

# Christian Socialism

by  
Henry Swabey

## Chapter 14 Usury and the Church of England

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## Chapter 14. Christian Socialism

‘The rate at which animals and plants increase and minerals are produced under the hand of man; in other words, the rate at which the means of subsistence increase...is the ultimate cause of a rate of interest.’  
*Del Mar, The Science of Money*

In 1846 the *Social Reformer* John Ludlow<sup>1</sup> called on the *Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn*, J.F.D. Maurice<sup>2</sup>, to ask him for his help in a scheme for ‘bringing to bear the leisure and good feeling of the *Inns of Court* upon the destitution and vice of the neighborhood’. Reckitt<sup>3</sup> dates from this meeting the revival of the *Church's* interest in social justice as part of her faith and commission.

But it was not until the Spring of 1848 that Ludlow's letters from revolutionary Paris<sup>4</sup> kindled that spark ‘which was to fuse *Theology* and *Sociology* into a single inspiration and recover after two centuries of virtual apostasy a social witness for the *Church of England*’.

In the same year, Sir Barry Domvile writes in concluding his *From Admiral to Cabin Roy* that ‘...nearly a century has elapsed since Europe was shaken by a series of revolutionary explosions. The year 1848 saw the end of the *Chartist Movement* in this country, a revolutionary democratic movement of considerable magnitude. In this year Canon Kingsley, the well known poet and novelist, issued a placard which is worth remembering today. There is a lot of truth in it:

‘There will be no true freedom without virtue, no true science without religion, no true industry without the fear of God and love to your fellow citizens. Workers of England, be wise, and then you must be free for you will be fit to be free.’

This explosive atmosphere was not, then, without its effect on the *Church of England*. We shall note the chief figures in this movement, but it is not until very recent times that the subject of usury has again received attention.

It was still the age of effects, and it was to be a long and tedious journey until the causes of the disease were understood. James Harvey could still ask in 1875, ‘Who has ever heard a sermon condemning usury as a sin?’<sup>5</sup>

But the association of Maurice, Kingsley and Ludlow once more aroused the attention of *Christians* to social issues and - if the *Catholic* analysis was right - this awareness must eventually consider the problem of *Money*, which is the pivot and life blood of *Exchange*.

Some characters in the narrative stand outside the specific social movement, but their intelligence warrants their inclusion. In the main, it was moral anxiety at the effects of an evil system, a recovery of the *Doctrine of the Kingdom* - as opposed to individualism in religion - and a feeling that the life of the time was unnatural, that led men back to the earlier doctrines. Reckitt insists that Maurice was the *fons et origo* of this social movement and that:

‘...his greatness lay in his capacity to see and to show that his theology was deep enough to answer all the questions which a secularized economic development and secular idealism alike had raised...His capacity arose from a profound grasp of the answers which Christ in God had given to social questions’.

We may turn to the real conquest that was being achieved. In 1846 the ‘landed gentry succumbed to the combination which *Lombard Street* made against them’<sup>6</sup>. But the flow of cheap corn drained the *Bank* of gold,

<sup>1</sup> John Malcolm Forbes Ludlow (1821-1911). [Ed].

<sup>2</sup> John Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) was an English theologian and socialist. Ordained in 1834, he became a leading figure in the intellectual and social life of London. He helped to found *Queen's College* for the education of women (1848), and the *Working Men's College* (1854). In 1853 he published *Theological Essays* and threw himself with great energy into the *Christian Socialism Movement*. Many streets in London are named in F D Maurice's honour. [Ed].

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Reckitt (1888-1980) was brought up as an Anglo-Catholic. His great-grandfather founded the well-known family business which later became *Reckitt and Colman*. As a young man he became involved with guild socialism and various Christian social movements. During the First World War, he joined the *Labour Research Department*, and in 1923 became Chairman of the *League of the Kingdom of God*. His most enduring achievement was *Christendom*, a quarterly journal of Christian sociology which he edited (and largely subsidized) from 1931 to 1950. He authored and edited numerous books on Christian social issues, of which the most readable and best-known is his account of the social movement in the *Church of England, From Maurice to Temple* (1947), based on his *Scott-Holland memorial lectures*. Maurice Reckitt established The Christendom Trust in 1971 which in 2005 was relaunched as the *MB Reckitt Trust*. [Ed].

<sup>4</sup> Ludlow's *Education Sentimentale* is a good example.

<sup>5</sup> We have seen that the last sermon on usury was probably that of David Jones in 1692.

<sup>6</sup> The combination of *Financiers* and *Industrialists*.

and in 1847 the directors refused further advances. It was the turn of the *Manufacturers* - also *Debtors* - to suffer. *Merchants* begged for *Notes* and did not care about the rate of interest<sup>7</sup>.

Although money was beyond price, the *Usurers* did not want total collapse - or revolution - so notes were again released under the direction of the almighty Overstone, who dictated the suspension of the act. There was extreme suffering. Wheat fell to 5/- a bushel and there were nearly a million *Paupers* in England and Wales.

In 1849 *Californian Gold* reached England and the *Currency* expanded. In 1851-52, the *Bank* received an addition to her *Gold Stocks* of about seven million. *Paper Issues* were increased from 19 to 23 millions. It was on facts of this kind that the welfare or misery of the vast *Proletariat* depended. But Overstone and the Rothschilds had not lost control.

“If a country increases in population, wealth, in enterprise and activity, more circulating medium will be required. This demand will raise the value of the existing circulation... *Gold* will rise.”

These are Overstone's words, and Adam's comment<sup>8</sup> on him and Rothschild etc. is that they were '*Financiers* beside whom the *Usurers of Byzantium* or the *Nobles of Henry VIII* were pigmies'. In 1819, the *Little Shilling Project* - to make 1/- pass for 1/6d. - had been launched. In 1952-3, the converse was proposed owing to the apprehended excess of gold. In neither case was there any proposal to relate *Currency* to *Goods Available*.

As spiritual counter-reaction to the dominant *Financiers*, the social movement in the *Church* was fully active by 1852. Maurice said he was a *Theologian* with no vocation except theology. His business was to preach the *Gospel of the Kingdom*. But he accepted the title (somewhat misleading a century later) of *Christian Socialist*. Through this group, the *Church* did face the challenge of the *Hungry Forties*, although they were concerned with social reform or social service and not with the basic fault of usury, with effects rather than causes.

Wilberforce typified the 'other-worldly' attitude to the *Poor*, assailed by Cobbett and the Hammonds. Tawney pointed out that three hundred years earlier the *Church* had failed to meet new demands 'because the *Church* itself had ceased to think'<sup>9</sup>. Instead the *Church of England* was pushed into a new type of ethic of sacrifice and abstinence (familiar words today) by the *Economists*, with usury as their premise. Hume wrote that 'avarice is the spur of industry'. Absent were such champions as Jewell, Sandys or the *Hammer of the Usurers*, Derry.

Cobbett pointed out, among much else, that the *Labouring Man* was no longer coming to church. In *Hard Times* Charles Dickens showed a lack of public worship in the grim setting. William Wordsworth wrote an *Ode to Lost Piety*, and Anthony Trollope recorded the change from country to town life and ways and the resultant lapse from *Religion*. To this society the *Church* was startlingly different from what she had been in the days of Andrewes or Sanderson. Her social heritage had been jettisoned.

She had lost, in addition to specific teaching on the *Just Price*, *Usury* and *Partnership*, the *Doctrine of the Creation* so that it did not seem anomalous to the clergy that *Urban Industrial Society* should be 'a contradiction of the eternal principles of the *Creator*'.<sup>10</sup>

It was the greatness of Maurice and Kingsley that they began to see this and, though its implications were only immediate works of social reform, it at least showed an awakening of the conscience and mind to the need for principles of justice. *Ethics* and *Religion*, almost totally severed outside home life for 150 years, were again related. It was only a movement among many, and many of the ablest Christian thinkers were to enter the forlorn defence of the historicity of *Genesis* in stead of upholding the truth that *God was Creator*.

<sup>7</sup>According to Henry Dunning Macleod (1821-1902), the difference between the prices of *Consols* for ready money and for account showed a rate of interest equal to 50% per annum. *Consols*...an abbreviation for *Consolidated Annuities*...are a *Government Bond* or *Gilt Edged Security* first issued in 1752 when all *Government Stock* was converted into a single *Consolidated 3.5% Annuities* bond. *Goschen's Conversion Act* of 1888 set the interest rate on these *Consols* at 2½% after 1903 and promised to pay back the *Principal* on 5 April 1923...or by *Act of Parliament* thereafter. *Governments* regard these *Consols* as a cheap overdraft that never needs repaying so they form a small part of the *Government's Debt Portfolio* managed by the newly created *Debt Management Office*...one of a number of quasi-governmental organisations (quangos) involved in manipulating money for *Her Majesty's Treasury*. Two other quangos are the privately owned *Company of the Bank of England* and the *Office of National Statistics*. Macleod published *Theory and Practice of Banking* in 1856 followed by *Elements of Political Economy* (1858), and *A Dictionary of Political Economy* (1859). His *Principles of Economist Philosophy* in 1873, and in 1889 *The Theory of Credit*. Between 1868 and 1870 he was employed by the government in digesting and codifying the law of *Bills of Exchange*. Macleod's principal contribution to the study of economics consists in his work on the theory of credit. A major feature of his work was to create a theory of money starting from a theory of credit instead of the other way round. In *The Theory of Credit* he says 'Money and Credit are essentially of the same nature: Money being only the highest and most general form of Credit'. (page 82). [Ed].

<sup>8</sup>Brooks Adams in *Law of Civilization and Decay*.

<sup>9</sup>Adapting its *Usury Doctrine* was the most essential.

<sup>10</sup>These were the words of Father Keble Talbot at the *Anglo-Catholic Congress* of 1920.

The forces that had severed religion and morality were still at work, so that when Kingsley and Maurice took one step forward, the *Church* may not have taken two steps backward but there is evidence of retarded progress even of retrogression. Pusey doubted whether he and Maurice worshipped the same divinity.

It was an age of many reformers - Coleridge and Southey, Bentham<sup>11</sup> and Mill, Carlisle, Owen, Cobbett - while Karl Marx was writing in the *British Museum*. He noted that Luther prohibited usury, but was bemused by current thought on money and never examined its issue. The *Communist Manifesto* was another response to the crisis of 1848 which aroused *Christian Socialism*.

Cobbett stoutly held to the last that he was a member of the *Church of England* and came nearest the old traditions. He complained, among much else, of the *Worldliness* and *Stupidity* of the parsons and of the poor attendance at *Morning Services*.

Cobbett was the father of the *Agrarian Movements* in this country, and has a striking counterpart in John Taylor of Carolina who, at the end of the eighteenth century, attacked the *Bank*, insisting like Cobbett on *Good Husbandry*. In his *Enquiry into the Principles and Tendencies of Certain Measures*, Taylor said that 'a money impulse and not the public good is operating in *Congress*'.

But it was for Giuseppe Mazzini<sup>12</sup> to insist on the *Duties of Man* in answer to Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*. For Mazzini *Greed*<sup>13</sup> was the principal new vice. Public dishonesty in his day contrasted with the medieval period when bejewelled shrines were constantly visited. Once more the question of why there should be *Poverty* in the midst of *Plenty* was raised.<sup>14</sup>

It is true that there were social implications of the *Oxford Movement*<sup>15</sup> but two forces at least diverted men's attention from them. One was the sectarian kind of struggle between the *Oxford Movement* and the *Evangelicals* and *Clapham Sect*, who recommended resignation to the evicted *Yeomen* and other sufferers.

The other was the sweep of *Avaricious Industrialism* which was changing not just the face but the very soul of England. Industrialism was not without its prophets, as the *Economists* were considered, and their doctrines succeeded in the popular mind those of *Church and Bible*. Robert Southey<sup>16</sup> wrote:

"As for the *Political Economists*, no words can express the thorough contempt which I feel for them. They discard all moral considerations from their philosophy and in their practice they have no compassion for flesh or blood."

But this was not the opinion which the business world held of the *Wealth of Nations*, and Church leaders took from this world many of their ideas. Maurice, Kingsley and Ludlow appear as figures in the wilderness. The most that Wilberforce, and his like, required was that a country should be filled with men 'each diligently discharging the duties of his own station without breaking in on the rights of others, but endeavouring to forward their views and promote their happiness'.

It was cold comfort for those who had been dispossessed of their rights, and it was an optimistic kind of view for a society based on avarice with few restraining laws. Yet it has been repeated in our own day by the late Bishop of Jarrow, who said that the *Church* did not exist to make society fit for men but men fit for society.

The forces against the *Christian Socialists* were in fact moving forward in confidence of everlasting progress, with small concern for those who suffered in the advance. Ludlow wrote of *Wilfred Owen's Movement* that:

"Instead of seeking to distinguish in it what was genuine, living and hopeful and what was false, excessive and dangerous, they looked on bewildered or joined with its opponents to hoot and crush the whole thing down."

Dr. Arthur Wade was a notable exception when he headed the procession of protest against the scandalous sentence imposed on the Dorchester labourers. He was Vicar of Warwick, and said that to withhold God's bounty from those who want is the highest treason against heaven. Dr. Wade was in the great line extending

<sup>11</sup> A champion at usury!

<sup>12</sup> Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) was an Italian patriot, philosopher and politician. His efforts helped bring about the modern Italian state in place of the several separate states, many dominated by foreign powers, that existed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He also helped define the modern European movement for popular democracy in a republican state. [Ed].

<sup>13</sup> David Hume called avarice 'the spur of industry'. Avarice differs from 'the profit motive', as sin from normal outlook.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Beard gives details in *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy*.

<sup>15</sup> The title of a book by W.G. Peck.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Southey (1774-1843) was one of the *English Lake Poets* and a *Poet Laureate*. He wrote biographies of John Bunyan, John Wesley, William Cowper, Oliver Cromwell and Horatio Nelson. He was also a renowned Portuguese and Spanish scholar, translating a number of works and writing a *History of Brazil* and a *History of the Peninsular War*. Robert Southey was the author of the immortal children's classic *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. [Ed].

from Bishop Berkeley to modern denouncers of *Poverty amid Plenty*. But he argued rather from the results of the economic system, right as he was to do so, and did not attack what the *Church* had formerly regarded as the fundamental causes of this disaster.

Reckitt mentions the layman John Minter Morgan, who said that we should not 'ascribe to His laws the imperfections of Human institutions', and Dr. William King of Brighton, who edited the *Co-Operator*. Such men did respond to Owen's challenge, but the hatred of things medieval and their association with Rome was still operative enough to prevent them calling on or examining the tradition of the *Church*.

As Ruth Kenyon remarked in *Christianity and the Industrial Order*, it was the publication of William Ashley's book<sup>17</sup> that led men to consider again the *Just Price* and *Usury*. Religion at this time was less and less connected with public life and morality, so that Jews and atheists became eligible for the *Parliament* whose members were responsible for the election of bishops.

Thomas Malthus and his *Scarcity Economics* was another force against social thought or reform. Malthus probably looked at the results of industrialism and read a cause into them. In fact, his work actively discouraged helping the poor as he was priest not of God - as the fatalistic laws he enounced make plain - but of the *Usurious Masters of Britain*.

Thomas Hood (1799-1852) should be mentioned among poets and reformers. Besides his well known *Song of the Shirt* with its indictment of 'poverty, hunger and dirt', he took up the case of Gifford White, a labourer sentenced in the Spring of 1844 to transportation for life for writing a threatening letter to the farmers of Bluntisham, Lincolnshire. Hood's eloquent appeal did not prevail against the panic of the farmers and the obduracy of the *Home Secretary*. One of Eliza Cook's verses, written as a demand for a fitting epitaph, gives an idea of what the public thought of him:

"But Hood, 'poor Hood!' the Poet fool  
Who sang of Women's' woes and wrongs  
Who taught his Master's golden rule -  
Give him no statue for his songs!"

Ashley, Arnold and Dickens tried to help those on whom *Industrialism* bore most heavily, without appreciating the ghastly fact that the victims had largely been *Independent Yeomen* not long before and had been robbed of their position and dignity. Matthew Arnold wrote:

"What is the good of a national church if it be not to Christianize the nation and introduce the principles of Christianity into men's' social and civil relations?"

Wordsworth understood the spiritual effects of the new 'progress'.

But the significance of Maurice, and his associates, Kingsley and Ludlow, from our point of view is that he started a movement, which dates back to 1848 and has resulted in something like the *Doctrine about Usury* being enunciated by a section of the *Church*.

This was because Maurice was a *Theologian* who revived the *Doctrine of Creation* and was content to leave no part of life outside the *Kingdom of Christ*. He restored Our Saviour to his position of redeemed not merely of a few independent souls but of *World Disorder*.

The numerous Christian and anti-religious movements, protests and proclamations would have resulted in little but improved material conditions - for some here and some there - unless the man with the equipment had come forward who could integrate the thirst for *Justice* with the *Doctrine of Christ* and the repulsion at *Injustice* with the *Dogma of Sin*.<sup>18</sup> Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) was such a man.

Kingsley was the *Rector of Eversley* from 1843. He authored *Alton Locke* in 1849 and the *Water Babies* in 1862. Kingsley met Ludlow in London in 1848 when it was clear that the *Charter* was not going to be effective. They resolved to grasp the opportunity as representatives of the *Church*.

In spite of Kingsley's aristocratic and somewhat patronizing attitude, close ties were formed with *Chartists* and working men. Kingsley's hatred of Rome might have hampered the *Christian Socialists* in recovering medieval teaching, but it was balanced by Maurice's theology and led them to be interested, not merely in *Sanitary Reform* such as the prevention of diphtheria or to be apostles of *Muscular Christianity*,<sup>19</sup> but to look for defects in theology in contemporary representations of the *Faith*.

<sup>17</sup> Sir William Ashley's *Mediaeval Economic History* has been discussed previously.

<sup>18</sup> *From Maurice to Temple* by M.B. Reckitt (1947).

<sup>19</sup> The *Rector* objected to this title despite the fact that the race still held near Eversley bears his name.

Of all who have written of Kingsley, Reckitt is best qualified to point out the rector's unique and modern contribution. For his country life gave him an insight into the processes and very laws of nature, and anticipated modern thinkers who commend a return to *Organic Husbandry*. In the waste of manure, the pollution of water and the sub-human repetition work of factories,<sup>20</sup> he saw a defiance of the *Laws of Providence*.

Before his appointment as *Canon of Westminster*, Kingsley had been *Canon of Chester* and this took him through the *Black Country*. Once people begin to look at *Nature* for guidance, and to have reservations about *Mechanical Progress* and artificial aids or impediments to life, it should not be too long before they consider the *Nature of Money* itself.

John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx were similar in the way they took for granted the fundamental matter of the nature of money, without questioning the *Economists*. Both of them even went so far as to invest it with a power which a modern writer has compared to that residing in the *Divine Bread*. The kind of society commended by Marx is essentially industrial. And Kautsky remarked that more factories would have to be introduced before his brand of *Social Democracy* became practicable.<sup>21</sup>

Kingsley stood alone in the *Christian Socialist Movement* to challenge this assumption, a great contribution in the age when *Thinkers* were mesmerized by *Machines* to an even greater extent than at present. The other leaders, Maurice and Ludlow, were *Town-minded* and it hardly crossed their mind to doubt the premises of *Industrialism*.

Kingsley's *Sanitary Reform* was not the petty issue it appears<sup>22</sup>. Yet some people consider that Reckitt's judgement on Charles Kingsley tends to be harsh. A few extracts from the 1882 edition of his *Westminster Sermons*, which are not given by Reckitt, will reveal Kingsley's claims and limitations. He says in his *Preface*:

“It is time that we should make up our minds what tone *Scripture* does take towards *Nature*, *Natural Science* and *Natural Theology*.”

He calls the *Laws of Nature* ‘the voice of God expressed in facts’.

But he sees that there is a curse on the earth.

“Man's work is too often the curse of the very planet which he misuses. None should know this better than the *Botanist* who sees whole regions desolate and given up to sterility on account of man's sin and folly, ignorance and greedy waste.”

And he quotes Elias Friers:

“A broad band of waste land follows gradually in the steps of civilization...behind him, man leaves a desert, a deformed and ruined land...the planter now often leaves the already exhausted land to become infertile through the demolition of the forests, to introduce a similar revolution in the far West.”

Kingsley is aware of the results of violating *Natural Law*, although he may not have known the word *Erosion*. And he is aware of *Greed* in human and monetary dealings. But he did not go far enough to connect the two. Preaching on the *Fruits of the Spirit*, he attributes to the old *Evangelical School*:

“...the germs at least and in many cases the full organization and final success of a hundred schemes of practical benevolence and practical justice, without which this country, in its haste to grow rich at all risks and by all means, might have plunged itself ere now into *Anarchy* and *Revolution*.”

Kingsley, no less than Maurice, believed in the *Kingdom of Christ* as unassailed and undiminished by the *Laws of Political Economy* and tacitly assumed that God was mightier and juster than Adam Smith. Maurice asked:

“Do you believe that you are actually now in a *Kingdom of Heaven* which cannot be moved, and that the living, guiding, acting, practical real king thereof is Christ who died on the Cross...an eternal changeless kingdom and an eternal changeless king?”<sup>23</sup>

Speaking on the *War in Heaven* and the *Battle of Life* he declared,

“Why, Cyrus and his old Persians, 2,400 years ago, were nearer to the kingdom of God...they had a clearer notion of what the battle of life meant, when they said that not only the man who did a

<sup>20</sup> What we now call ‘employment’ and both political parties consider the end of existence.

<sup>21</sup> *Social Democracy* by X. Kautsky.

<sup>22</sup> Yeast is an expression of Kingsley's ideas.

<sup>23</sup> *The Shaking of the Heavens and the Earth* by John Frederick Denison Maurice.

merciful or just deed, but the man who drained a swamp, tilled a field, made any corner of the earth somewhat better than he found it, was fighting against Ahriman, the evil spirit of darkness on the side of Ormuzd, the good god of light.”<sup>24</sup>

In his sermon *On God and Mammon*, Kingsley noted some of the reasons for the downfall of society:

“The Jews did not heed the warnings of Our Lord, St. Paul or St. James...after the fall of Jerusalem even more than before, they became the *Money-makers* and *Money-lenders* of the whole world.

“Throughout all the *Middle Ages*, here in England, just as much as on the continent, they lent money at exorbitant interest; and then the *Debtors*, to escape payment, turned on them for not being Christians.

“And meanwhile, who are we that we should complain of the Jews now, or of the Jews of Our Lord's time, for being too fond of money? Is anything more certain than that we English are becoming given up more and more to the passion of making money at all risks and by all means foul or fair? Our *Covetousness* is become a byword among foreign nations; while our old English *Commercial Honesty* is going fast.

“The very classes among us who are utterly given up to *Money-making* are the very classes which in all denominations make the loudest religious profession.

“You are in *Christ's Kingdom*. If you wish to prosper in it, find out what its laws are. *God's Kingdom* is a well-made and well-ordered kingdom. The yoke of *Money-making* [is] not light and easy like the yoke of Christ, but heavier and heavier as the years roll on, while you have still to roll up hill the money bags which are perpetually slipping back,”

He warned the *Young* against spreading a ‘net of greed and craft’ about their feet.

“Choose the better part which shall not be taken from you; for it is according to the true *Laws of Political and Social Economy*, which are the laws of the *Maker of the Universe*, and of the *Redeemer of Mankind*.”

In his sermon *On England's Strength*, he said:

“Freedom is a vast blessing from God, but freedom alone will preserve no nation...How many free nations in Europe lie now in bondage, gnawing their tongues for pain, and weary with waiting for the deliverance which does not come?

“No, my friends, freedom is of little use without something else - and that is loyalty...true freedom can only live with true loyalty and obedience, such as our prayer book, our *Catechism*, our *Church of England* preaches to us.

“If our freedom has had anything to do with our prosperity, I believe that we owe the greater part of our freedom to the teaching and general tone of mind which our *Prayer Book* has given to us and our forefathers for now these three hundred years.”

These passages are not out of date, and it only needed the connecting link between his insight both into *Natural Law* and *Divine Law* on the one hand, and into the *Money-getting Mentality* on the other, to reintroduce Christian teaching on the way in which money could be legitimately used.

But Kingsley was one of his own generation in his antipathy to *Catholicism* and would not look back for guidance. But he did recall attention to first principles, although none of the trio understood the immediate causes of the distress and agitation of their times.

Maurice also attacks the new spirit of *Greedy Money-making*, and his course of sermons *On the Lord's Prayer* requires a return to the *Law of Love*. He mentions ‘passing continually in our streets creatures of our own flesh and blood, who have a look of hunger and misery’, and of hearing ‘masses of creatures spoken of as if they were the insects we look at in a microscope’.

But it was not for his particular words - even in the *Tracts on Christian Socialism* - that Maurice has his large place in this study. He instituted a movement that with many vagaries, led the *Church of England* back again to consider the *Nature of Money* and the meaning of the *Usury Laws*. Others also led the way to the pre-1694 position, but the *Church* at least had her share.

<sup>24</sup> The reference is to Zoroaster's teaching.

The *Christian Socialist Movement* was most active from 1848 to 1854. Maurice was the leader and he avoided the many parties that then, as always, claimed so much attention. He ‘earned the animosity of men of every school primarily by not belonging to any of them.’

It was his mission, as he wrote to Ludlow at the time:

“to show that economy and politics must have a ground beneath themselves, that society is not to be made anew by arrangements of ours, but is to be regenerated by finding the law and ground of its order and harmony, the only secret of its existence, in God.”

Maurice was finding his way outside the system in which a particular theory of money was the great existing reality, for ‘the *Kingdom of Heaven* is the great existing reality’, and at least he started the kind of thought that would stop at nothing until it found the *Law of God* and his *Purpose in Nature*.

It was such work that the *Fathers of the Church of England* had done. Foremost amongst them had been Lancelot Andrewes with his contrast of *Human Law* and *Divine Law*, for to his mind usury could be legalized by the human but must still remain a *Sin* against the *Divine Law*.

Later the name of *Socialist* did not help the return to first or *Natural Principles*. But in 1850 it was embodied in the *Principle of Association*, which was a step towards *Partnership*. The positive side of the *Medieval System* of which the *Prohibition of Usury* was the negative.

The experiment of *Trade Associations* failed, although the *Working Men’s College* was formed in 1852. But the forces working against a return to the full doctrine and authority of the *Church* in economic matters were still active, and it is significant that in 1854 all *Usury Laws* were abolished by *Act of Parliament*. The *Act* is very heavy on *Pawnbrokers*. But the moral defeat had occurred centuries before, and even the *Christian Socialists* would not have seen its relevance.

For the next thirty years or so the witness of the *Church* in social matters is sporadic. Maurice wrote in 1870:

“It seems to me sometimes as if the slow disease of money getting and money - worship, by which we have been so long tormented, must end in death.”

Westcott and others were beginning to formulate what was later known as *Christian Sociology*. It was a conscious attempt to base *Social Principles* on *Religious Doctrine*, notably the *Doctrine of Creation*. There were many *Christian Philanthropists*, like Gordon and Shaftsbury, but it was said,

“The drive for *Gain* had continued unhampered by *Religion* and even stimulated by it.”

Trollope has been accused of being out of date with his *Clergy*, but he wrote of what he saw, and Maurice was an outstanding exception. Trollope meets this charge at the end of his *Barchester Towers*.

Many leading and even conscientious *Christians* tried to make the system tolerable and to ameliorate some of its worst features while they were heart and should in sympathy with the aims of industrialism. *Victorian Religion* had much in common with the *Calvinism* which first sanctified *Commerce*, and there is little wonder that usury did not worry the conscience of *Clergy* or *Laity*.

There were at least two men of the period who saw accurately what was happening. One was the *Novelist* and *Poet*, Thomas Love Peacock<sup>25</sup>, and the other was the *Economist* James Harvey. Indeed, the subject now takes a peculiar twist, for it is not, largely, the clergy of the *Church of England* and only in some cases the *Laity* who lead the way to sane economic thought.

Such thinking has its effect on the *Church*. It is a contrast to the earlier period when the *Church* propounded economic teaching directly. This means that the thoughts of others are relevant besides those directly involved in the developing sociological movement, which Reckitt calls the seed growing secretly.

Peacock (1785-1866) wrote in his earlier books with considerable antipathy of the clergy. In *The Headlong Hall* (1816) there is the unattractive Rev. Dr. Gaster, and the next year in *Melincourt* the clergy are the Rev. Mr. Grovelgrub and the Rev. Mr. Portpipe. But in *Crotchet Castle*, the Rev. Dr. Folliott is a likeable representative of the *Church Militant*.

Peacock also wrote about *Borough Taxes* and *Paper Money* with rare understanding, although it was abuses of paper money and not paper money as such that was to blame. In his final book, the Rev. Dr. Opimian, named

<sup>25</sup> J.B. Priestley is one of the few 20<sup>th</sup> century writers who was still willing to praise the writings of Peacock. Priestley’s second long novel *Angel Pavement* caused consternation and soon slipped out of favour after the feel-good factor of his best-selling first novel *The Good Companions*. But it is one of his greatest and its roots lie in Peacock’s writings. [Ed].



after a delightful wine, is made to declaim one of the bitterest and most intelligent poems of the nineteenth century. G. Saintsbury does not approve of it, although he recognizes that:

“...when Peacock first wrote, the follies he laughed at were still, though they were ceasing to be, on the side of *Toryism* and opposition to *Progress*. By the time of *Crochet Castle*, they were mainly, by the time of *Gryll Grange* almost entirely, on the other side - that of *Progress* itself.”

The Rev. Dr. Opimian said (and this awareness is attributed at least to the *Church*):

“I will recite to you some verses on what appears to me a striking specimen of absurdity on the part of the advisors of royalty here - the bestowing the honour of knighthood, which is a purely Christian institution, on Jews and Paynim; very worthy persons in themselves and entitled to any mark of respect befitting their class, but not to one strictly and exclusively Christian; *Money-lenders* too, of all callings the most anti-pathetic to that of a true *Christian Knight*.”

Peacock wrote:

Sir Moses, Sir Aaron, Sir Jamramagie,  
Two stockjobbing Jews and a shroffing Parsee  
Have girt on the armour of old Chivalrie  
And, instead of the Red Cross, have hoisted balls three.

Now fancy our Sovereign, so gracious and bland,  
With the sword of St. George in her royal right hand,  
Instructing this trio of marvellous knights  
In the mystical meaning of Chivalry's rights.

You have come from the bath all in milk white array,  
To show you have washed worldly feelings away  
And, pure as your vestments from secular stain,  
Renounce sordid passions and seekings for gain.

This scarf of deep red o'er your vestments I throw  
In token that down them your life blood shall flow,  
Ere Chivalry's honour, or Christendom's faith,  
Shall meet, through your failure, or peril or scaith.

These slippers of silk, of the colour of earth,  
Are in sign of remembrance of whence ye had birth;  
That from earth you have sprung and to earth you return  
But stand for the faith life immortal to earn.

This blow of the sword on your shoulder blades true  
Is the mandate of homage, where homage is due,  
And the sign that your swords from the scabbard shall fly  
When 'St. George and the Right' is the rallying cry.

This belt of white silk, which no speck has defaced,  
Is the sign of a bosom with purity graced,  
And binds you to prove, whatsoever betides,  
Of damsels distressed the friends, champions and guides.

These spurs of pure gold are the symbols which say  
As your steeds obey them, you the Church shall obey,  
And speed at her bidding through country and town  
To strike, with your falchions, her enemies down.

Peacock adds a note that in *Stock Exchange* slang, *Bulls* are speculators for a rise, *Bears* for a fall and a *Lame Duck* is a man who cannot pay his differences and is said to waddle off. Such awareness of the dealings of usury is at least attributed to the *Church*...in the person of Dr. Opimian.

This awareness also appeared in Byron's writings (1788-1824). He noted how rich Britain was in Jews, and the political results of a loan.<sup>26</sup> Napoleon too is said to have understood who the real powers were. But such knowledge in the *Church* must have been confined to a few *Doctor Opimians*.<sup>27</sup>

The *Patriotism* of the *Money Market* is well touched by François Ponsard<sup>28</sup> in his comedy *La Bourse* (Act IV, Scene 3).

<sup>26</sup> In *Don Juan* in particular.

<sup>27</sup> George Eliot's reference to the war and high prices has been previously noted.

*Alfred:* Quand nous sommes vainqueurs, dire qu'on a baissé;  
Si nous étions vaincus, on aurait donc haussé?  
*When we were winning, to think we should have dropped!  
And when we were losing, so we should have raised?*

*Delatour:* On a craint qu'un succès, si brillant pour France;  
De la paix qu'on rêvait n'éloignât l'espérance.  
*We feared that success, so brilliant for France;  
Of the peace that we dreamed would lose us the chance.*

*Alfred:* Cette Bourse, morbleu! n'a donc rien dans le coeur!  
Ventre affamé n'a point d'oreilles...pour l'honneur!  
Ainsi je ne veux plus jouir - qu'après ma noce –  
Et j'attends Waterloo pour me mettre à la hausse.  
*This Market, bedammed, has a heart that is empty!  
And a belly that's empty has no ears...for honour!  
So I will no longer enjoy - save after wedding –  
And await Waterloo to set about raising the rate.*

In 1875 James Harvey, author of *Paper Money* and *Interest of Money a Legalized Robbery*, asked who had ever heard a sermon condemning usury as a sin. Harvey understood the nature of money clearly enough, and wrote:

“If labour is the source of wealth, labour should be the source of money. As the substance comes into existence, so should the shadow.”

Harvey anticipates a modern theory that money should be a certificate of work done. He complains that in the Rev. J. Green's *History of the English People*:

“There is not the slightest allusion to the financial policy of Mr. Pitt when in 1793 he passed the *Bank Restriction Act*. Nor any reference to the important effects on the prosperity of the country of Sir Robert Peel's reversal of that policy. *The History of England*, epitomized by Hume, passes over the subject without comment.”

He continues:

“*Finance* will prove to be the keystone of history, and historians will be compelled to bring it more prominently before students. The issue of *Paper Money* on the cultivation of land is described by Rector Twells in his pamphlet.”

Walter Savage Landor professed friendship for the *Church of England* and realized what money did. In *The Letters of a Conservative*, addressed to Lord Melbourne in 1836, he attacked the *Extravagance of the Bishops* and makes proposals for social reform. One of these may be quoted for its modernity:

“that between fourteen and twenty, none work longer than four hours consecutively nor beyond eight hours in the twenty four.”

Landor also remarked that:

“Mr. William Pitt was the most wonderful steam-engine that ever worked with human breath. But all that came from it is mingled and lost in air, excepting an insoluble body of *National Debt*, and an eternal blight on *Agricultural Labour*.”<sup>29</sup>

Landor continued:

“The *Clergy*, and principally the higher, must be treated like the *Patients* of Dr. Caius in the seating sickness; they must be kept from going to sleep.”

<sup>28</sup> François Ponsard (1814-1867) was born in Vienne, Isère and trained as a lawyer. His breakthrough as a playwright came in 1843 with production of *Lucrèce* at the *Théâtre Français* in Paris. *Lucrèce* was followed by *Agnès de Méranie* (1846), *L'Honneur et l'Argent* (1853), *Charlotte Corday* (1859), *Le Lion Amoureux* (1866) and the controversial *Galilee* (1867). Ponsard's plays represented a reaction against the romantic style of Dumas and Hugo, blending the liberty with time and place of the *Romantics* with the more sober style of earlier *French Drama*. Ponsard's 3-volume *Œuvres Complètes* was published in 1876. [Ed].

<sup>29</sup> We are reminded of Mr. Massingham's remark that the *1832 Reform Bill* was Cobbett's greatest disillusionment, because it gave the power to the *Industrial Lords*.

This was written in 1836, the year after Cobbett's death and the publication of *Legacy to Parsons* and was one more indication of the desperate spiritual plight of the *Church*, which Lord Melbourne did not expect to survive more than a generation.

A later passage shows Landor to be a man of no party like Maurice but with greater awareness of economic motives.

*Whig*: As our wars have usually been conducted, if every man in England had as much courage and as much strength as Samson, it would avail us little, unless we had in addition the scrip of his countryman Rothschild. Men like these support wars and men like Greville beget them.

*Tory*: Not a word against that immortal man, please sir! Your economists, the most radical of them, will inform you that not money but the rapid circulation of money is wealth. Now whatever made it circulate so rapidly? All the steam engines that were ever brought into action would hardly move such quantities of the precious metals with such velocity."

From our standpoint the significance of Trollope is that he saw the importance of money in life to the sundering of bone and marrow. He was a *Churchman*<sup>30</sup> and was not opposed to the cheering influence of the *Oxford Movement*. He was opposed to the dreariness of cant and to the hypocrisy and greed that could be embodied even in prayer.<sup>31</sup> The Vicar of Bullhampton, with his merciful love for the castaway Carrie Brattle was luckily not so outdated as some of Trollope's critics would have us believe.

But in one of his last books shortly before his death in 1882 Trollope let fly at the drift in contemporary society. In *The Way we Live Now*, an *International Financier* is elected to *Parliament* for Westminster and entertains the *Emperor of China*. A *Jew* is accepted into a country family, to buy it out, and a suspect *American lady* also has a hand in the invasion.

But the *Church* took little notice of the perceptions of these men, some of them her members, none of them hostile to her true vocation. Faith in God was shaken to its foundations, while the distinction between issuing money, as the *Bishops* had done, and lending it, as the Rothschilds were doing, was too sharp for minds that were speculating in slums.

The attitude of the *Church* is well demonstrated by the definitions given in *Latin-English Dictionaries*.

The Rev. J. Riddle, in his *1843 Dictionary*, translated *fenerator* as: 'one who lends on interest, a capitalist. In a bad sense, as usurer'. The Rev. John White, in his dictionary of 1876, also implied that lending for gain may be an honourable trade with little qualification in translating *fenerator* as: 'one who lends on interest, a money-lender; with odious secondary idea, a usurer'. This difference is not found in Dr. Samuel Johnson's dictionary. In *Classical Latin*, *fenerator* is never used save with the force it would have had in Cato of 'criminal or despicable blackguard'.

The only action referring to money that the *English Church* took during this period was in 1867, when the *Decrees of the First Four Councils* were 'declared authoritative by *Act of Parliament*', and 'reaffirmed as part of the *Rule of Faith* of the *United Church of England and Ireland*'.

The *XVIIth. Canon* of the *Council of Nicea* forbade the clergy to practice usury, and has already been quoted.

The thirty years up to the outbreak of the 1914 war were busy with many movements within the *Church of England* that tried to help workers, as the vast *Proletariat without Property* was now called. Stewart Headlam and Thomas Hancock led the *Guild of Saint Matthew*. Canon Scott Holland was prominent in the *Church Union* and edited *The Commonwealth*.

Both movements tried to help the poor and to stir the conscience of church people, who were then a considerable body. But neither made very fundamental criticisms of the society which produced these evils. The industrial and financial systems were then accepted, although one was based on unreality and the other on usury. However, the movements did keep alive the Church's conscience, while Joseph Arch drew attention to the plight of agricultural labourers.

Arthur particularly interested Bishop Gore, while a student. *Mammon Worship*, as it was then called, was a target for popular preaching, but in spite of those mentioned and the warning of Thomas Attwood<sup>32</sup> to the

<sup>30</sup> "I try to go to Church regularly."

<sup>31</sup> Cousin Henry, for example, the weak rascal who always said the *Lord's Prayer* in bed and the praying lady in John Caldigate.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Attwood (1783-1856) was an *MP* in the *Chamberlain Family's* fiefdom of Birmingham. The Chamberlains were *Industrialists*; the Attwoods were *Bankers*. Attwood brought to *Parliament* an understanding of *Finance* and campaigned for *Currency* and *Parliamentary Reforms*. In sharp contrast to the *Orthodoxy* of his *Age*, Attwood understood that *Money*

*Chartists*, money power was not thought of. Indeed, the most aware of *Churchmen* tended to identify *Christianity* with *Socialism* - a doctrine that was no better defined than in the days of Maurice, and was apt to produce stupid reactions.

There was little attempt to regain the *Church's* authoritative position with regards to money and economic activity - such doctrines as the *Just Price*, for instance - and it was largely a movement of the heart within the *Financial Industrial* set up, in spite of *Theologians* such as Bishop Westcott.

But nearer the end of the century a deeper understanding of the problem's nature did appear, and had its effect on the *Church of England*, for Pope Leo XIII issued his *Encyclical Rerum Novarum*. It was a recall to the *Just Price*, notably of the *Labourers*, and said that unjust treatment of labour cried to heaven for *Vengeance*. At the same time, the *Roman Church* has never endorsed the teachings of *Socialism*, while it opposes '*Freemasonry, Communism and Zionism*'.

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Chapter 15 ▶

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backed by *Precious Metal* created the scarcity upon which the *Financiers* feasted. He campaigned for *Paper Money* backed by *Productive Power* and for the *Money Issue* to be by *Public Credit* instead of *Debt* on which the *Nation* pays interest to a *Private Corporation*. Austin Mitchell, *MP for Grimsby*, was the 2008 *Winner* of the *Attwood Award*. In *Chapter XI*, Rev. Henry Swabey quotes from Attwood's *Observations on Currency, Population & Pauperism*. [Ed].

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