocked to weekly meetings where the greed and cruelty of the landlords was depicted "in all the glowing metaphors of the Gaelic language." (p. 54). Then one Saturday on his way to preach at a distant parish, he was arrested and jailed at Portree. The whole island was stirred by this unjust action of the sheriff who was seeking to strike at the root of the island's land agitation. (p. 55). In two days, however, he was released, as no evidence was forthcoming. But MacCallum's Presbytery then decided to condemn his land reform activity. (p. 59). The censure motion accused him of stirring up the poor against the rich and of making the illiterate dissatisfied with their condition. The mover of the censure, who was the oldest member of Presbytery said: " 'We remember how in the days of youth the fire burned in our hearts also as we read the wrongs inflicted on the poor. The empty glens, with the hearthstones open to the heavens, proclaim man's inhumanity to man. But we have had to learn the lessons of patience. The wrongs of a century cannot be righted in a day. . . . Patience must be the reformer's watchword'." (p. 61). Another minister said that a preacher was called to proclaim the gospel of love and peace and must not stir up unrest and discontent among the people. The Presbytery then enjoined him to live in peace with all men and to cease from strife and agitation. (p. 61). MacCallum, in his defence, said the Church should be the defender of the poor and oppressed who "were left as the offscouring of the earth living in habitations unfit for cattle." (p. 62). He denounced the Presbytery for their silence and passivity in the face of the great injustices perpetrated against the poor over the years by the aristocracy. He referred to the action of a wealthy proprietor who had recently doubled or

Not until 1892, six years after the remedial Act of 1886 had brought a century of evictions to an end, and the general unrest and discontent in the Highlands had subsided, did an official Church of Scotland body devote some attention to the land question and to the general social condition of the people.[1] Only then, after a whole century of evictions and of the most irresponsible oppression of the Highland people, did the Established Church bring herself to publicly utter her sympathy for the just claims of the people. Such was the sad record of the historic National Church -- 'the Church of the people' -- during one of the most infamous periods of Scottish history. In relation to no other aspect of

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trebled the rents of his miserable and destitute tenants, but the Presbytery, who were informed of this inhuman action, said nothing. (p. 62). MacLean concluded his account of this incident by quoting John Darroch, the parish minister of Portree concerning the reason why he and other Church of Scotland ministers did not protest against the injustices done to their people during the 1880's. He said that parish ministers were in a very difficult position: " 'As ministers of the National Church we had to be careful to support law and order. You can take it as a fact that no minister in Skye said a word for the crofters except Donald MacCallum!." (p. 66).

1. At a Life and Work congress called in Inverness in 1892 by the four northern Synods to discuss the Church's work in the Highlands, a rather belated attempt was made to express the Church's concern over the past and present hardships suffered by the crofter population. (Cf. Report of the Congress on Christian Life and Work of the Church of Scotland, Inverness, October 5-6, 1892). One of the congress discussions centred on the social condition of the people and several speakers lamented the failure of the Church to champion the cause of the oppressed crofters during the evictions of the previous century. Speaking of the earlier clearances, the minister of Kingussie said: "We now allow that this was a proceeding contrary to the laws, both of economy and philanthropy. Is it not astonishing that the Church of that day -- the united Church -- uttered no loud protest against evictions often harshly and indeed cruelly carried out?" (Ibid., p. 47). The minister of Tain insisted that it was "the duty of the Church not to rest satisfied with simply helping to stave off distress and starvation for a short time only, but to do her very best in bringing about a more satisfactory state of things. It is not the part of a true patriot, or lover of his country, to sit down with folded arms and preach peace and contentment to those who are in distress and want." (Ibid., p. 52). Yet in addition to the more liberal sentiments expressed at the congress, many of the speakers spent much of their time attacking the popular land reform movements. (E.g., cf. ibid., pp. 53-8). Land nationalization, and other compulsory schemes designed to break up the huge landed estates were denounced as unethical because they violated the rights of private property. Norman MacLeod of the High Church, Inverness, said that the land reform movements were dominated by extremists and that "they as a Church could not place themselves in the position of supporting schemes that were not in accordance with the principles of political economy, or even with the elementary laws of justice." (Ibid., p. 58).

19th century social history did the failure of social criticism in the Established Church manifest itself so clearly and so pathetically; nowhere else was her unfaithfulness with regard to her prophetic responsibility more tragically evident.

On this question of Highland land reform and the events surrounding the crofter agitation in the 1880's, the record of the Free Church stands in marked contrast to that of the Church of Scotland. On no other social issue throughout the 19th century was there such a wide variation in the attitudes and activity of the two Churches. Ever since the Disruption, when the Free Church won the allegiance of the vast majority of the Highland people and faced the opposition of most of the Highland aristocracy, there had been a close relationship between the Free Church clergy and the mass of the people in the Highlands. As we have seen, an influential section of the Free Church press spoke out against the treatment meted out to the crofter population in the evictions of the 1840's and early 50's. Consequently, when the unrest and agitation arose in the 1880's, there was considerably more sympathy with the demands for land reform among representative Free Church ministers than among the parish clergy.

Many Free churchmen in all parts of the country were enthusiastic supporters of the measure of land reform advocated by the Royal Commission appointed in 1883 and later embodied in the Act of 1886. During the interim period between the presentation of the Commission's Report and the passing of the Act, numerous expressions of support for changes in the land laws were voiced in representative Free Church circles,[1] and in the autumn of 1884, a movement called 'The Highland Association' was formed in connection with the Free Church in order to press for

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1. E.g., cf. supra, pp. 324-6, where strong criticism of the existing land laws was expressed at the Glasgow and Ayr Synod congress in 1884.

the reforms suggested by the Commission.[1] As far as Free Church ministers in the Highland parishes were concerned, although apparently none supported popular movements such as the Land League, as Donald MacCallum had done, the majority obviously favoured the limited reforms embodied in the Commission's Report; some, as we shall see, wanted more positive legislative action to assist the poor crofters to enlarge and improve their holdings; while several sided with the people against the landlords when they were threatened with evictions.[2] One of the latter -- John MacMillan, the Free Church minister at Ullapool -- was credited with delivering a public address in Inverness in 1880 which furnished the initial spark for the new land reform agitation that spread rapidly throughout the Highlands in the 1880's.[3]

However, the most noteworthy and authoritative Free Church support given to land reform in these years came from the General Assembly itself. The Assembly first took up this matter in 1883, shortly after the Royal Commission had been appointed to investigate the grievances of the crofters. In that year, overtures

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1. The United Presbyterian Magazine reported that: "The avowed object of the Association is 'to ameliorate the condition of the small tenants, crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands; to watch over their interests, and to protect and vindicate their rights by just and prudent means'. Proceeding on the lines indicated by the Royal Commission, the Association desire to secure for the people -- (1) more land, (2) fair rents, (3) security of tenure, (4) compensation for improvements. If more land is obtained for which the people cannot purchase stock, it is proposed that loans be obtained from the Government." (January 1885, p. 15).

2. Cf. e.g., Alex. MacKenzie, The History of the Highland Clearances, pp. 149-52, 169-70; Joseph MacLeod, op. cit., pp. 97, 156 and 158.

3. In the parish of Lochbroom in 1879, when the landlord first ordered 29 families (about 100 people) to remove from their crofts at Leckmelm, MacMillan immediately protested and took up the cause of the helpless victims. He sought to draw public attention to the action of the landlord and to the plight of his poor tenants by placing notices in northern newspapers. Although he was not able to stop the eviction at Leckmelm in 1880, MacKenzie claimed that his attack on the land laws at a crowded public meeting in Inverness later that year marked the beginning of the modern land reform agitation. (Cf. MacKenzie, op. cit., pp. 149-52).

were received from two Synods and one Presbytery asking that the Assembly declare 'the mind of the Church' on the land question which was having such an adverse effect upon the physical, moral and spiritual condition of the Highland people.[1] In the debate which followed, great sympathy was expressed for the crofters, and the Assembly stated that it was anxious to see a just settlement of the land question.[2] Declaring, however, that no judgment on the issue could be made until the Commissioners had gathered all the evidence, it urged ministers and members to aid the Commissioners in every way possible, and authorized the Highland Committee to watch over the work of the Commission and represent the Church's interests in relation to it.[3] Not surprisingly, this first indication of official Church interest in the question of the evictions and of land reform was widely acclaimed throughout the Highlands.[4]

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1. Assembly Papers of the Free Church of Scotland, 1883, pp. 278-80.

2. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1883, pp. 29-35.

3. Principal Rainy -- who had become convener of the Highland Committee in 1881 -- and J. Calder MacPhail, minister of Pilrig Free Church, Edinburgh, drew up and submitted a memorandum to the Commission on behalf of the Highland Committee in December 1883. (Cf. Simpson, op. cit., p. 466). It said that two basic reforms were needed: "That the size of the crofts, speaking generally, is too small. . . that the existing tenure is an unsatisfactory one." (Report of the Highlands and Islands Committee, 1884, appendix, p. 26). It was critical of the paternalistic spirit in the Highlands which made the crofters too dependent on the good will of the lairds and factors, and left them unable to exercize their sense of individual responsibility in relation to improving their land. It said the crofters were unduly subject to the irresponsible power of the landlords and were unable to protect themselves through existing laws: "On the one hand, it tends to create a slavish spirit of submission; on the other hand, it irritates the people into a spirit of suspicion and defiance, and suggests a resort to illegal methods to protect them from dangers which the law is known to be powerless to avert." (Ibid., p. 27).

4. Alex. MacKenzie, the noted author of The History of the Highland Clearances and the editor of The Celtic Magazine, who had been critical of the Church for failing to take a stand in the past on this great moral issue, reprinted in the July issue of his magazine the full text of the proceedings and debates at the Assembly. He said that the Free Church Assembly "took up a position respecting the Land Laws and the social condition of the Highland people, which though taken somewhat tardily, ought to secure for that Church the gratitude of the Highland race whatever section of the Christian Church they belong to." (The Celtic Magazine, July 1883, p. 407).

In 1884, the Assembly received an overture from the Synod of Moray asking the Church to petition Parliament in favour of an amendment to the land laws.[1] The first supporting speaker -- John MacTavish, minister of East Church, Inverness -- drew attention to the denunciations of unjust landlords in the Old Testament and in the Book of Discipline. He asked

> "the Assembly to interfere and do what they could to have the evils of the land laws removed. . . . He objected to laws that allowed one party to act as an autocrat, and place a large body of people under him, he might say, as serfs, who could hardly say that their souls were their own -- who were required to say and do very much as the proprietor liked, and who, when an election took place, were driven in like a parcel of sheep, just to do as the landlord or ground officer chose to tell them. He put the proprietor, the tenant, and cottar exactly on the same footing, and it was high time the latter class ceased to be serfs and came to be treated as men. (Applause)."[2]

Another speaker -- W. Ross Taylor, minister of Kelvinside Church, Glasgow -- claimed that there was "no such thing as an absolute private right of property in land. (Applause)."[3] He insisted that it really belonged to the community as a whole and must be used for the well-being of all. Although, he said, the state did possess the power to allocate land and "to lay conditions on the holding of land, its legislation hitherto had been sadly partial. It had left the landlords a power which in the hands of the grasping and selfish had wrought incalculable mischief."[4] At the conclusion of the debate, the Assembly agreed to petition Parliament asking for a suspension of all evictions until the findings of the Commission had been implemented.[5]

In November of the same year, the Commission of Assembly considered the recent agitation and disturbances in Skye when an armed force had to be sent from the south to support local authorities in carrying through evictions and

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1. Assembly Papers of the Free Church of Scotland, 1884, p. 240.
2. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1884, p. 152.
3. Ibid., p. 153. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid., pp. 155-9.

making arrests among the enraged crofters. Whereas earlier in the century, the Church would have vigorously denounced all such expressions of popular revolt against established 'law and order' as acts of rebellion and anarchy, the Assembly's Commission took up a remarkably enlightened position with regard to the crofter riots and disturbances. It said that

> "considering the great evils which have in all times arisen from the prolonged irritation of social evils, acknowledged but not remedied, and also that the mere enforcement of obedience to laws, when these do not secure justice, is the smallest part of the duty of any Government, the Commission resolve to memorialize Her Majesty's Government, setting forth the gravity of existing evils, and pressing for the earliest possible redress."[1]

The Memorial sent to the government read in part:

> "While your Memorialists deprecate and desire to discountenance all tumultuous and unlawful proceedings, and will steadily exert the influence they possess among their people to promote peace and order, they must, at the same time, most earnestly represent the urgent need for effectual redress of the wrongs and grievances under which many of Her Majesty's subjects in the Highlands have laboured, by reason of which the conditions of life among large classes have long been of the most depressing kind. . . that additional dangers are impending as long as measures of reform are delayed. . . that under the existing law, acts of extensive and ruinous injustice could be carried through by legal process."[2]

At the 1885 Assembly, when the first Crofters' Bill was brought before Parliament for approval, Principal Rainy moved that the Assembly press for a more liberal measure. He said that the proposed Bill did not go far enough. The Assembly thereupon agreed to " 'record their judgment that further provisions bearing on the size of holdings and other important features of the crofter problem are urgently required in order to meet the just claims and necessities of the case'."[3] When a more liberal measure was introduced in the following year, the General Assembly petitioned Parliament to pass the Bill into law.[4] Even after

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1. Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1885, p. 242.
2. Ibid., p. 243.
3. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1885, p. 154.
4. Ibid., 1886, p. 177.

the 1886 Act was passed, however, many Free churchmen insisted that further legislation was needed in order to improve the poverty-stricken condition of most crofters. At the General Assembly held in Inverness in 1888, no less than 13 overtures were received demanding that the Church petition the government to enact further legislation to improve the social condition of the crofters.[1] The debate which followed was the longest and most important at the Assembly.[2] It ended with an official petition being sent to the government calling for further legislation that would enable small crofters to acquire more land through the enlargement of existing holdings or the creation of new ones.[3]

This sustained interest and activity of the Free Church in the question of Highland land reform in the 1880's was yet another indication of the general social awakening taking place in the Scottish Church in the closing decades of the century. It is significant that, unlike the many other signs of an emerging social criticism that we have noted in the 1880's and 90's, the note of social protest in relation to the land question expressed itself supremely through the General Assembly. This indicated the shape of things to come. Soon after the turn of the century, genuine social criticism was no longer confined to a few isolated, often unrepresentative churchmen, or even to the pages of a more radical church publication. As we shall presently observe, gradually, as the 20th century progressed, it was the Church in her corporate capacity, speaking through her courts, that gave expression to the clearest and most dynamic social pronouncements. It is to an examination of this corporate recovery of prophetic social criticism in the Scottish Church during the first half of the present century that this study now turns.

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1. Assembly Papers of the Free Church of Scotland, 1888, pp. 173-8.
2. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1888, pp. 168-89.
3. Ibid., p. 189.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MODERN RECOVERY OF SOCIAL CRITICISM: 1900 - 1950

In the early decades of the present century, it was becoming increasingly apparent not only to large numbers of the working classes, but to the socially-aroused members of other classes as well, that the 19th century 'laissez-faire' liberal state, which seemed to many to be appropriate enough during a phase of national economic expansion, was not able to secure for great masses of the people a living wage, steady employment or tolerable conditions of social life. The large-scale labour unrest immediately prior to the first World War and in the 1920's -- including a nation-wide General Strike; the tragic human suffering caused by the unprecedented periods of severe depression and mass unemployment in the 1920's and 30's; not to mention the continuance of widespread poverty and most of the old social problems, indicated that something was seriously wrong with the existing order of society. Freedom from want and freedom from fear in the much more complex industrial society of the 20th century seemed to demand different kinds of social and economic arrangements than those which had been evolved in the 19th century. Consequently, the first half of the present century in Britain witnessed what can only be described as a veritable revolution in the earlier patterns of social, political and economic life. Within these years, there occurred a dramatic shift in the old balance of social forces in society. Whereas the 19th century saw the rise and dominance of the middle classes, the year 1900 ushered in what was to be 'the century of the common man'. With the urban industrial workers slowly coming alive to the power and strength they

possessed through corporate political and industrial action, the 20th century became the scene of their struggle to achieve something of that comfort and economic security which had long been enjoyed by the middle classes by virtue of their social and economic position. In a word, these years witnessed the gradual development of the modern welfare state.

Even before the first World War, the idea was emerging among the more progressive elements in society that social services should not be regarded as a form of charity, but rather as one of the natural benefits available to the citizens of a civilized state, on a par with defence, justice, education, law and order.[1] Although this radical notion was not fully accepted until the second World War, the foundations of the modern welfare state began to be laid early in the century with the ~~institution~~ introduction of old age pensions in 1908, national insurance in 1911, and the first draft for trial of the Highlands and Islands state medical service in 1913.

The shift in the balance of power in society was nowhere more evident than in the growing power and influence of the trade unions and in the rapid success of the Labour Party. In 1897, when the Scottish T. U. C. was founded, it could claim only some 41,000 members. By 1939, the membership stood at 383,000 and in 1947 it had reached almost 700,000. In the election of 1906, the Labour Party won its first two seats in Scotland -- in Glasgow and Dundee. In 1910 a third was added for West Fife, and in 1918 there were 7 Scots Labour M. P.'s. Then in the surprise election of 1922, the socialists won 30 seats -- more than any other party. The following year this increased to 35, and by 1924 Britain had its first Labour Government with a Scot as Prime Minister. The shift in the balance of social forces had been dramatic. Although the events of the depression and war years delayed the implementation of basic social changes, at the end of the war,

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1. The best example of a pre-war social document which was based on this principle was the famous Minority Report of the Poor Law Commissioners drawn up by socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb and published in 1909.

the Labour Party was swept to power with a convincing majority and "nothing less than a social revolution was effected by the main legislation of the years 1946-48."[1]

Although in the earlier decades of the century there was a general stirring of the social conscience of the nation, and many important reforms were carried out, before the second World War only a beginning had been made in the solution of many basic social problems. At the end of the first World War for example, public ownership of housing had hardly begun, and consequently, prior to the 1920's, there was little real improvement in the appalling housing conditions which had for so long existed in the large industrial centres. In 1921, 1/8th of the population of greater Glasgow lived in one-roomed houses. The number so living -- 132,146 persons -- was actually greater than the number who lived in one-roomed houses 60 years earlier -- 126,000 persons -- although, of course, the percentage of the city's population so housed had decreased. Even in 1931, 55.4% of the people in Glasgow and 56.2% of the people in Dundee lived in one and two-roomed houses.[2] According to the legal definition provided by the Housing Act of 1935, "overcrowding in Scotland in the middle 'thirties was more than six times as bad as it was in England."[3]

Not surprisingly, the health and general social well-being of the low income groups still reflected the bad state of their environment and their continuing poverty:

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1. G. S. Pryde, Scotland from 1603 to the present day, p. 318.

2. The national figure was 44%. (Cf. ibid., p. 302).

3. A. M. MacKenzie, Scotland in Modern Times 1720 - 1939, p. 379. According to the Act, overcrowding was occupancy exceeding a rate of two persons to one room, three to two rooms, five to three rooms, etc. Babies were not counted and children between one and ten were reckoned half a person. (Cf. Pryde, op. cit., p. 303).

> "It was estimated, towards the end of the 'thirties, that something like half the population of Scotland were in what could not be described as good health: and in Glasgow seven school-children in eight were in need of some kind of medical attention."[1]

The marked difference between the condition of people in middle class districts and those in poorer districts was still plainly evident in the infant mortality rates -- the most accurate indicator of the social condition of a people. The shocking extent of the contrast was reflected in the infant mortality figures[2] quoted in 1930 for well-to-do and poorer districts in Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh: Glasgow: Calton 161, Cathcart 37; Dundee: Hawkhill and Blackness 127, Broughty Ferry 65; Edinburgh: St. Giles 111, Colinton 12.[3] To say the very least, the conditions of life among the lowest income groups in the large industrial towns were still deplorable.

It was in the context of these eventful years of social, political and economic transformation in the first half of the present century, that the modern recovery of social criticism in the Scottish Church took place. It was in this period that the Church in her corporate capacity at last came alive to her prophetic responsibility in society.

A. Before the First World War

(1) The Scottish Christian Social Union

At the turn of the century, the most notable example of the growing desire among socially-concerned churchmen to act together for the purpose of attacking contemporary social evils and working for a more just and Christian social order, was the formation in 1901 of the Scottish Christian Social Union (S.C.S.U.). Patterned after the famous Christian Social Union (C.S.U.) formed in England in

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1. MacKenzie, op. cit.
2. Deaths per 1,000 live births.
3. Quoted in Life and Work Magazine, September 1930, p. 386.

1889 among Anglican churchmen, the S.C.S.U. was formed among Presbyterian churchmen in Scotland and sought the same general objectives as the English body. At the founding meeting of the Union, its purpose was stated to be:

> "(a) To claim for the Christian law the ultimate authority to rule social practice. (b) To affirm the social mission of the Church, and make practical suggestions as to how that mission may best be fulfilled. (c) To investigate, where necessary, the social and economic facts in different departments of the national life, and to study how to apply the truths and principles of Christianity to the problems arising therefrom. (d) To take action, as occasion arises, for the furtherance of specific reforms."[1]

The main architect of the S.C.S.U. was David Watson, the minister of St. Clement's Parish Church in Glasgow, who was one of the leading exponents of social Christianity in the Church of Scotland for half a century.[2] Early in 1901, Watson

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1. David Watson, The Scottish Christian Social Union and How it Came to be Formed, p. 15.

2. Watson was minister of St. Clement's, a poor working class congregation, from 1886 until 1938. Early in his ministry in Glasgow he became interested in social problems and was one of the first to advocate that the Church herself should engage in social work. Two years after the Established Church's Social Work Committee was formed in 1904, he became vice-convener for 21 years. In 1927, he became convener of the Committee, a post he held until 1935. As one who did not regard social work as a substitute for social reform and social criticism, he played a large part in promoting the establishment of the Church and Nation Committee in 1919, becoming convener of the Committee on Social and Industrial Life, one of the three main sub-committees, from 1919 until 1930. In addition to being a prominent speaker on social questions at church congresses and other official gatherings, Watson throughout the first quarter of the century, was the most prolific writer in the Church of Scotland on all aspects of contemporary social problems. His most outstanding works were Social Problems and the Church's Duty published in 1908, The Social Expression of Christianity published in 1919, and Social Advance -- Its Meaning, Method and Goal published in 1911. The latter volume, which formed the substance of the Gunning lectures delivered in Edinburgh in 1910-11, was concerned with the sociological factors which lay behind existing social evils, as well as with practical problems. It was, therefore, a valuable contribution to the social science literature of the time. Although disavowing socialism, Watson was a strong critic of the existing order of society. As society now is, he said, "Christianity has been frankly excluded as inapplicable and unworkable, and self interest has been accepted as the proper basis of action in social, commercial, political and international relations." (The Social Expression of Christianity, p. 32). He expressed no surprise at the prevalence of social and industrial unrest in society, and said it was an indication of a truly Christian-inspired discontent with social wrong and the cruelty of the existing industrial system -- "it is, in the last analysis, a revolt of the soul against mechanical industrialism which reduces men to things and hinders the

wrote a series of articles in the Church of Scotland newspaper Saint Andrew, in which he outlined proposals for the formation of a Scottish body similar to the C.S.U. His plan was that the new body

> "would gather up and focus the opinion of the Churches on social questions, and would furnish a strong and broad platform from which effective action could be taken with regard to the most pressing social problems of our time. It would evoke the enthusiasm and gratitude of the working classes.[1] The benefit to the Church, in more ways than one would be incalculable."[2]

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development of personality." (Ibid., p. 18). He said: "We want more of that Divine discontent with the existing order which is the true guarantee and the impelling motive of all true reform. It is social reconstruction on Christian lines and on a Christian basis we want which will give us a new social order marked by solidarity, unity, co-operation and mutual aid, and in which no place will be found for social caste or class war, or the extremes of wealth and want, luxury and misery, mansions and slums, culture and ignorance, such as disfigure the present social regime." (Ibid., p. 71). Watson confessed that "frequently in the past religion has had the effect of making people contented with their lot, perhaps when they should not have been contented with the hovels in which they were housed, and the inadequate wages they received for their labour. . . . Unrest admittedly is better than apathy and stagnation. Where there is aspiration, there will be unrest. . . . Industrial unrest is only a part of a larger unrest, the general unrest of Society caused by deep dissatisfaction with the existing social order." (Ibid., pp. 180-1).

1. In his works on social questions, Watson frequently expressed the opinion that large numbers of the working classes were alienated from practising Christianity because the 19th century Church had failed to be obedient to her social mission. In his Gunning lectures delivered in 1910-11, he declared that "many hold aloof from the Church from the conviction that she has not done all she might have done for social amelioration; that she has acquiesced in, and so helped to stereotype their environment and those bad conditions under which they groan. That undoubtedly is a shortcoming for which the Church should now stand in sackcloth. She has not preached sufficiently the Gospel of the Kingdom. She has not applied Christian ethics to social, economic and industrial conditions. She has emphasized charity more than justice." (Social Advance -- Its Meaning, Method and Goal, p. 298). Writing several years later, he claimed that the Church's "Teaching and her methods have both been at fault. Her message has been too individualistic. . . . She has not always been a home for the lowly. She has inadvertantly encouraged social caste, and social stratification by offering mission halls to the poor, and splendid churches to the well-to-do, a practice abhorrent to the very genius and spirit of Christianity. She has paid too much deference to wealth and rank. She has not honoured the poor as Jesus did, nor always championed their cause. She has not raised her voice as clearly and fearlessly as she might against social injustice and social wrong. . . . Had she done so, these wrongs might never have been committed, and today the common people would have heard her gladly instead of forsaking her sanctuaries." (The Social Expression of Christianity, pp. 16-7).

2. Watson, The Scottish Christian Social Union and How it Came to be Formed, p. 1.

Watson claimed that the

> "Church is only awakening to her social mission. We are only beginning to understand the meaning and scope of Christ's social teaching. My profound conviction is that the special glory of this new century will be its social reform achievements, and if that conviction be well based then the work of the Christian Social Union will be the work of the century."[1]

Since there was an encouraging response to Watson's suggestion from many Established and U. F. Church ministers,[2] a founding meeting was held on April 4th, 1901, when the national organization of the Union, composed of many prominent Scottish churchmen, came into being.[3] In the months and years that followed, local branches were set up in several of the major towns in Scotland.[4]

In its initial years, the S.C.S.U. was considerably influenced by the Church of England C.S.U., and a few joint meetings of the two bodies seem to have taken place.[5] These meetings were significant not only because they formed one of the

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1. Ibid., p. 2.

2. Cf. ibid., pp. 2-10, where dozens of replies favouring the formation of a Scottish C.S.U. were reprinted.

3. The President was the Lord Provost of Glasgow, and the vice-presidents included John Marshall Lang, George Adam Smith, A. H. Charteris and R. H. Story -- Principal of Glasgow University. On the executive were many ministers who were noted for their active interest in social questions, such as James Paton of St. Paul's Parish Church, Glasgow, J. Wilson Harper of Chalmers U. F. Church, Alloa, George Reith, David M. Ross and, of course, Watson himself. (Cf. ibid., p. 17).

4. Until it ceased publication in January 1907, the Church of Scotland paper Saint Andrew frequently commented on the activities of the S.C.S.U. In June 1901, it reported that the first local branch had been formed at Glasgow. (Ibid., June 13, 1901, p. 6). Members of the branch formed at Helensburgh in October 1901 were said to include the local Provost, U. F. Church minister Adam Welch, and Glasgow M.P. Andrew Bonar Law -- a future Prime Minister -- who was a vice-president of the branch. (Ibid., November 7, 1901, p. 11). In 1902, it was reported that local branches of the Union had been formed in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Greenock, Helensburgh, Dunfermline, and Clydebank. Further branches were expected to be formed shortly in Rothesay and Craigmore, Alloa, Aberdeen, Perth, Dundee, and several other towns. (Ibid., May 15, 1902, p. 9).

5. It was reported that at one joint meeting of the C.S.U. and the S.C.S.U. the speaker was the famous Anglican churchman and C.S.U. leader Canon Henry Scott Holland. (Ibid., October 24, 1901, pp. 4-5).

earliest examples of ecumenical encounter and co-operative endeavour between Scottish Presbyterians and Anglicans, but also because such contacts with leading Anglican social liberals helped to stimulate the social thought of the new Scottish Union.[1]

Like its English counterpart, the S.C.S.U., rather than engaging in direct criticism of the existing social and economic system itself, sought to quicken the social conscience of the Church and nation by focussing attention on particular social problems. Local branches were largely forums and study groups where the application of Christianity to social life was discussed. Questions such as child life and welfare, slum housing, sweated labour, and unemployment were the most common topics of discussion. At the national level the Union promoted the establishment of social institutions and clubs for the young and the elderly and, beginning in 1906,[2] it sponsored an annual school of social study where distinguished lecturers delivered addresses on contemporary social issues. Although few, if any, of the local branches were still active after 1914, the national organization of the S.C.S.U. and the annual summer schools seem to have continued

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1. In the 19th century, as we have already noted, a mild form of Christian socialism had considerable influence in the Church of England. Many of the leaders of the C.S.U. -- men like Bishop Westcott, Charles Gore, Henry Scott Holland and others -- belonged to this distinctively Anglican Christian socialist tradition. The main feature of this type of Christian socialism was a strong emphasis on the Incarnation -- based on a 'kenotic' Christology emphasizing the humanity of Christ -- together with a highly critical attitude toward the individualism and harsh competitiveness of capitalism. This C.S.U. social teaching probably influenced members of the S.C.S.U. most directly through the pages of The Economic Review, the very able journal of the Oxford University branch of the C.S.U. which was published from 1891 to 1914. This quarterly sought to demolish -- in Fabian-like language -- the theories and assumptions of 'laissez-faire' economic teaching, and advocated increased state action to promote social welfare schemes and to achieve a greater measure of social justice for the working classes. Above all it tried to show that the existing economic order was not sacrosanct but could be controlled and directed by social and political action.

2. Cf. Saint Andrew, May 10, 1906, p. 2.

in existence until the beginning of the second World War.[1]

As the identity of some of its supporters and the nature of its activity clearly indicated, the S.C.S.U. was not a radical social movement. Nor, it seems, did it ever manage to attain the strength or exert the degree of influence which its founders had originally hoped. Nevertheless, the formation of the Union in 1901 was another landmark in the development of Christian social thought in Scotland, and over the years it undoubtedly performed a valuable service in awakening the social conscience of the Church, and in demonstrating to society at large that churchmen were concerned about the social and economic condition of the people. It was the first organization to bring Established and U. F. churchmen together for common endeavour and helped to make possible the official co-operation of the two Churches in joint action on social questions during and immediately after the first World War. Finally, by drawing together large numbers of socially concerned churchmen into one body in order that they might exercise their corporate strength in unified social action, the S.C.S.U. was the natural precusor of the official social activity of the Church in her corporate capacity through her church courts. In this way, the Union made a decisive contribution to the formation of the Social Work Committee in the Church of Scotland and the Social Problems Committee in the U. F. Church.

(2) Social Action in the General Assemblies

(a) The Church of Scotland

In these early years preceding the first World War, the social awakening in the Church of Scotland still had not reached the point where the General Assembly involved herself directly with the implications of the Christian faith for the social and economic life of the nation. As yet, no official committee of the Assembly had been set up to study and give a Christian judgment upon the critical

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1. The Scots Observer referred to some of the summer schools of social study held by the S.C.S.U. in the 1930's. In 1930, the school was held at Rothesay and in 1933 at Dunblane. (Cf. ibid., May 8, 1930, p. 10; May 6, 1933, p. 5).

social, political and economic issues of the day. Consequently, before 1914, one cannot properly speak of a recovery of social criticism by the Established Church in her corporate capacity. Nevertheless, in two quite different directions, the Church, through her General Assembly, did involve herself officially in social action. This she did by sponsoring several national church congresses where a large place was given to the discussion of contemporary social questions, and also by appointing a permanent Social Work Committee to direct and expand the Church's social service work.

Annual church congresses dealing with a large variety of ecclesiastical matters had long been held in the Church of England. In the last two decades of the 19th century, these gatherings began to enlarge their interests in order to include the consideration of social questions among their proceedings. At each congress from 1880 to 1900, except for 1891, at least one session was devoted to the study of social questions. Although in Scotland, as we have seen, church congresses were held at the Synodical or regional level in the 1880's and 90's, no national gatherings of this nature took place until the end of the century. However, beginning in 1899, another landmark in the gradual recovery of Christian social criticism was reached with the holding of several national church congresses, mostly by the Church of Scotland, at which the discussion of social questions had a central place.

In 1898, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received an overture asking for the holding of annual congresses to discuss those practical questions relating to the social and religious condition of the people for which time was not available in the General Assembly. As a result of this overture, four national church congresses were held in 1899, 1901, 1904 and 1907, in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dundee, respectively.

The Glasgow congress held in October 1899 was the first such national congress held in the Scottish Church. It was a three day gathering and one whole

session was devoted to the subject 'The Church: Its Attitude to Social and Economic Movements'. This session was open not only to the official delegates who came from all over Scotland, but also the public, and a special invitation was given to Glasgow working men to attend. The full text of the speeches and proceedings of this notable session -- and indeed, of the whole congress -- was published and circulated widely in the Church.[1] The substance of the addresses delivered at this public session revealed something of the wide variety of social thought which existed in the Church at large, and the tolerant manner in which even radical views were received, reflected the growth of more liberal attitudes among churchmen. Said one official journal:

> "In the Congress, speakers were at liberty to utter what was in their hearts upon any of the important subjects brought before it without the Church at large being committed to their views; and as a means of eliciting the mind of the Church the Congress has justified its existence entirely. This free and unhampered expression of opinion, often diverse opinion, was given with an utter absence of the controversial spirit, and without an acrimonious word."[2]

Among those who addressed the congress at the session dealing with social questions were Robert Flint, A. Wallace Williamson and, most surprisingly, the noted Christian socialist John Glasse. Flint, although a bitter critic of socialism, was a strong advocate of a more positive Church involvement in the nation's social and political affairs. Addressing the congress on the subject 'What ought to be the attitude of the Church towards social and economic movements?', Flint claimed that since the Church's task was to build up the Kingdom of God, she had a quite definite mission to the corporate life of society.[3] He said that

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1. Cf. the Official Report of Proceedings of the First Church Congress of the Church of Scotland. Glasgow, October 25-27, 1899. The addresses delivered at the public meeting on social questions are printed on pp. 74-118.

2. The Church of Scotland Home and Foreign Missionary Record, December 1899, p. 338.

3. Official Report of the First Church Congress, pp. 77-81.

> "'the Word' entrusted to the Church to proclaim and enforce is not one meant for the Church merely but for society as a whole. Although it fully recognizes the importance of individuals, it has not been sent simply for the salvation of individual souls. It has been sent also for the redemption of our race and the establishment of a reign of divine righteousness and brotherly love on earth. The Bible, in which 'the Word' is contained, abounds in references to social and economic matters. . . . Any 'preaching of the Word' which ignores these things or fails to present them in the light of the Gospel cannot justly claim to be biblical."[1]

Flint later claimed that "when houses of one apartment ceased to be, God's kingdom will have made in our land, a very perceptible advance.[2] He went on to insist that the Church should support all the just claims of labour:

> "Employers may not make whatever terms they please with their employees, exort from them excessive exertion or keep them working in conditions ruinous to health or incompatible with decency and virtue. . . . Industrial competition has moral limits as well as economic limits, and the former are the more easily discernible and the more sacred, and wherever they are disregarded the Church is bound to protest and should heartily co-operate with the leaders of labour movements in demanding that those limits be respected. . . . My belief is that whatever errors and evils it [i.e. trade unionism] may have been responsible for, it was and is a necessity, and one the tendency of which is towards good, towards progress, not towards anarchy and strife, but organization and peace."[3]

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1. Ibid., p. 88. In his work on socialism, Flint declared that genuine concern about social problems inevitably leads to an interest in politics, for "no absolute distinction can be drawn between political and social questions. . . . The man who fancies that the Church ought to have nothing to do with politics, cannot have thought much on the subject. The Church has to do with the Bible and the Bible is a very political book. . . . The prophets preached politics so very largely that no man can expound what they uttered and apply it without preaching politics also. To lecture through the Epistle of James without trenching on the sphere of politics one would require to be not merely adroit but dishonest. It is true that 'Christ's kingdom is not of this world' but also true that Christ is 'prince of the kings of the earth', and consequently that all political rulers and political assemblies are as much bound to obey His will as ecclesiastical leaders and ecclesiastical councils. . . . The Church has, therefore, very much to do with politics. She has to do with it insofar as politics may be moral or immoral, Christian or anti-Christian; insofar as there is national duty or national sin, national piety or national impiety." (Socialism (1895 ed.), pp. 489-90).

2. Official Report of the First Church Congress, p. 90.

3. Ibid., pp. 90-1. Flint believed that the clergy "ought always to have the courage to protest against any social injustice or political inequity perpetrated by the strong on the weak. . . . They ought never to be among those who thoughtlessly or selfishly tell us that 'we have heard quite enough of the working man'. Those who say so can surely have imbibed little of the spirit of Christ, or must know little of the hard, bitter lot of vast numbers of working men and working women." (Socialism (1895 ed.) p. 484).

Like Flint, Williamson, in his address to the congress, also pointed out the social implications of the Gospel and emphasized the social nature of the Church's mission.[1] But it was the address by John Glasse on 'Christianity and Socialism' which caused the greatest stir at the congress. In urging the case for Christian socialism, the minister of Old Greyfriars said that

> "many are socialists for the same reason they are Christians. I do not believe in everything that is connected with socialism but there is a necessity of being equally discriminate in connection with Christianity. The ethic of both, however, is obviously the same. They insist on brotherhood. Our religion teaches us that there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. I do not know any system that is more imbued with this idea and more earnest in its realization than socialism."[2]

Glasse rejected the claims of Marxian socialism and said he agreed with the Fabians that social reconstruction would evolve in stages:

> "All experience assures us that such a change must be gradual, and in every country with representative government, it will be constitutional. . . . If it is to succeed at all it must be by convincing the sober and conservative majority of the community that private ownership for wealth-production fails to render social service, and threatens to develop into social tyranny."[3]

Denouncing the false individualism and ruthless competition of capitalism, this social radical denounced the irresponsible power of the greedy capitalist who "organizes the labour of others, captures companies, controls the railways, inspires the press and constrains the government, forcing them all by his masterful will to spend their energy in filling his coffers."[4] Continuing his address, Glasse attacked the existing social class system. He emphasized that the first Christians taught social equality. In the early Church

> "all were one in Christ. If we are going to change this, and adopt the cult of the superior person, the glorification of the overman, let us understand that in doing so we have abandoned the religion of Jesus to become the disciples of Nietzsche."[5]

Christians should welcome and not oppose the demands of socialism, he concluded,

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1. Official Report of the First Church Congress, pp. 112-8.
2. Ibid., p. 93.
3. Ibid., p. 96.
4. Ibid., p. 99.
5. Ibid., p. 100.

for what socialists want "is not equal distribution of goods, but equal possibilities of manhood."[1]

It is most significant that a well-known socialist was invited to deliver one of the main addresses at this officially-sponsored church congress, and that the radical social views expressed found a hearing in such a gathering. Churchmen of an earlier generation would have been horrified at such an occurrence and at the sentiments expressed. Clearly, by the beginning of the 20th century, the Established Church had become much more tolerant of the views of social radicals within her ranks. She had come a long way since the days of Brewster.

At the next three church congresses, the discussion of contemporary social issues again found a prominent place. At the Aberdeen congress of 1901,[2] those who delivered addresses on social questions included David Watson and W. P. Paterson, professor of Divinity at Edinburgh University.[3] At the third congress held in Edinburgh in 1904,[4] Watson was again one of the main speakers at the session dealing with social questions. Unfortunately, little is known about the 1907 congress held in Dundee, because, unlike the earlier three congresses, no report of the proceedings and debates was published. However, it was stated that this final congress dealt almost exclusively with social questions "as the Committee understood that was the desire of the people of Dundee."[5] It was also

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1. Ibid., p. 103.

2. Cf. the Official Report of Proceedings of the Second Church Congress of the Church of Scotland, H. M. B. Reid, ed. Aberdeen, October 9-10, 1901.

3. Paterson, who was a leading advocate of social Christianity, played a large part, as we shall see, in preparing the way for the establishment of the Church and Nation Committee after the War. In his autobiography, David Watson described him as a man having "the spiritual fervour of a Loyola and the social enthusiasm of a Keir Hardie." (Chords of Memory, p. 103).

4. Cf. the Official Report of Proceedings of the Third Church Congress of the Church of Scotland, H. M. B. Reid, ed. Edinburgh, October 19-20, 1904.

5. The Layman's Book of the General Assembly, 1907, p. 127.

reported that at the one evening session open to the public, large numbers of Dundee citizens attended, including many of the working classes.[1]

Although by no means all the sentiments expressed at these church congresses were socially enlightened,[2] merely the holding of these official gatherings -- giving as they did such a large place to the discussion of the social implications and application of the Gospel -- was an important indication of the growing social awakening of the Church in her corporate capacity. For while the Church was not officially responsible for the sentiments expressed in the various speeches, the congresses were official meetings of the Church, and the substance of the addresses and debates were reported extensively in church publications and in the daily newspapers and were circulated throughout the Church by means of the published reports. Above everything else, the message of these congresses represented a clear call to the Church to engage in her social mission and to proclaim the Gospel in a relevant way to the whole corporate life of society.

The second way that the General Assembly manifested its growing social concern was through the inauguration of organized social work at the national level.

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1. Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1908, pp. 1365-9.

2. For instance, one speaker at the Aberdeen congress -- Thomas Young, minister of Ellon -- insisted that the wages of most of the working classes were far too high. Claiming that the greatest curse among many communities was the curse of high wages paid to the lower classes, he said "he believed the working classes of the country at the present day had, considering their position, more money to spend on their personal indulgence and personal pleasures than almost any other class of the community. Their obligations were fewer, less expensive, and the consequence was their amount of expenditure on personal enjoyment was proportionately greater. And he thought the Church should teach that class to use their means for the highest objects, for themselves and others." (Official Report of the Second Church Congress, p. 123). Such bourgeois sentiments as these, expressed publicly at the congress, did not help to heal the breach between the Church and the alienated working classes. The hope of narrowing this breach was one of the main reasons for holding public sessions in the evenings where the discussion of social questions from a Christian standpoint could take place before largely working class audiences.

As we have noted at the outset of this study, social service is not social criticism.[1] Consequently, except insofar as the Church's decision to engage in large-scale social service work can be regarded as a recognition of the fact that the existing order of society produced appalling social problems and was, therefore, defective, the appointment by the General Assembly of the Committee on Social Work in 1904, was not, in itself, an indication of a recovery of social criticism in the Established Church. Although many churchmen opposed the involvement of the Church in social work because they feared such activity would inevitably bring the Church into the sphere of social reform, in fact, it was no part of the new Committee's duty to study social questions much less advocate social reforms.[2]

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1. Cf. supra, chapter 1, pp. 5-6.

2. Criticism of the Church's activity in social work seems to have come from three main sources. First of all there was a small group of socially radical churchmen who believed that the Church should concentrate her main efforts against the evils and injustices in the existing order of society instead of trying to make the existing order bearable by alleviating its worst excesses. This was the attitude adopted by John Glasse and a few others in the Assembly of 1904 when the work of the Committee was first defined. However, this position received the support of only a handful of churchmen at that Assembly. (Cf. The Layman's Book of the General Assembly, 1904, pp. 120-3). At the Assembly of 1907, the same group attempted to have the scope of the Committee's work enlarged by bringing forward a motion that "the General Assembly enjoin the committee to devote their energies more to the removal of the causes of social evils." (Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1907, p. 56). These churchmen claimed that the Church's social task was not fulfilled by building homes for the wrecks of society, but that she should be seeking to solve some of the great social evils such as slum housing and sweated labour. (Cf. The Layman's Book of the General Assembly, 1907, pp. 122-3). However, only a few in the Assembly were prepared to support such an enlargement of the Church's social concern, and after some debate, the motion was withdrawn. (Ibid). Other criticisms of the Church's activity in the field of social service came from the more conservative elements in the Church -- from both theological and social conservatism. The former believed that social work was 'unspiritual' and only diverted the Church's attention away from her true and proper function which was the 'preaching of the Gospel'. David Watson refers to the opposition of these churchmen to social work in his autobiography. (Cf. Chords of Memory, p. 150). Watson also refers to the social conservatives who were suspicious of this aspect of the Church's work: "Others scented danger in the very word 'social'. One day when I was about to address a class of Divinity students on Social Work, the Professor said to me warningly, 'Be sure and tell them it is not Socialism'." (Ibid., p. 151).

Nevertheless, as in the case of the influence of the church congresses and the work of the S.C.S.U., the appointment of this Committee helped to prepare the way for the recovery of social criticism by the General Assembly in the closing years of the first World War. After more than a decade of noble social service work, it became increasingly obvious to the Church that caring for a few victims of the harsh competitive industrial system was not enough and that a more direct attack had to be made on the causes of social evils and social misery in the system itself. As the vice-convener of the Committee, David Watson, expressed it in 1908:

> "The Church's social work is not meant as a substitute for social reform. It rather accentuates the need for reform. Through the social work a mass of sociological data is being accumulated which should prove of immense value some day. More and more it is clear that social conditions need to be redeemed as well as men and women. The grave social problems. . . are clamouring for solution, and the Church must aid in solving them."[1]

It was as a result of this growing awareness in the Church of Scotland that social criticism as well as social service was needed, that at the end of the War, the General Assembly finally acted to set up the Church and Nation Committee.

(b) The United Free Church

Although in the early years of the present century, the U. F. Church did not, like the Church of Scotland, hold national church congresses where the discussion of social questions had a place,[2] much the same result was accomplished through holding, in connection with the General Assembly, occasional working men's meetings where practical moral and social questions were considered from a Christian

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1. Watson, Social Problems and the Church's Duty, p. 199. Cf. also Watson's speech in the General Assembly in the same year. (The Layman's Book of the General Assembly, 1908, p. 89).

2. In November 1899, one month after the first Church of Scotland congress was held in Glasgow, the Free Church held her one and only national congress in Edinburgh. However, there was only one address on social questions, and this was delivered by a Congregationalist minister from England. (Cf. The Free Church of Scotland Monthly, October 1899, p. 242). After the union, the U. F. Church does not appear to have held any such national congresses before 1911, when, as we shall see, a special congress on social problems was held.

standpoint. This remarkably successful practice, which began with the 1902 Assembly in Glasgow,[1] provided the Church with a unique opportunity of demonstrating the relevance and application of the Gospel to contemporary issues before an audience composed of many church-alienated industrial workers.

However, the most prominent indication of the social awakening in the U. F. Church in the years before the first World War, was the activity of the General Assembly itself. Significantly, this social awakening expressed itself in a more radical form in the U. F. Church than in the Established Church. Whereas the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland concentrated its efforts upon social service work, the U. F. Church Assembly chose a completely different path of Christian social action. Instead of directly involving herself in reclamation work among the 'social rejects' of society, the U. F. Church sought rather to get at the root causes of the appalling social distress in society. Before 1914, therefore, her different approach to the evils in industrial society led her to enter into a more direct attack upon contemporary social problems than was the case with the Church of Scotland. Consequently, it can be said that the U. F. Church was the first of the Scottish Churches to recover, in her corporate capacity, her prophetic witness, and to engage in genuine and consistent social criticism.

It has already been noted that, generally speaking, the social awakening among individual churchmen in the 1880's and 90's seems to have taken a more

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1. Some 3,000 men were present at this special meeting held during the first Saturday night of the Assembly. Addresses which dealt frankly with practical religious and social questions were delivered by Principal Rainy, George Reith, Lord Provost Chisholm and George Adam Smith, among others. (George M. Reith, Reminiscences of the United Free Church General Assembly, 1900-1929, p. 33). George M. Reith -- not to be confused with George Reith of College U. F. Church, Glasgow -- the author of the above-noted book of reminiscences, was editor of the Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, and was present at each Assembly from 1900 to 1929. Although, as we shall see, Reith in his social views, was hardly an unprejudiced observer, his volume of reminiscences provides a useful commentary on little known events and happenings not recorded in official Assembly documents.

radical form among socially-aroused U. P. and Free Churchmen -- especially the former -- than among their Established Church counterparts. Indeed, as we have observed in the U. P. Church, attempts were made in the 1890's to have the Synod itself set up a permanent committee to study and pronounce upon social questions. In the early years following the union of 1900, the General Assembly's Home Mission Committee, and her Committee on Church Life and Work found that increasingly in carrying out their responsibilities they were being brought face to face with complex social evils which were an affront to the Christian conscience and which were seriously impeding the Church's mission to society.[1] It soon became clear, therefore, to a growing number of churchmen, that if the Church was to be faithful to her calling and was to make any effective impact upon the real life of society, she must set herself to study and give a Christian judgment upon contemporary social questions. This feeling reached its climax in 1908 when the General Assembly received overtures from 2 Synods and 6 Presbyteries asking that the Church officially take some action with regard to the social questions of the day.[2]

These overtures were the subject of a heated debate in the Assembly of 1908.[3] The debate revealed clearly the strong cleavage that had by this time developed

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1. In 1905 and 1906, for example, the Life and Work Committee found itself involved in the question of slum housing conditions, and in 1908 with the evils of sweated labour. (Cf. Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work, 1905, pp. 4-7; 1906, pp. 3-8 and appendix pp. 9-13; 1908, pp. 3-9, included in Reports to the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, 1905, 1906, and 1908). The 1906 Report after deploring the sad state of working class housing, concluded: "Among those outside the Church, and not among the slum-dwellers only, but among the working classes generally, a cynical impression prevails that the Church does not really care about them. . . . If the Church is to regain lost ground she must bring the great principles of the Gospel to bear on social and economic questions of the hour; and, by practical endeavour amongst them, convince the people that the professing followers of that Christ who had compassion on the multitude, have their well-being at heart." (Ibid., 1906, p. 8).

2. Assembly Papers of the United Free Church of Scotland, 1908, I, pp. 197-201, and II, pp. 31-2.

3. Cf. the Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, 1908, pp. 264-76.

between the progressive and conservative elements in the Church -- between those who wished the Church to work for a reformation of the social and economic structures of society in order to achieve a more Christian social order, and those who held that the Church's only task was to preach the Gospel to individuals, leaving it to redeemed individuals to create a more Christian society.[1] Although, judging from the speeches, these two elements appeared to be fairly well balanced

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1. In these years, many socially conservative churchmen still voiced the traditional 19th century view that poverty and social distress was mainly due to personal moral and spiritual inadequacies in individuals. Consequently they saw no need for the Church to concern herself with social problems. One Aberdeen minister -- R. Bruce Taylor of Ferryhill Church -- writing in the official church magazine, argued that poverty and slum housing was not a social or economic problem but a matter of individual moral character. He said that "if you could abolish the drink traffic, you would abolish the housing question and many another of the most vexing problems of the day." (The Missionary Record of the United Free Church of Scotland, June 1903, p. 243). Regarding a proposal to build a large housing scheme for slum-dwellers in Glasgow, he declared: "Put up palaces tomorrow for a section of the population, leaving at the same time the other conditions untouched, and in a week the palaces will be hovels. . . . The real problem is not the tearing down of the slums, but the regeneration of the slum-dweller. The root question is moral, not economic. . . . Slums will be abolished only when the slum-dwellers are reformed." (Ibid., pp. 243-5). This attitude was still prevalent in the General Assembly debates. One prominent spokesman in many Assemblies, Mr. (later Sir) David Paulin -- a well-known Life Assurance Co. executive -- who was for many years convener or vice-convener of the Life and Work Committee, objected, in the 1902 Assembly to references about the poverty of the working classes. He asked "Who are the poor? If you mean the working classes, then I say they are not poor. They were never better off in the history of the world than they are now." (Proceedings and Debates, 1902, p. 47). If any of them were poor, he said, they had brought their poverty on themselves, for what, he said, is the cause of poverty? "Drink! I put it at the head by a long way. (Applause). Secondly, vice; and thirdly, insanity; . . . Fourth, laziness; fifth, gambling. . . . Do you think it will do any good to give people of that kind a pension from the State, and houses of five rooms? If they are to remain as they are, the money had better be thrown into the sea! (Applause). If you gave them all palaces, and spent millions in endowing them, you will do no good." (Ibid). On the other hand, in the early 1900's there were many socially enlightened sentiments expressed in the Assembly speeches which would never have been uttered in a church court in the 19th century. Speaking in the above-noted debate in the 1908 Assembly, J. Y. Simpson -- professor of Natural Science at New College -- charged that the Church was still living in the past as far as her outlook on social problems was concerned. He declared that "many of the social evils of the day arise from social wrongs in monopolies of land, of money, of machinery, of railroads, and of capital of other kinds. It is these that have to be met, and it is just here that the Church has done so little." (Ibid., 1908, p. 269). Another speaker in the debate, Colin Gibb -- minister of Albert St. Church,

in the General Assembly, when the debate was concluded the Assembly took the notable step of instructing the Life and Work Committee to investigate some of the leading social questions of the day and to report on them to the next Assembly.[1] Consequently, the next two Assemblies -- 1909 and 1910 -- witnessed another landmark in the gradual recovery of Christian social criticism. For in these years, the Church, in her corporate capacity, not only gave her approval,

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Glasgow -- charged the Church with failing to understand the root causes of social distress. (Ibid., p. 264). He said that moral factors as a cause of poverty had been grossly overstressed by traditional Christian teaching. With regard to drink, for example, recent investigations have "clearly brought out that for every one who was idle through drink and drunkenness there were four who were idle through no fault of their own, and for whom the present system of things failed to find employment." (Ibid). Gibb said that the workers now know that bad social and economic arrangements were the cause of their misery and he urged the Church to awaken to her social mission and show the workers that "they are their friends, ready and willing to aid them in their righteous struggle for better conditions of life." (Ibid., p. 265).

1. This action by the Assembly seems to contradict George M. Reith's estimate of the social views of the majority of churchmen during the debate. In his reminiscences, he said that in the debate there was evident the subtle influence of the 'materialistic philosophy' which claimed that character was determined by environment. (Reith, op. cit., p. 93). To many in the Assembly, he said, it seemed that the whole effort to show the importance of social problems to the work of the Church was "a sort of red-herring trailed across the path to divert the Church's attention from her principal duty. . . . To get at the mass through the individual rather than seek the individual through the mass seemed to them to be supremely the method of Christ, which His disciples were bound to follow. The above remarks are not so much matter drawn from Assembly speeches as reflections of talk amongst the members afterwards in the freer environment of intercourse in the corridors and the smoking-room." (Ibid., p. 94). Although this comment probably gives a more accurate picture of Reith's own conservative social bias than of the feelings of the Assembly as a whole, there can be no doubt that it was the continuing influence of such views which still made it difficult for the Church to end her prophetic silence. Significantly, throughout these years before the first World War, it seems evident that the opposition in the Assembly to the Church's social activity was often led by the elders. Apparently the laity were much less influenced by a new social liberalism in the Church than the clergy. Certainly, a major obstacle to the recovery of social criticism by the church courts was the inherent conservatism of many leading laymen who were usually drawn from well-to-do classes, and who, therefore, too often reflected the economic and class interests of the privileged sections of the community.

for the first time, to pronouncements which were highly critical of the existing social and economic order, but in addition, she proceeded to set up the first official General Assembly Committee commissioned to deal specificially with the whole range of contemporary social questions.

The Reports presented to the Assembly in 1909 and 1910 bear a remarkable testimony to the advanced social views which were to be found in a large section of the U. F. Church by this period. In line with the 1908 Assembly's instructions, the Life and Work Committee had set itself to study not only a few specific social problems but also the deeper question of how to relate the Christian faith in a relevant way to contemporary social and economic movements, particularly the rapidly growing socialist and labour movements. Several sub-committees had been formed to investigate and report upon the widely varying aspects of the whole subject, and their findings and recommendations were presented in the 1909 Report of the Committee.

The first sub-committee, which dealt with the teaching of Christ in relation to social questions, presented a brief statement on 'The Social Ideals of our Lord'. This statement, which was subsequently accepted by the Assembly, clearly displayed the influence of the new social and theological liberalism. It pointed out Jesus' obvious bias in favour of the distressed and outcast classes, and his condemnation of the Scribes for their indifference to social distress. It declared that Jesus' main teaching related to the Kingdom of God, which, though a spiritual reality, was also a social ideal:

> "He intended to realize this social ideal meantime gradually by means of His disciples. . . . The service of the Kingdom was a service to the souls and bodies of men, to make the world a home for them in God's Love. Its aim is social regeneration as well as spiritual renewal."[1]

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1. Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work, 1909, p. 15, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1909.

Discussing the bearing of Christ's teaching on the present social order, the statement claimed that His teaching contained within it a criticism of the present social system in several respects:

> "1. The elements in the present economic system which makes the life Christ calls all men to live hardly possible -- such as unduly low wages, sweating of labour, and oppressive conditions of work. Whatever these are due to, they are contrary in their effects to the mind and life of the Master.
>
> "2. Extreme inequalities of wealth and poverty. So far as these are favoured and fostered by the present system, it can hardly be said to reflect the mind of Christ.
>
> "3. So far again as modern conditions foster the alienation of industrial and other classes from one another, the whole spirit of Christ's words is against these conditions. It is plain from the facts adduced earlier in what ways the mind of Jesus condemns all oppressive, unjust, alienating conditions of life and labour, and favours the more equal distribution of happiness and opportunity."[1]

In the light of this teaching of Christ, the sub-committee declared that:

> "1. One of the pressing needs is a revival in the mind and conscience of the Christian Church of Christ's great social ideal. The Church's partial neglect of this has had serious results in throwing the leadership of masses of the poor into other hands. Christ's words and example show that the Church has a real concern in the physical and social welfare of the people, in conditions of labour, in wages, in social righteousness.
>
> "2. Therefore, the Church in its Courts, should examine the facts and should witness fearlessly against the social evils already mentioned, in such a way as to force them on the general conscience.
>
> "3. The Church should lead the way in the exhibition of practical brotherhood, and should supply personal service to the needs of the poor and outcast in the spirit and methods of Christ's own life. It can carry culture, faith, love, down to the loveless, the ignorant, and the lapsed."[2]

Another sub-committee had been assigned the task of investigating the possibility of having divinity students instructed in economics and sociology. In its section of the Report, it came out strongly in favour of initiating such a practice. It declared that

> "instruction in Social Science is a necessity; that Ministers cannot well or wisely meet working-men on a common platform and give them guidance, unless they themselves be informed as to the modern social movements; that since social questions are largely affected by Economics, it is essential that students should be taught a reading of Economics in the light of the Christian Faith; that since within the last few years, the science of Economics has received an ethical rather than a mathematical treatment, students should

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1. Ibid., p. 16. 2. Ibid.

have the full benefit of a recent Sociological teaching; and that, in the interests of our common Christianity, social science should be specifically taught in our Theological Halls."[1]

However, although no objection was voiced against this sub-committee suggestion when the Assembly heard and accepted the bulk of the Report of the Committee, strangely enough, no definite action seems to have been taken by the Assembly to initiate such a programme.

A third sub-committee of the Life and Work Committee studied the critical problem of unemployment and the 'right to work'.[2] In its statement, it reported that on this question there was a wide gulf between socialists and the defenders of the existing order.[3] Although the sub-committee still gave a large place to moral factors -- drink, vice, laziness -- as a cause of unemployment, it emphasized in a manner that the Church had not done in the past, the fact that existing social and economic arrangements were equally if not more largely at fault. Without definitely committing itself on the principle of 'right to work', the sub-committee did state that large numbers of workers were idle through no fault of their own; that church members should study the causes of unemployment and do all in their power "to improve the present industrial and economic conditions in society"[4]; and that the government should exert every effort to see that all able-bodied workers were provided with employment by setting up temporary public works programmes and other such schemes.[5] While the views expressed in this section of the Report were by no means advanced, this statement represented the first occasion upon which an official General Assembly body had engaged in a specific study of unemployment.

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1. Ibid., p. 6.

2. I.e., the claim that the state was responsible for providing work, and if it was unable to do so, that unemployment insurance should be paid to the unemployed.

3. Ibid., p. 13. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid., pp. 13-4.

Another sub-committee undertook a quite remarkable experiment designed to demonstrate the Church's interest in the social and economic movements of the time. It arranged for several conferences on industrial problems where churchmen met with leading employers or with representatives of the trade unions and the Labour Party. These conferences provided employers and working men -- both socialists and non-socialists -- with the opportunity to explain their views on contemporary social and economic questions. At one such meeting, members of the Committee met a group of radical socialists from Glasgow who had no connection with the Church.[1] These confrontations undoubtedly helped churchmen to understand something of the hopes and aspirations of the working classes, and the causes of their strong disappointment in the Church. Speaking of this meeting with the socialists, the Report said that the

> "Committee were impressed by the evident earnestness of the speakers in seeking to discover and to remove the causes of social ill-being, and by their willingness to co-operate with the Church in efforts for social betterment. . . . They were conscious of a feeling on the part of most of the speakers that the Church had lagged in the forward march; and of a soreness in some, induced by an impression that the Church has hitherto failed to extend an informed sympathy to the less fortunate of the labouring classes and has practically sided with the Capitalists in the struggle between Capital and Labour."[2]

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1. The views of the Church held by most of the church-alienated workers was probably accurately expressed by one socialist speaker at this meeting. We know, he said "that the Church as a rule preaches contentment to the people. We, on the other hand, hold that in preaching contentment with evil conditions the outcome must be deterioration of individual and national character. People have no right to be contented with injustice and wrong. . . . But is the Church, through its pulpits, its periodicals, it missionaries, not always asking its people to be contented?. . . We believe that discontent is an essential and natural condition of progress, and that, even were the social conditions tenfold better than they are, there would still be room for the play of this element." (Ibid., p. 19). This speaker said that even ministers who were social radicals were unable to preach against social injustice because the Churches were dominated by the capitalist classes: "It can never be an easy thing for a minister in the pulpit to denounce the sweater, if the sweater happens to sit in one of his best pews or if he has supplied the stained-glass windows in the Church." (Ibid).

2. Ibid., p. 5.

However, of all the remarkable studies and activity carried on this year by the Life and Work sub-committees, the most notable investigation related to the radical proposal to establish a permanent Church and Labour Department of the U. F. Church. One sub-committee was given the task of investigating the advisability of the Church adopting this proposal, and of drafting a scheme outlining the aims, scope, and activity of a Church and Labour Department. The findings of this sub-committee recommending the establishment of such a Department, were unanimously endorsed by the whole Committee and an outline of its proposed responsibilities was submitted to the Assembly for approval. It was recommended that:

> "1. The department shall serve as a clearing-house for the study of up to date methods of city and other mission-work. The head of the Department shall study social problems as they affect the Church. He shall attempt to reduce to a science Christian work amongst working-men, and be at the call, for advice and practical suggestion, of those ministers who are faced with peculiar situations, or who are new to certain phases of Home Mission Work. He shall endeavour to promote throughout the Church the study of Home Mission Work as it is affected by the social and economic situation.
>
> "2. It shall arrange, when desired, for the exchange of fraternal delegates between Presbyteries and local Labour Unions and for the appointment of corresponding Committees in the Presbyteries of the Church to act in conjunction with the Department.
>
> "3. It shall organize in the different industrial centres, shop and factory campaigns, uniting ministers and laymen, not necessarily of our own denomination only, in a concentrated evangelistic endeavour.
>
> "4. It shall organize the working men's meeting in connection with the Assembly.
>
> "5. It shall do something towards the institution of a Labour Sunday, on which all our ministers would preach on some phase of the Labour question in its relation to the Church.
>
> "6. It shall be responsible for a Labour page in the official organ of the Church, dealing with some phase of the Labour question from the Christian standpoint. . . .
>
> "8. The Department shall be prepared to arrange conferences between employer and employee in cases of industrial dispute, at which masters and men can talk things out upon a Christian basis."[1]

This new Department was to be patterned after the famous Church and Labour Department in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., which had been so notably successful in making a Christian impact upon the church-alienated industrial working

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1. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

classes in the U.S. The basic purpose of this bold and daring scheme of Christian social outreach was " 'to interpret the Church to working-men, to interpret working-men to the Church, and to interpret employer and employee to each other, through education, inspiration, mediation, evangelism, and twentieth century methods of Church work'."[1] In effect, the whole programme was a noble attempt at industrial evangelism, designed to undo the disastrous consequences of the 19th century Church's prophetic failure and her pro-capitalist, anti-labour bias, which had done so much to alienate the socially-aroused working classes from the Churches. This proposal indicated that many in the Church were aware that great masses of the industrial workers were completely outwith the normal patterns of congregational life; that the traditional 19th century slum mission concept of evangelism could not reach them; and that some new and more radical approach must be attempted. In urging the adoption of the Report, the convener -- Wm. M. Falconer, minister of St. Paul's Church, Edinburgh -- declared that

> "conditions exist in our land which call for some new opportunity for the Church coming into closer touch with the parties in our industrial and social problems. . . . A critical time in the Church's relation to the toiling masses has arrived. Their leaders are calling for our sympathy and assistance. . . to hang back unwisely may be to lose it finally."[2]

Nevertheless, in spite of the unanimous recommendation of the members of the Life and Work Committee, the majority in the 1909 Assembly were not prepared to accept such a radical departure from the traditional methods of church activity. Therefore, after some debate, the Assembly decided not to act on the proposal to establish a Church and Labour Department until further study had been made of the scheme and another Report submitted to the next Assembly. However, the Assembly did give its approval to the other notable sections of the Report, including a final recommendation of the Committee that a pastoral letter be addressed to the

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1. Ibid., p. 6.

2. Proceedings and Debates, 1909, p. 253.

whole Church concerning the responsibilities of Christians in relation to contemporary social questions. This pastoral letter, which was circulated throughout the U. F. Church, pointed out that Christians had a duty "to put an end to underpayment and sweating in business, [and] to promote adequate housing;"[1] it warned against "the unbrotherly and even fierce competition which so often characterized the conduct of business;"[2] and called upon employers of labour "to take solemnly into the court of conscience the question of remuneration; to consider the claims of manhood in their employees, and the laws of equity in the distribution of the proceeds of labour."[3] It went on to urge all church members to interest themselves in social questions, to study the causes of social evils, "to use their influence to improve industrial and social conditions, and to promote justice and brotherhood between man and man."[4] In words which would have found favour among few churchmen in the 19th century, the letter concluded by stating that because the Church realized "the vast influence of environment on life and character, and the ultimate relation between industrial and social conditions, she interests herself in all that pertains to temporal welfare and social righteousness."[5]

However, this pastoral letter issued by the General Assembly had much greater importance than was justified merely by the social views which it contained. The additional significance derived from the fact that this action by the Assembly seemingly represented the first occasion upon which any Protestant Church had sought to address her members on social questions. As one member of the Life and Work Committee noted several years later:

> "Our Church, it may with much satisfaction be pointed out, has the signal honour of being the one Reformed Church in Christendom which has directly addressed her faithful people through her supreme Court respecting

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1. Ibid., p. 379. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid., p. 380.
4. Ibid. 5. Ibid.

social questions, the Church of Rome being the only other Church which through her Head, the Pope, has issued Pastorals on Common Weal and the Conditions of Labour."[1]

Turning to the 1910 Assembly, it witnessed a heated debate over the Report submitted by a special Committee set up to continue the study and experimentation along the lines of a Church and Labour Department.[2] This Committee had carried out its work in three spheres. In the first place, it sought by literary means to rouse a Christian social concern among church members and to demonstrate to the public at large, and to the working classes in particular, that the Church had a Gospel which was relevant to contemporary social and industrial questions. To this end, the Committee reported that it had arranged for the publication of five articles by its members in the official church magazine,[3] and that one of

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1. The Record of the Home and Foreign Mission Work of the United Free Church, March 1923, p. 83.

2. Cf. the Report of the Special Committee appointed to experiment along the lines of a Church and Labour Department, 1910, pp. 1-7, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1910.

3. These five articles on 'The Church and the Social Problem' furnish excellent examples of the degree of radical social thought which marked representative members of the new Committee. The first article by a minister -- A. Herbert Gray of College and Kelvingrove Church, Glasgow -- contained a strong attack on the traditional 19th century type of Christian social work, which, the writer said "has nearly all been remedial, and not preventative. . . . We have agencies for feeding the hungry, and clothing the shivering, for caring for orphans and easing destitute old age, for alleviating sickness and helping cripples, for curing the drunkard and reforming the juvenile criminal, and so on. But it cannot be said that as a Christian community we have as yet realized that the best way of doing the practical work to which the spirit of our religion calls us, would be to begin to deal with the roots of all these social evils, and to prevent the production of those maimed and ruined lives which now with so little success we try to mend." (The Missionary Record of the United Free Church of Scotland, January, 1910, p. 5). This churchman charged that "the Church as such has been silent about low wages, but has been busy in collecting vast sums to be used as alms for those brought down to poverty through low wages. She has been silent about housing, but has helped in raising vast sums for the erection of hospitals in which to deal with those who have been physically ruined by vile sanitary conditions in our large towns. . . . She has left the fierce competition of modern industry and commerce unchallenged, but has to confess to a sense of helplessness before the mass of crushed and out-worn humanity which is the result of the cruelty and the pace of that competition." (Ibid). He rightly claimed that Christians have avoided attacking the causes of social evils because "effective prevention can only come through very great social and industrial changes, and that ultimately

its members -- Glasgow minister Colin Gibb -- had obtained space in several socialist and labour journals for the presentation of the Christian view of current social problems.[1] In the second place, the special Committee organized

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these changes must be effected by political means." (Ibid., p. 6). Since Christians have neglected to bring their faith to bear on political and economic questions, social distress has gone unchecked at its source. He said that if the Church does not seek to reclaim these areas of life soon, she will be completely abandoned by those who are seeking to build a better social order. Already, earnest eager men in the ranks of labour "are finding it very hard to be either patient or respectful towards a Church with an undoubtedly generous heart but which is content with remedies for our social evils which partake of the nature of soup-kitchens." (Ibid). What they want "is not food or clothes or gifts for their children. . . but such freedom from oppression and the perils of this unstable civilization of ours, as shall make it possible for them all to earn their own living, and to supply their own children with the things for which too often now they have to come begging to our charitable institutions. And before that demand of our people the Church of Christ, along with every other national institution, is on trial." (Ibid). The same socially-enlightened views marked the other four contributions in this series. One of these -- by Fred J. Rae, minister of Beechgrove Church, Aberdeen -- remarked how dramatically social criticism had arisen in the Church in recent years: "The spirit of the Church is totally different from what it was twenty years ago, and very different from what it was even five years ago." (Ibid., March 1910, p. 100). Remarking upon these articles, the editor of the church magazine said that many letters had been received about the series, "some critical, but mostly appreciative. Evidently they have excited widespread interest." (Ibid., May 1910, p. 196). So socially-advanced were the articles that the Committee reported that a letter praising them had been received from the Kelty branch of the Independent Labour Party, and that all five articles had been reproduced in Forward, the widely read labour paper in Glasgow. (Proceedings and Debates, 1910, p. 274).

1. Colin M. Gibb, who was minister of Larbert West Church before going to Albert St. Church, Glasgow in 1907, was one of the most active and vocal members of the new Committee. He was one of those who were convinced that most of the intelligent, politically radical artisan working class who were alienated from the Church had left because of her hostility to their social and political aspirations. Beginning in 1907, he wrote a series of articles in the official church magazine on this and other aspects of the Church's social task. After a survey conducted among the working classes in Larbert designed to ascertain their attitude toward the Church, Gibb reported that the majority of workers "complain -- many of them with bitterness and scorn -- that the Church has taken no part in the movement for the emancipation of the workingman, whom she has left to work out his own salvation. Rightly or wrongly the idea prevails that the Church has little or no sympathy with the social aspirations of the working-classes, and that its attitude towards social reform does not encourage them to look to it for help in the amelioration of bad social conditions. Indeed, the day of the Church is already past so far as vast multitudes of our working classes are concerned." (The Missionary Record of the United Free Church of Scotland, March 1907, p. 108). In order to remedy this tragic situation, Gibb urged that "the Church set herself to study social problems and understand the social aspirations of the working

e highly successful working men's meeting held at the time of the General sembly, when James Stalker -- professor of Church History at Aberdeen College -- d Labour M.P. Arthur Henderson were the speakers.[1] Finally, the Committee perimented further with conferences on social and industrial problems at the esbytery level, bringing together churchmen, local employers and labour leaders.

In presenting the Report to the Assembly, the convener, Robert J. Drummond -- nister of Lothian Road Church, Edinburgh -- expressed the Committee's satis- ction with the results of their experiments and asked the Assembly to designate e new Committee 'The Assembly's Special Committee on Social Problems', and to ant it another year to complete its experiments.[2] After a very lively debate,

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classes." (Ibid). He also recommended that ministers arrange to address workmen at large foundries and works in their localities during the dinner hours. His own practice of addressing workers each week at the Carron Iron Works had done much, he said, to break down the distrust and antagonism of the workers towards the Church. (Ibid). Gibb was an enthusiastic supporter of the proposal to establish a Church and Labour Department. In an article on the 'Reconciliation of the Masses and the Church', he outlined the work of the very successful Church and Labour Department in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (Ibid., June 1907, pp. 246-7).

The growing practice of asking socialist leaders to address the working classes at officially sponsored church gatherings was but one indication of how rapid had been the change in representative Christian social thought even since 1900. It was also apparent from the sentiments expressed in the debates and in the reports to the Assembly that the socially progressive element in the Church were being increasingly influenced by socialist proposals for a radical alteration in the existing economic order.

In seconding Drummond's motion, J. Wilson Harper -- minister of Chalmers Church, Alloa -- a prominent member of the Committee, vigorously condemned the present industrial system as unchristian: "Is there any person who would say in the presence of its inequalities, the injustice it produces, that it is the final system? And if it be not final, has the Church of Christ nothing to say while people suffer under its operations? I have heard it said that the Church has nothing to do with economics. Why, there is nothing that stands more in need of being Christianized than the economics of today. (Applause)." Harper was one of the most prolific church writers on social and economic questions in these years. His works -- which displayed a strong note of idealistic theological liberalism -- included Money and Social Problems (1896); The Foundations of Society (1899); Social Life (1900); The Social Ideal and Dr. Chalmers' Contribution to Christian Economics (1910); The Church and Social Betterment (1910); and Christian Ethics and Social Progress (1912).

during which the conservative forces, led by three Glasgow elders, tried to have the Committee dissolved,[1] the Assembly accepted the Report and the new Committee became the Special Committee on Social Problems. This action was another noteworthy event in the Church's recovery of social criticism, for the new body became the first permanent Committee[2] established by a Scottish Church especially commissioned to study and pronounce upon social and industrial questions. It is significant that this U. F. Church Committee came into being almost a decade before its counterpart -- the Church and Nation Committee -- in the Church of Scotland. At the union in 1929, the Church and Nation Committee and the Social Problems Committee were united to form the modern Church and Nation Committee.

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1. Part of this debate turned into a political controversy between 'left' and 'right'. One of the leading opponents of the Committee's activity, J. Buyers Black -- a well-known Glasgow elder and a prominent figure in the Tory Party -- charged that the Committee was leading the Church to the 'left' by taking up the labour and socialist position in social and industrial questions. (Proceedings and Debates, 1910, p. 280). He said that, like Keir Hardie, he believed that the future would see society divided into two large groupings -- socialists and anti-socialists -- and he did not want the U. F. Church on the socialist side. (Ibid). He urged the Church to reject the false teachings of socialism which he linked with atheism; to stay clear of involvement in controversial social, political and economic questions; and to remain neutral in the present struggle between capital and labour. (Ibid). He said the Church had her own special sphere of activity -- namely that of "impressing the reality of the unseen, in showing that wealth did not mean happiness, and that poverty did not mean misery." (Ibid., p. 281). Black said socialism and Christianity were antagonistic: "The Socialist was essentially a materialist; the Christian was an idealist and an individualist. The Church dealt with the heart and spirit of mankind. The Socialist made man an eager getter, and the Church changed him into a cheerful giver. The Socialist preached the enforcement of rights, while the Church was eager in its inculcation of duties, asking for patience and renunciation and humility from her people." (Ibid). Colin Gibb replied by criticizing Black and another elder for introducing politics into the debate on the Report. He said they complain of socialism and its dangers, but Toryism could be equally condemned for what it had done and was still doing. He claimed that there were many socialists who were members and office-bearers in the U. F. Church, and if they were to be attacked in the Assembly, let there be a formal debate and they will reply for themselves. (Ibid., pp. 284 ff.).

2. This Committee was called 'Special' until 1912 after which it was called simply the Committee on Social Problems.

In its 1911 Report to the Assembly, the new Committee suggested that the time for experimentation was now past, and recommended that the Assembly give its approval to a statement listing the proposed functions of the Committee. The statement said that the Committee

> "by conference with Presbyteries, employers, masters' federations, Chambers of Commerce, Trades Councils and other labour organizations, would keep itself and the Church informed on industrial and social problems. It would arrange for the presentation and discussion of labour and social questions from the Christian point of view at meetings of existing organizations, wherever opportunities offer. It would be prepared to receive representatives of masters or men on questions bearing on the social and industrial welfare of either class. It would arrange for shop and factory evangelistic campaigns in the great industrial districts. It would negotiate for the formation, for joint action where possible, of joint committees of presbytery and other organizations which strive for the welfare of the various classes of the community. Through the press and by the issue of literature it would see to the propagation of the Christian view of social ethics. It would undertake arrangements for the men's meeting at the Assembly. . . and would arrange for the holding of Congresses on social questions in the large cities. It would keep a watchful eye on Social Legislation, get in touch, as occasion arises, with such Departments of State as the Local Government Board, the Board of Trade and the Home Office."[1]

In urging the acceptance of the Report, R. J. Drummond said that the Church was being asked to embark on a permanent type of social action which had not yet been tried by a Scottish Church. He praised the Church of Scotland's efforts in the sphere of social work but said that such activity was a different approach from what was being proposed here, for

> "we seek to bridge the river of alienation between the Church and labour, and deal with attendant evils at a different level. It has long seemed to me that the great social awakening of the present day is the fruit of the renewed interest in the teaching of Christ which some forty years ago accompanied the recognition of the place which the kingdom of God had in His teaching. That was enormously advanced in our land by our late Professors Bruce and Candlish. But what to many seemed simply an interesting question in New Testament exegesis became to the sons of toil a practical message. They took the matter seriously."[2]

Now, he insisted, the Church must take the message of the Kingdom seriously in the practical sphere by proclaiming the social implications of the Gospel and by

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1. Cf. Report of the Special Committee on Social Problems, 1911, p. 19, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1911.

2. Proceedings and Debates, 1911, p. 336.

taking up her social mission in society.[1]

Not surprisingly, this bold scheme of dynamic Christian social action which was outlined to the Assembly was hotly attacked by the more conservative sections of the Church, and another controversial debate rocked the Assembly.[2] However, although the opponents of the Church's social activity succeeded in deleting from the Report several of the Committee's recommendations,[3] at the conclusion of the

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1. Ibid.

2. Writing in his autobiography 40 years later, R. J. Drummond referred to the opposition encountered by the Social Problems Committee when it made its recommendations on social questions to the Assembly in these early years. The Committee's Reports, he said, "evoked fierce opposition on the ground that they savoured of socialism. So they did if by socialism is meant concern for the temporal welfare of the underdog." (Lest We Forget -- Reminiscences of a Nonagenarian, p. 97). As convener of the Committee, he recalled, "I had a glorious battle to fight against Conservative obscurantism." (Ibid., p. 98).

3. There were two main recommendations deleted by the Assembly under pressure from conservative churchmen. The first was that the Assembly petition the government to enact legislation setting up an arbitration tribunal to handle industrial disputes which could not be settled by masters and men themselves. (Report of the Special Committee on Social Problems, op. cit., p. 17). The second item that was defeated was the recommendation that the Assembly officially commend to the Church for study four booklets on social questions published by the Committee and written by four of its members. (Ibid). The booklets were: The Church and Social Duty by A. Herbert Gray; The Attitude of the Christian to Socialism by R. J. Drummond; Religion and the Social Movement by F. J. Rae; and The Church and the Poor by Wm. Muir -- minister of South Shawlands Church, Glasgow. Criticism of various aspects of the Report came from several speakers, but again a few laymen, led by J. Buyers Black, were the most hostile to the Committee's work. Black claimed the Church had no business becoming involved with social questions. He criticized the recommendation that the Assembly pronounce in favour of compulsory arbitration; opposed a church congress on social problems which the Committee planned to hold in the autumn; and condemned the four booklets published by the Committee because they gave expression to socialist views. (Proceedings and Debates, 1911, pp. 341-4). Black denounced the members of the Committee and said that many of the 18 members were not social reformers but were socialists. He claimed that several of them were actually members of the Fabian society. This conservative spokesman moved an amendment that the Assembly discharge the Committee and reject all its recommendations because of "the need of concentrating the energies of the Church on direct spiritual work. . . considering the decrease in the membership of the Church, the grave state of indifference to religion existing in Scotland, and the special call for the evangelization of the world at home and abroad." (Ibid., p. 344).

debate, the Assembly accepted the main section of the Report and endorsed the statement setting forth the Committee's aims and activity.

At the end of October 1911, the U. F. Church held in Edinburgh a remarkable three day church congress on social problems which was attended by over 800 official delegates from all parts of the country. Organized by the Social Problems Committee, the object of the congress was

> "to bring members of the Church together for the deliberate consideration of some of the problems in the social life of the country which influence the moral and religious well-being of the people; to demonstrate that the Church is in sympathy with efforts for Social Reform; and to suggest lines of action which will enable the Church to help in the social and religious regeneration of the nation."[1]

The topics dealt with at the regular sessions of the congress included such questions as the conditions of labour; unemployment: its cause and cure; the care of the poor; housing; industrial legislation: a factor in social reform; rural depopulation; and the moralization of trade and commerce. The speakers included two employers of labour, a representative of the Edinburgh Trades Council, Scottish Labour M.P. Wm. Adamson, the secretary of the Scottish Council for Women's Trades, and several ministers.[2] The speakers at the evening sessions, which were open to the public, included Church of Scotland ministers David Watson and W. P. Paterson, the convener of the Social Problems Committee, R. J. Drummond, J. E. McFadyen, professor of Old Testament at the U. F. Church College, Glasgow, the Master of Polwarth, Labour M.P. J. H. Thomas, and a Canon of the Church of England.[3]

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1. The Churches' Task in Social Reform. The Report of the Proceedings of the United Free Church Congress on Social Problems held in Edinburgh October 31-November 2, 1911, p. 5.

2. Cf. ibid., passim.

3. Report of the Committee on Social Problems, 1912, pp. 2-3, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1912. This brief mention of the speakers at the evening meetings -- the identity of the Anglican Canon was not given -- was the only reference made to these public sessions. The official Report of the Congress did not reprint the speeches of those who addressed the congress in the evenings.

A week after this very successful congress took place in Edinburgh, an even more remarkable U. F. Church gathering took place in Glasgow with the holding of a Labour Week. This event, which was organized by the Social Problems Committee, consisted of a series of public meetings at which prominent Christian labour and socialist leaders -- John Hodge M.P., J. H. Thomas M.P., Wm. Adamson M.P., Walter Hudson M.P., J. R. Clynes M.P., and James Brown (who later became a Labour M.P. and Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland) -- delivered addresses on social, economic and industrial questions from a Christian standpoint.[1] This bold experiment with a Labour Week represented another attempt by the socially-advanced section of the Church to demonstrate to the growing number of socialist workers that the Church and Christianity had a message that was relevant to the burning social issues of the day. It also represented another attempt to rouse middle class church members to an awareness of the need to sympathize with and support -- on Christian grounds -- the just social aspirations of the workers.[2]

In the remaining years before the first World War, the U. F. Church, through the activity of her Social Problems Committee, continued to manifest a lively interest in questions relating to social and industrial life. In 1912 and 1913 it was reported to the Assembly that numerous Presbyteries had set up special committees to co-operate with local organizations such as trade unions and community groups in order to press for social reforms, and several examples were

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1. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

2. In furthering this latter aim, it seems that the Labour Week was not as successful as its promoters had hoped. R. J. Drummond, in commenting on this experiment in the Assembly, regretted that the meetings were not fully attended. He said it was unfortunate that those in the Church who were suspicious of labour and its leaders did not take the opportunity of hearing them first hand under the auspices of their own Church. (Proceedings and Debates, 1912, p. 236).

given of the effectiveness of such joint action.[1] In 1912 it was reported that the two speakers at the men's meeting at the Assembly were A. Herbert Gray -- one of the most outspokenly radical of the ministers on the Committee -- and Labour M.P. and future prime minister J. Ramsay MacDonald.[2] In the same year, on the recommendation of the Social Problems Committee, the Assembly gave its approval to the recent National Insurance Act;[3] recommended that ministers and elders advise the people of its benefits; and asked the government to take special action concerning the provision of social services in the Highlands, "more especially in relation to medical service and to the question of tuberculosis."[4]

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1. A special committee of Perth Presbytery was reported to have joined with the local Trades Council in carrying out a searching investigation of housing conditions in Perth. It was claimed that the Joint Report issued by the Presbytery and the Council on this question led to improvements being made by the landlords and new regulations by the Town Council (Report of the Committee on Social Problems, 1912, p. 5, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1912). In 1913, a committee of Edinburgh Presbytery was twice asked by the Trades Council to co-operate in joint action. On one of these occasions, an end was brought to a long industrial lock-out. (Ibid., 1913, p. 6).

2. Ibid., 1912, p. 6.

3. As in the case of the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908, the church journals spoke approvingly of this new Act providing insurance against sickness and unemployment for the bulk of the working classes. The official U. F. Church magazine said that this measure affecting 14 million persons would prove a real blessing to the working classes: "There is no object on which it is more fitting that all good men should combine than the removal, as far as that can be done by human effort, of the shadow that hangs over many a working-class home through dread of the consequences of sickness and unemployment." (The Missionary Record of the United Free Church of Scotland, June, 1911, p. 242). The British Weekly was another enthusiastic supporter of the measure: "We have come to recognize that in a Christian nation no one, however culpable, can be allowed to starve. . . . This Bill when in action, will not bring us the new heaven and the new earth, but it will soften and brighten and console many lives that have been dark and sad enough. . . . It is because this policy as a whole, apart from details, is Christian that we wish it to succeed." (May 11, 1911, p. 146). These sentiments represented a complete reversal of this paper's attitude 25 years earlier. (Cf. supra, chapter 8, pp. 363-4).

4. Proceedings and Debates, 1912, pp. 314-5.

In 1913 and 1914, the Committee made an investigation of housing conditions in the industrial centres, and in its findings it laid great stress on economic factors, especially low wages, as the basic cause of slum housing. In its 1913 Report, it recommended that the Assembly take note of the bad housing conditions made necessary by the low wages and high cost of living of many people, and called upon the whole Church to do all that was possible to secure for every worker an adequate remuneration for his daily toil.[1] The 1914 Report drew the attention of the Church to the fact that adequate working class housing could not be economically built and let at rents which the low income groups could afford.[2] Although it did not specifically state that subsidized housing on a large scale was essential if these groups were to have adequate housing, the Report did say that the provision of decent housing must be met somehow, whether through the reduction of the cost of building land, or raising the wages of low income workers, or perhaps we "will require a complete revision of the whole industrial and economic system."[3] By this latter remark, the Committee was presumably referring to the proposal long advocated by the socialists that the state should assume some direct responsibility for the housing of the working classes through the provision of subsidies. Such a proposal, in fact, became the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Housing three years later.

Considerable detailed attention has been given here to these early years in the establishment of this pioneer work of Christian social action in the U. F. Church. However, this period preceding the first World War is of great importance in that it witnessed in the Scottish Church the first significant break from traditional 19th century Christian social concern based on an acceptance of the

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1. Report of the Committee on Social Problems, op. cit., 1913, p. 8.

2. Ibid., 1914, pp. 20-1. 3. Ibid., p. 21.

existing order, and which expressed itself in charitable and reclamation work, and a new Christian social concern based on a suspicion or rejection of the existing order, and which expressed itself in social criticism and in more dynamic and radical forms of social action.

B. Between the Wars, the War, and After

(1) Social Criticism in an Age of Unrest and Depression

Stimulated by the experiences of the first World War, which, like all wars, aggravated existing social problems and created new ones, the Church of Scotland, by the closing years of the War, was rapidly coming alive to her prophetic task in society. Consequently, by 1920, the fact that a genuine recovery of social criticism had taken place in the Scottish Church was quite as evident in the deliverances and activity of the Church of Scotland General Assembly as it was in the U. F. Church Assembly.

In the initial years of the War, the Churches tended to take a rather naive and optimistic view of the conflict and of its consequences. Many churchmen, imbued with a shallow, idealistic liberal theology, believed the War was a righteous crusade to rid civilization of the evil forces which were blocking the moral and spiritual evolution and perfection of man and the world. As one editor expressed it:

> "God's law of evolution will not always be baulked, the path of progress will not always remain blocked. As a gathering of storm-clouds in the heavens is cleared by lightning and rain, so the time comes when evil forces that have barred the spread of righteousness for generations are, if there be no better way, swept away by blood and fire."[1]

This war, another churchman claimed was "a holy war, moreso than any Crusade of old, for in a cause so good and so imperative man never drew the sword."[2]

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1. The Record of the Home and Foreign Mission Work of the United Free Church, December 1914, p. 521.

2. Life and Work Magazine, January, 1915, p. 11.

Although the influence of this type of liberal theology was evident throughout the War -- and for many years afterwards -- by the middle years of the conflict, with the hostilities dragging on, the extent of their horrors becoming increasingly apparent, and the losses of men and resources mounting at a staggering rate, there were some signs of a more realistic, penitent and self-critical attitude in the Church. There was, for instance, more of a readiness to regard the War, as, in one sense, a judgment of God upon the sins and failures of the Church and the nation. One outcome of this change was that in 1916 both Churches appointed special committees -- in the Church of Scotland called the Commission on the War, and in the U. F. Church called the Committee on the Present Situation as affected by the War -- whose task it was to seek to interpret the significance of the national crisis, and to determine the nature of the challenge which it presented for the future. In 1917, these special committees presented their first Reports to their respective Assemblies.

The Church of Scotland Commission declared in its Report that the War constituted a solemn call for repentance, corporate and individual, including "a call to national and social reformation of national and social evils."[1] It claimed that while

> "Christianity has been individually cultivated as a law of life for the soul of the individual, it has been neglected as the basis of social life -- it has not been worked out or applied to corporate relations. From many of these it has been frankly excluded as inapplicable, un-workable -- or, at best, it has been ignored. Self-interest has been accepted as the proper and natural basis of action in practical relations -- commercial, social, political and international. Our standards have been materialized, and our social practice has followed into materialism."[2]

The Church was urged to secure

> "a drastic and permanent amelioration of social conditions. 'Never again' must be her watchword as she contemplates the chaos of pre-war conditions. . . so that the people who have nobly borne the burden and patiently endured

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1. Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1917, p. 726.

2. Ibid., p. 738.

the calamities of the war may find recompense in a worthier social environment, where the individual may possess fuller opportunities of self-culture and a richer and more secure happiness."[1]

The Commission reported that in March and April 1917 special church congresses dealing with the moral, spiritual and social implications of the War had been held jointly with the U. F. Church in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee, and that, together with the U. F. Church Committee on Social Problems, a series of five conferences had also been held dealing with specifically social and industrial problems.[2] These joint conferences and the largely attended congresses were said to have awakened considerable public interest in the need for social reconstruction after the War. Certainly this close co-operation between the two Churches in the sphere of social action at the end of the War and in the early 1920's demonstrated to the nation that the Churches were united in their efforts to remove social evils and apply the Christian faith to the whole corporate life of society. No doubt, also, this joint social action was one of the most important factors in breaking down the barriers between the Churches and preparing the way for the union of 1929.

In 1918, one of the most notable products of the Commission's work was the publication of the volume entitled Social Evils and Problems. Edited by David Watson and W. P. Paterson, this large volume, containing contributions from many Established churchmen on a wide range of social questions, was extensively circulated throughout the Church and was used as a study book in numerous congregations.[3] Another feature of the Commission's activity reported to the 1918

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1. Ibid., p. 753.

2. Ibid., pp. 728-9.

3. Cf. Social Evils and Problems, edited for the Church of Scotland Commission on the War by W. P. Paterson and David Watson. Although the Church was not officially committed to the views expressed in this volume, the contributions came from a broad cross-section of churchmen -- both ministers and laymen -- and may be considered representative of enlightened social opinion in the Established Church at this time. Contributions included articles on: Social Disintegration, Child Welfare, Rural Depopulation, Destitution, The Housing of the People, Industrial Problems, Christian Ethics and Business, Christianity

ssembly related to the holding of two important national conferences -- again ointly with the U. F. Church -- on social and industrial problems. The first f these conferences, held in December 1917, considered the recently published eport of the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland;[1] the second, -- an cumenical meeting attended by seven other Protestant denominations in addition o the two sponsoring Churches[2] -- was held in March 1918, and concerned itself

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and Politics, and Christianity and International Relations. Professor W. P. Paterson, in a long introductory article on the Ethical Mission of the Church, dealt briefly with most of the topics contained in the volume. He attacked the terrible consequences of poverty on family life -- the high infant mortality rate in low income districts, the ill-clad, half-starved children, the one-roomed houses with their squalor and indecencies which inevitably produced depraved tendencies on character. (pp. 7-8). He pointed out the evils in the economic structure right from the stage of production, through exchange, distribution, to the consumption of wealth (p. 11), and lamented that "because our economic system seems to work fairly well in general, we think it morally justifiable even though it entails apparent injustice to sections of society and to individuals." (p. 14). Paterson concluded by calling upon the Church to take up her great Scottish prophetic tradition which had been so long neglected: "The reformers of Geneva and Scottish Schools proposed to assist the state effectively to get God's will done on earth as it is in Heaven, and they pro-offered their help, on the one hand, by giving advice to kings on matters affecting the true prosperity of the commonwealth, and on the other, by instituting a rigid system of ecclesiastical discipline. The evangelicalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, on the whole, narrowed its programme to the spiritual sphere -- the general theory being that the Church ought to confine itself to preach the Gospel, and if it does this with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and fills the country with converted men and women, social problems can be safely left to take care of themselves." (p. 26). We at last realize, he said, that faithful preaching of the Gospel by an evangelical ministry has not and will not, in itself, dispose of social injustice and degradation. (p. 27).

. Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1918, p. 624. The conference commended the Report and the work of the Commissioners, and called for an early start upon the large-scale building programme which the Report claimed was needed to relieve the acute overcrowding of working class housing. Although there was a majority and a minority Report by the Commissioners, based largely on a difference of opinion about how much of the required housing could be left to private building, the conference did not take sides on this question. It is significant, however, that while the U. F. Social Problems Committee in its Report to the Assembly agreed that the Church need not pronounce on this technical question, it warned "that sufficient care must be taken that manifest evils flowing from private enterprise be not perpetuated." (Report of the Committee on Social Problems, 1918, p. 5, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1918).

. Even the Roman Catholic Church was invited to send representatives but she declined to do so.

with the question of industrial reconstruction.[1]

In 1919 the Church of Scotland Commission on the War presented its final Report to the Assembly before being discharged. It stated that further joint conferences on social and industrial questions had been held with the U. F. Church, including another ecumenical one in December 1918 dealing with the Church and industry.[2] The stated aim of this latter conference -- which was addressed by David Watson, R. J. Drummond, who this year was Moderator of the U. F. Church General Assembly, a factory manager and a lecturer on social economics from Glasgow -- was "to inform ministers on urgent industrial problems, and to promote reconstruction on Christian lines."[3] The Commission also reported that, together with the U. F. Church, a Mission of National Rededication had been launched throughout the two Churches in the spring of 1919. This nation-wide Mission was intended as an act of national thanksgiving for the successful termination of the War, and an act of personal and national rededication to God for the future.[4] The Report noted that as a result of this Mission, the national demand for speakers on the application of Christianity to contemporary moral and social

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1. Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1918, p. 625. This conference discussed: Causes of Industrial Unrest; Industrial Readjustment; and How to Improve the Relationship between Employers and Workers. Among the resolutions adopted was "that 'a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and employed must be founded on something other than a cash basis', [and] that 'to foster a common interest between employers and employed, it is essential that workpeople be taken much more largely into the confidence of their employers than hitherto'." (Ibid).

2. Ibid., 1919, pp. 633-4.

3. Ibid., p. 635.

4. Ibid. At the Rededication Sunday, April 13, 1919, the Scottish people were asked to rededicate themselves to God and to the building of a better social order in the following words: "Believing that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men and the rightful Lord of all life, personal, social, national and international; that Christianity is applicable to, and alone adequately meets, all the conditions and necessities of humanity: we re-affirm the supreme and universal authority of Jesus Christ and the laws of His Kingdom." (Life and Work Magazine, February 1919, p. 20).

questions had been taxing the Commission to the utmost. It stated that the one clear indication arising out of the Mission is "the earnest resolve of the nation thoroughly to Christianize its social and industrial order."[1]

One final act of this Commission had great significance for the future. In the spring of 1919 a detailed inquiry on the life and efficiency of the Church had been circulated widely throughout all parishes and congregations. One of the questions asked was the part the Church should play in social and industrial questions. In reply to this question, the Committee found that "the prevailing trend of the answers received is that the Church should take a much stronger stand than she had done in the matter of Social and Industrial problems;"[2] that -- as one reply quoted in the Report expressed it -- " 'the Church has not been fearless enough in exposing the wrongs which have crept into social, industrial and commercial system. . . . She should be a conscience to the nation'."[3] On the basis of this inquiry and all the remainder of its work in relation to moral, social and industrial questions, the Commission recommended that the Assembly appoint a permanent Committee to carry on the Church's new concern for the corporate well-being of social and national life. After some debate, the Assembly approved the motion, and agreed to establish a Committee on Church and Nation "which shall watch over those developments of the nation's life in which moral and spiritual considerations specially arise, and consider what action the Church from time to time might be advised to take to further the highest interest of the people."[4] With the appointment of this permanent Committee of the General

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1. Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1918, p. 635.

2. Ibid., p. 660

3. Ibid., p. 661.

4. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1919, p. 48. In the debate concerning the motion, John White, minister of the Barony Church, Glasgow -- who more than any other single individual was instrumental in the formation of the new Committee -- moved an amendment -- which was later carried -- that the Assembly include within the duties of the proposed Committee the question of " 'how best to commend the teaching of Jesus Christ to those who are seeking to solve the problems of industrial life'. He said

ssembly, the most notable milestone of all was reached in the gradual recovery f social criticism in the Church of Scotland.

Turning briefly to the U. F. Church in the years 1917-19, as we have noted, his Church, through her Social Problems Committee and her special Committee on he Present Situation as affected by the War -- both of which had an interest in ocial questions -- co-operated extensively with the Church of Scotland on atters of common national and social concern. But each of these Committees also arried on their own separate studies and activity. In 1917, the Report of the ocial Problems Committee spoke approvingly of expected post-war changes wherein he state would assume a much larger place in social life:

> "In the immediate future there will be, in connection with many of the social problems which are before the Church and the nation, a great increase of state and municipal action. . . . The war has revealed not only our want of organization as a nation but has shown the possibility as well as the effectiveness of government action in many directions."[1]

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that the Church must, without timidity and without delay, do something in the right relations between organized Christianity and organized labour. Civilization had been too long founded on the patience of the poorer members of the community. Labour was asking not only a share in the good things of life but a status that included rights and duties in the growth of democracy. They were in the midst of a movement more momentous than the Reformation or the French Revolution: the Church must not stand as an apologist for the present industrial relations." (The Layman's Book of the General Assembly, 1919, p. 70). White, who became the first convener of the Church and Nation Committee, had long advocated that the Established Church take up the type of social activity in which the U. F. Church was engaged. Speaking in the debate on the Report of the Social Work Committee in 1917, he urged that the Church should press the state to undertake its obligations for the social well-being of the people, and not confine herself to mere reclamation work after social evils had done their worst. He said "the social mission of the Church was not its works of charity; it was to inculcate a keener sense of social justice which would make the other charity unnecessary." (Ibid., 1917, p. 95). In the same debate, W. P. Paterson, in commending White's speech, said that "the traditional view of the Church of Scotland was that evil was due to sin: convert to the Gospel, it was held, and the problem will be solved. The opposite view was that evil was all a matter of environment. Mr. White had combined the two views." (Ibid., p. 96).

. Report of the Committee on Social Problems, 1917, p. 2, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1917. Most churchmen seem to have expected a great social, political and economic transformation after the War, and there was little indication of any fear or alarm over the prospect. Said one editor: "The war will bring about tremendous changes in the life of the world. There is evidently to be a complete re-weaving of the social and industrial fabric

he Report called upon employers to give their workers a larger share in the rofits of their firms and a greater interest in and responsibility for its peration. It also urged greater government and voluntary efforts to reduce nfant and mother mortality rates through improved health and welfare services.[1] n the same year, the special Committee on the Present Situation as affected by he War reported that it had issued 24 booklets for church-wide circulation on hese and many other moral, spiritual, social and industrial problems.[2]

It was in 1918, however, that this special Committee issued its most signifi- ant Report. In dealing with those aspects of the present industrial order which tood condemned by the Christian conscience, the Report was particularly critical f the selfishness and unrestricted individualism embodied in the existing ompetitive system. It stated that:

> "To a large extent the desire for personal gain is the prevailing motive in the industrial and commercial world.
> In numberless cases the weak go to the wall, and find their places among the wrecks and debris of society.
> The status of the majority of men and women employed is not such that befits the children of God: they are mere cogs in the machinery of industry."[3]

he Report went on to say that

> "any system which would stand the test of Christian criticism must secure: -- 1. That the interests of the community as a whole, rather than personal advantage or gain, shall be the primary motive and aim of employer and employed alike, and of all engaged in business transactions. 2. That the conditions of industry and Commerce shall be such as to make true fellowship

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of society. The balance of power seems rapidly shifting from the few to the many. Democracy is taking command of the situation." (The Record of the Home and Foreign Mission Work of the United Free Church, October 1918, p. 135).

. Report of the Committee on Social Problems, on. cit., pp. 3-4.

. Report of the Committee on the Present Situation as affected by the War, 1917, pp. 19-20, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1917. Booklets on social and industrial questions included: A Plea for Industrial Drudges; The Christian Spirit in Industry; How the Church can help to save Infants; and The Church and Social Righteousness, by R. J. Drummond.

. Report of the Committee on the Present Situation as affected by the War, on. cit., 1918, p. 7.

possible -- fellowship of interest, of counsel, and of service. 3. That the individual worker shall be given a status and an opportunity for a full, creative life congruous with his nature as a son of God."[1]

n approving this Report, the U. F. Church Assembly thereby gave its sanction to hat was one of the most critical statements yet made by a church court concern- ng the existing social order.

Throughout the 1920's both Scottish Churches carried on a vigorous criticism f various aspects of contemporary social, economic and industrial life. In 920, the first Report of the Church and Nation Committee contained another strong ndictment of the existing industrial system. Claiming that the teachings of hrist provided a standard by which the present order could be tested and udged, the Report presented a statement of those teachings which pertained to ndustrial life:

"1. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.
2. That every soul is of infinite value in the sight of God.
3. That men are more than things, that personality is sacred, and must not be subordinated to material gain.
4. That labour is honourable and should be justly and adequately remunerated.
5. That fidelity and loyalty in word and work is an imperative moral duty.
6. That life should be lived under a solemn sense of stewardship, and in accordance with the three great Laws of Love, Sacrifice, and Service."[2]

oncerning the existing industrial system, the Report stated that "in so far as t violates these principles, or makes their operation difficult, it is un- hristian."[3] The Committee went on to suggest that various changes ought to be rought about in industry in order to reduce the causes of the prevalent labour nrest in the country. It said that the following claims of the workers should e granted:

"1. A fuller recognition of personality, higher status as producers, some voice in the control of industry.
2. Improved conditions of life and labour, better housing, and greater security of employment.

. Ibid.

. Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1920, p. 526.

. Ibid.

3. A larger share, than in the past has been customary, of the wealth which is jointly produced by Capital and Labour.
4. More leisure for family life, for self-culture, and social relaxation."[1]

While this notable Report was being presented to the Church of Scotland neral Assembly, the U. F. Church Assembly received from its Social Problems mmittee much the same recommendation concerning the just demands of labour. e Assembly was told that if the Church wished to discern the causes of the despread industrial unrest of the time, she

> "must set herself with Christian sympathy to understand the claims of those who have no wealth but their individual labour, and who invest their lives in industry as others invest their capital. The Church which claims to follow Jesus Christ should not turn a deaf ear to the claims of higher status for the worker, for his share in the control of the conditions of industry, for adequate housing of the people, for protection against unemployment, and for suitable recreation."[2]

On February 1-3, 1921, the two Scottish Churches, acting jointly, held another ccessful church congress on social and industrial questions. This Glasgow ngress, which was attended by over 500 official delegates from all parts of e country, was devoted entirely to the discussion of the theme 'The Application Christian Principles to Industry'. Many prominent churchmen, labour and cialist leaders delivered addresses on contemporary industrial questions.[3]

In 1922, the General Assembly of the United Free Church took a significant ep when it instructed its Social Problems Committee to prepare an outline of e basic principles upon which the Church's social action programme should be sed. The statement on 'The Social Aims of the Church', which was presented to e Assembly in 1923 and subsequently approved, represented what was undoubtedly

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Ibid., pp. 526-7.

Report of the Committee on Social Problems, 1920, p. 2, included in Reports to the General Assembly, 1920.

Ibid., 1921, p. 3. The speakers included R. J. Drummond, David S. Cairns, John White, M.P.'s Wm. Graham, James Brown, and a Glasgow Town Councillor. Significantly, all three political speakers belonged to the Labour Party. (Cf. The Record of the Home and Foreign Mission Work of the United Free Church, March 1921, pp. 77-8).

the most radical social pronouncement which had ever been made by a Scottish Church. The statement declared that the social

> "aim of the Church is to realize the Kingdom of God on earth. . . . Christianity implies a social order in which the Christian life will have its fullest opportunity, a society which will be a richer expression of the mind of Christ, in which men will live together as brethren and in which every man will take a man's part in the commonwealth. It is constructive as well as remedial. Christ came not only to save souls but to create a world in which saved souls might live a saved life. The Church must insist that no sphere of human activity lies outside the authority of her Lord. . . . No part of life can be left to the uncontrolled operation of economic laws."[1]

This statement went on to say that:

> "The spirit of Christ is the spirit of service. The Church maintains that the performance of service and not the acquisition of gain is the Christian motive of social life. . . . It is the duty of the Church to assert that the industrial order should so conform to the mind of Christ that men may find in that order a sphere for the service of men to the glory of God.
>
> Christ lays supreme emphasis upon the sacredness of human personality. Therefore the Church must seek to secure justice to all men and opportunity for the fullest and highest life of which man is capable. . . . No supposed economic interests can justify anything that is injurious to the moral well-being of a human soul; it is better that a whole industry should perish than that man's highest nature should be injured by it."[2]

These Christian principles, said the statement, imply several things in practical terms. They imply the sacredness of home life and the importance of adequate housing,

> "for the sanctities of the home -- even the decencies of life -- are impossible in the conditions under which great masses of the people live at present.
>
> The regulation of the conditions of toil for women so as to safeguard the physical and moral health of the future generation. . . .
>
> The preservation of infant life, and the physical, moral and spiritual protection of child life by the abolition of child labour.
>
> A living wage as a minimum in every industry, an honest day's work for an adequate remuneration, and regulation of the hours of labour so that workers may have the leisure which is a condition of fuller development than their work affords.
>
> Adequate provision for old age, sickness, and enforced unemployment, and a more thorough study of the causes of poverty with a view to their abatement, and if possible their removal."[3]

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1. Report of the Committee on Social Problems, op. cit., 1923, p. 4.

2. Ibid., p. 5.

3. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

This advanced statement of Christian social thought produced in the mid-20's gives some indication of how far to the 'left' a considerable body of church opinion had shifted in these years, and how radical Christian social criticism had become compared even with the relatively enlightened period before the War.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the Church had recovered her prophetic witness, and that the new social awakening had left her better prepared to meet the challenge presented by contemporary social and economic problems than at any time since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, it cannot be said that her response to the two major crises of the 1920's and 30's -- the intense industrial conflict and the great economic depression -- was as dynamic and relevant as might have been expected. Perhaps by the very nature of the case the Church could do little to bring Christian influence to bear on such complex events. But among many Scots -- and in particular among the working classes -- there was a widespread feeling by the mid-30's that the Church had not done all that she might have done to bring about a solution to these problems.

The intense conflict between capital and labour which had marked the industrial scene ever since the end of the War reached its climax with the coal crisis and the General Strike in 1926. Throughout these years, as we have noted, the Churches devoted considerable attention to various aspects of the relationship between Christianity and industrial life. Yet, strangely enough, when the most serious industrial conflict in the nation's history took place, the Scottish Churches, unlike several of the Churches in England, maintained a complete silence.[1] In

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1. The Church of England made a notable effort to bring the Strike to an end. At the height of the crisis, when the government resolutely refused to deal with the men until they returned to work, the Archbishop of Canterbury took a bold and controversial stand by demanding that negotiations be re-opened immediately with the men. For this daring action, he was denied publication in The Times and was severely rebuked in Parliament. Other Anglican clergy such as Wm. Temple also took a leading part in promoting reconciliation during this industrial crisis. During the first week of the Strike, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of England declared its support of the workers' efforts to resist a reduction in their standard of living. It said: "The Assembly,

1926, both Assemblies received a delegation from the Scottish miners who presented a moving case concerning their low wages and their determination to resist the attack being made on their standard of life through the imposition of longer hours and reduced wages.[1] But inasmuch as the Assemblies had decided beforehand not to make any judgment on the justice of the workers' cause, no opinion on the matter was expressed by either church court. During the General Strike itself, the Churches were so determined to remain neutral in the conflict and not to offend either party in the dispute,[2] that they were not able to recommend even the

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maintaining as it does that, in any Christian view of Industry, the first charge on its fruits should be the provision of a living wage for all workers, is in full accord with the effort to maintain the standard of livelihood, and therefore the standard of wages -- in many cases far from adequate -- of the workers, and not least of those engaged in the vital and perilous occupation of the miner.'" (Quoted in James Barr, The United Free Church of Scotland, p. 284. Cf. also The British Weekly, May 13, 1926, p. 2).

1. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1926, p. 72; Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, 1926, pp. 104-8. The Established Church Assembly was addressed by miners' M.P.'s Robert Smillie and Wm. Adamson. The same two men, together with James Brown M. P. -- who two years earlier had been the first working man Lord High Commissioner to the Church of Scotland Assembly -- addressed the U. F. Church Assembly.

2. Most of the references to the General Strike and the coal crisis in the official church journals reflected this attitude of passive neutrality. The longest article on the subject in the U. F. Church magazine was entirely devoted to defending the Church against the charge that she failed to take a bold stand on the moral issues involved, and was therefore unable to give any real leadership to society during the crisis. The writer felt that "on the whole, the ministers of the gospel dealt with the matter in the spirit of the gospel, refraining from commenting on the merits of the dispute, and simply expounding the Christian principles which Christ enjoined as the rule of life." (The Record of the Home and Foreign Mission Work of the United Free Church, June 1926, p. 250). The June issue of Life and Work Magazine, however, contained an article by the writer of the monthly 'views and reviews' column which denounced the working classes for giving their support to the General Strike. He said the Strike was an unethical act on the part of the workers who gave their loyalty to their own class rather than to the interests of their country which was a higher loyalty. Accepting the government's well-publicized argument that the Strike was a conflict between the trade unions and the community, and not between the unions, the coal-masters and the government, as the workers claimed, this writer declared that the workers should not have obeyed their union leaders. "No Association, for example, simply because it is an Association and we are pledged members of it, can compel us to engage in dishonesty, to approve of fraud, or to break our personal obligations to a higher or more binding

esumption of negotiations, because to have done so would have been tantamount to aking the anti-government side, for the government had refused to consider egotiations until the Strike was called off. Likewise in the coal lockout which ontinued after the General Strike ended, the coal owners had made it clear that hey wanted no attempts at arbitration or any other forms of interference from the hurches.[1] Thus even the manifestly Christian duty of promoting reconciliation etween the parties had become a controversial issue which the Churches had to void. Seldom had Christianity and the Church seemed as feeble and irrelevant to real crisis in national life.

This acute industrial conflict furnished a striking demonstration of the act that the 'application of Christian principles to industry' was not as simple matter as many churchmen had previously assumed. The Churches' reaction to this risis highlighted the fact that much of the new Christian social teaching --

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authority." (p. 131). This anti-labour viewpoint was undoubtedly widely shared by conservative churchmen in the 1920's. Even more progressive churchmen were often suspicious of many of the political and economic aims of labour. In a revealing article in The British Weekly in 1936, Jane T. Stoddart, the long-time assistant editor, remarked upon the Church's attitude to the rise of the Labour party over the past 30 years. Speaking of the attitude of liberal middle class churchmen such as Wm. Robertson Nicoll and James Denney, she said that while they sympathized with the working classes, they did not believe that the Labour Party's schemes for a redistribution of wealth in society through social and economic reforms would benefit the workers. She said that Denney was typical of the advocates of a cautious liberalism at the time of the first World War who were suspicious of the rising power of labour. This writer noted his opposition to the famous miners' strike of 1912 in his letters, and said his lukewarm attitude toward social legislation designed to reduce inequality was all the more surprising in view of the hard life endured by his father: "With his father's life-story on record, we might have expected him to be a fiery-hearted Radical, but he looked coldly on the workers' claims. His attitude toward social reform was that of the cautious middle classes, He was unprepared for that swift acceleration of demands, with the sharper monitions of the social conscience, which have placed the constitutional Labour Party already twice in office." (November 12, 1936, p. 133).

. Cf. J. R. Fleming, A History of the Church in Scotland 1875-1929, pp. 179-80; Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the United Free Church, 1926, pp. 318-20.

based as it too often was on an idealistic liberalism -- was formulated in moral and social principles which were unsuited for direct application to the harsh realities of industrial disputes and to the bitter class antagonism that accompanied them. Therefore, while such teaching might favour, for example, a general social ideal such as a 'living wage' -- which was what the miners were defending in 1926 by their refusal to accept cuts in wages -- it failed to take into consideration the economic consequences of applying such an ideal in the practical situation. To annunciate such principles without indicating their relevance to specific situations was nothing less than irresponsible. Clearly, the achievement of industrial peace and a more just social order was an infinitely more complex task than was suggested by the practice of churchmen when they merely urged individuals and social and economic classes to 'love one another' or to 'accept the simple teachings of Jesus'.[1]

In the 1930's, the Church and Nation Committee, which at the re-union of the Churches in 1929 had been enlarged to include the former Social Problems Committee of the U. F. Church, continued to engage in its task of watching over and commenting upon developments in the various spheres of national life. Some of the more important social questions which occupied the attention of the Committee in these years included housing conditions,[2] stock market specula-

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1. David Watson, who was convener of the Church of Scotland's Church and Nation sub-committee on Social and Industrial Life in these years, was one of those who was strongly influenced by this type of naive social and theological liberalism of the post-War period. Writing in 1919 about the teachings of Jesus, he claimed that "if all men would accept this teaching and make it their rule of life, a changed world would rise about us. Oppression and injustice would wither in the atmosphere created. Man's inhumanity to man would cease. Given social expression to in every sphere of human activity, it would solve most of our social problems and realize the kingdom of God in our midst." (The Social Expression of Christianity, p. 119).

2. The 1930, 1936 and 1937 Reports were particularly concerned about housing. The latter declared that municipal slum clearance programmes were not proceeding as quickly as they ought: "It is much to be hoped that with the Government offering to pay a large portion of the cost, local authorities will be encouraged not only to plan more boldly but to use all possible means to speed up the rate of building." (Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1937, p. 526).

ion,[1] low wages in industry[2] and, of course, the most acute and seemingly in-urable problem of all, unemployment.

The year 1931 witnessed the beginning of the most serious depression in the ation's history. Scotland's unemployment rate increased from an already high 1.4% in 1927-29 to 26.2% in 1931-33.[3] These were only average figures, however, or there were many towns in Lanarkshire and on Clydeside where, for some years n the 30's, more than half of the total population were unemployed. The situa-ion remained serious, especially in the west, until war broke out. In February 934, 360,000 were idle, a third of whom were in Glasgow. Even in the first onths of 1939 there were still a quarter of a million unemployed, and in December f the same year -- three months after the War had begun -- Scotland still had 77,000 unemployed or 10.6% of insured workers.

Although the Church regularly commented upon and lamented the mass unemploy-ent which plagued the nation in these years, she, like most other sections of the ommunity, had little positive to offer by way of a solution. The only compre-ensive Report of the Church and Nation Committee on unemployment was presented to he General Assembly in 1932. This thorough study marked a distinct advance on

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. Both the 1932 and 1936 Reports condemned stock market speculation as a form of gambling. The latter noted that shares in iron and steel and in aircraft interests registered a rise of 50% from 1934 to 1935 due to increasing international tension. It criticized all those who engaged in the scramble for armament shares, for "the hope of exceptional profits from them depends on conditions of unrest and on the possibility of an early war which are themselves the very negation of a Christian international order, and which involve appalling dangers for the next generation if not for our own." (Ibid., 1936, p. 429).

. The 1939 Report deplored the fact that "there is a wide range of urban employment in which a man's wage does not exceed forty or forty-five shillings a week, and that where in such cases there are large families, quite apart from any question of unemployment, earnings are not sufficient to provide for more than a meagre subsistence." (Ibid., 1939, p. 517).

. The corresponding figures for Great Britain as a whole were 10.1% and 20.3%.

previous statements on this subject which were seldom more than mere platitudes expressing the Church's sympathy to the idle workers and their families. Yet while this detailed study of unemployment presented in the 1932 Report indicated the Church's genuine desire to make a contribution to the solution of this national calamity, on the whole, its recommendations were disappointing. Although many useful suggestions were made, too great a stress was still laid on traditional, moral and spiritual factors as the cause of the depression and the resulting unemployment.[1] Of the five major causes of the economic crisis stated in the Report, the primary cause was said to be 'religious and moral'[2] and that "a change of heart is a first essential of any permanent solution of the problem of unemployment, an earnest and sincere effort to apply the golden rule between men and nations."[3] In discussing the economic causes of the depression, the Committee, following the diagnosis given by many economists of the time, declared that the main fault lay in the failure of the financial system to distribute money to consumers rapidly enough to enable them to purchase the goods and services created by the productive system.[4]

In more enlightened fashion, the Committee did stress the need for more government planning of the economy and for the direction of industry through National Boards. It said that the

> "system of laissez-faire has, for the time being, broken down. It fails to make the necessary adjustments with sufficient rapidity if at all. A change of fashion or the invention of a machine may cause widespread dislocation in the industries involved, and without forethought and planning this ends tragically."[5]

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1. The Report was criticized by several newspapers for its overemphasis upon moral and spiritual factors in the solution of the problem. (Cf. Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1932, pp. 271-2).

2. Reports to the General Assembly, 1932, pp. 506 and 508.

3. Ibid., p. 506. 4. Ibid., pp. 507-8 and 517. 5. Ibid., p. 517.

concluding, the Report said: "The Committee believe that it is not sufficient r the Christian Church to state general principles; Christian men and women st endeavour to bring these principles to bear on economic thought and practice."[1] went on to urge the government to do everything possible to alleviate the con- tion of those who were suffering from unemployment through no fault of their n.[2]

A considerable part of the debate on this Report centred on a motion asking e Assembly to petition the government to remove the recently imposed means st on 'transitional unemployment benefit' and to restore the cuts in such nefit which had been made.[3] From this and later debates on this subject in e Assembly, it was clear that not a few churchmen still believed that much of e current unemployment and poverty could be blamed on the improvidence and ziness of the unemployed themselves and that the basic cure for the problem sted as much on the moral initiative of individuals as with the government. veral speakers in the 1932 Assembly stated that the means test needed to be plied to unemployment benefit just as it had been to the poor law benefit. They re fearful that its removal would destroy the 'traditional spirit of independence' ong the Scottish working classes. Not surprisingly, therefore, the motion to ve the means test removed and to restore to the unemployed the cuts in benefit s defeated.[4] Whatever the real merits of the Church's stand on this matter

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1. Ibid., p. 510. 2. Ibid., pp. 511-12.

3. Proceedings and Debates, 1932, pp. 283-7. This unemployment benefit, commonly called the 'dole', was paid to those whose regular unemployment insurance benefits had expired.

4. The motion was proposed by J. M. Munro, minister of Trinity Church, Camelon, who was one of the strongest champions of the working classes in the Assembly. In 1924 -- the same year that U. F. Church minister James Barr, another champion of the working classes, was elected Labour M.P. for Motherwell -- he unsuccessfully contested the Scottish University seats as a Labour candidate. In the debate on the motion, R. J. Drummond, who over the years had done so much to rouse the social conscience of the Church, deplored the hostility of so many church members towards the 'dole' and the unemployed. He referred to a case of one poor family which had used up all its savings in 9 months of

re, the position which she adopted -- and which was basically re-affirmed by the 33 Assembly[1] -- certainly helped to confirm the view already prevalent among ny of the working classes that the Church had little genuine concern for the fferings of the unemployed. The common hardships and deprivations suffered by e working classes in these years further hardened their feeling of class lidarity, while the apparent indifference of the Church further strengthened eir long-held suspicion that she 'belonged' to the other classes.[2]

Later Reports of the Church and Nation Committee only commented briefly upon employment. Like the earlier Reports, none of them displayed any sign of the ld declarations that one would have expected from a Church which had so recently akened to the social implications of the Christian faith. There was little sign any passionate concern about the physical and psychological sufferings endured the unemployed and their families, and few indications of any radical criticism the existing social and economic system which stood condemned by its fruits. vertheless, as we shall presently see, in spite of the Church's indifferent sponse to the challenge of the unemployment crisis of the 1930's, the social ssons of the depression years were not lost on large numbers of churchmen who ved through them.

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unemployment rather than draw on the 'dole' "owing to the slighting way it was always referred to. . . . Believe me, nothing has done the Church more harm than the attitude taken up by some of the 'pillars' against the drawer of the 'dole'." (Ibid., p. 286).

This year the Church merely qualified its support for the means test by urging the authorities in areas of severe unemployment to apply the test with care so that cases of real hardship and poverty would not be neglected. It said that supplementary umemployment benefits should be paid to families before all their savings were exhausted. (Reports to the General Assembly, 1933, pp. 460-1).

Cf. Evangelism in Scotland -- An Ecumenical Study published by the Secretariat for Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, p. 19.

The War and the Maturing of Social Criticism

By the late twenties much of the superficial optimism that had marked both cial and theological liberalism in the post-war period began to fade. Hope in e coming of the kingdom of God upon earth as a result of God-inspired human fort lessened as the idealistic basis of such liberalism was challenged by alistic thought. This decline of liberalism was hastened by the shattering ents of the 1930's -- total depression and total war -- when such a theology, th its romantic conception of the kingdom of God, had so little to say in the dst of the tragedies of the time. This process of decline was also quickened the 1930's by the revival of a more biblically-centred Reformed theology which ew its inspiration not only from its own earlier Scottish Reformed tradition, but so from new theological movements, -- sometimes loosely referred to as neo-thodoxy -- on the Continent and in the United States.[1]

This new realism was reflected in the Church in her attitude to the second rld War. The Church regarded the new conflict with none of the naive enthusiasm d easy optimism with which she greeted the first War. There was none of the ealistic, self-righteous, holy crusading spirit which was so evident in 1914-18 urch sources, but instead there was a sober consciousness of the demonic power

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[1] On the Continent the new movement was associated with the names of Swiss theologians Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. It represented a reaction against the 'rational' religion and natural theology of liberalism with its exalted view of the nature and possibilities of man, and its idea of a God immanent in man and in culture working out His will through evolutionary moral, spiritual and social progress. The new movement sought to lift contemporary theology out of the sphere of human and spiritual 'values' into the category of divine revelation. It stressed the uniqueness of the judging, saving Word of God which stands over and outside man and human culture. Consequently, it urged a more realistic social ethic based on a biblical understanding of the sinfulness of man and of the real possibilities as well as limitations of Christian social action. The influence of American neo-orthodoxy in Scotland in the 1930's and 40's came particularly through the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr, and was especially applicable to the field of social ethics.

mystery of war and of the fact that it was an evil which was always contrary the will of God. Above all, there was a keen awareness that the coming of yet ther and more fearful conflict represented a terrible judgment upon both the ion and the whole of western civilization.

The profound effect which the War had upon the Church's theological and social ught was nowhere more evident than in the remarkable investigations carried on ing the war years by the General Assembly's famous Commission for the Interpre- ion of God's Will in the Present Crisis. This Commission, set up in 1940 to estigate the implications of the War for the life of the Church and the nation, ued 5 Reports between 1941 and 1945 dealing with a wide range of subjects -- rch life and organization, education, marriage, and social and industrial life. our purposes, we will be concerned largely with those sections of the 1942 and 4 Reports dealing with the Church's relation to the civil order and to social industrial life. It was these sections of the Reports which proved to be both most popular and the most controversial declarations of the Commission.[1]

Some indication of the widespread appeal and influence of the Commission's findings may be seen in the fact that sections of the Reports and studies based upon them were frequently published between 1941 and 1946. A study text book of the 1941 Report called Ordeal and Opportunity was issued by the Church for the use of study groups; the whole of the 1942 Report was published by the S.C.M. under the title God's Will in Our Time, and had a large circulation of over 14,000 copies; a study text book called Crisis and Challenge, based on the 1942 Report and written by Professor J. G. Riddell and G. M. Dryburgh, was published by the Church; the whole of the 1943 and the 1944 Reports were published by the S.C.M. under the titles The Church Faces the Future and Home, Community and Church, respectively; the Iona Community published the sections of the 1942 and 1944 Reports on social and industrial life in a booklet entitled The Church of Scotland and Social and Industrial Life; a study booklet written by J. W. Stevenson based on the social and industrial life sections of the 1944 Report called Is it the Church's Business? was issued by the Church; and finally, in 1946, there was published by the S.C.M. the most significant volume of all entitled God's Will for Church and Nation. This volume, which contained the most important sections of the 1942-1945 Reports, like the other single Reports published by the S.C.M., was well known in England as well as Scotland.

At the outset of this study, when noting the dramatic transformation which ook place in the Church's social thought between the 1840's and the 1940's, we ad occasion to refer briefly to the radical nature of the Commission's pronouncements.[1] We need only indicate here the manner in which the social thought contained in these Reports represented a more mature type of Christian social criticism than that found in the Church earlier in the present century, and how it was he culmination of the long development and recovery of social criticism in the cottish Church.

The 1942 Report began by setting forth a sound theological statement of the hristian faith in its relation to social life. It criticized the liberal humanism of the past with its naive belief that "as time went by, both the evil in an's heart and the evil forces at work in society would more and more be overome by the operation of a natural and immanent law of growth."[2] It went on to et Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God in its proper eschatological setting, ointing out that the kingdom which the gospel promises is not 'brought in' by an's efforts but "is an order of things which only the power of God can ever naugurate, yet it is a Kingdom whose full realization is already heralded by the edemption wrought by Christ."[3] This section of the Report welcomed the growing pirit of community which had gripped the nation and said there must be no return o the old individualism with its unconcern for the corporate well-being.[4] It tressed that all genuine Christian social action must proceed on the basis of he biblical understanding of the nature of man as a sinner, or else it would go stray. The Christian doctrine of man corrects the illusions of utopianism by tressing the fact that "no earthly society can hope to be a perfect community or

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. Cf. supra, chapter 1, pp. 3-4.

. God's Will for Church and Nation, 1942 Report, p. 13.

. Ibid., p. 16.

4. Ibid., pp. 21-4.

can claim to be an end in itself."[1] However, this section of the Report acknowledged that liberal humanism had done much to awake the Christian social conscience:

> "There are aspects of Christian charity, of Christian tolerance, of brotherhood and equality and social justice, which, though deriving their ultimate inspiration from the Christian ethos, were nevertheless not taught to the world by the official representatives of organized Christianity. They were rather wrested from such organized authority, often as the result of bitter controversy and struggle, sometimes by men and movements which had detached themselves from the Church. . . . Much of the present indifference to the Church, and even hostility to it, derives from the feeling that it has shown little zeal for the redress of the most obvious social evils -- so that the oppressed and underprivileged are forced to look elsewhere for the help they need. Here is an obstacle to the present propagation of the Gospel which should move all who are in the Church to the deepest penitence, to constantly renewed searching of heart, and to open confession of their own grievous and sinful responsibility in the matter."[2]

The next section of the 1942 Report discussed the nature and extent of the Church's concern in the civil order. It pointed out that throughout her history, the Church has always been under the temptation to adopt one or the other of two false positions with regard to the civil order. On the one hand, there has been the danger of making pronouncements on technical questions concerning which the Church was not competent to deal; on the other, the danger of a complacent acceptance of the existing order and a cold indifference to the grave injustices in it. The Report claimed, however, that while it was true that sometimes harm had been done by the Church falling into the former error,

> "we hold it is as certain that the greater harm has come about through the opposite error -- through the indifference of Christians to the maladjustments of that civil ordering of society in which they like others have a part, and the consequent failure of the Church to bring its own light to bear upon the problems so created. If it were merely that Christians were so exclusively absorbed in heavenly things as to be indifferent to the earthly ills of themselves and their neighbours, that alone would spell a serious falsification of the true Christian temper; but it is to be feared that many of us must plead guilty to the even more damaging charge of complacently accepting the amenities, and availing ourselves of the privileges, of a social order which happened to offer these things to ourselves while denying them to others. It cannot be denied that during a period when the crying injustices of the existing order were being brought prominently into the light, the Church as a whole seemed content to leave this task either to those outside its fellowship or to isolated voices within, instead of itself providing the necessary volume of righteous and

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1. Ibid., p. 30. 2. Ibid., pp. 27-8.

enlightened zeal. Arriving only as a latecomer in this most necessary field, it largely failed to bring its Gospel to bear at the right time upon a situation that continued to develop with such tragic speed."[1]

Here the Commission, with considerable insight, had set forth one of the basic causes of all the Church's tragic prophetic failure in the past: the influence of social and economic factors in militating against any real social criticism. Here the Church at last gave due acknowledgment to the fact that social injustice was caused not simply by the personal sin of individuals but was the product of social sin -- of corporate evil -- which expressed itself supremely in class and economic self-interest.

This section of the Report went on to indicate how the Church could avoid the danger of adopting either of the false attitudes to the civil order by confining her pronouncements within the sphere of what were called 'middle axioms'.[2] 'Middle axioms' were formulations of those Christian goals for society which were more specific and concrete than vague general principles which were inapplicable to the practical problem at hand, yet which were less specific and concrete than particular programmes and schemes of action. They were intended to provide a middle way for the Church between the utterance of mere empty platitudes which said nothing, and the advocacy of complex and technical political and economic programmes. The Commission admitted the difficulty in formulating such 'middle axioms' before the practical situation in which they were to be applied had developed. But it said this was inevitable, for by their very nature, "they are not such as to be appropriate to every time and place and situation, but they are offered as legitimate and necessary applications of the Christian rule of faith and life to the special circumstances in which we now stand."[3] It warned,

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1. Ibid., p. 34.

2. Ibid., p. 45. The term 'middle axioms' first came into use at the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State, held in 1937.

3. Ibid.

however, that unless the Church sought to apply the Gospel in some such relevant and practical way to the real life of man in society, she would lose the great opportunity to bring the Christian faith to bear upon the whole corporate life of the nation which the present crisis had presented to her. The Commission believed that if she failed in this area of her mission, her evangelistic efforts in an industrial society would be ineffective, for

> "there can be little doubt that it is to the failure of Christians to realize and act upon these social implications of the Gospel that the present weakness of the spiritual life of our land must in no small part be attributed. We long for a revival of spiritual religion, but there are many who suspect the spirituality to which we call them of making too ready a compliance with a social order that for them means only hunger, slum conditions, unemployment, or sweated labour. . . . How can men be drawn to a Gospel whose one practical expression is serving Christ by serving the least of His needy brethren if we preach it in abstraction from the crying needs of the poor and oppressed of our own society? Selfishness is of the very essence of the sin from which, in any revival of religion, men need to be redeemed; but what if there be no particular form of this sin from which we more need to be redeemed today than a complacent indifference to the social evils that surround our comfortable lives?"[1]

In the last section of the 1942 Report, the Commission, in dealing with social and industrial life, sought to abide within the limits of the Church's concern and competence as it had defined them in the notion of the 'middle axioms'. The Commission declared that from a Christian standpoint, the existing industrial system was open to serious criticism for many reasons, and it proceeded to enumerate 7 major 'defects in the present industrial system'. These included the existence of mass unemployment in peace-time;[2] the growth of great private monopolies whose uncontrolled economic power "leads to the production of inessential luxuries at a time when there is an insufficient supply of basic necessities, such as housing;"[3] the immoral practice whereby "things which have actually been

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1. Ibid., p. 49. After quoting the above words from the Report in the Assembly, John Baillie, the convener of this Commission, added: "That is why so many of us feel that no form of evangelism which is insensitive to the social problem is likely to meet with much success in our own time." (J. G. Riddell, and G. H. Dryburgh, Crisis and Challenge, appendix I, p. 121).

2. God's Will for Church and Nation, 1942 Report, pp. 58-9.

3. Ibid., p. 59.

uced and are needed for consumption must be again destroyed, in order to main-
or to restore the existing financial, industrial, and political structure;" [1]
exaggerated economic inequalities which

> "lead to one-sided relationships of dependence, giving to some an arbitrary power over others, producing class antagonisms, leading to jealousy and hatred in the victims of arbitrary power, and to pride and contempt in those who wield it." [2]

Later, the Commission considered some of the goals which must be sought in
r to achieve a more Christian social order. It enumerated several 'middle
ms' to which it claimed the Church could commit herself without going beyond
sphere of her competence or the limits of her proper concern. In applying its
dle axioms', the Commission criticized existing slum conditions which it said
l compared "unfavourably, not only with what was ideally desirable, but with
has actually been achieved in certain other countries of comparable wealth." [3]
alled for greater educational opportunities for all children, and claimed that
men had a right to live a socially useful life and to receive a living wage. [4]
lso insisted that "extreme inequalities in the possession of wealth are dan-
us to the common interest, and wise measures should be sought by which they
be controlled." [5] Pointing to the 'anarchical' tendencies of the present
omic order, with its general lack of social purpose and direction, the Commis-
, in its boldest pronouncement, declared that henceforth

> "economic power must be made objectively responsible to the community as a whole. The possessors of economic power must be answerable for the use of that power, not only to their own consciences, but to appropriate social organs. . . . This means that we must be prepared for a much greater measure of direction, on the part of the community, of the uses to which economic power may be put. It is a further question to what extent, and in what cases, this will involve the direct ownership by the community, through the State, of the means of production and distribution." [6]

This radical statement, which seemed to many churchmen to imply a modified
oval of socialist plans for the nationalization of certain key sections of the

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Ibid. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid., p. 63.
Ibid. 5. Ibid. 6. Ibid., p. 62.

economy, was elaborated upon by the Commission in their 1944 Report. At that time, as we shall presently observe, this finding became the subject of heated controversy in the Church, both inside and outside the Assembly.

The section of the 1944 Report on social and industrial life proved to be the most radical and controversial of all the Commission's statements.[1] As a result of further intensive study of the structural faults inherent in the existing order, the Commission declared that it was more convinced than ever of the necessity for some such 'middle axiom' as that contained in its 1942 Report dealing with the control of irresponsible economic power. It now

> "believes the present time and situation to be such as to call forth the clear declaration that the common interest demands a far greater measure of public control of capital resources and means of production than our tradition has in the past envisaged."[2]

The remainder of this section of the 1944 Report was taken up with a justification of this far-reaching 'middle axiom'. It stated that the primary defect in the present economic system which lay behind most of the defects enumerated in the 1942 Report, was "the tyranny of private interests."[3] By this was meant the fact that the control of the economic power of the nation was in

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1. In an article in Life and Work Magazine, R.E. MacIntyre, minister of Morningside High Church, Edinburgh, and one of the members of the Commission, discussed the opposition to the Commission's declarations. He noted that it had been said of the 1942 Report "that it was 'Left' in its inspiration. What matter, if the thing inspired was itself right? God save us from the tyranny of names and labels! We are looking for God's mind in this crisis of our affairs, and why should we be silent if it be His mind to change the foundation upon which hitherto our political and social life has been grounded?" (May 1944, p.70). The British Weekly referred to the attempts which were made in the 1944 Assembly to shelve the Report or to water down its recommendations (June 1, 1944, p. 109; June 8, 1944, p. 117). The opposition to the Commission's deliverance on the social and industrial life section of the Report was reflected in the number of amendments which attempted to weaken the Church's commitment to the section advocating a greater measure of common control of the means of production. One attempt to alter a sentence in the Committee's deliverance was successful, but most of the amendments were defeated, and the Assembly eventually gave its sanction to the main recommendation on this question. (Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1944, pp. 590 and 607.

2. Ibid., 1944 Report, p. 157. 3. Ibid.

hands of private interests who were not responsibile to society for the use
e of such power. The Report claimed that the only

> "alternative to increased public control of the country's capital resources and means of production is the continuance of the traditional private control, which is so little answerable to the community as a whole, and which allows the industrial scene to be so largely dominated by the profit-seeking of private and sectional interests. We are convinced that this domination must involve the perpetuation of three evils: (a) it will prevent the rehabilitation of our social and industrial life; (b) it will prevent our meeting our world responsibilities in a way more consonant with the Gospel; and (c) it will prevent our democracy from again becoming vital." [1]

The remainder of this section on social and industrial life was devoted to
etailed and persuasive substantiation of the statement that a greater measure
communal control was necessary for the rehabilitation of social and economic
e, for the conscientious discharge of the nation's world responsibilities,
for the revitalization of democracy. [2] We are not concerned here with the
ails of the arguments which the Commission advanced except to note that they
e marked by a thorough and competent analysis of all the factors in the existing
angements which hindered the attainment of a more just and Christian society.
Commission was fully realistic in its understanding of both the possibilities
limits which its recommendations in the social and economic field could
omplish. It emphasized that no utopia would be ushered in by an extension
public control over economic life. With a keen insight into the mood of the
ion in these years, it insisted, however, that men were not looking for
pias but rather for an

> "objective that is really obtainable, though not without hazard; a fair chance without too much disfavour; and a cause not devoid of idealism. For such they are still prepared to accept discipline. But our present economic system no longer provides a recognizable objective; it denies a fair chance in life to a multitude of our citizens and a fair chance of leadership to those with the will and capacity to lead. . . . We therefore call on the members of the Church to rally in this matter to the full obligations of their citizenship, to study most seriously all proposed reforms whereby our nation may recover her vitality as an effective democracy and our people gain a new basis for their social and industrial life." [3]

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d., p. 158. 2. Ibid., pp. 161 - 71. 3. Ibid., pp. 169 - 71.

Throughout the remarkable Reports of this Commission on the Interpretation f God's Will in the Present Crisis, it was evident that the Church's social riticism had reached a more mature stage of development. The Church was now ngaging in something more than a negative criticism of the existing social nd economic order, but was prophetically attempting to discern the signs of the imes and to speak God's Word in the midst of them. She was aware that the old rder stood condemned and was attempting to point the way for the new kind of ociety that was emerging -- a society in which a concern for social and economic ustice was to have a primary place.

The wise lead which the Church gave to the nation on those critical issues hich came to light during the War, together with the enlightened attitude which he adopted towards the comprehensive social welfare schemes which were drafted uring these years, [1] made it possible for her to play a large part in easing the ransition to social democracy after 1945. It is not too much to say that by her igorous pronouncements and activity in the war years, the Scottish Church helped o prepare the way for that orderly transfer of power and that 'revolution' in ocial and economic life which was the mark of the 1945 - 50 period.

. The Church of Scotland gave her warm approval to the social security scheme known as the Beveridge Report. This Report, published in December 1942, formed the basis of the modern welfare state which came into being between 1946 and 1948. The Report recommended a comprehensive national health service, unemployment insurance, national assistance, workmen's compensation, and family allowances. Life and Work Magazine in January 1943 declared that the Report "marks a long step towards that social security for all classes which is one of the great aims of all good government. One is glad that the proposals are on such a massive scale: any mere tinkering would have been worse than useless. Apart from modifications in detail that may prove necessary, the general purpose of the scheme will assuredly commend itself to a Church which knows only one answer to the question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'" (p. 1). The Church and Nation Committee rejected the view of those who claimed the scheme would put a premium on indolence: "No doubt there will always be some who would prefer to have an allowance while not working rather than work; but experience of the working of the pre-war unemployment benefit does not bear out the contention that there is any general inclination to adopt this attitude." (Reports to the General Assembly, 194[illegible], p. 245). The General Assembly said that they welcomed the Beveridge Report believing that the adoption of its proposals "would go far to provide necessary safeguards agains the worst forms of poverty, preventable ill-health, and the evils attendant on unemployment; and they are concerned that they may be put into force as soon as possible." (Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1943, p. 451).

C. The Church and Social Criticism: A Conclusion

Writing in 1930 about the Church of Scotland's task in relation to the corporate life of society, one Scottish Churchman declared that the

> "Church's task is to form, or transform, public opinion, and in so doing she must always move on ahead of the laggard majority. Hers is the task of the pioneer. She loses her distinctive source of power if she becomes an exponent of ca' canny, a mere defender of things as they are . . . . The Church, like the Kingdom, should act as a leaven --- a disturbing uncomfortable ingredient, ever stirring to dissatisfaction with that which has been attained. So the Church is in a real sense the conscience of the Nation, its principle of moral activity. It is a demoralized conscience which finds excuses for delay in attempting hard duties, and it is an unfaithful Church which counsels caution in setting wrongs right, whether at home or abroad." [1]

Valid as this expression of the Church's relationship to society certainly is, yet, as this study of the Scottish Church's social witness from 1830 - 1950 has demonstrated, seldom in this period did the Church faithfully fulfil this dynamic biblical understanding of her prophetic task. Throughout the entire 19th century, as we have observed only too clearly, the Church made virtually no attempt to form or transform public opinion or stir up the national social conscience. Until the closing decades of the century, her clergy were, in effect, little more than chaplains in the central fortress of power, wealth and privilege, who not only failed to champion the causes associated with the oppressed and the under-privileged but were among their most heated opponents. For too long, the 19th century Church put the rights of property and class privilege before human rights and the dignity and worth of individuals. She was unable to understand that any effort to rescue men, women and children from starvation wages and unendurable toil, filth and disease would have been a higher spiritual activity closer to the kingdom of heaven than much of the religious activity and 'church work' with which she busied herself. Although the Church believed she was being neutral and non-political by refusing to make judgments upon contemporary social and economic problems, in fact, she was being decidedly partisan and political when she said

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1. G. F. Barbour, Church and Nation in Scotland Today, pp. 16-7

nothing in the face of the glaring social evils of the period, and when she complacently accepted the existing order as divinely ordained. By her silence the Church took sides: she took a quite definite stand on the side of the status quo, for, by the nature of the case, her perpetual silence never signified disapproval of things as they were, only approval, or, at best, an attitude of indifference. Not surprisingly, the Church's virtual 'deification' of existing social and economic institutions and arrangements precluded the possibility of her engaging in any genuine social criticism.

However, even since the turn of the present century, when the Church began to reclaim her traditional concern for the whole corporate life of society, she has often failed to carry out her prophetic task with the boldness and vigour which the situation demanded. Seldom has she moved 'ahead of the laggard majority'; seldom has she been a 'pioneer'; seldom has she appeared as 'a disturbing uncomfortable ingredient, ever stirring to dissatisfaction'. This is not to suggest that there has been no genuine recovery of social criticism in the Church in the past half century -- the famous 1940 - 5 Commission alone is sufficient proof of this -- but it does mean that there has not always been that degree of prophetic criticism that might have been expected, considering the extent of the Church's general social awakening.

Of course, it is true that the Church can never 'fully' recover her prophetic witness. As we have noted at the outset of this study, Christian social thought, because of the Church's 'humanity', is always strongly conditioned by historical and sociological factors which tend to militate against the exercize of consistent social criticism. As was plainly evident in our study of the 19th century Church, the effect of such factors, particularly political, economic and class influences, upon the Church's social witness was disastrous. The influence of the same historical and sociological factors condition the Church's social outlook no less today. Since she cannot escape such influences in the formulation of her social

thought, the most effective action she can take is to be aware of the existence of such factors and of the direction in which they influence her, and thus be in a position to minimize their harmful influence and prevent undue distortions in her social thought. Perhaps, once aware of her own hidden biases the Church can make allowances for them by compensation. John Baillie, in a famous speech delivered to the General Assembly in connection with the 1942 Report of the Commission of which he was convener, suggested one such form of compensation:

> "I wonder whether it would be the worst disaster that could befall the Church in this hour, if it should be found to be a little over-bold in its pronouncements, if it should be a little over-impetuous in its zeal for the redress of social wrong, and in its desire to see the lineaments of that New Jerusalem in which it claims to believe a little more noticeably and recognizably reflected in Scotland's green and pleasant land? There is a famous remark of Aristotle's to the effect that sometimes we can correct a defect to which we are naturally prone, or to which we have long been subject, by leaning over a little too far towards excess, as men try to straighten a piece of wood that is bent." [1]

Perhaps these words provide some clue as to the manner in which the Church can counteract tendencies in her social thought and institutional life that tend to social conservatism, conformity and passivity. Certainly, no Church can be prophetic which is blindly unaware of the conditioning process to which she is constantly being subjected and the extent to which she is sociologically imprisoned. Perhaps, in the final analysis, no Church can be prophetic which does not deliberately 'lean over a little too far towards excess'.

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1. J. G. Riddell and G. M. Dryburgh, Crisis and Challenge, appendix I, p. 118.

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