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The New Age and the Apocalypse - Carlyle's developing vision on history and society.

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THE NEW AGE AND THE APOCALYPSE - CARLYLE'S DEVELOPING VISION OF HISTORY AND SOCIETY

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of London

by

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation into the concern for History displayed in the Works of Thomas Carlyle. This is seen to be related to his criticism of contemporary society. Carlyle studied History for an insight into the problems of the nineteenth century, and History enriched his roles as artist, prophet and social critic. However, his view remained concentrated on his own age.

This concern is seen to be founded on his conception of the nineteenth century as an age of transition, during which society was undergoing profound apocalyptic upheaval. The overarching theme of the new age and the apocalypse embraces both Carlyle's historical works and his social criticism. Carlyle's emergent vision of the modern age as one of change, disruption and disintegration is viewed in the light of his antipathy toward the secularizing, materialist trends of the age, as well as his portrayal of the successive periods of belief and apocalyptic change in History.

The important scholarship already in existence on Carlyle's early intellectual and religious background is endorsed in this study. Setting out from the view that greater attention needs to be paid to Carlyle's intellectual and religious development after 1834, the study discusses the salient ingredients in Carlyle's important historical works, and the important bearing these had upon his social criticism.

The research is based on Carlyle's Works, as well as on manuscripts and letters of Carlyle, published and unpublished.

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SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Published Material. The references in this thesis are taken throughout from The Centenary Edition of Carlyle's Works, edited by H.D. Trail, London, 1896-99, with the exception of Sartor Resartus, where the edition used is C.F. Harrold's, New York, 1937. The Duke-Edinburgh edition of Carlyle's letters is cited as Letters.

Abbreviations are noted in the footnotes otherwise.

References to the Centenary Edition enumerate volumes in Roman numerals, e.g., Essays, II..., The French Revolution, III...

J.A. Froude's four volume biography of Carlyle is cited in Roman numerals.

Other enumeration of volumes follows the published editions.

A full index of publications consulted is included in the Bibliography.

Unpublished Material. The following abbreviations are used:

NLS - National Library of Scotland, e.g., MS, NLS: 523 (Letters of Thomas Carlyle to John Aitken Carlyle).

V & A - Victoria and Albert Museum, London, e.g., MS, V & A: F 48. E3 (Letters of Thomas Carlyle to John Forster).

Details of unpublished material consulted appear in the Bibliography.

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The responsibility for the presentation and views of this thesis is entirely my own.

CHAPTER 1

CHARACTERISTICS

The immediate Post-Napoleonic years were an age of prophets, pseudo-messiahs and savants, all reacting in one way or another to the acute sense of crisis and change which had been brought about by the revolutionary upheavals and fall of ancient institutions. While the absolutist monarchs of Europe endeavoured to re-establish the ancien régime on its old foundations, at the Congress of Vienna, and through such attempts at absolutist solidarity as the 'congress system' and the 'concert of Europe', there were within their respective domains movements of political and religious ferment which reflected the pervading sense of instability of the time.[1]

On the Right, we may figure the response of religion, which in such diverse figures as Chateaubriand, Joseph de Maistre, Bonald; Adam Müller and Ludwig von Haller; Edward Irving and Spencer Perceval, all represented a holding fast to traditional doctrines, buttressed by a new spirit of irrationalism. Each within their own traditional communions manifested a rigid opposition to liberalism and a return to orthodoxy, so vehement that in the eyes of the orthodox their orthodoxy seemed heterodoxy.

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1. See J.L. Talmon, Political Messianism. The Romantic Phase; and Romanticism and Revolt, Europe 1815-1848.

The Romantic Age released a new intensity of adherence to doctrines long held out of mere habit. Irving's call was both backward-looking and archaic in his use of seventeenth century puritan divinity and his appeal to apostolic gifts, and apocalyptic in its expectation of the imminent return of Christ. He was the most outstanding product of an impulse which threw up a number of fringe fanatics like Joanna Southcote and Richard Brothers.[1] Revivalism was to produce a stream of preachers and prophets throughout the first half of the century.

On the Left, political ideology had been fermented and tested by the Revolutionary explosion following upon 1789. Proclaiming either atheism or a refurbished social religion intended to meet the needs of the new age, the millenarian prophets of socialism, such as Comte Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourrier, Robert Owen and others, preached the dawn of a new day in human history. Whilst the religious millenarians were invoking the Judgement of the Last Day, in the traditional Christian terms of violent physical signs on earth and in the heavens, the socialist prophets were envisaging a speedy establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth. The radical bourgeoisie also had its prophet in Jeremy Bentham, whose philosophy propounded a totally re-organized, rational, egalitarian society freed from the bondage of tyranny and superstition.

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1. See G. Kitson Clark, 'The Romantic Element 1830-1850', Studies in Social History, ed. J.H. Plumb.

Carlyle, who reached his twentieth year in 1815, would become better acquainted with these influxes of revolutionary and apocalyptic interpretations of the new age. In a few years time, he would imbibe from the disciples of Saint-Simon and Bentham their masters' doctrines, whilst as the close friend of Edward Irving, he was in a special position to observe and react to the phenomenon of religious millenarianism.

Meanwhile, though born in lowland Scotland among the classes of peasantry and yeomans, his early life had not been lived in so remote a corner that the great change of the time had passed him by. In his own home, in the person of his father, Carlyle was reminded of the effects of this bewildering time of change. "The great world-revolutions send in their disturbing billows to the remotest creek; and the overthrow of thrones more slowly overturns also the households of the lowly",he wrote in 1832. "My Father had seen the American War, the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon. The last arrested him strongly: in the Russian Campaign we bought a London Newspaper, which I read aloud to a little circle thrice weekly. He was struck with Napoleon, and would say and look pregnant things about him: empires won, and empires lost... and now it was all vanished like a tavern brawl! ... I have heard him say in late years, with an impressiveness which all his perceptions carried with them: 'that the lot of a poor man was growing worse and worse; that the world could

not and would not last as it was; but mighty changes, of which none saw the end, were on the way.' To him, as one about to take his departure, the whole was but of secondary moment: he was looking towards 'a city that had foundations'".[1]

Yet this quietist religion of his father, an offshot of a dissenting sect removed from the established Kirk of Scotland, was in itself to be a casualty of the age of change. "The Church to which he belonged had educated him in his world-philosophy, a proud and independent one, and so he was in Carlyle's sight a fine and admirable product of the old system - a product perhaps the last of his kind".[2] The father thus left his son a strong example of individual striving, self-sufficiency, and religious belief. But "the old Theorem of the Universe" which was "sufficient for him",[3] was not tailored to fit his son. Emotionally, he was to go through life revering but unable to accept the "simple version of the Christian Faith",[4] taught him by his parents.

Thus, the age of change was impressed upon Carlyle through immediate personal experience. The standards of his family upbringing were soon questioned when he embarked upon his university education at Edinburgh. Though he was not

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1. Reminiscences, 30-31.
2. I.M. Campbell, 'Carlyle and the Secession',55.
3. Reminiscences, 4.
4. Harrold, Sartor Resartus, 99.

taught infidelity - on the contrary, his teachers endeavoured to provide their pupils with a liberal Christian education - he was laid open to the influence of the eighteenth century sceptics and philosophes. Gradually, their influence, as has been described elsewhere, corroded his doctrinal belief in his native Scotch Calvinism.[1] The chilling air of rationalism blown from the eighteenth century had its effect on the young Carlyle: "thus was the young vacant mind furnished with much talk about Progress of the Species, Dark Ages, Prejudice, and the like; so that all were quickly enough blown out into a state of windy argumentativeness; whereby the better sort had soon to end in sick, impotent Scepticism; the worser sort explode... in finished Self-conceit, and to all spiritual intents become dead".[2]

Carlyle reacted to the new age which had robbed him of his faith, by setting out on a field of investigation which eventually enabled him to characterize the whole epoch. Though his studies were not begun at first with this end in view, his voracious reading provided him with a stock of learning in the natural sciences, in History, and in Literature, which he would in time put to the use of interpreting the new age. He relinquished the natural sciences in the early 1820's, but through History and Literature, he began

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1. To the standard accounts J.A. Froude's Life, and C.F. Harrold's Carlyle and German Thought 1819-1834, should be added G.B. Tennyson's Sartor Called Resartus, and the recent research into Carlyle's Scottish background and early life by I.M. Campbell (see bibliography).

2. Harrold, Sartor, 112.

to build up a picture of contemporary society founded upon biographies of men whom he took to be its significant products. It was through his use of biography in essays on Literature that Carlyle created for himself a perspective of the contemporary age.

Carlyle's early reading was a rich diet of travelogues and histories. At the early age of fourteen, in addition to Cook's Voyages, Carlyle had embarked upon William Robertson's History of Scotland, Hume's History of England, and the first volume of Gibbon's Decline and Fall.[1] Neither was he neglecting the classics of imaginative literature, for he was already busy with Shakespeare. Until his mature historical studies led him away from imaginative literature, History and Literature were twin sisters in Carlyle's reading in the Arts.[2]

What factors helped to determine that the eventual bent of Carlyle's mind was historical, and that he should use History in his interpretation of society? It was true that the Calvinist household he grew up in, epitomized in his father's hatred of fiction, discouraged him from taking up the imaginative arts. Yet this narrowing influence was not without its compensatory side. James Carlyle allowed the value of reading History; he was interested in the real transactions of men. "He delighted to hear of all things

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1. Masson, Edinburgh Sketches and Memories, 231-232. The account here gives details of Carlyle's university reading from contemporary records.

2. Hill Shine, Carlyle's Early Reading to 1834...provides a lis compiled from references in letters, journals, and his Works

that were worth talking of; the mode of living men had, the mode of working, their opinions, virtues, whole spiritual and temporal environment".[1] He had a regard for facts as opposed to mere speculation. "Any talk that had meaning in it he could listen to: what had no meaning in it, above all, what seemed false, he absolutely could and would not hear".[2] Carlyle inherited from his father his hatred of theoretic speculation, and what interest he took in Metaphysics was exhausted by the efforts it cost him in trying to conquer scepticism.

Carlyle's father, in fact, was a powerful influence, not only on his style, but upon his intellect. "Clearness, emphatic Clearness, was his highest category of man's thinking power: he delighted always to hear good 'Argument;'.. I have often pleased him much by arguing with men...in his presence".[3] In a somewhat modified form, James Carlyle's attitudes can be seen in his son. Carlyle's Works are throughout concerned with argument and attempts to arrive at meaning. They are remarkably catholic in the subjects they deal with, and catholic in their interest in what generations of men have thought and said, but damning when treating what Carlyle considered small-minded, specious or rhetorical.

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1. Reminiscences, 5.
2. Ibid., 6.
3. Ibid., 12.

Carlyle inherited his father's strong-mindedness, and his moralist's frame of mind then. He was concerned to know what was going on around him, and what had happened in the past, because these two factors helped interpret to him what man was. The religious bias of Carlyle's upbringing made sure that his concern with argument, and his attempts to arrive at meaning, rested ultimately on moral grounds. Were men good, or were they bad - what made them so, themselves or their environment?

The early essays reflect this concern. His special interest in the biographies of literary figures was that their lives displayed this moral earnestness - or failed to display it, when their lives fell short of the high, moral aim of art:

> ..among these men are to be found the brightest specimens and the chief benefactors of mankind! It is they that keep awake the finer parts of our souls; that give us better aims than power or pleasure, and withstand the total sovereignty of Mammon in this earth.[1]

The finest example of Carlyle's pursuit of the correlation of art and morality in a biographical context is his essay, 'Burns'. The moral behind it is the maxim: 'He who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem'.[2] As Professor Tennyson observes: "There is a distinct correlation between the quality of the author's life and Carlyle's respect and affection for his work ".[3]

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1. Life of Schiller, 43.
2. Essays, I.316.
3. Tennyson, Sartor Called Resartus, 79.

Though Carlyle makes allowance for Burns - here was a fellow Scot from much the same background as himself - still he cannot waive his standard. Burns, and Byron as well, had simply asked too much from life and neglected to follow their art as though called to a prophetic office.

Beneath the idealism of this position on art can be seen a moralism that derives from Carlyle's Calvinist training, the same religious frame of mind that distinguished his father's interest in "the mode of living men had, their opinions, virtues, whole spiritual and temporal environment". A Calvinist's immediate interest was whether a man exhibited the works that were the fruit of a justifying faith. Though he had lost the doctrinal faith, Carlyle was throughout his life anxiously concerned with the relationship between a man's work and his religious belief.

However, his biographical studies in the lives of literary men taught him the delicate interaction of the moral performance of the individual, and that influence which the environment he was born into would exert upon him. Carlyle's essays of the 1820's, including the Life of Schiller, show a recognition of this fact. He digested it and expressed it best in 1833, in his essay 'Diderot'. It was "a great truth, one side of a great truth, that the Man makes the Circumstances, and spiritually as well as economically is the artificer of his own fortune. But there is another side of the same truth, that /the man's circumstances are the element he is appointed to live and work in; that he by necessity takes his complexion, vesture, embodiment, from these, and is in all

practical manifestations modified by them almost without limit; so that in another no less genuine sense, it can be said Circumstances make the Man".[1]

Here then was an important, two-sided criterion for estimating the life of an individual: his moral performance was to be considered in the light of his own individual exertion against the material difficulties all flesh is heir to; but also in the light of the character of the age he lived in. Thus, as his approach to the life of the individual was religious (Calvinistically inclined as we have said), so the same criterion was expanded to meet the character of an age. Hence the key to Burns's struggle centres on the man of genius and human sympathy fallen into an age barren of religion: "He has no Religion; in the shallow age, where his days were cast, Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light <u>forms</u> of Religion;[2] and was, with these, becoming obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow of doubt. His religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, 'a great Perhaps'".[3]

The study of the individual thus involved Carlyle in the delineation of the background against which his life

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1. <u>Essays</u>, III.229.

2. This is a reference to the split in the Secession Kirk into Burgher and Anti-Burgher over the administration of the Burgess oath. The controversy arose again in the first years of the nineteenth century when the terms 'Auld Licht' and 'New Licht' were used. See Burleigh, <u>Church History of Scotland</u>.

3. <u>Essays</u>, I.313.

was led. He plots the sufferings of a Heyne, from a poor family in Saxony, his hard struggle with necessity at Leipzig University, and his eventual triumph - all against the backcloth of the first half of the eighteenth century and the Seven Years War. Where possible, he wishes to know the religious belief of his subject - whether it was deep or superficial, theoretic or practical. His inquisitive mind is fascinated (to an extent that worried Goethe) with the prospect in the enigmatic figure of Zacharias Werner of an "unnatural union of genius with depravity".[1] Carlyle's Calvinist morality was never faltering or prudish about the realities of life. Indeed, at this time it was buttressed by a tolerance no doubt fostered by his studies in German idealism, but, despite his later detractors, one which never wholly left him.

Carlyle's interest in men, therefore, was founded on religion - construed ethically rather than doctrinally - and around the core of the life of the individual were sketched in the immediate social factors he had to contend with, and the character of the age as a whole. When all was allowed for, the achievement of the individual was more clearly seen; but hasty judgement was at all times precluded, for in every heart "there are mysteries and unsounded abysses", and it was "a questionable philosophy which undertakes so readily to explain them".[2]

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1. Essays, I.88.
2. Ibid., 145.

Eventually, it can be seen that Carlyle's interest in individual biography discerned so many influences and forces at work - not least the myriad lives of other men - that he let this interest spill over into the study of the influences and forces themselves. The stuff of History was still "the essence of innumerable biographies",[1] but its outer shape was obviously stamped by a collective spirit. The bent of Carlyle's mind thus became historical because of his religious interest in the lives of men. He came to use History in his interpretation of society because he realized the organic relationship between past and present. As he wrote in 1830, in the essay 'On History':

> every single event is the offspring not of one, but of all other events, prior or contemporaneous, and will in its turn combine with all others to give birth to new: it is an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being, wherein shape after shape bodies itself forth from innumerable elements.[2]

The language, of course, bears the flavour of the organicism of the German Transcendentalists, and it tells us that this review of the foundations of Carlyle's interest in History and society has taken us some way from his Calvinist beginnings. The details of this advance as it relates to German influences, philosophical and literary, have been dealt with at such length elsewhere that they need not detain us once more.[3] But we shall look at the problems

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1. Essays, II.86, and III.46.

2. Essays, II.88.

3. e.g. Harrold; Hill Shine, Carlyle's Fusion of Poetry, History and Religion by 1834.

Carlyle had to face before he could establish his view of History of 1834.

The problem presents itself thus: Carlyle had seen from his literary studies that there was a pattern of individual response to the age of change, of which he himself was a part. He had lost his own faith as a result of the climate of this epoch, and this gave personal stimulation to the wider recognition that a spiritual crisis had descended upon the contemporary western world. The years 1818 to 1831 represent Carlyle struggling to come to grips with the characteristics of the present age. By 1831, he had, he believed, not only achieved this, but had also solved his personal spiritual crisis.

Clearly, for a person of Carlyle's temperament who was attached to religious belief even though deprived of its doctrinal solace, and who had a native element of mysticism in his character as well, the rationalism of the eighteenth century Enlightenment would be uncongenial. Yet the influence of the eighteenth century sceptic historians, such as Robertson, Hume, and Gibbon, could not but be great. "The eighteenth century was...an age of consuming interest in history. History was a craft, a discipline, and an entertainment".[1] These great literary historians brought to the study of History not only an urbane, finely weighed style of argument, but, as Peter Gay has argued, the beginnings of a genuinely scholarly approach to historical documents.[2]

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1. P. Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, vol. 2, The Science of Freedom, 369.

Yet, as Gay admits, the eighteenth century philosopher-historians used History for polemical purposes; for all their recognition of the relative worth of different movements and events of previous ages, "relativism was swamped by polemical passion".[1] "They wrote the history of the human mind as the history of its rise from myth in classical antiquity, its disastrous decline under Christianity, and its glorious rebirth".[2] They were, first and foremost, 'modern pagans', who had no use for the Christian Religion, or non-rational or 'mythically' based cultures in general. They aimed to "secure rational control of the world", and deprecated "ages of myth, belief, and superstition", while they pronounced the virtues of the Classical Age and the new Enlightenment, as "ages of rationality, science, and enlightenment".[3]

In practice, this had a limiting effect on their writing of History. The past was ill-judged by a hostile mind, and very little rapport was achieved between historian and his subject. Critics of the Enlightenment historians have accused them of having no sense of the past, since they had no sympathy and insight into ages incompatible with their rationalist frame of mind. Indeed, from such a work as Gibbon's Decline and Fall, History does appear as "a register of crimes,

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1. Ibid., 383.
2. The Enlightenment..vol. 1., The Rise of Modern Paganism, 35.
3. See Ibid., Chap. One, 'The Useful and Beloved Past'.

a tale of cruelty and cunning, at best the record of unremitting conflict"; even though each age had its "champions of reason and humanity".[1]

Carlyle's reaction to this school of History was both admiring and hostile. As we saw, he had begun reading Robertson, Hume and Gibbon at an early age; it was to Gibbon that he had yielded his faith, for after reading him in 1817 or 1818, he told Allingham, he "then first clearly saw...that Christianity was not true".[2] Yet his letters to Robert Murray, his college friend, reveal at that time delight in Gibbon's style (after an initial dislike) as well as recognition of his unorthodoxy. Indeed, "the whole historical triumvirate", of Gibbon, Hume and Robertson, were "abundantly destitute of virtuous feeling - or...any feeling at all".[3] Still, Gibbon's perfect command of argument and style continued to win his enthusiasm. "The volume [of the Decline and Fall] which treats of Mahomet is a splendid piece of writing", he wrote to Jane Welsh in 1823. "Never look at the notes, if you can help it; they are often quite abominable".[4]

Carlyle was known to his college friends as "the Dean", after Swift - a recognition of his sarcastic wit and powers of argument.[5] He had to admire the same faculty in Gibbon, even while he must have felt uneasy at the object

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1. Ibid., 32.
2. W. Allingham, A Diary, 232.
3. Letters, 1.121.
4. Letters, 2.330.
5. Masson, 244.

of its employment. Besides, Gibbon had elevated the sphere of History: "History you have heard me say a thousand times", he wrote to his brother John, "is the basis of all true general knowledge; and Gibbon is the most strong-minded of all historians".[1] It was clear, then, that Gibbon had won Carlyle's intellectual, if not his moral assent: he had lifted History to rank among the highest forms of literary art, and it is true, as several critics have remarked, that Carlyle, through his reading, inherited partly the respect paid to History in the Age of Reason.[2]

But this intellectual assent was limited by the end to which it led. To Carlyle's mind, there was something barren in the "talk about Progress of the Species, Dark Ages, Prejudice, and the like", for it ended "in sick, impotent Scepticism". As early as 1822, the apprentice work essay, 'Faust', revealed Carlyle's discontent with the previous century's sceptical view of life and history. Goethe's Mephistopheles represents "the Denyer", who "fears nothing", complains of nothing, and hopes for nothing. "His powerful intellect" enables him to understand man's feelings and emotions without sympathy; "irony is the only tone in which he speaks of all things". The universe and its history are only a source of "derision from a rational thinker". In short, Mephistopheles: "in many respects...resembles some French

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1. Letters, 2.467.

2. See Harrold, 151-154; Louise Young, Thomas Carlyle and The Art of History, 10-11.

philosophe of the last century... He cannot pity, or admire, or worship - he can only mock".[1]

This revulsion against the heartless employment of reason was deepened by Carlyle's moralism; and the belief that the previous century's thinkers had undermined human feeling, and religion itself, became the burden of his criticism of their effect on the modern age.

Not only the British eighteenth century historians, but the chief belligerents of the Enlightenment - The French philosophes-were well known to Carlyle. He knew the works of Montesquieu, D'Alembert, Diderot and Voltaire. One of his earliest reactions to Voltaire was to write to Robert Murray"...the said Voltaire is the most impudent, blaspheming, libidinous blackguard that ever lived"; he strongly reproved Voltaire's "indecent, vicious or profane allusion[s]".[2] But he was still fair - he recommended Montesquieu's L'Esprit des Loix to Matthew Allen five years later in 1820,[3] and wrote to Murray of his sorrow that Hume, the philosophes' great ally, had been a Deist: "How much might his strong talents have accomplished in the cause of truth, when they did so much in that of error!" [4]In the same letter, Carlyle expressed a view of the influence of rationalists which he was to carry fundamentally throughout his life:

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1. Collectanea Thomas Carlyle, ed. S.A. Jones, 76-78.
2. Letters, 1. 43-44.
3. Letters, 1.263.
4. Letters, 1.55.

> What will become of La Place and Playfair and Hume and Voltaire & [] unprejudiced, unsophisticated ones, when the carrion and offal of creation & unsophisticated as they? are as unprejudiced [1]

The remark was prompted by the observation that certain cobblers and weavers in the neighbourhood of Ecclefechan were openly declaring themselves Deists, even Atheists. It is characteristic because it reveals that at such an early stage (he was barely twenty) Carlyle was aware of the function of religion as social cement. The eighteenth century had done a great deal to weaken this by its assault on religion, and Carlyle was beginning to weigh up in his mind the real effect of this upon society.

The religious issue, then, was uppermost in Carlyle's mind when he viewed the eighteenth century inheritance. It was in his essay 'Voltaire' of 1829, that he expressed at length his objection to the philosophes on the religious score, an argument he carried out in part, at a general, philosophical level. In C.F. Harrold's words: "He sought to redress the intellectual and moral balance which had been disturbed by eighteenth century skepticism, mechanism, associationism".[2] The means he used to attack Voltaire's denial of what he saw as religion itself rather than the French Church alone, involved a use of the concepts of Reason (Vernuft) and Understanding (Verstand) which he had learned from the German

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1. Ibid.
2. Harrold, 2.

Idealists after Kant. This distinction, which Coleridge used, and which has been discussed elsewhere,[1] enabled him to carry on a debate with Voltaire over the fundamental impulse of religion.

> Understanding, Carlyle took to mean the narrow, rational power which was able to discern only the relation between things at a phenomenal level. It could order facts, but did not operate in the realm of primary truths which was open only to Reason, a deeper, intuitive source of knowledge. He associates Understanding with eighteenth century speculation: "the means whereby man accomplishes whatever, in the way of outward force, has been made possible for him; conquers all practical obstacles, and rises to be 'king of this lower world'". This was no mean faculty, and Carlyle was prepared at this time to give it its due. He was himself a capable mathematician with publications to his name, and was versed in the principles of astronomy and some other natural sciences as a result of his studies prior to adopting a literary career.

However, Understanding had its definite limitations; it was not qualified to enter the province of higher truth, where Reason held sway. It was not meant to be used in order to try proving the existence of God, or to enter into speculation about beauty or virtue. Reason alone was capable of discerning the truth of religion.[3]

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1. See Harrold, Chapter V. The influence of Coleridge is discussed and significant passages from his work cited.

2. Essays I. 448.

3. Ibid., 82.

Now Voltaire, who was an adept in using the tools of the Understanding for purposes of polemical demonstration, employed his skills in deriding religion. He dealt with it, according to Carlyle, only in a spirit of mockery: "for him, in all matters, the first question is, not what is true, but what is false; not what is to be loved, and held fast, and earnestly laid to heart, but what is to be contemned, and derided, and sportfully cast out of doors".[1] Thus the weaponry of the rationalist moves into realms it does not properly apprehend. Voltaire never understood the religious impulse: "The glory of knowing and believing is all but a stranger to him; only with that of questioning and qualifying is he familiar".[2] Voltaire, then, was not qualified to judge the more profound implications of religion according to Carlyle's argument. His offence was

> ...that he intermeddled in Religion, without being himself, in any measure religious; that he entered the Temple and continued there, with a levity, which, in any Temple where men worship, can beseem no brother man; that, in a word, he ardently...warred against Christianity, without understanding beyond the mere superficies what Christianity was.[3]

Carlyle carries part of his argument by his demonstration of the weakness of Voltaire's moral posture; where his character was prone to vanity, self-preservation and weakness on points of principle was he then qualified to effect the moral force of Christianity?[4] Yet his imputation

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1. Ibid. 413.
2. Ibid. 413-14.
3. Ibid., 456.
4. Ibid., 404.

of guilt to Voltaire on the question of religion reveals, if anything, the tentativeness of his own standpoint. While affirming the sacrosanctity of the religious impulse, he does not wish to be drawn on the matter of the evidences of Christianity. "Our fathers were wiser than we, when they said in deepest earnest/ness, what we often hear in shallow mockery, that Religion is 'not of Sense, but of Faith';not of Understanding, but of Reason".[1] Christianity's origins were in the deepest, interior realms of men, and the religion's test of divinity lay in ethical regions where mere investigation into its miracles could produce no light. Carlyle plays Goethe's 'Worship of Sorrow' doctrines from Wilhelm Meister against Hume's Essays on Miracles[2].

The argument then, resolves itself into a quite clear Enlightenment-Romantic cleavage, in which both sides are using their own definitions. Though Carlyle will not be more explicit about what he means by Religion, his argument carries some moral weight: the significance of the essay lies in its moral objections to the work of the philosophes. Were they qualified to attack religion as they did?

In 'Signs of the Times', an essay which appeared only two months after 'Voltaire', Carlyle carried his attack on the eighteenth century's rationalism on to a far broader front. Instead of confining himself to the religious issue, he builds up a case against the whole mode of thought of the

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1. Essays, I. 457-58.
2. Ibid.

Enlightenment rationalists. He designates this as "Mechanism" and proceeds to investigate its influence in the present world by examining its effects, from Metaphysics to government.

The problem, as Carlyle sees it, is rooted in the excessive dependence on reason which the Enlightenment had championed, and which had spread to an excessive implementation of "mechanical" ways of thinking and acting throughout the whole of society. So much was this so, that the age had become the "Age of Machinery"; in the spheres of political economy, science, metaphysics, even religion, the age was governed by this mechanistic approach. It now constituted the most fundamental problem to be faced. It was "a mighty change in our whole manner of existence":

> For the same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions, - for Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle.[1]

This excessive dependence on the outward, mechanical province of man, as opposed to the relative neglect of his inward "Dynamical" faculty which is the source of spiritual ideas, is tacitly attributed to the Enlightenment. Locke, the inspiration behind so many of its procedures, is called to task for originating modern Metaphysics, which since his time downwards had been "physical".[2] Modern philosophy did

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1. Essays, II. 62-63.
2. Ibid., 64.

not deal with the ultimate questions of necessity, freewill, the relation of mind to matter; time, space, God and the universe. Hume had instead opened the way "into the bottomless abysses of Atheism and Fatalism", and the Scottish School of Metaphysics had continued to tug "lustily" on the same "logical chain". The reductio ad absurdum of the philosophy of the senses was the recent "discovery" that "'as the liver secretes bile, so does the brain secrete thought'".[1] Given this frame of mind it was not surprising that deeper investigation into man - into his religion and poetry for instance - had been abandoned. Modern thought, in short, is figured as saying: "what cannot be investigated and understood mechanically, cannot be investigated and understood at all".[2]

The dependence on mechanism was a pronounced trait of Politics: "Nowhere .. is the deep, almost exclusive faith we have in Mechanism more visible than in the Politics of this time". The "mighty interest taken in mere political arrangements" was "itself the sign of a mechanical age".[3] Where in the past a Socrates, a Plato, a Jeremy Taylor, had shown the necessity for individual self-nurture as the secret of happiness, the modern philosopher advocated a reform of government, a perfecting of external circumstances for the achievement of the same end.[4]

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1. Ibid., 64-65.
2. Ibid., 66.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 67.

The mechanical frame of mind had even spread into religion. "Religious machines" (such as the new missionary Bible Societies, and recent commissions for Church building, which are not by name mentioned) have adopted the task of preaching the gospel. In fact, each sect or interest, in politics and religion, had its own organ for propagating its ideas. Then, not least, the sudden increase in wealth itself, facilitated by the new machinery, proclaimed the age to be what it was: the 'Age of Machinery'.

What was the bad effect of all this? It was that the Dynamical part of man suffered as a result of the imbalance. The Dynamical had ultimately motivated the men of genius of the past, in science and art; men like Bacon, Kepler and Newton; Homer and Shakespeare; it gave to man his sense of wonderment, awe and religion. Guided by nature it was essentially individual: a Newton was ultimately the produce of the Dynamical part of man, Carlyle says; in this time, the individual genius which he supplied is replaced by modern academies.

History gave examples of the Dynamical in action: the Middle Ages had produced the Crusades. The Reformation was the result of a spiritual idea, as was "Our English Revolution". Even the French Revolution expressed the Dynamical: "Here too was an Idea; a Dynamic, not a Mechanic force".[1]

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1. Ibid., 71.

Individual effort and personal valour were the hallmark of great achievements; organisation might amount to nothing otherwise. The Dutch, for example, still possessed a constitution, but they were no longer stirred to do such deeds as those they performed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, under such heroes as William the Silent. The noble people made the noble government, then, and not vice versa. Democracy, Carlyle says, is not a necessity in order to have freedom; this, "without which indeed all spiritual life is impossible, depends on infinitely more complex influences than either the extension or curtailment of the 'democratic interest'".[1]

'Signs of the Times' sets off by characterizing the present age as the inheritance of the mechanical frame of mind of the eighteenth century rationalists, then. But it moves into an argument still wider in its force: a diagnosis of the disease of the present age revealed an alarming range of implications to the 'Age of Machinery'. Machinery, for instance, had created great wealth, but it was concentrated in the hands of a few whilst poverty flourished.[2] Contemporary science and philosophy seemed to put rich potential in men's hands in respect of conquering the environment, yet they were leading to atheism, a tendency apparently increased by the secularizing effects of political machinery.[3] Religion, beneath the clamour of its sectaries, might, in fact, be losing the spirit

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1. Ibid., 71-72.

2. Ibid., 60 .

3. See Ibid., for the potential of the machinery created by science.

essential to its survival. Behind all these developments, Carlyle posits the imbalance of the Mechanical and Dynamical parts of man.[1] Society needed a re-infusion of the Dynamical, it needed, in short, a spiritual renewal.

'Signs of the Times', as critics of different persuasions agree, was a seminal work for the nineteenth century. It remained at the core of Carlyle's own critique of the age for many years after. Past and Present grew out of the seed in the essay, criticizing the existence of wealth amidst poverty, and the means by which wealth was being generated. Later, the Latter-Day Pamphlets developed the rudimentary remarks against democracy of 'Signs of the Times'; and its early suspicion that the spirit of religion was dying, in spite of the "religious machines", was greatly amplified in that same, later work. And perhaps most significant of all, the discovery of the withering of the Dynamical province in the modern age gave way to Carlyle's more specific call for a return to 'Belief', and his celebration, in works like Chartism, Past and Present, and indeed ubiquitously throughout his later works, of the virtues of past ages of heroism and vitality. Against them, the present age had already been weighed and found wanting by Carlyle in his seminal essay of 1829.

It can only be remarked upon in passing how influential the essay proved for later critics of Victorian material-

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1. Ibid., 73.

ism, like Arnold and, in America, Emerson. As early as 1829, a decade and a half before Victoria's accession to the throne, Carlyle had suggested a process which historians of her reign over a century later would see as one of the most significant features of the Victorian Age: the secularization of society. Indeed, Owen Chadwick specifies the new "secularized" atmosphere of society as coming in the 1860's. Carlyle had sensed its manifestations thirty years before they become clear to the historical eye.[1] Nevertheless, the essay is not gloomy, despite its indictment of mechanism. It begins by showing that the conservative citizens who feared the recent repeal of the Test Acts, and Catholic Emancipation, were setting themselves against the tide of History. It concludes with praise for the increase in knowledge and education, and foresees the time when heroism and admiration for what is noble will have returned. It is the present hour which is likened to the 'darkest..hour nearest the dawn':

> The thinking minds of all nations call for change. There is a deep-lying struggle in the whole fabric of society; a boundless grinding collision of the New with the Old. The French Revolution, as is now visible enough, was not the parent of this mighty movement, but its offspring.[2]

This was announcing the theme which would be the main burden of Carlyle's significant works: that of the apocalyptic demise of the old age. Meanwhile, the new one was awaited in its stead.

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1. O. Chadwick, The Secularization of The European Mind in the Nineteenth Century.

2. Essays, II. 82.

'Characteristics', separated from 'Signs of the Times' by two years, displays a development of Carlyle's ideas on several fronts. To begin with, where the earlier essay had proposed a balance between the Mechanical and the Dynamical parts of man, in 'Characteristics' the gap is widened, and there is tension instead. There is an undoubted dualism now in Carlyle's thinking: the "Unconscious", which corresponds to the Dynamical, is held up as the ideal, the state where the body social is healthy without being conscious of the fact. His argument with eighteenth century rationalism has also now developed into what amounts to an avowed contempt for metaphysical speculation and moral philosophy.

The concept of the Unconscious is associated with a feeling of "the significance of Mystery".[1] This faculty is now accounted the most essential and persistant part of man. It manifests itself in society as the "Divine Idea" which holds society together. A society founded on such a Divine Idea is "the standing wonder of our existence; a true region of the Supernatural".[2] In contrast, the modern age had acquired the disease of "Consciousness" - or rather, not the disease, but the symptom of disease. For the basic argument of the essay is that modern, analytic thought is symptomatic of a diseased society. The mere act of questioning proves all is not well. Consciousness,

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1. Essays, III. 16.
2. Ibid., 12.

however, like the Understanding, is but a limited fraction of man: "what he can contrive, nay, what he can altogether know and comprehend, is essentially the mechanical, small; the great is ever, in one sense or other, the vital; it is essentially the mysterious, and only the surface of it can be understood".[1]

Nevertheless, the present time, as in 'Signs of the Times', abounds in endeavours to know and comprehend mechanically the small, the superficial. Addressing a day fraught with increased political activity, Carlyle focusses on Politics as an example. The present time was well supplied with political theorists: "The evil repute your 'theoretical men' stand in, the acknowledged inefficiency of 'paper constitutions', and all that class of objects" typified the Conscious at work . "Whatsoever can proclaim itself from the house-tops may be fit for the hawker, and for those multitudes that must needs buy of him; but for any deeper use, might as well continue unproclaimed".[2]

Against this sickness of Consciousness, Carlyle develops his favourable view of past epochs where society was motivated by a high ideal. Moreover, what was the crucial part, society in those times was unaware of itself. In the Roman Republic, for instance, patriotism was unquestioned - only when it ceased to be so were "Treatises

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1. Ibid., 3.
2. Ibid., 17.

of the Commonwealth" written on the subject.[1] So too, the strength of feudal monarchy was that it went without saying. ("Society went along without complaint; did not stop to scrutinise itself, to say, How well I perform! or, Alas, how ill!...Society was what we can call <u>whole</u>, in both senses of the word".[2]) Poetry and Literature, Religion, and Philosophy as its handmaid, pervaded such times. Not that life was without its perennial hardships: nevertheless, men acquitted themselves of these without recourse to "a system".[3] Knowing what to do unquestioningly, they simply performed it.

Now the greatest symptom of the diseased modern society was its speculativeness. As an example, Carlyle has before him (as one of the two works the essay is reviewing - the other is Schlegel's last set of lectures) Thomas Hope's system of metaphysics. No better contrast could perhaps be found to set against the unspeculative epochs just mentioned. Carlyle sees in Hope's metaphysics the reaction of a sceptical, inquiring mind against a previous "theorem" of the universe. His dismissal of Hope is couched in satirical vein: we have a system which includes "the First Cause..as a huge Circle, with nothing to do but radiate 'gravitation' towards its centre".[4]

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1. Ibid., 14.
2. Ibid., 15.
3. Ibid., 3.
4. Ibid., 36.

This kind of thinking is an advanced stage of the "chronic malady" of Metaphysics.[1] According to Carlyle, it has weakened the possibility of faith (and Hume is named once more). Thus the frame of mind Hope's system represents is not simply a bait for Carlyle's irony: it has succeeded in encouraging doubt and scepticism, with the result that faith, which once sweetened the bitter pill of existence, has been made impossible for most men. For the universe had been figured by the Metaphysicians as a machine - one which the poet can only appreciate as a crushing burden: "the sum of man's misery is even this, that he feel himself crushed under the Juggernaut wheels, and know that Juggernaut is no divinity, but a dead mechanical idol."[2] Carlyle's image conveys a sense of the poet's bitter reaction to the universe the materialist philosophers have forced him to envisage as his home, and which he repeats in Sartor Resartus.

This is not, however, the final vision of 'Characteristics', though it had haunted Carlyle for some while earlier as Sartor Resartus again explains. He had attained to a new vantage point from where he realized the limitation of the sceptic's view of the world. "To the better order of...minds any mad joy of Denial has long since ceased"; the time to check Scepticism had come: "the problem is not now to deny, but to ascertain and perform.

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1. Ibid., 26.
2. Ibid., 29.

Once in destroying the False, there was a certain inspiration; but now the genius of Destruction has done its work, there is now nothing more to destroy".[1] The old, then, was all but ended; a new order was nowrequired.

However, before this would come, in the interim, the present stood out as an age of transition, characterized here in terms similar to those of 'Signs of the Times'. Society is on the threshold of a new era, whilst undergoing the stress of the old one's decay. In the meantime, society suffers from the prevalence of mechanism in its relations and activities. It was symptomatic of a lack of the Dynamical or Unconscious forces which made for coherence and the healthy functioning of society. Thus, though "the doom of the Old has long been pronounced, and irrevocable..[and] the Old has passed away..alas, the New appears not in its stead; the Time is still in pangs of travail with the New".[2]

Nevertheless, we can tell, however mysterious man's existence must ever seem, that "this wondrous Mankind is advancing some-whither".[3] The movement of the past attested to the onward development of History: ages give way to succeeding ages; Paganism was followed by Catholicism, Tyranny by Monarchy, the process neither ends or stands

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1. Ibid., 32.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 37.

still.[1] The present age, therefore, following on the scepticism of the Enlightenment, was one of Mechanism, but it must give way to a new age of light.

In his view of society by 1831, therefore, Carlyle had wrought for himself a perspective in which he could view the past, the troubles of the present time, and even prophesy the near future somewhat. The journey that had brought him thus far grew, as we saw, out of his antipathy to the rationalist thinking of the Enlightenment, particularly where it had made inroads into religion. It was founded on a recognition of change, which he felt immediately through his own loss of faith, had seen in the biographies of literary figures whom he observed in their various reactions to it, and which he had followed over into the wider environment of their age. These various factors led Carlyle to characterize the present time. If the perspective he thus attained to cannot be called 'historical', because of its subjectivity, it can be replied only that Carlyle's view of History was indeed subjective.

This view was certainly founded on documentary evidence of a kind, but relied more on a native intuition. "Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand", was Carlyle's personal diagnosis, to which he added in 'Characteristics': "It is not by Mechanism, but by Religion; not by Self-interest, but by Loyalty, that men are governed or governable".[2] Religion was not

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1. Ibid., 38.
2. Ibid., 42.

precisely defined, except in so far as it is said to originate in an actual realm beyond reason and sense experience, and could be seen to operate in past societies.

But, in fact, these premises were not confined to Carlyle. On the contrary, the historical perspective we have seen emerge from his work can and should be seen in the context of a wider movement: that of German Idealism. Carlyle's diagnosis is akin to, and clearly influenced by, the German Idealists. It will be possible here to expand somewhat on Professor Harrold, and relate the salient points of agreement as evinced in the two essays discussed.

Herder must begin any discussion of the break with the Enlightenment,[1] which he began as early as the 1770's, in attacking, significantly, its concept of History as a move from superstition, or religion, to non-religious morality. He also broke, in so doing, with the Enlightenment's strict chronology of the darkness of the past and the light of the eighteenth century. He established instead the need to penetrate into each period and to study it for its own sake, understanding it on its own terms.

Between 1784 and 1791, in his work <u>Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind</u> (the <u>Ideen</u>), Herder set about revolutionizing the conventional historical attitudes. He opened up the past and established a vista of

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1. See F. Copleston, <u>A History of Philosophy,</u> vol. VI, Chaps. VI-VII.

progressive development in the future. "Still there is no doubt, generally speaking", he wrote, "that what has not yet appeared upon Earth will at some future period appear: for no prescription is a bar to the rights of man, and the powers, that God has implanted in him, are ineradicable".[1]

Since the beginning of time, in fact, from the evidence of primitive societies to the advanced civilizations, it was apparent man's history had been on the move. Nor was it liable to reach a static peak of achievement such as the Enlightenment prided itself upon, for the present time was but a step on the way, no less subject to change than any other time:

> The plant blossoms, and fades: your fathers have died, and mouldered into dust: your temple is fallen: your tabernacle, the tables of your law, are no more: language itself, that bond of mankind, becomes antiquated: and shall a political constitution, shall a system of government or religion, that can be solely erected on these, endure for ever? [2]

In 'Characteristics', Carlyle echoes the sentiment:

> How often, in former ages, by eternal Creeds, eternal Forms of Government and the like, has it been attempted,...to chain the Future under the Past; and say to the Providence, whose ways with man are mysterious, and through the great deep: Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further! A wholly insane attempt...[3]

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1. Herder, Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 86.

2. Ibid., 163-164.

3. Essays, III. 37. See also Hill Shine, 'Carlyle's Early Writings and Herder's Ideen', for a discussion of the general points of influence of Herder's work on Carlyle.

In Fichte, whose work, Characteristics of the Present Age, Carlyle read as well as Herder, there could be found further criticism of the Enlightenment, with its self-centred sense of superiority over the past, and a more developed periodicity than in Herder.

Fichte designated the present age as the third epoch in the development of terrestial life. Whereas in the two preceding epochs men's reason remained under-developed, first, as a state of innocence in which instinct prevailed, and second, where a sense of sinfulness called forth "ruling Authority", the third epoch was the "Epoch of Liberation", or "completed sinfulness":

> the Present Age stands precisely in the middle of Universal Time..[and] unites the ends of two essentially different Worlds, - the World of Darkness and that of Light,- the World of Constraint and that of Freedom,- without itself belonging to either of them.[1]

There were to follow two more epochs in Fichte's five-fold plan of History. Though Harrold considered "Fichte's metaphysical treatment of history was almost wholly lost on Carlyle",[2] he would have been able to find in Fichte some biting epithets used to characterize the Third Epoch, which synchronised in Fichte's scheme with the world of the Enlightenment.

Fichte sees that world, in effect, as a world in limbo - an "Age of Empty Freedom", in which nothing is

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1. Fichte, Characteristics of The Present Age, 16.
2. Harrold, 161.

accepted which cannot be clearly comprehended by the individual. It is an age which does not know that man has to learn "how to know".[1] It is falsely guided in its belief that the individual alone can know, being an age of "naked Individuality" intent upon its own "self-preservation" and "well-being". What it cannot apprehend is dismissed, for, "it is Experience alone from which this Age derives its views of the world". Unable to attain to "Ideas of a higher world and its order" which transcends its experience (for Fichte, that of the "Divine Idea", which we saw Carlyle utilize in 'Characteristics') this age rests instead on its doctrine of happiness and has a patronising view of the past.[2]

Herder and Fichte, then, would have aided Carlyle in giving him a perspective of change and development throughout History, moving onward to a future goal. In part, they could help him too in characterizing the present age, for their points of hostility to the Enlightenment were also his in the main. The German writers and poets who were contemporaries or near contemporaries of the two philosophers could give Carlyle an even more rich appreciation of the age of change as a result of their more personal responses.

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1. Fichte, 20.
2. Ibid., 24-26.

Goethe apprised him of the idea of alternating periods of Belief and unbelief in History,[1] and was thus instrumental in helping form the analysis behind 'Signs of the Times' and 'Characteristics', with their examples of past ages where the Dynamical and Unconscious part of man figured chiefly.

The Germans after Kant had been united in attacking the mechanistic philosophy of the Enlightenment. Carlyle's opening maxim in 'Characteristics' - "The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick" - recalls Schiller's dictum: "the knowledge of the malady must precede the return to health"; thus Carlyle's figure of German Metaphysics in the form of Schlegel, as "a disease expelling a disease".[2] "For Schiller, as later for Carlyle, the age of unbelief and despair has much that is prophetic of a new and positive order".[3]

Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, in his preface to Hesperus, also prophesied the coming of a better time in speaking of "the soul, which by nature looks Heavenward", being "without a Temple in this age". Nevertheless, he promised:"..there will come another era...when it shall be light, and man will awaken from his lofty dreams, and find - his dreams still there, and that nothing is gone save his sleep". However, Richter, in a phrase which

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1. See Harrold 174-175; and his Sartor, 19.
2. Essays, III. 40
3. Harrold, 61-62.

long haunted Carlyle, added: "But as yet struggles the twelfth-hour of the Night: nocturnal birds of prey are on the wing, spectres uproar, the dead walk, the living dream".[1] These words were all translated by Carlyle and appeared in his first essay on Richter. Carlyle recalled the twelfth-hour image in his delineation of the present time of upheaval in 'Characteristics':

> Man has walked by the light of conflagrations, and amid the sound of falling cities; and now there is darkness, and long watching till it be morning. The voice even of the faithful can but exclaim: 'As yet struggles the twelfth hour..[etc]'[2]

That these significant German influences on Carlyle had played an important part in his view of the new age is underlined by his own tribute to them, at the end of 'Characteristics', as "the beginning of a new revelation of the Godlike", showing: "This age also is not wholly without its Prophets".[3]

German thinkers, however, were not alone in strengthening Carlyle in his diagnosis of the time. In 'Characteristics', Carlyle wrote:

> Remarkable it is, truly, how everywhere the eternal fact begins again to be recognised, that there is a Godlike in human affairs... Such recognition we discern on all hands and in all countries: in each country after its own fashion. In France, among the younger nobler minds, strangely enough...[4]

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1. Essays, II. 154
2. Essays, III.32. The twelfth-hour passage recurs in Sartor Resartus.
3. Ibid., 41.
4. Ibid., 42.

The reference is to the Saint-Simonians who had contacted him, in Summer 1830, sending him some of their society's pamphlets. What had interested them in particular was 'Signs of the Times' - they had addressed a letter, written by Gustave d'Eichthal, "to the author of 'Signs of the Times'!"[1]

In his reply to d'Eichthal, Carlyle establishes the points of agreement between the two parties:

> That the last century was a period of Denial, of Irreligion and Destruction; to which a new period of Affirmation, of Religion, must succeed, if Society is to be reconstituted, or even to continue in existence: this with its thousand **corollaries**; is a proposition for which the thinking minds of all nations are prepared.[2]

And in a letter of the next year (1831), Carlyle specifies:

> Especially important I reckon your delineations of our actual No-Society, of the Critical and the Organic alternation in man's history; your strongly emphatic precept of our duty towards the Poor...[3]

Both the Saint-Simonians and Carlyle seemed to agree on some fundamentals concerning present-day society then.

Carlyle's interest in the Saint-Simonians (who with their millenarian overtones, were evidently eager to make him their convert) developed in spite of their claim to be a new religion, a claim he dissented from in his letters. It demonstrates his openness to different quarters

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1. See Letters, 5.134
2. Ibid., 136.
3. Letters, 5.278.

at this time, suggesting that he had caught the air of expectancy which the age of transition had created in many diverse persons and groups. "At such a period", he had written in 'Signs of the Times',"it was to be expected that the rage of prophecy should be more than usually excited. Accordingly, the Millenarians have come forth on the right hand, and the Millites on the left. The Fifth-monarchy men prophesy from the Bible,and the Utilitarians from Bentham".[1] Yet Carlyle, too, as his letters and journals show, was like all these groups in expecting a radical change of sorts in society himself.

Whilst the stimulation of Saint-Simonian ideas upon Carlyle's critique of society has not gone unnoticed, Carlyle's personal experience of "the Millenarians", or the Adventism of his close friend Edward Irving, has attracted little attention. This is perhaps because, though he refers to them again when speaking of "the shrieking of hysterical women, casting out of devils, and other 'gifts of the Holy Ghost'"[2]in 'Characteristics', Carlyle's evident half-seriousness would seem to make further comment unnecessary.

Yet Carlyle and the Adventists had something very near in common, in Edward Irving. He had been Carlyle's closest friend as a young teacher in Kirkaldy. Moreover,

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1. Essays, II. 58
2. Essays, III. 42.

both came from the same church - the Ecclefechan Burgher, Secession congregation. Though they had early disagreed over Christianity, a certain respect remained between the two. In his letters to Annandale, though he might make light of Irving and his prophecies of the millennium, the intimacy of the shared religious background gave to Carlyle's comments a tone of uneasiness.

Irving had left Scotland to take up the post of minister to the Congregation at the London Caledonian Chapel in 1821. Here he had enjoyed a spectacular popularity for his bizarre style of preaching and effusive oratory. High Society had attended his sermons, including politicians like Canning and Peel. But this proved transitory, and Irving's later claim to fame turned on the more dubious support he was now giving to certain members of his congregation - mostly women - who claimed to have the gift of tongues. Moreover, he was reputed to hold heretical views on the humanity of Christ.

The downfall of Irving was occasioned by these issues, but the Irvingite phenomenon as a whole was significant for its conviction of impending apocalyptic upheaval.[1] From 1826 onward, Irving had presided over annual conferences of evangelicals intent upon reading the signs of the times in the light of the imminent physical return of Christ, and the Last Judgement. Carlyle's first essay appeared in the same year as Irving's pamphlet: The Last Days; or Discourses on These Our Times. The group

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1. See A.L. Drummond, Edward Irving and His Circle.

had established its quarterly, "The Morning Watch", in which its interpretations of the prophecies concerned with the millennium were exposited. According to A.L. Drummond, the movement in its craving for "signs" or "preparations" for this event latched upon the phenomena of the gifts of the primitive Church - such as faith healing and tongues.

Carlyle met Irving on his visit to London in winter 1831-32, and recalled afterwards: "Our talk was good and edifying: he was by this time deep in Prophecy and other aberrations; surrounded by weak people, mostly echoes of himself and his incredible notions: but he was willing to hear me, too, on secularities..."[1] They were in disagreement over the progress of democracy, which Carlyle then considered not only inevitable but necessary. Irving considered it "a thing forbidden, leading down to outer darkness..."[2] There was the same fundamental disagreement, too, over what Carlyle called 'Evidences' of Christianity.

But there were points of agreement. Irving was quite opposed to the effects of the Enlightenment. "The whole philosophy of Europe serveth infidelity...", he wrote in one pamphlet. "There is nothing but rationalism in religion and liberalism in politics...Even among such as are spiritual there is a constant appeal to the useful. The intellect hath become all sufficient".[3] The parallels with

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1. Reminiscences, 293.
2. Ibid.
3. Quoted in Drummond, 130.

'Signs of the Times' are evident: substitute "Understanding" for "intellect", and we have almost a direct verbal echo.

The similarity of diagnosis led, moreover, to a similarity of prophecy, which for all Carlyle's ironical references to the Last Day, reveal a rather strange congruity between himself and Irving. In 1827, he wrote to Adam Hope in Annandale "..for if the millennium is to come upon us in twenty years and odd months, ought we not to be turning a new leaf? Ought not you to shut up your Ledgers, and I my Note-books, and both of us sit on the outlook, like Prentice-service men, spying and scenting, with eye and nostril, whether there be aught of it in the wind?"[1]

The Reform Bill agitation, however, whetted Carlyle's apocalyptic premonitions, as it did to many others at the time. As King and Bishops incensed radicals and dissenters by holding up the bill, thoughtful men like Thomas Arnold and Robert Peel gave credence to the most dire prophecies. Spencer Perceval moved for a general fast in the House of Commons, and Royalty, Lords, and Commons, attended services on a national day of penance in March,1832. Arnold was half-inclined to accept Irving's millennial theories, for he read in the signs of the times the end of an epoch for the human race. Peel believed the monarchy might last only another five or six years,

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1. Letters, 4.296.

whilst High Churchmen were not slow to see the parallel between their position and that of the French bishops who fell with Louis XVI.[1]

Carlyle wrote to another Scottish friend in October, 1831:

> I suppose the Reform Bill must be passed first, or perhaps the World (as some Millenarians think) altogether brought to a Conclusion. Either way, one ought to be, like the Annandale Johnstones, "in readiness". [2]

In his journal, at the same time, he entered an estimate of the time not unlike Arnold's: "A common persuasion among serious ill-informed persons that the end of the world is at hand: Henry Drummond, E. Irving, and all that class. - So was it at the beginning of the Christian era; say, rather, at the termination of the Pagan one".[3] What the congruence between Carlyle and Irving amounted to, in fact, was that both believed the age was big with portents of grave upheaval. Whilst Irving saw them as preparatory to the Second Coming, Carlyle, rationally speaking at least, looked, not for the return of Christ, but for the apocalyptic end of an era. Yet the kind of language Carlyle was using in relation to such an outcome displays, above all, the similarity of style, and partly of thinking, of two men brought up in the covenanting tradition of the Scottish Lowlands.

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1. For these details, see: O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Vol. 1, Chap. 1, 'The Church in Danger'.
2. Letters, 6. 14-15
3. Two Note Books, 223.

Between 1830 and 1832, the Reform Bill agitation was threatening social upheaval, and in Europe, revolutions in France, Belgium and Poland, increased the convulsionary character of the times. Carlyle's Note Books and letters of this period give important insight into his mind as he was embarking upon Sartor Resartus, and they display an apocalyptic turn of phrase that is particularly interesting given the above.

Having been poor himself, Carlyle was well aware of the desperate conditions of the poorest classes. In autumn 1829, agricultural labourers in the South of England began an intermittent campaign of rick-burning. Carlyle's Note Books remark on these events thus:

> Hay-stacks and corn-stacks burning over all the South and Middle of England! Where will it end? Revolution on the back of Revolution for a century yet? Religion, the cement of Society is not here: we can have no permanent beneficient arrangement of affairs.[1]

Would Carlyle have welcomed revolution? It seems that he viewed such a prospect as an Irvingesque 'judgement' on the political establishment:

> The Sin of this age is Dilettantism [from the Note Books]; the Whigs, and all 'moderate Tories', are the grand Dilettanti: I begin to feel less and less patience for them. This is no world where a man should stand trimming his whiskers, looking on at work, or touching it with the point of a gloved finger.[2]

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1. Two Note Books, I78-9.

2. Ibid., 172.

The Whigs and moderate Tories were wordly men, then; nor were the Utilitarians any better in Carlyle's eyes. "Utilitaria shall die, it has been written in the book of Doom", he wrote to a friend in June, 1830. This is qualified by a remark which expands on Carlyle's conception of 'Dilettantism': "Dilettantism, in spite of all its able Editors, that play with the Highest as if it were a toy, and the Galaxies and Eternities a thing 'well got up', must be burnt.."[1] The universe, he was beginning to enter in his Note Books, was, on the contrary, a wonder, and the very existence of human society, a miracle. Yet when he viewed its present state of health as evidenced in the events going on around him, Carlyle concluded: "All Europe is in a state of disturbance, of Revolution...The whole frame of Society is rotten and must go for fuel-wood, and where is the new frame to come from? I know not, and no man knows."[2]

In default of evidence from manuscript drafts, we can say that it is likely that Sartor Resartus, which reproduces many of the sentiments and sometimes nearly complete passages from the Note Books, was stimulated by two salient themes which emerge from such passages as the above. They were the ingredient of 'wonder', applied to the universe, and mankind's existence in it; and the sense

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1. Letters, 5. 115.
2. Two Note Books, 183-84.

of apocalypse which the political and social events of the time seemed to point at. Carlyle, we know, completed a first draft which he entitled 'Thoughts on Clothes', and sent to his brother John in London, in autumn 1830.[1] It is after this date that the observations on society and politics noted above appear in the Note Books. We know, however, from C.E. Norton's edition of the Note Books, that passages prior to autumn 1830, dwelling on the theme of wonder, appear in the finished work almost verbatum. Perhaps, then, the 'Thoughts on Clothes' contained a predominating ingredient of the 'wonder' theme, whereas under the stress of the Reform Agitation, Carlyle developed his views on social apocalypse. This is suggested by the entry in the Note Books, around the time that he wrote to John asking him to retrieve the 'Thoughts on Clothes' piece from the publisher: "Whiggism, I believe, is all but forever done. [The Whigs were forming their first ministry of the Reform crisis at the time]. Away with Dilettantism and Machiavelism, tho' we should get Atheism and Sansculottism in their room! The latter are at least substancial things, and do not build on wilful falsehood. - But oh! But oh! Where is Teufelsdreck all this while?...Time rests not: thou only art idle. To pen! To pen!"[2] This was written in

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1. For precise details of composition, see Tennyson, Sartor Called Resartus, 141-45.

2. Two Note Books, 186.

February 1831; between then and the summer, Carlyle reworked the 'Clothes' essay into his major piece, Sartor Resartus.

Carlyle did a great service to scholars of his works when he characterized Sartor in a letter to his publisher, Fraser, in the following terms:

> I used to characterize it briefly as a kind of "Satirical Extravaganza on Things in General"; it contains more of my opinions on Art, Politics, Religion, Heaven Earth and Air, than all the things I have yet written. The Creed promulgated on all these things, as you may judge, is mine, and firmly believed...[1]

Recent critics have successfully established how Sartor is the crowning product of Carlyle's early years, incorporating much that he learnt in his literary apprenticeship, expressing a debt to German transcendentalism, and representing his personal triumph over not only religious doubt, but the ambitions of his own nature.[2] In bringing to a climax a whole period in his development, Sartor thus embodies in some form or other all of the pre-occupations we have traced in Carlyle up to now.

In particular, the work repeats the insights of the two essays 'Signs of the Times' and 'Characteristics', for it repeats their diagnosis of the age of change and its portents for the future. But it also develops a view largely unexplored in the Essays up to then: Sartor,

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1. Letters, 6. 396

2. See Tennyson; also Carlisle Moore, 'Sartor Resartus and the Problem of Carlyle's Conversion'.

of course, is the full expression of Carlyle's 'Creed', embodied in a totally personal literary form.[1] It is literature put to the service of transcendental truth.

Perhaps the first question posed by the enigmatic format of the work is why create a Professor Teufelsdröckh? Teufelsdröckh fills many roles in the work. He is a deep-thinking German, a "Professor of Things in General" in an obscure German university; he is also a "Transcendentalist", and a "Mystic". In addition to his Teutonic aspect, Teufelsdröckh is something of a prophetic, John-the-Baptist figure, being a "wild seer" from the wildness; "a kind of Melchizedek, without father or mother of any kind;" he is also a patriarchal figure. His vast knowledge of men and History prompts men to call him the "Everlasting.. or..Wandering Jew". Added to all this, is Teufelsdröckh's position apropos of contemporary society as a "speculative Radical", a sansculotte, and "descendentalist", as a foil to his transcendentalism.[2]

The Teutonic aspect of Teufelsdröckh is the most evident because it plays such an integral part in the creation of the fiction. It also, naturally enough, expresses Carlyle's debt to the German transcendentalists. However the semitic references, and the radical ones too, pertain more to Carlyle's personal Yeatsian mask as the

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1. This is so much so that critics have argued as to what form the work is in,e.g. G. Levine, The Boundaries of Fiction, which claims it is a novel.

2. Sartor, Book One, Chapters III; X,63-65.

"religious zealot",[1] that part of Teufelsdröckh which he seemed to live out in"uttermost solitude" at Craigenputtock.[2] It was there that Sartor was written - to an unknown audience and a completely uncertain reception.

Further, the fictional guise of Teufelsdröckh enabled Carlyle to voice his opinions, especially those on society, without taking direct responsibility, as he must in his essays. Carlyle has not, as there, to criticize or defend a position: Teufelsdröckh's "method" can be different from "that of common school Logic, where the truths all stand in a row, each holding by the skirts of the other" (the Understanding again). It can proceed instead "by large Intuition over whole systematic groups and kingdoms", so that "a noble complexity, almost like that of Nature, reigns in his Philosophy, or spiritual Picture of Nature". Though it be "a mighty maze" this way, "faith whispers" it is "not without a plan".[3] In short, there is nothing to prove or disprove; the fiction makes the philosophy literary, above all poetical, instead of having to maintain itself in formal discourse. "By shifting his artistic ground, making the book editor and Teufelsdröckh fully fictional, Carlyle circumvented the problems of his earlier essays".[4]

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1. Crabbe Robinson's designation, see Harrold, Sartor, XIV.
2. TC. to John Stuart Mill, printed, Letters to John Stuart Mill, John Stirling and Robert Browning, 13.
3. Sartor, 52.
4. A. LaValley, Carlyle and The Idea of The Modern, 90.

The fictional Teufelsdröckh thus gave Carlyle freedom at the same time as he expressed a lot about Carlyle himself. He frees the would-be prophet in Carlyle who felt "as if [he] had much to do in this world..in the search and declaration of Truth, in such measure as the All-wise shall see meet to impart it,...and give [him] means of showing it to others".[1]

The message of Sartor distinguishes it from the merely diagnostic essays we have discussed. For it goes further in not only delineating the ills of the Age of Machinery, but in proffering a cure too. The transcendental truth Sartor projects reveals Carlyle's debt to the Germans, but it also proceeds from his own "Mighty glimpses into the spiritual Universe".[2] Cazamian seized on the blend when he spoke of Carlyle's "fusion of transcendental Idealism with Puritan mysticism".[3] The blend figures when Carlyle describes society as a mysterious organism, and gives as examples, the power the judge and executioner wield over the criminal, who meekly accepts to be hanged by their order: "Thinking reader, the reason seems to me twofold: First, that Man is a Spirit, and bound by invisible bonds to All Men; secondly, that he wears Clothes, which are the visible emblems of that fact".[4] The bizarre use of clothes to symbolize men's interrelationships, though it

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1. Letters, 4. 165.
2. Two Note Books, 151.
3. Cazamian, Carlyle, 111.
4. Sartor, 60.

first seems unintelligible, works in practice, because, as in Carlyle's use of condemned man and executioner, here the manner in which he puts his symbols to use strikes the reader by virtue of its very tangibility. The reader sees the concrete situation in his mind's-eye, and is able to perceive its symbolic truth.

Carlyle borrowed the 'Divine Idea' from Fichte, employed it in 'Characteristics', and anatomizes it in Sartor. Carlyle's awareness of the complexity of social bonds, like the example above, is his own; he visualizes them in healthy activity when society is motivated by Fichte's 'Divine Idea'. The relationships, however, are conceived of more in terms of Carlyle's puritan moralism. The healthy society is one in which the puritan virtues of renunciation, duty and work are fully realized by each member. They are in part 'mysticized' in Teufelsdröckh's gospel for individual and society in Book Two. Take work for example:

> A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us; which our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our Works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible Precept, Know thyself; till it can be translated into the partially possible one, Know what thou canst work at.[1]

The doctrine of work has come to be seen as quintessentially Carlylean; one of its earliest appearances here is in the terms of transcendental idealism.

Teufelsdröckh's gospel which follows from his experience of "The Everlasting Yea" is really, again, a

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1. Ibid., 162-163.

puritan one in transcendental dressing. Yet it follows on from Teufelsdröckh's "feeling of Wonder..which he holds to be the only reasonable temper for the denizen of so singular a Planet as ours. 'Wonder,' says he, 'is the basis of Worship: 'the reign of wonder is perennial, indestructible in Man..'"[1] The conversion he experiences is an awakening to the beauty of the universe - to which an awareness of God is at once attached: "'The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's!'"[2] Teufelsdröckh then feels love and pity for his fellow men, who are unhappy because they make the wrong demands of nature. Their souls yearned for something higher than happiness which could only be achieved by renunciation.

The blending of German idealism and traditional religious teaching is evident. Christ's message of sacrifice is seen through Goethe's eyes as the 'Worship of Sorrow': to "love the Earth while it injures thee".[3] The greatest Bible is God's own handwriting - the universe: a common German Romantic doctrine. Teufelsdröckh's call on man to the duty of action, to create the "Ideal" out of the "Actual", is perhaps an echo of Schiller. Yet it is expressed in a more strident voice that is typical of Carlyle: "'Yes here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal: work it out therefrom; and working, believe, live, be free!'."[4]

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1. Ibid., 67.
2. Ibid., 188.
3. Ibid., 193.
4. Ibid., 196.

This is the spiritual core of Teufelsdröckh's message: the universe is founded on wonder, man is spirit, his destiny in the world relies on his recognition of these facts, and his realization that his part is renunciation backed up by work, the true expression of his spirit.

For a long time readers of Sartor would dwell on Teufelsdröckh's 'spiritual autiobiography' and his recipe for the soul, which make up Book Two. High-aiming people were sustained by it. G.M. Trevelyan wrote that Sartor "supplied many of us Victorians with the spiritual food we needed";[1] the agnostic T.H. Huxley informed Kingsley: "Sartor Resartus led me to know that a deep sense of religion was compatible with an entire absence of theology".[2] But its message was aimed beyond the individual soul alone; Book Three, as Professor Tennyson suggests, addresses itself to the spiritual crisis of the whole age.

It is not surprising that the 'spiritual autobiography' should have claimed so much attention, for it is almost the perfect paradigm of the tumults of the individual Romantic's experience.[3] But Carlyle was doing more: he identifies Teufelsdröckh's experience, which was essentially his own, with the spiritual crisis of the age as a whole. Here then, is another use of the literary, fictional form of Sartor: it enabled Carlyle to fuse his view of the age with the personal experience which had contributed so integrally to its formation.

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1. 'Thomas Carlyle as a Historian', The Listener, October 2, 1947.

2. Quoted in A.O.J. Cockshut, The Unbelievers English Agnostic Thought, 95-96.

3. See Morse Peckham's discussion of this in Beyond the Tragic Vision, 181-2.

In Book Three, we see that the wonder theme has been applied to a social purpose. Where in Book One, Teufelsdröckh had, through his illuminating gaze, stripped man and his society down to its essentials, in Book Three we are presented with the problem of how the new philosophy relates to society of the moment. For Teufelsdröckh is no Rousseau, wishing to destroy only to leave man in "the savage state".[1]

Nevertheless, Teufelsdröckh's belief is that the symbols which held society together in the past have grown old, and are ripe for destruction. He "is one of those who consider Society, properly so called, to be as good as extinct".[2] How is this? The nerve of the problem is religious symbols, we are told."' Mystical, more than magical, is that Communing of Soul", Teufelsdröckh waxes, "with Soul, both looking heavenward..for only in looking heavenward...not in looking earthward, does what we can call Union, mutual Love, Society, begin to be possible'".[3] Religion was the "Pericardial and Nervous Tissue" giving life to the body of society.[4]

"'But, on the whole, as Time adds much to the sacredness of Symbols, so likewise in his progress he at length defaces, or even desecrates them; and Symbols, like all terrestrial Garments, wax old'".[5] Time was, and Carlyle

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1. Sartor, 208.
2. Ibid., 231-32.
3. Ibid., 214.
4. Ibid., 216.
5. Ibid., 224.

expresses it in a delightful figure of George Fox, the Quaker, who sews for himself a suit of leather, when men could find that spirit again for themselves. But now the "Church-Clothes" were worn, worse, had become "mere hollow Shapes, or Masks" with no spirit in them.[1] Carlyle's digression about the Old Clothes Market in Monmouth Street, where men can marvel at livery of past ages, in fact underlines his correlation of clothes and symbols perfectly. Like the condemned man and executioner, the reader sees the image, and perceives the symbolic truth it enshrines: the religion of today, Carlyle says, is as worn and ancient as those suits of old clothes. Time has marched on, and stripped them of their usage. Once they clothed the body, now their fashion and style proclaim their uselessness to the modern age.[2]

Yet with Religion, under attack for three centuries, now in shreds, what will happen to the society it holds together? "'The World', says Teufelsdröckh, 'as it needs must, is under a process of devastation and waste'". When the Idea of society is gone, its ruin is inevitable. "'Who can hinder it; who is there that can clutch into the wheelspokes of Destiny, and say to the Spirit of the Time: Turn back, I command thee?'"[3]

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1. Ibid., 216.

2. The symbol also works at a further level: the Old Clothes market is situated in the Jewish quarter, this relates to the Semitic character of Christianity.

3. Ibid., 234-35.

All this is lyrically expressed but - and Carlyle himself forestalls the criticism - is Teufelsdröckh merely content to watch the spectacle of destruction? Apparently he is, because Teufelsdröckh has up his sleeve the miracle of Phoenix - rebirth, or palingenesia.

"Teufelsdröckh [is] content that old sick Society should be deliberately burnt...in the faith that she is a Phoenix; and that a new heaven-born young will rise out of her ashes!"[1] The exclamation mark is meant to show the editor shares the reader's surprise. Can Teufelsdröckh really be serious, he is asking. But Teufelsdröckh goes on with his colourful picture of palingenesia.

It seems most likely that Carlyle's idea of palingenesia was stimulated by both German transcendentalist and Saint-Simonian ideas. Goethe's periods of alternating belief and unbelief, and the Saint-Simonian's thesis of organic and critical periods, both provided for a general periodicity which enabled Carlyle to appeal to the evidence of the past for his prophecy of future rebirth.[2] His particular use of the Phoenix image has defied precise attribution to German or Saint-Simonian use; it is, in fact, expressed in Carlyle's own poetry, that of 'Natural supernaturalism', and the lyrical vein of Sartor itself:

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1. Ibid., 237.

2. There is a large amount of literature on the subject; see Harrold, and Tennyson; also, Hill Shine, Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians, The Concept of Historical Periodicity; R. Wellek, 'Carlyle and the Philosophy of History'.

> 'Find Mankind where thou wilt, thou findest it in living movement, in progress faster or slower: the Phoenix soars aloft, hovers with outstretched wings, filling Earth with her music; or, as now, she sinks, and with spheral swan-song immolates herself in flame, that she may soar the higher and sing the clearer.'[1]

This lyrical expression of the apocalyptic theme has two interesting effects: it takes the edge off the implications of the destruction Teufelsdröckh envisages in such doctrinaire terms; and in so doing, it covers the open question of the whole work. Having unclothed society, having shown the inevitability of its road to destruction, has Teufelsdröckh given his readers any solace other than the assurance that wonder, or spiritual belief, is perennial, and that we can see from History that it always comes back? Carlyle had posited a definite trend of society in decline. "Two centuries of convulsion and conflagration"[2] might after all be needed; for "Religion, the cement of Society is not here: we can have no permanent beneficient arrangement of affairs". But where was the spiritual renewal to come from, and what were men to do in the interim? This is what later critics were to ask with greater vexation: what would Carlyle have us do? Sartor's literary achievement had for the meantime overwhelmed the question.

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1. Sartor, 248.
2. Ibid., 237.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIETY AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Carlyle's exhilaration with the events of 1831-32 subsided with their passing. The uncertainty created by the Reform Bill crisis helped prevent any publisher from taking up Sartor. However, Carlyle's visit to London in search of one was not a complete disappointment: he had met John Stuart Mill and this seemed to open the prospect of further contacts there.

In Edinburgh, in the winter of early 1833, Carlyle, perhaps unfairly, criticized the mood of complacency: "The spirit of Mammon rules all their world", he wrote to his mother, "Whig, Tory, Radical, all are alike of the earth earthy".[1] Most probably, he was provoked by their failure to recognize him on his own terms. "I am as a John the Baptist, girt about with a leathern girdle", he described his posturing in Edinburgh Society to John Carlyle, "and whose food is locusts and wild honey".[2] If Edinburgh could not understand him, Carlyle might have been hoping for better things from his new London contacts. Soon he would cut loose his ties with Scotland.

Meanwhile, Carlyle returned to Craigenputtock and the living he could earn through periodical writing.

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1. Letters, 6.344.
2. Ibid., 320.

There he would lay the foundations upon which would rest his eventual London fame. The essays 'On Biography', 'Johnson', 'Cagliostro', 'Diderot', and 'The Diamond Necklace', were all written there during 1832 and 1833. They established his new conception of the importance of History, and at the same time deepened Carlyle's acquaintance with the eighteenth century. Both were vital aspects of his eventual choice of the French Revolution as a subject for his first and greatest history.

Sartor had exhausted Carlyle's interest in imaginative literature per se. He now began to conceive a theoretical infrastructure upon which he could erect his developing concern with History. The earlier essay, 'On History', had revealed his indebtedness to the philosophy of History of the Germans; the succeeding essays display Carlyle's personal application of transcendental truth to the composition of History. Sartor, as we saw, had already stated the significant German ideas of History as the true Bible of mankind, and of the universe as God's temple. Carlyle also borrowed from the Germans, especially from Schiller, the conception of the historian as artist-poet-philosopher, as opposed to the mere dogged researcher who laboured with details but had no idea of the Whole.[1] In 'On History',

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1. For a discussion of Carlyle's indebtedness to the theory of History of the German Romantic Historians see Louise Young, Thomas Carlyle and The Art of History; and also Harrold, Carlyle and German Thought. Nevertheless, scholars have tended to dogmatise about Carlyle's 'philosophy of history' as though it were a constant. For a short precise of Schiller's influence on Romantic histiography, see R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, 105 .

Carlyle argued for the inspired prophet-historian and for the 'wholeness' of History.

In 'Biography', Carlyle opens the question of the possibility of a 'new revelation of truth'. He has created a new personage through which to articulate his idea of History as the medium for this new revelation. Just as Teufelsdröckh expressed Carlyle's concept of the 'Wonder' of the universe, Professor Gottfried Sauerteig, introduced as the author of the 'AEsthetische Springwurzeln', is a vehicle for his new ideas on History.

Sauerteig uses as his text Carlyle's self-quotation: "history is the essence of innumerable Biographies".[1] He dismisses contemporary novels as false portrayals of men's lives; his criterion is belief; fiction required only a temporary belief, and in modern times the narrative technique had degenerated into a machinery no longer believed. This debasement of the Imagination had not always been so: Poetry was once taken as the inspired word of God. It emanated in epics that were believed, such as the Iliad and the Koran; all the supernatural details attached to these were believed by their creators. Once the epic form was no longer believed it became unreal machinery.[2]

The important idea here is that the faculty of belief is no longer to be employed in fiction. It was necessary to turn to reality. Here men might still find

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1. Essays, II. 86., and III. 46.
2. Essays, III. 49-51.

in man's life the quality of divine revelation: "..for Man's Life, now, as of old, is the genuine work of God; wherever there is a Man, a God also is revealed, and all that is Godlike: a whole epitome of the Infinite, with its meanings, lies unfolded in the Life of every Man".[1] It was then, not only in the "primeval" days - when all seemed sacred and divinely-inspired - that men could feel themselves in touch with the divine: there was only needed the poet who had the "spiritual Endowment" to see into "REALITY" and divine its "inexhaustible meanings".[2] Carlyle's adds: "how impressive the smallest historical <u>fact</u> may become, as contrasted with the grandest <u>fictitious event</u>".[3]

Thus, to the idea that behind what is called 'reality' lies a transcendental truth, Carlyle applies a historical context. Beneath the details of everyday life was an eternal reality; such a reality was also to be discerned in the smallest historical fact. Carlyle was applying to History a transcendental realism.

This is exemplified by Carlyle's illustrations of the new concept. He chooses a small event from Clarendon's <u>History of the Rebellion</u>, where Charles 11, in retreat from the Commonwealth armies, is sheltered by a poor Catholic cottager. Carlyle re-creates the event's significance by allowing his imagination to focus on the little details of this "genuine flesh-and-blood Rustic of the year 1651",

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1. Ibid., 52.
2. Ibid., 53.
3. Ibid., 54.

including his clothes, food and lodging. Through him could be seen a world of "British rustics who tilled and lived along with him...We see him but for a moment; for one moment, the blanket of /the Night is rent asunder, so that we behold and see, and then closes over him - forever".[1]

The same was true of the small, apparently unimportant events, recounted in Boswell's Life of Johnson. A prostitute who approached Dr. Johnson along The Strand, and who received a kindly rebuke, had also "issued from the Maker of Men". Both cottager and prostitute were, in the context of their limited life, holy: "Their baseness and wickedness was not They, was but the heavy and unmanageable Environment that lay round them" - their real "Self" was an "ethereal god-given Force that dwelt in them" and which had now gone to a purer "Environment".[2]

The idea here, embodying mystic terminology of Self and lesser self, is but a variant of Carlyle's religious interest in human life that has already been discussed. Thus Carlyle's new concept of History still appertains to his perennial concern with religion. The past was "silvered over with the pale cast of thought, with the pathos which belongs only to the Dead. For the Past is all holy to us; the Dead are all holy..." They had now "shuffled-off that heavy Environment, and are free and pure".[3] Carlyle's approach to

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1. Essays, III.55.
2. Ibid., 56.
3. passim., 55-56.

History was in part determined by a mind strained habitually after an eternal dimension.

'Cagliostro' and 'The Diamond Necklace' both purport to interpret that same "Mystery of Life"[1] in an historical context. 'Cagliostro' repeats the observation of Sauerteig, that a new method of interpreting the "heaven-written mystic Sanscrit"[2] of human life is required. The Hebrews, the Persian Magi, and the authors of the 'Arabian Tales' had all possessed some view of human life which rendered it divine. The Greeks too had invested fleshly beauty with the quality of divinity.[3]

Carlyle's method, in fact, is simply to iterate his idea that man is the work of God, and has the divine in him. Indeed he attaches to this a moralism which stresses the old evils of worldly attachment in the context of modern times. Cagliostro's life is an old moral tale, re-defined to fit the eighteenth century, and, by implication, Carlyle's own age.

Cagliostro's particular value is that he emphasizes the duality implicit in human life: he was a complete quack; his life-story throws into relief the perennial choice of good and evil. Born in an age of swindlers and imposters, Cagliostro fed off the vanities and cupidities of the time. Once more, Carlyle characterizes the age through an individual,

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1. Essays, III. 251.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 252. The 'Arabian Tales' are evidently The Arabian Nights which Carlyle had read as early as 1810. See Masson, *op. cit.* (p.6 f. note 1.)

The eighteenth century "was the very age of impostors, cut-purses, swindlers, double-goers, enthusiasts, ambiguous persons; quacks simple, quacks compound; crack-brained, or with deceit prepense; quacks and quackeries of all colours and kinds.."[1] The rhetoric and repetition sets the tone of moralistic address. Yet Carlyle's narrative of the life of the Sicilian charlatan includes a double perspective: the eighteenth century was not alone in possessing quacks:

> ..how many millions, through all manner of gradations, from the wielder of Kings' sceptres to the vender of brimstone matches, at tea-tables, council-tables, behind shop-counters, in priests' pulpits, incessantly and everywhere, do now, in this world of ours, in this Isle of ours, offer themselves to view![2]

The list gives a sense of ubiquitous corruption.

It is not merely the eighteenth century, but the reader's own time that is being addressed then. Carlyle is in fact pointedly turning to the richer classes. In 'Cagliostro', he launches his baiting of 'Respectability': "What, in the Devil's name", he asks, "is the use of Respectability, with never so many gigs and silver spoons, if thou inwardly art the pitifulest of all men?"[3] Cagliostro is a moral example particularly for the respectable classes of the early nineteenth century. The essay concludes with a challenge: given "that immeasurable, mysterious glory of being alive", should the individual not use it for moral ends? Though there seemed to be a dualism between "manlike.. Faithfulness" and the "quacklike..Eatableness, and Similitude

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1. Ibid., 271.
2. Ibid., 254.
3. Ibid.

of Doing" of a Cagliostro - Carlyle foresees many will chose a third path, "gigman-like,..following the 'respectable' countless multitudes, - into <u>both</u>".[1]

'The Diamond Necklace' displays further Carlyle's mystic moralism and the dual perspective of eighteenth century and modern times. Though "'social forms'" might bind men up into a "commonplace existence", Carlyle insists on man's "birthright of Eternity".[2] In the modern age, where "each man's task has got entangled in his neighbour's, and pulls it awry", men collectively had lost the "Romance of Life".[3] This came of worshipping Vanity "and the shadow of an imaginary Hunger for Applause; under the name of what we call 'Respectability'".[4] This malaise of respectability even spread to the writing of History, where the reality of a thing was hidden by a concern for the 'dignity' of History, and each person's political and social standpoints.

Carlyle endeavours once more to infuse a higher reality into the mundane world of the modern age. No age was ever romantic to itself, even the age of Charlemagne and Roland. Life was still a miracle; the spectacle of millions passing through existence and beyond would never be prosaic: "look, see, behold it, the Flame-image; splendours high as Heaven, terrors deep as Hell: this is God's Creation; this is Man's life!"[5]

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1. Ibid., 318.
2. <u>Essays</u>, III. 324-5.
3. Ibid., 325.
4. Ibid., 326.
5. Ibid., 329.

Carlyle introduces the story of the diamond necklace as "a fraction of that mystic 'spirit-woven web' from the 'Loom of Time..'"[1] In fact, it was a particularly significant thread, for the affair caused a scandal that gravely weakened the French Monarchy.

Each figure in the story stands for a principle. Cardinal Rohan, the aristocrat exiled from Marie-Antoinette's court, symbolizes the vain, selfish aristocracy of the ancien régime. Boehmer, the artificer of the necklace, panders to the worldiness of the aristocracy. Jeanne de Saint-Remi, the bogus Countess de Lamotte, fraudulently manipulates "the two fixed ideas",[2] Rohan and Boehmer, in order to swindle both. As the fraud involves the Queen herself, the highest institution of society is called into question. "The whole narrative is a symbolic representation of evil forces, which, in uniting, brought about their own destruction".[3] Rohan is impuned of fraud himself, but is acquitted; his acquittal shifts the guilt to the innocent Queen in public eyes. The Countess de Lamotte, and Cagliostro, who was also embroiled in the affair, are eventually imprisoned.

To the narrative of the actual historical events, Carlyle brings what has been called a 'synoptic view': he

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1. Ibid., 330.

2. Ibid., 338.

3. Carlisle Moore, 'Carlyle's "Diamond Necklace" and Poetic History', 548.

contrasts the present condition of a person or scene with a past or future condition, giving the sense of a universal view. He assembles all the main characters and shows how their previous careers had destined their coming together. This lends a prophetic character to the narrative. It is part of his transcendental realism, which shows "the Infinite through the Finite, the eternal through the transitory".[1] 'The Diamond Necklace' was indeed a preparation for the narrative technique of The French Revolution.

Carlyle has appended a purely imaginary ingredient however: the piece ends with an address from prison by Cagliostro. He declares that the chief end of man is no longer to glorify God, as the extinct Christian sect had believed, but: "'To eat and find eatables by the readiest method'".[2] The God whom scoundrels most feared now was the gallows. But, in prophetic vision, Cagliostro beholds the burning up of 'Imposture', thrones and mitres falling in the process, and metal images of 'Respectability', such as the gig, turning molten in the apocalypse.[3]

The new discovery that History could be invested with a revelationary character thus went with a stronger judgemental emphasis. Teufelsdröckh's antagonism to respectable Society had been masked by his poetic conception

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1. Moore, 556.
2. Essays, III. 394.
3. Ibid., 399.

of palingenesia. But so long as Carlyle himself remained in a position of social obscurity, isolated and unheeded, there was a strong stimulus for reproving the worldliness and heedlessness of the richer classes.

However, there had also been a fundamental ingredient of mysticism in Teufelsdröckh's mixture of 'Descendentalism' and 'Transcendentalism'. Hence his saying: "'Happy ... he who can look through the Clothes of a Man...into the Man himself; and discern,...in this or the other Dread Potentate, a more or less incompetent Digestive-apparatus; yet also an inscrutable venerable Mystery, in the meanest Tinker that sees with eyes!'"[1] Man was a mystery then: "I have no Property in anything whatsoever"; Carlyle wrote in his notebooks, "except perhaps (if I am a virtuous man) in my own Free-will: of my Body I have only a life-rent; of all that is without my Skin only an accidental Possession - so long as I can keep it".[2]

The richer classes, however, lacked this mystic awe in viewing property and social position. "Dilettantism", associated by Carlyle with Whigs and moderate Tories, he condemned for: "play[ing] with the Highest as if it were a toy, and the Galaxies and Eternities a thing 'well got up'..."[3] Carlyle declared to his brother John, in July

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1. Harrold, Sartor, 67.
2. Two Note Books, 179.
3. Letters, 5.115.

1832, that "Anti-gigmanism is the fixed Athanasian creed /unalterable of this house".[1] Gigmanity - that rich and respectable part of society which could afford to keep a gig - was henceforth a concept and identifiable social reality against which Carlyle would vent his spleen in the 1830's.

Thus Carlyle's radicalism was partly mystical, with moral associations, and directed at social values. The mystery of man's existence should teach him humility, but the only values recognised by the superior classes in society were material ones. They treated the universe as if it were there merely for their convenience and pastimes.

When directed against actual social injustice, Carlyle's radicalism also expresses abhorrence of man's treatment of his fellows. The following passage from his journal might seem little different from the baiting of aristocracy indulged in by Benthamite and popular Radicals alike:

> A man with £200,000 a year eats the <u>whole</u> fruit of 6,666 men's labour thro' a year; for you can get a stout spademan to work and maintain himself for that sum of £30. Thus we have private individuals whose wages are equal to the wages of 7 or 8 thousand other individuals: what do these highly beneficed individuals <u>do</u> to society for their wages? <u>Kill Partridges</u>. CAN this last? No, by the soul that is in man, it cannot and will not and shall not![2]

This would seem to suggest that Carlyle's radicalism could be expressed in terms practical enough to make him at least an ally of such political Radicals as the Utilitarians.

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1. <u>Letters</u>,6. 184.
2. <u>Two Note Books</u>, 159-60.

However, the mystical side of Carlyle's radicalism, when attached to his moral opposition to the respectable classes, appeared to be directed to other than political purposes. In 'Cagliostro' and 'Diderot', Carlyle appears as a proponent of moral reform first and foremost. They express at least a difference of approach, and potentially a fundamental disagreement, with the radical schools of thought which upheld the principle of reform as an external alteration in the mechanism of society.

The most influential of Radical groups at this time were the Benthamites, or Utilitarians, who claimed success for their ideas in the economic and penal reforms of the 1820's, the repeal of religious tests for public office, and even the Great Reform Bill. Bentham was sublimely indifferent to 'motives', or the moral reasons, behind men's actions, when devising his legislation programmes for the perfection of the social machine. Man was wholly formed by his circumstances, Bentham taught, and following such eighteenth century thinkers as Hume, Helvétius and Hartley, who said all knowledge came from sense experience, he would allow no 'innate' ideas in man. An innate moral sense was thus ruled out. "The expectation of pain or pleasure determines conduct; and, if so, it must be the sole determinant of conduct".[1]

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1. L. Stephen, The English Utilitarians, I.241. It is fair to add that the Utilitarians believed in the power of education. James Mill believed in: 'the formation of all human character by circumstances, through the universal Principle of Association, and the consequent unlimited possibility of improving the moral and intellectual condition of man by education'. J.S. Mill, Autobiography, 91.

By 1833, Benthamite Radicalism was perhaps most well-known for its creation of the 'science' of Political Economy. The Political Economist applied Bentham's ideas to economics and discovered that prosperity would be forthcoming when the right alterations had been made in the economic system. In 'Cagliostro', Carlyle addresses an imaginary "Politico-economical benefactor of the species", and warns him not to deceive himself "with barren sophisms: National suffering is, if thou wilt understand the words, verily a 'judgement of God'; has ever been preceded by national crime". In other words, not adverse circumstances but moral evil in men had caused bad conditions: "temporal Distress...Misery of any kind, is not the cause of Immorality, but the effect thereof".[1]

There was another factor which precluded Carlyle's desire for a radical change in society from taking practical political expression. Beside the fact that his radicalism appeared to be unassociated with any contemporary school of radical thought, he was afraid of what would result from a complete removal of social authority. "Radicalism goes on as fast as sane mortal would wish it", he wrote to John in February 1835, "without help of mine; Conservatism I cannot attempt to conserve, believing it to be a portentous em-broiled Sham, accursed of God, and doomed to destruction...

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1. Essays, III. 272. In the essay 'Diderot', Carlyle allows the significant effect of circumstance on character, yet still insists on individual moral accountability. See Essays, III. 229.

But woe the while, if the people are not taught! If not their wisdom then their brutish folly will incarnate itself - into the frightfullest Reality".[1] This fear is made even clearer in a letter to his mother of around the same time: "[Buller] and his mother...are Radically given, to a very decided degree. That also is my humour, but I find little /it profit in speaking out; rebellion, against authority of any kind, is always a barren matter, full of irritancy, of poor painful feelings which are more of the Devil than of God".[2] Though his letters at this time were full of prophesies of social revolution, Carlyle made it clear he would play no part in one. "If they set up any guillotine, I will be off, I think!", he wrote as a grim farewell joke at the end of a letter to his brother in Rome in 1835.[3]

Here was a real dilemma then for Carlyle's radicalism of that time. It attacked social injustice and the moral attitudes of the higher classes, and clearly displayed no concern at all for social rank, yet it feared revolution, even while expecting it. Carlyle was genuinely afraid of the moral vacuum the downfall of authority would leave. Whereas in Sartor he had predicted the certain destruction of existing social formulas, yet remained a detached observer, as the new decade developed he had to face the consequences of the process he had prophesied.

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1. MS, NLS: 523.28. Printed, with incorrect punctuation, Froude, III.25.

2. Letters, 1826-36, ed. C.E. Norton: 2.270.

3. MS, NLS: 523.27.

Yet despite his non-involvement in radical politics, there does remain an important connection between Carlyle and the political Radicals during this period. When he came to London in 1834, Carlyle's most promising contact, now he was partially estranged from Jeffrey, was the young John Stuart Mill. Their friendship had been formed as a result of Mill's series of articles on 'The Spirit of the Age', which had appeared in the London Examiner in 1831. Carlyle had been impressed enough on reading them to search out the author on his earlier trip to London in 1832; and it is not difficult to see what the two had in common at this time.

In these articles, Mill had pointed out the critical nature of the time; "the nineteenth century", he had written, "will be known to posterity as the era of one of the greatest revolutions of which history has preserved the remembrance, in the human mind, and in the whole constitution of society".[1] In short, the present was a time of great political and social change, with the governing classes discredited, and the people desirous of becoming their own masters, but without the capacity to govern themselves. Mill, like Carlyle, was at that time significantly interested in the Saint-Simonians; he admired their delineation of the present age in terms of their thesis of organic and

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1. E. Neff, Carlyle and Mill - An Introduction to Victorian Thought, 1.

critical epochs. Moreover, he liked their organization of society on the lines of a corporate use of the best talents.[1] Thus the two men were united in a common interest which was at the same time rare: they expected radical changes, and were aware of the problems, especially of government, that these would bring.

The association therefore began in amity and admiration, but led in the end, on Carlyle's part, to a repudiation which was in private unqualified, and which also was given public utterance in a covert form. On the basis of confidence between Mill and himself, believing Mill to be open-minded about the creed of his upbringing and perhaps open to his own 'mysticism', Carlyle revealed his opinions on Utilitarianism. "Considered as European Thinkers, our poor Utilitarians make the mournfullest figure", he wrote, "yet in this one fact, that they were the re-originators of any Belief among us, they stand far above all other Sects".[2] In a later letter, Carlyle gave a clue as to how he could associate Utilitarianism with the origination of 'Belief'. Reviewing the political labels of the time, he characterized the Whig as an "Atheist", the Tory as an "Idolater", and the Radical, a "wild heathen Iconoclast". Evidently, Carlyle was referring again here to his repeated view of the Whigs as worldly materialists, for he calls them "gigmen" who could only worship a "two-wheeled vehicle".

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1. See Mill, Autobiography, I38-I42.
2. Letters to John Stuart Mill...etc. [hereafter Letters to Mill], I7.

In comparison, the other two were not "'without God in the world'".[1]

Carlyle was fairer to the Tories (though he was to be less charitable in the near future) because they were at least in earnest; though their stalwart adherence to altar and throne was a misguided idolatry of a worn-out formula, they were sincere. The Radicals Carlyle had in mind were usually the Utilitarians,[2] who in 1833 were pressing hard on the government of conservative Whigs, trimmers, and Radical sympathizers like Brougham. In Carlyle's eyes, the Utilitarian Radicals, whose programme included national education, manhood suffrage and abolition of peers, were carrying on the destruction of social formulas inaugurated by the philosophes.[3] Nevertheless, this work was necessary before 'Belief' could be re-established,[4] so in this sense the Utilitarians were the 're-originators of Belief'; they at least refused to bow down like the Whigs and worship the status quo. Thus to Carlyle they may have seemed worthy of his rather admiring epithet of 'heathen iconoclast'.

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1. Ibid., 78.

2. Carlyle was acquainted with Godwinian Radicals like his neighbour in London, Leigh Hunt, and with popular Radicals of various kinds. He also heard O'Connell once, and always loathed him. In January 1833, he wrote to Mill that he had met in Edinburgh 'a rabid, distracted, avoidable set of men, of the Hunt and Cobbett sort'. Letters, 6. 301.

3. To the enthusiastic young Mill of the mid-1820's 'The French philosophes of the eighteenth century were the example we sought to imitate, and we hoped to accomplish no less results'. Autobiography, 91.

4. See Carlyle's later comment, in Heroes and Hero-Worship, [Centenary Ed.,], 172.

Moreover, Carlyle and the Utilitarians (in the shape of Mill, though it is not always safe to make the two synonymous) seemed to agree in particulars. Both realised that measures were needed immediately to allay the threat of popular revolt. Mill and Carlyle agreed that the speedy progression of democracy would endanger government itself. Carlyle advocated "some extensive far-reaching system of Emigration be organized",[1] which the Utilitarians also supported, though for more Malthusian reasons. Carlyle was completely in favour of a system of national education.

In fact, so close was the intimacy between Carlyle, Mill, and his Radical friends (including Charles Buller, Carlyle's old pupil) that Carlyle expected to be offered the editorship of their new organ, the London and Westminster Review. Before coming to London, Carlyle had written to Mill, evidently with the editorship in mind, that he looked forward to uniting "with a set of men whom I believe to have the faithfullest intentions".[2] Unfortunately, there had been a misunderstanding, for the editorship was not wholly Mill's to give, and in the event Carlyle had to be disappointed. However, Mill took two articles for the review at a time when Carlyle was getting desperate enough to contemplate emigration to America. He was also ready to make efforts on Carlyle's behalf should the education scheme proposed by the Radicals in Parliament, under Roebuck, succeed

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1. Letters to Mill, 51.
2. Letters, 7. 70.

in obtaining a committee of investigation. Carlyle thanked Mill politely, saying he believed "there must probably be faculty in me equal to that of an average Commissioner".[1]

Though there were points of agreement in detail between Carlyle and the Utilitarians, and warm friendship between himself and Mill, there were also, inevitably, fundamental disagreements. For instance, Carlyle wrote to Mill of one of hisassociates:"There is much in [William] Fox that I wholly agree with; or rather I agree with almost all in him, only do not rate it so highly as he".[2] This statement in fact covered a wide latitude of variance. Carlyle was beginning to notice (or perhaps he had always known) the distance between his own complex attitudes to society, and the single-mindedness of a set of people attached to a political programme. Moreover, though Mill was providing him with the books he needed for his work on the French Revolution, and was anxious to help in whatever way he could, Carlyle's contact with the London Radicals had not resulted in any steady or worthwhile employment for him.

These matters figure in an important letter written by Carlyle to his brother in January 1835:

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1. MS, NLS: 618. 57.
2. Letters to Mill, '89.

> My friends here admit cheerfully that I am a very heroic man.—that must understand the art, to them (happily unknown) <u>of living upon nothing</u>. Mill, I think, alone...would make any great effort to help me; I find him really assiduously serviceable: but he is so <u>theoretic</u> a man, and like a printed Book, I never open myself to him: besides we meet only some once in a fortnight, or seldomer. At Mrs. Austin's one may see floods of people; but people barren as the East Wind.[1]

The company of the Radicals was less satisfying than it had once been. No practical help was forthcoming from them after all, except from Mill, but he now seemed "so <u>theoretic</u> a man". The set he was in were "barren as the East Wind".

There were two important reasons for Carlyle's growing estrangement besides the lack of help given him. He emphasized the narrowly logical character of the Utilitarians. He found that Mill, though "a pure-minded clear man everyway", yet had "the strangest, unluckiest Utilitarian husk around him, which he will never cast off". Moreover, it struck Carlyle how his Radical friends looked "forever at some <u>theory of a thing</u>, never at any <u>thing</u>".[2]

The second reason was Mill's friendship with Mrs. Taylor. In private letters Carlyle described her as a dangerous woman, in rebellion against too many things, and thus a bad influence on Mill.[3] She was in fact drawing

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1. MS, NLS: 523.27. Printed in part in Froude, III.22.
2. MS, NLS: 523.29.
3. Ibid.

Mill away from most of his friends besides Carlyle.

In 'Diderot', Carlyle had already foreshadowed his argument with the Radicals. His attack on the eighteenth century's deism and atheism could be made to apply just as well to Benthamite theories. Also, his criticism of the philosophes' ideas and practice in respect of marriage could equally be applied to the Utilitarians. Mrs. Taylor was, in fact, only putting into practice moral theories held by the Utilitarian group.

'Diderot' lays strong assault on eighteenth century moral speculation. The strongest emphasis is on Diderot's atheism. Carlyle was well aware of its origins. To begin with there had been the move toward 'natural religion' and deism, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Carlyle visualizes one of its genteel proponents, Shaftesbury, (the devisor of 'aesthetic morality') unknowingly stimulating the great argument between faith and atheism. There he was, standing in the middle: "not only a Sceptic but an Amateur Sceptic...a delicate, perfumed, gentlemanly individual.. in that war of Titans (hill meeting hill with all its woods), and putting out hand to it - with a pair of tweezers.."[1]

Where he was ironic with Shaftesbury, Carlyle knew that with Diderot he was dealing with someone more substantial. Once a deist, Diderot had followed the

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1. Essays, III. 200-01.

fashionable deism of his century to its atheistic conclusion. Carlyle affords him respect for his honesty, but puts into perspective the logic of denial. It was:

> The smallest of Finites struggling to prove to itself, that is to say if we will consider it, to picture-out and arrange as diagram, and include within itself, the Highest Infinite; in which, by hypothesis, it lives, and moves, and has its being![1]

Carlyle's rebuttal suggests the fundamental cause of disagreement between himself and the Benthamites: "Of final causes, man, by the nature of the case, can prove nothing; knows them, if he know anything of them, not by glimmering flint-sparks of Logic, but by an infinitely higher light of intuition".[2]

James Mill had begun from the first part of this premise - that man could know nothing of first causes - and had thus exhausted the relevance of further considering religion. "The question 'Who made me?' cannot be answered, because we have no experience or authentic information from which to answer it; and..any answer only throws the difficulty a step further back, since the question immediately presents itself,'Who made God?'"[3] This was honest rationalism, the kind Carlyle had already figured as in itself leading, by its own logic, directly to atheism.[4]

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1. Ibid., 231.
2. Ibid., 232.
3. Mill, Autobiography, 36.
4. See Essays, I. 82; Essays, II. 64-65.

It was the fruit of eighteenth century reason, the heritage of Hume, whom the Utilitarians admired so much. In John Mill's System of Logic, described by Leslie Stephen as "the most important manifesto of Utilitarian philosophy", [1] Mill would lay for all time, as far as Utilitarianism was concerned, the spectre of 'intuitions'.[2] Though in that instance the argument was with the idealist philosophy of Sir William Hamilton, the cleavage between 'logic' and 'intuition', in terms of nineteenth century debate, knew no bridge.[3]

In its discussion of eighteenth century atheism, then, 'Diderot' pre-supposed radical differences between that century's heirs, the Utilitarians, and Carlyle. In their correspondence, Carlyle and Mill parried with each other on the subject. Mill responded to Carlyle's enthusiastic exhortations "to see somewhat, to believe somewhat; a quite mystic operation, to which Logic helps little...",[4] with the information that he could only conceive of 'a probable God'.

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1. Stephen, The English Utilitarians, III. 75.

2. 'It is a pretence of explaining [i.e. intuition] something which lies altogether beyond the limits of real knowledge, and therefore admits of no explanation'. Ibid., 81.

3. 'Nominalists and realist, intuitionists and empiricists, idealists and materialists, represent different forms of a fundamental antithesis which appears to run through all philosophy. Each thinker is apt to take the postulates congenial to his own mind as the plain dictates of reason'. Stephen, op. cit., I. 2-3.

4. Letters to Mill, 62.

Always acutely aware of the moral value attached to religion, Carlyle was anxious about the practical effect of the recession of actual belief in a God. In 'Diderot', he repudiated a "'faint possible Theism' which now forms our common English creed" since it played no practical part in the lives of the people.[1]

This indeed was the crux: having once dismissed God, the philosophes had opened the way to moral laxity. They had brought in hedonistic criteria - their utilitarian attitude to marriage was but one example. Carlyle's argument with the philosophes here ranges from irony to direct refutation. He ridicules their moral theories by stressing the banal realities of their indulgence in free-love and eating and debating. Carlyle interprets the philosophes in frivolous terms in 'Diderot' because he deemed their acts and theories superficial; but he assays them with seriousness on points of principle.

Diderot's desire to have marriage accountable to the general law of change to which man is subject, would in effect leave nothing binding upon man. Carlyle demands "that [man] take preassurance of his Fate; that in this ...high act of his life, his Will...abdicate its right to change; voluntarily become involuntary..."[2] The poor craftsman had to do just this when he took out his indenture of apprenticeship. The economic point was significant: it opened what would later prove a fundamental issue between

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1. Essays, III. 233.
2. Ibid., 236.

Carlyle and the Liberals - the whole question of _laissez-faire_. The difference over marriage hid a whole range of divisions between Carlyle and the 'progressive' circles of the nineteenth century.

At present, Carlyle was content with ironic disparagement of the new moral theories of these 'progressive' circles: "Most of these people", he wrote, "are very indignant at marriage and the like; and frequently indeed are obliged to divorce their own wives, or be divorced: for tho' the _world_ is already blooming (or is one day to do it) in everlasting 'happiness of the greatest number', these people's own _houses_...are little Hells of improvidence, discord, unreason".[1]

At their most colourful in their sexual licence, the Utilitarians were at their most dour in their prescriptions for obtaining the happiness of the world. For here, as Carlyle implies, they were ready to reform the world but inept at putting their own houses in order. They were indignant at the idea of marriage for themselves, but preached restraint to the masses on the strictest Malthusian grounds - as in the simple home truths of political economy Harriet Martineau preached to the lower orders.

Mill's brethren of the 'Philosophic Radicals' did believe that Malthus's gloomy prophecies could be allayed and wages even rise, but only through "a voluntary restriction of the increase of their numbers" by the labouring classes

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1. _Letters_, 7.327.

themselves.[1] They held to the purest Ricardian economic wage theories: the natural order of market forces made sure wages tended to find the level necessary for the labouring classes to 'keep up their numbers'; that and no more, for Ricardian economies forbade interference in the free market, where the capitalist had to achieve the amount of profit requisite in order to make manufacture worth his while.

It is in Carlyle's recognition of the class interest behind these theories that his radicalism appears more thorough-going than the Utilitarians' nowadays. Yet like his criticism of Radical mores, this was basically the result of his background. He came from an environment which acquainted him with the practical reality of poverty.

Carlyle's eldest brother, Alick, was also a constant source of worry; the economic situation in the 1830's was brought home to Carlyle by his own precarious employment, his brother's insolvency, besides an acute awareness of social distress about him. He wrote to Alick in 1833 of the terrible plight of the toiling millions, "without prospect of rest, save in speedy death", who received barely food or shelter for their toiling. The conditions in the Lancashire cotton factories, where children laboured "for sixteen hours a day", inhaling "cotton fuz, falling asleep over their wheels" only to be thrashed awake,

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1. Mill, Autobiography, 89.

appalled him. In Ireland too, human beings were being "driven out of their potatoe-patches and mudhovels, and obliged to take the hillside as broken men.."[1] Was the earth a place of hope, or of hell, he asked? Carlyle's awareness of the reality of social conditions in the British Isles thus took in the factory system and the state of land tenure in Ireland, and led him further away from the Radicals.

Now, having won their victories in the late 1820's and early 1830's the Utilitarians were losing their homogeneity.[2] "They had no longer a common war-cry".[3] Their reformism meant already, in practice, a concentration on agitation for free trade. Advocates of Ricardian economics were upon the whole opposed to factory legislation. Carlyle became sickened by the complacency of these middle-class radicals: "Everybody, Radical and other..tells me that the condition of the Poor people is - improving! My astonishment was great at first but I now look for nothing else than this: 'improving daily'..." In this letter to his mother of 1835, Carlyle aped the glib selfishness of the richer classes. "'Well, gentlemen", I answered once, "the Poor, I think, will get up some day, and <u>tell</u> you how improved their condition is'".[4]

Not only was Carlyle isolated from any definable political grouping, he was both frightened by the prospect of a grand social upheaval and yet seemed to desire it. Carlyle's repudiation of the aristocracy and rejection of the Radicals, as well as his sympathy for the poor and diag-

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1. <u>Letters of Thomas Carlyle to His Brother Alexander</u>...ed.E.Marrs [hereafter cited as Marrs], 328.
2. See Mill, <u>Autobiography</u>, I65-66.
3. Stephen, op. cit., III.2.
4. <u>Letters</u>, 1826-36, 2. 323.

nosis of impending revolution in Britain, were the chief contributory factors behind his social vision in The French Revolution.

Carlyle took up the subject seriously in 1834 on his move to London. He had already read extensively materials sent by Mill when Carlyle was at Craigenputtock. There he had contemplated writing on John Knox; but contemporary issues were far more pressing.

Stylistically and thematically, Carlyle had been preparing for his work on the Revolution. Reading Mill's books, he soon began to picture in his mind the epic that could be made of it. It would also be infused with the social pre-occupations we have seen Carlyle milling over.

The Revolution was first of all "properly the grand work of our era ...in this, in the right understanding of this, [was] involved all possible knowledge important" for the time. Yet England had almost forgotten it.[1] The Craigenputtock essays had been straining toward the Revolutionary apocalypse, and holding it up as a threat to the unheeding generations living in its stead. Carlyle was in the mood for social prophecy - "all light sportfulness, and melodious Art, have fled away from us...not in Poetry, but only...in Prophecy, in stern old-Hebrew denunciation, can one speak of the accursed realities that now, and for generations, lie round us, weigh heavy on us!"[2]

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1. Letters to Mill, 70.
2. Ibid., 48.

Yet art was not out of his mind; there was an art in presenting the revelationary feeling excited in him by the books and pamphlets on the Revolution. "A great result lies in these so intensely interesting Narratives"; he wrote to Mill, "and might, had one the faculty, be drawn out of them...For my own share I declare I now enjoy no other Poem than the dim, shadowy as yet only possible Poem, that hovers for me in every seen Reality".[1]

Soon Carlyle was picturing the Revolution as an inexhaustible reality - "...for it is a flaming Reality; the depths of Eternity look through the chinks of that so convulsed section of Time"; it now seemed "as if the right History (that impossible thing I mean by History) of the French Revolution were the grand Poem of our Time; as if the man who could write the truth of that, were worth all other writers and singers".[2]

It must be like an epic poem then: the man who could write it must have the vision of a seer. As he rejected the theoretic, narrowness of Utilitarian analyses, so Carlyle was opposed to the cause-and-effect approach to historical writing. "The 'dignity of History' has buckramed up poor History into a dead mummy", he wrote. "There are a thousand purposes which History should serve beyond 'teaching by Experience'". It was again the wholeness which only the inspired prophet could apprehend that Carlyle was seeking,

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1. Ibid., 57.
2. Ibid., 70-71.

for History was "an address (literally out of Heaven, for did not God order it all?) to our whole inner man; to every faculty of Head and Heart, from the deepest to the slightest.."[1] "Understand me all those sectionary tumults, convention-harangues, guillotine-holocausts, Brunswick discomfortures; exhaust me the meaning of it!"[2] There could especially be no attempt to rationalize this subject.

But this meant no disregard for detail: on the contrary, the smallest details revealed much to the seeing eye. Carlyle wrote to his brother John to try to acquire for him a piano score of the 'Ça ira' when passing through Paris. Would he also see if the Tree of Liberty still grew.[3] Carlyle had himself been to Paris only once for a short period in 1824. His narrative depended on the skill with which he could visualize in his imagination the information provided by his sources.[4] He found pictures especially useful: "The natural face of a man is often worth more than several biographies of him", he wrote later.[5]

Carlyle's treatment of his subject achieves a unity at several levels by its single vision of the course of revolutionary destruction as embodied in the force of

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1. Ibid., 82.

2. Ibid., 70.

3. Letters, 1826-1836, 2. 333.

4. For Carlyle's use of sources see C.F. Harrold, 'Carlyle's General Method in The French Revolution'; A. Cobban spoke of Carlyle's 'remarkably detailed knowledge', 'Carlyle's French Revolution', 313.

5. Essays, IV. 6.

Sansculottism. As a literary device, the creation of this symbol of destruction, which is made to stand for the whole Revolution, lends the work remarkable imaginative power. It also provides a unifying factor in terms of the actual narrative: from the death of Louis XV to the full unfolding of the Terror, it provides a predetermination.

The seeds of the Terror are present in the hanging of poor rioters in the reign of Louis XV. These had arisen, believing the King had been taking baths in their children's blood in order to cure the results of his debaucheries. Their vengeance is prophesied: "Ye are heard in Heaven. And the answer too will come, - in a horror of great darkness, and shakings of the world, and a cup of trembling which all the nations shall drink".[1]

The spectre reappears in the reign of the new king. Peasants congregating at Versailles with a 'Petition of Grievances', receive for answer the hanging of two of their number "on a 'new gallows forty feet high'", the rest being "driven back to their dens, - for a time".[2] French royalty has cause to remember the 'new gallows forty feet high'. The gallows and the 'Petition in Hieroglyphs' which they symbolize, are reminders of the monarchy's failure to answer the demands of the poor. On its day of judgement, the monarchy has the same image put before it by Carlyle.

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1. The French Revolution, I. 14.
2. Ibid., 34.

The first hundred pages of The French Revolution are a perfect synthesis of Carlyle's previous expositions on the decadence of the last days of the ancien régime. He manipulates the two ideas of the false 'Age of Hope' and the actuality of the collapsing symbols of the old order. Recalling Sartor, Carlyle views the French monarchy as a worn-out symbol; the 'Realised Ideal' of kingship that had taken a thousand years to grow was now about to fall. Where once the king had been raised by common assent as the "Acknowledged Strongest",[1] Louis XV, contemptible and debauched, and Louis XVI, weak and innocuous, represented the decay of the monarchical ideal. The first task of the Revolution is to sweep away feudalism, with all its social, political and religious accoutrements.

The forces which begin the process are only a little better. 'Philosophism' is the first of Carlyle's comings: it embodies the philosophes and the political and economic theorists of the new classes hitherto outside the ancien régime; persons like Turgot and Necker are among its numbers. Voltaire is its chief exponent - he comes to Paris and is worshipped as a hero. The tool of 'Philosophism' is analysis, its practical import is 'Scepticism'. Whilst promising a millennium of "Ease and plentiful Supply",[2] the theories of 'Philosophism' are really undermining the old

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1. Ibid., 9.
2. Ibid., 54.

order. "It is an unbelieving people; which has suppositions, hypotheses, and froth-systems of victorious Analysis; and for belief this mainly, that Pleasure is pleasant".[1]

Carlyle is thus applying the same criterion as in Sartor: the worn-out symbol of the ancien régime is undermined by eighteenth century scepticism. No belief holds this society together: "Here, indeed, lies properly the cardinal symptom of the whole widespread malady. Faith is gone out; Scepticism is come in".[2] Though "an Era of Hope...rests on mere universal Benevolence, victorious Analysis, Vice cured of its deformity;..in the longrun [are]..Twenty-five dark savage Millions, looking up, in hunger and weariness,to that Ecce-signum of theirs 'forty feet high'..."[3]

The financial bankruptcy facing the successive controllers in fact is an image of the moral bankruptcy of the old order. Everything is wrong: "the inward spiritual, and the outward economical". The argument of the Craigenputtock essays is repeated: moral evil accompanies social disease. "Before those five-and-twenty labouring Millions, ...could get that haggardness of face...in a Nation calling itself Christian,...what unspeakable, nigh infinite Dishonesty...must there not, through long ages, have gone on accumulating!"[4] The sickness is thus radical and ubiquitous.

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1. The French Revolution, I. 36.
2. Ibid. 14.
3. Ibid., 52-53.
4. Ibid., 36.

Carlyle figures this decadent, light-headed society hanging over an abyss. The forces of destruction will arise from it, for "our whole being is an infinite abyss, overarched by Habit, as by a thin Earth-rind, laboriously built together...And now,...let but...your 'thin Earth-rind' be once broken! The fountains of the great deep boil forth.."[1]

It is thus that the disagreement between the aristocratic Parlements, and the King and Court, signifies the beginning of this terrible process. The two quarrelling cousins open the way for 'Rascality', a synonym for Sansculottism. With the first appearance of this vital participant in the drama of the Revolution, Carlyle speaks in a tone of sardonic foreboding:

> A Wonder and a new Thing: as yet gamboling merely, in awkward Brobdingnag sport, not without quaintness; hardly in anger: yet in its huge half-vacant laugh lurks a shade of grimness, - which could unfold itself![2]

The agitation surrounding the 'revolt' of the Parlements leads to the calling of the States-General.

The newly-elected three Estates pass in procession to the St. Louis Church. In the procession are many of the main participants in the coming revolutionary struggles. Carlyle applies his 'synoptic' device of visualizing the past and future in the present: "Singular to think: they

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1. Ibid., 38.
2. Ibid., 114.

have it in them; yet not they, not mortal, only the Eye above can read it; - as it shall unfold itself, in fire and thunder, of siege, and field-artillery; in the rustling of battle-banners, the tramp of hosts, in the glow of burning cities; the shriek of strangled nations !"[1]

Carlyle picks out particular individuals in the crowd. Having proposed the great theme of the opening of the abyss, he relates these individual characters to it. This is done by applying to them the imagery of chaos and the abyss as well; they are thus made lesser or greater microcosms of the macrocosmic breaking loose of fixities and floating of elements which manifests the disintegration of the old order.

The Duke of Orleans has already been figured setting out on his career to chaos (where later he is seen to have reached). Marat is consistently referred to through the work as emanating from chaos and night. The French Noblesse walk in the procession in their old nobility, but are really "changed from the old position; drifted far down from their native latitude, like Arctic icebergs got into the Equatorial sea".[2] The Clergy too has "drifted in the Time-stream, far from its native latitude.."[3]

It is in the Third Estate that the fermenting elements are to be found. Energy, motion and chemically reactive properties characterize these active men of the

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1. The French Revolution, I. 134.
2. Ibid., 146.
3. Ibid., 147.

Revolution. "Blue sulphur-light" burns in Marat; the face of Camille Desmoullins is "wondrously irradiated with genius, as if a naptha-lamp burnt within it". Through Danton's face "looks a waste energy as of Hercules not yet furibund", whilst Mirabeau, the greatest of all has in him "a burning fire of genius; like comet-fire glaring fuliginous through murkiest confusions".[1] This new chain of imagery is the beginning of the presentation of the Revolution as an explosive phenomenon.

The imagery of the opening abyss, of explosive destruction, lends the work one consistency. The theme of destruction through Sansculottism works through the narrative structure of The French Revolution by means of a succession of climaxes. Any account of the Revolution would tend to fall into such a form; Carlyle's literary achievement lies in the mastery with which he makes the narrative thrust on from one climax to the next.

After the summoning of the States-General friction soon appears. The Third Estate refuses to be cowered by the First and Second Estates, which meet separately, and by the old superiority-tactic of the display of royal ceremonial. The pattern is set for the first confrontation: the Third Estate stands firm, demanding to sit in session with all

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1. Ibid., 136-37.

three Estates. Tension arises, the Third Estate are prevented from assembling; as a result the declaration of the National Assembly is made. The climax comes, as so often in the work, with the rising of the people. The fall of the Bastille is Carlyle's first descriptive 'set-piece'.

The chief ingredient of a revolution is force: Carlyle excels in describing this, since for him the Revolution was exactly about force. He pits natural spontaneous force against artificial bulwarks of the establishment. The court etiquette of the ancien régime is ridiculed in 'Mercury' De Brézé, the king's usher. His ceremonial is swept away by the will of the Third Estate. In the days of July 1789 the force of revolution swells until it sweeps down the immobile strength of the ancien régime. The cry 'To arms!' appears to spread impersonally through the Parisian people. "Seven hundred thousand individuals, on the sudden, find all their old paths, old ways of acting and deciding, vanish from under their feet. And so there go they, with clangour and terror, they know not as yet whether running, swimming or flying, - headlong into the New Era".[1] Against such a force De Broglie, chief of the military, appears stiff and undecisive. De Launay, governor of the Bastille, displays the same fatal symptom. In such a battle, Carlyle suggests, force can only be met

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1. Ibid., 178-79.

with force: the inactive formality of the old Order buckles under the new force.

This pitting of opposites against one another is a new facet of Carlyle's earlier dichotomy of the conscious and the unconscious. The formality and fixity principles equate with the conscious; the spontaneous and energetic express the unconscious. Carlyle makes the distinction clear in his picture of the hungry multitude about to take the Bastille: "Great is the combined voice of men; the utterance of their instincts, which are truer than their thoughts: it is the greatest a man encounters, among the sounds and shadows which make up this World of Time".[1]

The fall of the Bastille is the first climax. After the outburst, a calm settles. The King accepts the new developments; the army returns to barracks. But Carlyle sees the Revolution developing rhythmically; the formation of a Constituent Assembly does not signify the end of force: "No, Friends this Revolution is not of the consolidating kind"[2] - however much the constitutionalists might wish it was.

Already there is a new array of forces, creating a new tension. In the second movement, the constitutionalists establish order through the National Guard, under Lafayette. The respectable classes, Carlyle says, imagine boiled jelly can be poured into constitutional moulds -

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1. The French Revolution, I. 194-5.
2. Ibid., 239.

"Could it, indeed, contrive to cool".[1] But the symptoms of revolt are not allayed. Carlyle figures the reality in terms of the unconscious once more: "Hunger whets everything, especially Suspicion and Indignation. Realities themselves, in this Paris, have grown unreal, preternatural. Phantasms once more stalk through the brain of hungry France".[2] This suspicion and indignation (made into personifications here, giving the situation greater imaginative dimension) is soon able to find cause for grievance.

Lafayette's National Guard becomes 'Patrollotism' and symbolizes the power of respectable constitutionalism. It harasses the poorer classes, who now have their proponents in Danton, Desmoullins and Marat. They are patriots, the army they lead, 'Patriotism'. The array of forces is completed by the Court royalists. Patriotism, harassed by Patrollotism, is angered by the rallying of the Court. Hunger drives the women on to the march, led by Maillard, who like Santerre the "sonorous Brewer"[3] who led the struggle for the Bastille, is a hero thrown up by the masses.

The second climax is the march on Versailles by the 'menadic' women of the 'fourth estate'. Once again, the force of the mob creates a situation which can only issue in the full release of energetic potential. At Versailles

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1. Ibid. 234.
2. Ibid., 244-45.
3. Ibid., 193 et postea.

a deputation is allowed to see the King, but again energy cannot be restrained. The crowd bursts into the Palace: "It is..the infinite Element bursting in; wild-surging through all corridors and conduits".[1] The untutored force of the mob carries all before it: "A roaring sea of human heads, inundating both Courts; billowing against all passages: Menadic women; infuriated men, mad with revenge, with love of mischief, love of plunder! Rascality has slipped its muzzle; and now bays, three-throated, like the Dog of Erebus".[2] Carlyle's few brush strokes suggest perfectly the variant motives of the mob, as well as its ugly fierceness.

The King is forced to go with the mob to Paris. Mayor Bailly, the epitome of the speculating philosopher-savant, greets him with oratory. The King is now the people's - a 'tricolour king', and the new era has arrived.

Twice the Revolution has been carried into new phases by the revolutionary mob. In the third stage the respective parties hold together in uneasy coalition under the transformed constitutional monarchy. Marat barks against the "prating Senators". He is the people's friend: "Shudder at it, O People; but it is as true as that ye yourselves, and your People's-friend, are alive". Ripened by

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1. The French Revolution, I. 279.

2. Ibid., 281.

Time in Paris cellars, the "cavernous Marat" indeed stands for the ugliest potential of the people.[1] While the senators are "perfecting their 'theory of defective verbs'"- Carlyle's phrasing of their attempts to create a constitutional regime - Sansculottism is "putting forth new buds". It "has the property of growing by what other things die of: by agitation, contention, disarrangement.."[2] Such things are indeed fatal for fixed formulas.

The third climax centres on the attempted escape of the royal family. Despite the pomp of Federation Day, and the taking of the National Oath, tensions have again developed. The army is in a state of mutiny, which Bouillé quenched partly at Nanci with bloodshed. Carlyle suggests that here the force of Sansculottism might have been met and defeated. Bouillé was strong; Mirabeau was inclined to the Queen. But Mirabeau, the one figure capable of forming the revolutionary force into what Carlyle calls an image of "the general Belief",[3] is struck down by death. Royalty is robbed of a great titanic force, as is France.

The whole episode of the Flight to Varennes has been criticized for its historical inaccuracy,[4] but Carlyle takes a little poetic licence in order to demonstrate his thesis of the fatality of indecision. Louis is fatally weak: "Volition, determination is not in this man: only

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1. French Revolution, II.16.
2. Ibid., 17.
3. French Revolution, I. 215.
4. C.P. Gooch, History and Historians in The Nineteenth Century, 303-4.

innocence, indolence; dependence on all persons but himself, on all circumstances but the circumstances he were lord of".[1] The flight of the monarchy fails because of the slow Berline in which they travel, and because when they are recognized, Louis merely gives in. The whole prospect of counter-revolution ends there: Bouillé flees France. Varennes is purposely fashioned as an anti-climax: the lengthy preparations, with the 'Thunder-chain' of escorts, end in bathos. The sense of anti-climax is underlined by the return of the royal party to its Parisian captivity: the crowds await them in silence.

An unreal calm follows. The Feuillant - constitutionalists try to keep their two-chamber monarchy by maintaining the King like an "upturned pyramid". But the confrontation between Patriotism and the Feuillants is inevitable. "How different, at the same instant", Carlyle phrases the dualism, "is General Lafayette's street-eloquence; wrangling with sonorous Brewers, with an ungrammatical Saint-Antoine".[2]

A year after the Champ de Mars celebration, Mayor Bailly shows the drapeau rouge, and the military shoot into a crowd of demonstrators. There is a gathering storm on France's borders - aristocrats emigrate; many who already have done, accompany invading European powers. The royal veto angers Patriotism; the strength of the Jacobins has grown. In August 1792, the fourth climax comes with the

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1. The French Revolution, I. 224.
2. The French Revolution, II.131.

defeat of the Feuillants and overthrow of the constitution.

Again, this is accomplished by sansculottic force, by the pitting of unconscious against conscious. The constitution 'will not march'; in contrast, there descend on Paris the Marseillese, believing men who "know how to die".[1] The coup is effected by their courage; they charge the Tuilleries, many dying in the fire of the Swiss defenders, who also fall, martyrs without a cause. Even then, the Swiss had received no orders from the King, and had fired on their own initiative. The constitution is burst apart by forces beyond rational control, in the Swiss fire and the frenzy of the Marseillese.

The next two climaxes occur in the atmosphere of the Terror. "Very frightful it is when a Nation, rending asunder its Constitutions and Regulations which were grown dead cerements for it, becomes transcendental". Sansculottism has now come to reign in all its grandeur and hideousness, Carlyle recapitulates. Yet this was the consummation of the "'death-birth of a world'" and was History's most recent revelation.[2]

In the atmosphere of fear created by the war, and the advance of Brunswick, the Paris Commune stimulates the September Massacres. These were ofa piece with the previous tumults in Carlyle's eyes: "How it was and went,

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1. Ibid., 271.
2. The French Revolution, III.2.

what part might be premeditated, what was improvised and accidental, man will never know, till the great Day of Judgement make it known".[1] These were the same unconscious forces at work as at the Bastille and Versailles. The Terror was Sansculottism naked, without rule.[2] The trial and execution of the King is seen in the same context. It is the fifth climax.

The penultimate struggle is between the Girondins and the Jacobins. Once again Carlyle sees this cleavage in terms of the division between the conscious and unconscious. The conscious Gironde bore a remarkable likeness to the Utilitarian Radicals of Carlyle's time:

> ..men of fervid Constitutional principles; of quick talent, irrefragable logic, clear respectability; who will have the Reign of Liberty establish itself, but only by respectable methods.[3]

"This huge Insurrectionary Movement, which we liken to a breaking-out of Tophet and the Abyss, has swept away Royalty, Aristocracy, and a King's life. The question is, What will it next do...Settle down into a reign of Law and Liberty; according as the habits, persuasions and endeavours of the educated, moneyed, respectable class prescribe?"[4] Carlyle was clearly thinking of the 1830's when the respectable middle class revolution seemed accomplished.

Hunger and fear, he insisted, still goaded on the naked, French sansculottic force. Moreover, even in so corrupt a time, the people had got hold of a faith for which

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1. Ibid., 25.
2. Ibid., 67.
3. The French Revolution, II. 206.
4. The French Revolution, III. 114.

they were laying their lives down in the revolutionary wars. It was a miracle, but the French nation believed that it was "within reach of a Fraternal Heaven-on-Earth".[1] This faith Carlyle juxtaposed alongside the patriotism of the respectable Girondist who beneath his lip-service to Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, really desired a "Republic for the respectable washed Middle Classes.."[2] In reality, this meant "Moneybag of Mammon".[3]

This was the intense expression of Carlyle's rejection of the Utilitarians. Of all nineteenth century writers on the Revolution, probably Carlyle was the least anxious about the political implications of the Terror. Even Michelet averted his gaze; Carlyle followed the Sansculottism of his conception to the very end.

The storm of the Assembly and the arrest of the Girondists, followed closely by the murder of Marat by Charlotte Corday, was the penultimate climax. There remained only the last formula, which in Carlyle's eyes signified Robespierre. Characterized in the States-General procession as "a strict-minded, strait-laced man", with his "sea-green" complexion,[4] which Carlyle appended to him in the eyes of posterity, Robespierre had become the 'sea-

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1. Ibid., 119.
2. Ibid., 115.
3. Ibid.
4. The French Revolution, I.141-2.

green incorruptible'. The deadly enemy of the Girondins, he was yet like them a theoretic, if incalculably more fanatic man. Paradoxically, Robespierre's downfall, the final climax, represented the defeat of Jacobinism, hitherto the vehicle for unconscious Sansculottism.

Carlyle now saw Sansculottism as having burned itself out. It was essentially destructive, the spontaneous eruption of hunger, anger and fear. In the end it was finally suppressed by military force. Yet "the soul of it still lives",[1] Carlyle insisted. It was a frightful anarchy, but it was necessary to draw inferences from it. The message it taught was:

> ..'if the gods of this lower world will sit on their glittering thrones, indolent as Epicurus' gods, with the living Chaos of Ignorance and Hunger weltering uncared-for at their feet, and smooth Parasites preaching, Peace, peace, when there is no peace,' then the dark Chaos..will rise; - has risen, and, O Heavens, has it not tanned their skins into breeches for itself.[2]

Still there was a state of suspension following on the last great apocalypse"-Shams are burnt up;...The new Realities are not yet come..."[3] Carlyle ends by repeating Cagliostro's prophecy from 'The Diamond Necklace', adding, cryptically, "This Prophecy, we say, has it not been fulfilled, is it not fulfilling?"[4]

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1. The French Revolution, III. 311.
2. Ibid., 313.
3. Ibid., 322.
4. Ibid., 323.

Professor Cobban was therefore right in considering, "Carlyle's French Revolution was bottled in '37 not in '92.. in the decade of rioting and reform, Chartism and cholera ..."[1] The work reveals Carlyle's pre-occupations with his own time. Its author has created a radically destructive force, wreaking vengeance upon 'shams' and 'formulas' of all kinds, punishing the richer classes for their treatment of the poor.

However, the work also represents an apolitical nihilism. Jacobinism is only destructive; popular sovereignty is impracticable and unmanageable; or Carlyle gives it no chance. No wonder Godefroi Cavaignac was bemused at Carlyle's "treatment of the Seagreen man" and his "impartialité generally".[2] To Mill, Carlyle wrote in 1837, insisting he was a radical, but repeating his "aversion to Benthamism, to all Formalism.."[3]

The French Revolution reveals an isolated author rapt in his own prophetic vision. It was "written by a wild man, a man disunited from the fellowship of the world he lives in; looking King and beggar in the face with an indifference of brotherhood, an indifference of contempt.."[4] The book further underlines the dilemma of the radical Carlyle of the 1830's, passionately involved in the social issues he is describing, and yet curiously detached; desirous of a more radical change than the contemporary radical groups,

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1. 'Carlyle's French Revolution', 307-8.
2. Froude, III. 120.
3. Letters to Mill, 161.
4. New Letters, ed. A. Carlyle. I. 55-56.

yet fearful of the practical consequences of revolutionary upheaval.

As a work of historical writing, The French Revolution is indeed "in a class by itself".[1] It is the realisation of Carlyle's transcendental realist vision of History of the 1830's. He viewed the phenomenon of the Revolution as a revelation, and by making sansculottic force the vehicle of this revelation, bursting asunder a corrupt society from below, Carlyle invested the work with a narrative unity. This is further emphasized by the continuity lent by the respective chains of imagery of the abyss and chemical explosion.

This led Carlyle to ignore many historical issues: his avoidance of analysis leaves areas of vagueness. Did the Girondins really exist as he imagined them? Was the Revolution the work of a subterranean, unidentified sans-culottic class, or a real petty bourgeois social grouping? Was Mirabeau really the force Carlyle portrayed? Many more similar questions could be asked.[2] Yet there can be no doubt that Carlyle had through his imaginative force penetrated into hitherto unchartered regions. "He opened up unsuspected possibilities, if not for the historic understanding, yet for the organs of historic feeling".[3]

However, an important point is also raised here. In seeing Sansculottism as the force of divine judgement, did Carlyle carry himself into troublous waters? His

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1. A. Cobban, A History of Modern France, 1. 281.

2. See Cobban, 'Carlyle's French Revolution'; also H. Ben-Israel 'Carlyle and The French Revolution'.

3. P. Geyl, Debates with Historians, 54.

celebration of the instinctive force of the mob could be considered daemonic. Carlyle asks his reader to accept this force as the work of a God who speaks in the whirlwind and makes the wrath of men to praise Him.[1]

In fact, what Carlyle does is to merge the daemonic and the divine in one vision of the 'celestial-infernal'. This is apparent in his prevalent use of mock-blasphemy. Biblical language is invoked in a straight-forward judgement on the seigneurs who had "preserved Game not wisely but too well".[2] "Wo to the land over which Sans-culottism, in its day of vengeance, tramps roughshod.." The "Highbred Seigneurs" flee by night with their half-naked women and children. There is here a use of the traditional language of the Last Judgement.[3]

However, in other contexts, Carlyle 'inverts' Biblical quotation. The undesirable elements of European society flock to France during the Revolution: "Where the carcass is, thither will the eagles gather".[4] The sardonic use of texts is particularly effective in the context of the Terror. The "guillotine-sickle" tours the towns of France, then: "Many are the labourers, great is the harvest".[5] The blood-lusting Hébertists find themselves transported to the guillotine: "as they have done to others, so it is done to them".[6]

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1. The French Revolution, I. 213.
2. Ibid. 227-28.
3. Ibid., 228. of Matthew, 24. 19-20.
4. The French Revolution, II. 20.
5. The French Revolution, III. 215.
6. Ibid., 253.

In all these cases, Carlyle is suggesting that the devil claims his own - his quotation of Scripture is very apt. However, his satirisation might appear to admit a double-standard. If the work of Sansculottism is the wrath of God, how can Carlyle blame its agents for blasphemy? For there is certainly a sense of blasphemy in parts of Carlyle's narrative.

The description of the Feast of Pikes displays Carlyle's genuine sense of the blasphemous. How could the citizens mistake sentimentality - "like gossamer gauze, beautiful and cheap; which will stand no tear and wear!"[1] - and believe the momentary swearing of the National Oath would cancel the results of Sin and Death? His criticism is the same as that which dismissed the hedonism of Diderot, and characterized the 'Age of Hope' as established on "Vice cured of its deformity". "On the fifth evening [of the Federation celebrations], which is the Christian Sabbath, there is a universal Ball".[2] Carlyle's personal feeling of the blasphemy in this is evident.

In fact, there are degrees in Carlyle's use of mock-blasphemy. In the case of the Feast of Pikes, Carlyle's satire has a serious undertone. This is to be discerned wherever he satirises the ideals bequeathed to the Revolution by 'Philosophism'. The establishment of the Constituent Assembly in 1789 is a victory for the "Gospels according to Jean-Jacques", and the debates of 4 August constitute: "A new Night of Pentecost", shaped after the "new Church of

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1. The French Revolution, II.59.
2. Ibid., 66.

Jean Jacques Rousseau".[1] Carlyle makes his objection clear later on, in the context of the Terror:

> A Gospel of Brotherhood, not according to any of the Four old Evangelists, and calling on men to repent, and amend <u>each his own</u> wicked existence.. ; but a Gospel rather, as we often hint, according to a new Fifth Evangelist Jean-Jacques, calling on men to amend <u>each the whole world's</u> wicked existence, and be saved by making the Constitution.[2]

Carlyle's contempt for Robespierre is to be seen as an extension of his contempt for the ideas of Philosophism. Robespierre, with his <u>Être Supreme</u>, is the final example of the <u>philosophes</u>' desire to create a heaven-on-earth which for Carlyle is ludicrously artificial.

Thus, Sansculottism, which Philosophism and the Girondins had nurtured, turns out to be a frightful, infernal reality, which turns the <u>philosophe</u> formula upside down. The raw instincts of the hungry millions, Carlyle insists throughout, are more real than conscious thought. Sansculottism, created by the blasphemy of the respectable middle class theorists, finally swallows even their formulae. Sansculottism was only real in destruction; it was not present at the Feast of Pikes, which was the work of the light-headed consciousness.

Carlyle, then, is quite aware of what he is doing in <u>The French Revolution</u>. He suggests that only the ultimate blasphemous forces can cleanse the conscious vanity of men from society. The French Revolution was a judgement

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1. <u>The French Revolution</u>, I. 219.
2. <u>The French Revolution</u>, III. 204.

upon man by the daemonic part of him which subsisted alongside a celestial part. With religious authority taken away: "wnat will remain? The five unsatiated Senses will remain, the sixth insatiable Sense (of vanity); the whole daemonic nature of man will remain, - hurled forth to rage blindly without rule or rein; savage itself, yet with all the tools and weapons of civilisation".[1]

The French Revolution, in its vision of apocalypse, visualizes in greater intensity the idea established in Sartor: society without its religious cement must fall to destruction.

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1. The French Revolution, I. 14.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY, HEROES AND A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

Carlyle told John in November 1839: "Work, with the pen, is always as a fever to me";[1] and echoed the sentiment in a later letter (February 1843) to John Sterling: "Work is not possible for me except in a red-hot element which roasts the life out of me".[2] While such expressions, taken at their face value, have led to some critical mis-apprehension about Carlyle's mode of literary composition,[3] they do reveal an essential quality in his work - Carlyle needed a subject which could fire him.

After The French Revolution, completed in January 1837, Carlyle spent well over two years before he found a new interest, in the Commonwealth period in England. Meanwhile, he published one full-length essay on a major literary figure, lectured to London High Society by the arrangement of Harriet Martineau, and threw over in his mind his perennial thoughts on the social problems which were growing even more acute.

The French Revolution had brought recognition but as yet no tangible rewards. The lectures Carlyle delivered annually between 1837 and 1840 proved lucrative however,

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1. New Letters, I. 99.
2. Ibid., 281.
3. As Froude's mistake over the writing of Past and Present.

though with the exception of the last series, required him to go over old ground.[1] At the request of Mill he wrote his essay 'Scott', of which he wrote afterwards: "I cannot say I ever felt more entirely indifferent as to the fate of any production whatsoever".[2] While not failing to recognise his artistic genius, Carlyle's judgement of Scott, reproving his genial wordliness and egotism, is a harsh estimate. Almost his last full-length study of a literary figure, the essay reveals Carlyle's increasing distance from Literature. His thoughts were now fully centred on History and society.

If the two years pursuant to his major work were spent in consolidation of a newly won recognition and financial security rather than in developing new horizons in his work, they had not altered Carlyle's anguish for social problems. He had now no need to contemplate emigration, but his brother Alexander still did. Moreover, social antagonisms were becoming sharper, resolving themselves along class lines and ushering in one of the most bitter periods in English social history.

In April 1834, Carlyle wrote to Emerson: "I wait in silence for the new chapter, feeling merely that we are at the end of one period here. I count it <u>two</u> in my autobiography: we shall see what the <u>third</u> is.."[3] Later that

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1. The lectures were: German Literature (1837), The History of European Literature (1838), Revolutions of Modern Europe (1839), and On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History (1840).

2. MS, NLS: 523.56.

3. <u>Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle</u>, ed J. Slater, 222.

year, he wrote to Emerson: "The only work I had on hand was one that would not prosper with me: an Article for the Quarterly Review on the state of the Working Classes here. The thoughts were familiar to me, old, many years old; but the utterance of them, in what spoken dialect to utter them!"[1]

Carlyle's letters at this period are full of references to the social situation, especially those written to Alexander in Dumfriesshire, and Thomas Ballantyne, a working man who was also editor of a newspaper in northern England. It was to John Carlyle that he wrote in April 1837, relating news of paupers raiding Manchester bread shops, and a Nottingham man hanging himself and his family. The pregnant images of the workhouse 'Bastille', so feared by the people, and the "Hunger-Tower of Dante", are juxtaposed alongside Miss Martineau and Edwin Chadwick "celebrating their *New* Poor Law Bill as the miracle of recent legislation".[2] A year later, again to John, Carlyle observed: "Ecclefechan itself has its Chartists; they were rattling a very slack old drum, and shouting round the rumble of it, passing 'resolutions' I suppose...very curious to me to hear".[3] "The Northern Operatives", he wrote again, "generally are understood to be getting arms, pikes, pistols and muskets; they

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1. Ibid., 250.
2. New Letters, I. 69.
3. Ibid., 168.

have a 'Convention' sitting here somewhere in Fleet-Street at present...; their loaf is dear, their heart bitter, their head hot and dark, may Heaven pity them!" Parliament, he concluded, was "dull as ditchwater".[1]

Carlyle's concern eventually crystallised in Chartism, which appeared in its own right as a pamphlet. Chartism begins on a dominant note:

> A feeling very generally exists that the condition and disposition of the Working Classes is a rather ominous matter at present; that something ought to be said, something ought to be done, in regard to it.2

The intention is to uncover what was in fact a conspiracy of silence on the part of the ruling classes over the Chartist agitation. Carlyle contrasts the coercive measures taken by the executive to deal with the Chartist unrest, and the absurd refusal of Parliament to discuss the matter: "Irish Appropriation question, West-India question, Queen's Bed-chamber question; Game Laws, Usury Laws...", and so on, "all manner of questions and subjects" are debated, "except simply this the alpha and omega of all!"[3] He continues to satirise the hide-bound, procedural stumblings of Parliament, then broadens the argument by asking "Why are the Working Classes discontented?"[4]

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1. MS, NLS: 523.62.
2. Essays, IV. 118.
3. Ibid., 121.
4. Ibid., 123.

The next chapters re-phrase the question. In that entitled "Statistics", Carlyle argues that the wrong questions have been asked; that statistics, used by defenders of the status quo to prove that life expectation had risen, did not deal with how the real conditions of life had altered. Carlyle does not deprecate statistics - indeed he wants far more surveys - but his concern is to establish principles to start with in order that the right questions be asked by investigators. If wages have risen, have they risen in real terms; is the quality of the labourer's lot getting better in short? Carlyle was asking questions which still divide social historians; and this was still before the admirable social surveys of the 1840's got under way, and revealed a picture of appalling degradation that enabled reformers like Shaftesbury to rattle the conscience of Parliament.

Carlyle extends his remarks to an analysis of the New Poor Law. Again, his premise is that the praise of proponents of the act masks an approach which is wrong in fundamentals. The framers of the act had wished to decrease paupers, so they made conditions of relief miserable in practice. "If paupers are made miserable, paupers will needs decline in multitude. It is a secret known to all rat-catchers: stop up the granary-crevices, afflict with continual mewing, alarm, and going-off of traps, your 'chargeable labourers' disappear, and cease from the establishment".[1] The mordant irony expresses

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1. Ibid., 130.

Carlyle's abhorrence at the selfishness of the principle - it was "not an amiable faith"[1] to believe the poor were a nuisance and were best reduced, out of sight.

Yet the Law contained a "half-truth": if a man declined to work he should starve; idleness was despicable. But why was this not applied throughout the whole of society, in every quarter; why was it only confined to the lowest classes? Nevertheless, this principle enshrined in the Poor Law was a beginning; for though Carlyle knew it to be unwitting, the law had initiated government interference in the spectacle of "wastefulness, idleness, drunkeness" in society.[2]

From the purblindness of the existing law, Carlyle turns to the realities of a Britain on the verge of the "Hungry' Forties". With humour, but sympathy, he poses the problem of the Irish migrant, the "Sans potato", who in spite of his proclivity for lying, cheating and stealing, and his abject appearance ,"is of the selfsame stuff as the superfinest Lord Lieutenant".[3] England is held responsible for Ireland, yet has done worse than nothing. With a prophetic insight, Carlyle envisages that: "The time has come when the Irish population must either be improved a little, or else exterminated".[4] Meanwhile, Irish migrants degraded the position of the threatened classes in England.

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1. Essays, IV. 130.
2. Ibid., 133.
3. Ibid. 136.
4. Ibid. 139.

The issue rests again on the laissez-faire philosophy of the Political Economists. In Carlyle's eyes, the theory of freedom of contract in the labour market is the root disease. According to Political Economy, work could always be found, providing the labourer sought it. Carlyle knew the cruel impracticality of this for a man and his family. He knew also that 'short time' and fluctuating employment were the bane of the operative, however well he might be paid between times. To strike at the principles of Political Economy, such as freedom of contract, and self-restraint in reproduction, Carlyle's method is to pose the high-sounding philosophy in terms at once concrete, yet apparently ridiculous. By so doing he turns the tables and makes the Political Economists look stupid. He substitutes in place of the labourer, the horse, and figures a Political Economist master preaching his theory to the work force:

> 'Railways are forming in one quarter of this earth, canals in another, much cartage is wanted; somewhere in Europe, Asia, Africa or America, doubt it not, ye will find cartage: go and seek cartage, and good go with you!' [1]

Against the Malthusian "'Population Principle', and 'Preventative check'", Carlyle visualizes "Smart Sally in our alley... all too fascinating to brisk Tom in yours: can Tom be called on to make pause, and calculate the demand for labour in the

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1. Ibid., 142.

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British Empire " 1 Carlyle's humour seemed to expose the unreality of Political Economy, but his satire later grew sour. He was to use the figure of horses that did get assured food and shelter as opposed to workers who did not, with a vehement, literal force.

The argument of Chartism is not merely polemical, it has something profound to state. "It is not what a man outwardly has or wants that constitutes the happiness or misery of him. Nakedness, hunger, distress of all kinds, death itself have been cheerfully suffered, when the heart was right. It is the feeling of injustice that is insupportable to all men".[2] There was a deep instinct in man that eventually revolted against the injustice behind his evil conditions. It is associated with a divine providence - Carlyle calls this the 'rights and mights' of men. Yet he does not have in mind the Rights of Man of the American and French revolutionaries.

The Chartist agitation was so important because it was a reaction against a disordered, sham society. "What is injustice? Another name for disorder, for unveracity, unreality".[3] What will emerge as the core of Carlyle's reformism is the need for a social order established on the principles of a posited divine justice. This is the

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1. *Essays*, IV. 201.
2. Ibid., 144-145.
3. Ibid., 145.

ideal to be aimed for. Yet "'the Ideal", Carlyle says, "weds itself to the Possible'".[1] Man ideally has "a Life given him out of Heaven, with Eternities depending on it... With Immensities in him, over him and round him".[2] In practice, "this other saying is most true, 'Use every man according to his rights, and who shall escape whipping?'"[3] Yet "it is to this ideal of right, more and more developing itself as it is more and more approximated to, that human Society forever tends and struggles".[4]

Chartism, then, not only presents a powerful argument for social reform, but bases this on an only partly articulated social philosophy: the struggle of rights and mights, or the ideal and the possible.

Carlyle would have much more to add to this theme. For the present, he envisages the meaning of Chartism in the following terms: "Food, shelter, due guidance, in return for his labour: candidly interpreted, Chartism and all such isms mean that.."[5] This means a challenge to the laissez-faire philosophy of the ruling classes; indeed it is a development of the same phenomenon as the French Revolution, turning now on the issue of an unbridled economy by which, as he expressively puts it, "Cash payment" had "grown to be the universal sole nexus of man to man".[6] Yet Carlyle remains unenthusiastic about the political demands of Chartism. Democracy, its essential demand, as in The French Revolution, is seen to be self-cancelling.

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1. Essays, IV. 152.
2. Ibid., 136.
3. Ibid., 153.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 186.
6. Ibid., 162.

A comparison of Chartism with 'Signs of the Times' shows a greater explicitness on two fronts. First, the social criticism is more specific in accordance with Carlyle's growing anxiety; secondly, there is a significant development of the historical ingredient which in the early essay had been little more than a digression. In Chartism there is an historical perspective with a dimension of its own. It is introduced in the form of a spurious work by Professor Sauerteig: "We shall crave leave to excerpt some pages; partly as a relief from the too near vexations of our own rather sorrowful Era; partly as calculated to throw, more or less obliquely, some degree of light on the meanings of that".[1]

Sauerteig's work is entitled 'History of the Teuton Kindred' and is described as "strange rhapsodic".[2] It is in fact a laudatory account of the history of the Anglo-Saxons, from the time of their arrival from the East ("'on the shores of the Black Sea'" or "' out of Harzebirge rock'"[3]), to their building of a world empire, through heroic industrial achievement on land and heroic navigation by sea.

Carlyle has entitled the chapter (the work's longest) devoted to this subject, 'New Eras', and it amounts to an exposition of the successive eras in English History in the light of the theme of rights and mights. Each new era is

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1. Essays, IV.170.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 171.

a further stage in a scheme of colonization, establishment of order, and expansion.

The Saxon migrants Hengst and Horsa are seen as progenitors of the "Wellingtons, Washingtons, Shakspeares, Miltons, Watts, Arkwrights..."[1] who stand for the widening Saxon stock, all heroes. Through the first Saxons the foundations of order were laid: "forests [were] felled, bogs drained, fields made arable, towns built, laws made, and the Thought and Practice of men in many ways perfected.."[2] The early Saxon invasions and settlements, though apparently disorderly, were the necessary preparation for what followed. The struggles of this time determined "who had the might over whom, the right over whom".[3] The displaced Celts had themselves once displaced the the bison; their reign was not to be forever.

Carlyle sees an existing thing as dependent for its existence on a divine providence:

> Why does that hyssop grow there, in the chink of the wall? Because the whole Universe, sufficiently occupied otherwise, could not hitherto prevent its growing! It has the might and the right.

So too in History, the same organic law applies:

> By the same great law do Roman Empires establish themselves, Christian Religions promulgate themselves, and all extant Powers bear rule. The strong thing is the just thing: this thou wilt find throughout our world; - as indeed was God and Truth the Maker of our world, or was Satan and Falsehood?[4]

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1. *Essays*, IV. 172.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. 173.
4. Ibid., 174.

Survival is thus dependent on a divinely ordained power; might and right, though "so frightfully discrepant at first, are ever in the long-run one and the same".[1]

This argument is applied overall, and in particular, to the history of the English. Overall, they had an appointed role in History; one determined by their practicality, valour and genius for creating order from natural obstacles. In detail, their history exemplified the law of mights and rights. After the Saxon settlements was the Norman conquest. (The Normans, Carlyle is at pains to stress, were not aliens but, like the Saxons, Teutonic). The might of the Normans was again their practicality and order, thus they had the right to subdue the Saxons.

Now the process of the unfolding of social mights and rights began. "Class after class acquires faculty of utterance - Necessity teaching and compelling".[2] First, the barons limited monarchical power by establishing Magna Carta.

The process seemed to manifest itself in a series of struggles; in Wars of the Roses, Puritan revolutions, and now in the modern, democratic era, the struggle of the Working Classes. This was "the Third Constitutional controversy";[3] The aristocracy having triumphed at

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1. *Essays*, IV. 147.
2. Ibid., 176.
3. Ibid., 179.

Runnymede; the middle classes with Cromwell.

Carlyle's idea of periodicity is not only expressed in socio-political terms, but in spiritual terms as well. This is again wedded to an organicism: the seasonal cycle. The Elizabethan period was a "spiritual flower-time". With the eighteenth century, England passed into a winter. The latest new era is "dark, wild-weltering, boundless", with its ballot-boxes, representative assemblies and so forth. Yet even this age has its heroes and its poetry, and its order. The heroes were the creators of industrialism; industry has both a poetry and order: "Cotton-spinning is the clothing of the naked in its result; the triumph of man over matter in its means. Soot and despair are not the essence of it; they are divisible from it, - at this hour, are they not crying fiercely to be divided?"[1]

Carlyle's idea of mights and rights was at this period capable of a noble expression and a reforming impulse.

Carlyle's introduction of this historical ingredient into his social argument has the value of widening the latter. The rationale of the historical past can be defended on the grounds that its theme of mights and rights is also the basis of the social argument. Further, the two meet in their advocacy of the mights and rights of the working classes. Through establishing the rights of the working classes by the historical lineage seen above, their case acquires a compelling power. Chartism possesses, through the

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1. Ibid., 179-182.

marriage of its historical and social parts. a sweep and vigour that enliven the value of its message.

However, on further analysis, the cause of the working classes which Chartism is championing appears to lack precise articulation. If the new era was to inaugurate the rights of the working man, what would be the practical expression of these rights? - certainly not, if Carlyle could help it, the democratic franchise. And if this new age was divinely ordained, why had Carlyle so much disrelish for it? Here were some open questions.

But in fact these matters were to remain unanswered, much as they are here, for a whole decade, until The Latter-Day Pamphlets opened once more Carlyle's social philosophy, in the light of contemporary developments. The social statements of the 1840's would be made indirectly through the medium of History.

It was the historical perspective of Chartism, that had been forming in Carlyle since as early as 1830, which he would develop in the new decade. Having endeavoured to characterize the new age in terms of its relation to the previous century, first through philosophy, then through the great event of the modern period, Carlyle would now place it within the grand sweep of History. He turned to the 'new eras' of Chartism and investigated them more minutely, again, against his theme of the unfolding of mights and rights.

Three important elements wed themselves to Carlyle's historical exposition of this theme in Chartism: organicism, heroism and Teutonism. The success of a cause, we saw, seemed to be justified by a progression in History,

comparable to organic growth in nature. Struggle in any cause required heroism; this, according to Carlyle, was a characteristic of the Teutonic peoples.

Carlyle's earliest, expansive treatment of heroic Teutonism is to be found in his unfinished, History of German Literature, of 1830. "A national character", he wrote there, "...cannot grow up except in Time; and the older it is, the more fixed will it be, and generally the better perfected, and in its kind the worthier".[1] The development of the Germanic peoples displayed this. They had shown early distinction as warriors, where their character revealed "strength of heart; stout, unflinching, ever-fresh Endeavour...", and moreover, a "deep meditative temper, full of enthusiasm and affection".[2]

Within this character were deposited virtues which would appear in time: "above all, that rigorous love of Justice, and deep, steadfast, untameable spirit of Freedom, which is based thereon...features of an earnest, high-minded, heroic, people, worthy of the great work they were one day to perform".[3] Indeed, reviewing the Germanic people from the vantage-point of his own time, Carlyle asks:

> ...have not the Germans, and their descendants which we too are, grounded, and by long effort, built up a Form of Life, which, both in respect of physical and moral culture,...both in the rudest and in the finest estimate. we fancy we can prove to be the highest yet known representation of Humanity?[4]

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1. Carlyle's Unfinished History of German Literature, ed. Hill Shine, 15.
2. Ibid., 16-17.
3. Ibid., 19.
4. Ibid., 22.

This very high estimation of the Germanic character displays the depth of Carlyle's Teutonism at its beginning. And as Chartism showed, Carlyle extended the Teutonic virtues to include the English; this was true of their language: "For it is in its Teutonic stem that the real strength of English lies".[1]

Several significant ideas associated themselves with Carlyle's advocacy of the Teutonic ideal. The Teutonic peoples had a strength of practicality, of thrift. In the Lectures on the History of European Literature, of 1838 (hereafter, Lectures), this takes a gratuitous turn. Carlyle suggests the ancient Etruscans, who he says possessed this virtue of thrift, might have been Teutonic. So too might their mighty neighbours, the Romans, an agricultural people who took up arms to suppress the foolishness of the peoples around them and so established order and a civilisation. "Their whole genius was practical", and they achieved dominance for this reason:

> ..fighting was not at all the fundamental principle in their conquests; it was their superior civilisation which attracted the surrounding nations to their centre.[2]

The 'Teutonic' Romans thus had a right to their might.

The natural successors to the Romans were the Huns and Goths, the Teutons who overran their empire. In the destruction of Rome by the barbarians, Carlyle sees the

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1. Ibid., 30.
2. Lectures on the History of European Literature, 37-40.

seed of five hundred years later, when Christianity wedded itself to Teutonic valour. "The Christian Faith was to wed itself with the deep chivalrous Spirit of the North; and their nuptial torch, so mysterious are the ways of God, was the conflagration of a World".[1] Attila the Hun paved the way for a Christian Charlemagne, and "in that fiery whirlwind, abominations, at which the Sun had sickened, were swept away".[2]

Practicality and order; the martial valour of the German tribes wedded to the Christian religion - these were important aspects of Carlyle's Teutonism as it developed. However, it is not to battles that Carlyle turns for the choicest manifestation of the heroic ideal, but to language and poetry. He explains the correlation of heroism and language:

> Language is the element in which Thought lives: it is the visible air-body of which Thought is the soul; the one is dependent on the other, the one is an emblem of the other. Could we speak the noble language of our ancestors, we must first have thought in their noble spirit; and, in so doing, have learned much and unlearned much.[3]

Language embodied the spirit as well as expressing the deeds of a people. Was it a coincidence that an heroic people produced epic poetry? Carlyle saw the Nibelungen Lied as the epic product of a heroic people,[4] but he did not limit his association of epic and heroism to the Teutons. The

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1. History of German Literature, 20.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 31.
4. See 'The Nibelungen Lied', and 'Early German Literature', Essays, II.

Greeks had their Iliad, the Arabs the Koran: when a people believed and performed what they sang, it was as though a 'revelation of God' came upon them.[1]

Carlyle's use of organicism to express historical periodicity occurs in several ways. In Chartism, it was to plot the development of a national character; in Sartor, 'Signs of the Times', and 'Characteristics', it expressed the general historical principle of growth and decay. Flourishing periods were periods of growth, developing unconsciously, and founded upon a quality of belief. They succumbed eventually to self-doubt, self-criticism and scepticism.

The same principles can be observed in the Lectures, where Greek culture is accounted strong, vital and believing at the time of Homer's Iliad; but began to decline when scepticism manifested itself with Euripides. The decline is reflected in language and literature: "There is a decline in all kinds of literature when it ceases to be poetical and becomes speculative".[2]

The idea behind this is the 'unconscious' which we saw mooted in 'Characteristics'. It is a facet of organicism. Literature is associated with the transition from growth to decay, when the unconscious is on the wane. "During a healthy, sound, progressive period of national existence there is, in general, no literature at all. In a time of active exertion the nation will not speak out its

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1. See 'Biography', Essays, III. 50-51.

2. Lectures, 31.

mind. It is not till a nation is ready to decline that its literature makes itself remarkable".[1] This does not contradict Carlyle's eulogy of the epic, for the epic is the by-product and accompaniment to heroic deeds (and, he might have added, orally transmitted).

As in nations, so in individuals, unconsciousness is a sign of healthiness, of genius. Shakespeare was unconscious of his genius. With Milton, the beginnings of decline are observed: "He is conscious of writing an epic, and of being the great man he is".[2] "All great things, in short, whether national or individual, are unconscious things".[3]

Carlyle's admiration for heroism, the Teutonic, and flourishing organic periods finds its natural focus in the Medieval Period. This time had a particular value for him because it embodied so many attributes Carlyle admired: it was religious therefore believing; it was, in his mind, a product of the Northern spirit; it expressed its belief in poetry and acts of valour - above all, in chivalry.

Carlyle's idea of chivalry is not epitomized in the courtly love of Provence. It did involve a high valuation of woman, but this he saw as a realization, through the inspiration of Christianity, of a respect for women

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1. Ibid., 44.
2. Ibid., 147.
3. Ibid., 44.

natural to the Teutonic races even in pagan times. What roused him more in chivalry was its orderliness. "Considered as a social institution, at that age of the world, the benefits of Chivalry were manifold. He.re , for the first time, the grand principles of order, of subjection to rule, were universally inculcated, and the maintenance of them made a habit and a sacred duty.."[1] Chivalry further focussed the joining of Christianity and the Germanic character: "Here at last were old German Valour and Christian Humility harmoniously blended; and the new European man stood forth all points a man".[2] The Crusades were a further result of chivalry. In the Crusades, Europe "proved its belief".[3]

Religion permeated the Middle Ages: "as the pillars and dome of the Church encircled the flock, so did Religion, as the Highest, encircle Poetry and Reality; and every heart, in equal love, humbled itself before her".[4] This is the same idea as that which associates the Unconscious with religion, and makes it all-pervasive, in 'Characteristics'. It would be expressed again in Past and Present. The poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries revealed a spontaneous, youthful, unconscious spirit.[5] The Middle Ages, indeed, impressed Carlyle as a great example of an age of belief.

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1. History of German Literature, 70.
2. Ibid.
3. Lectures, 68.
4. Essays II, 276. This is a quotation from Tieck.
5. Carlyle refers to the Troubadours in France, and the Minnesingers in Germany, 'Early German Literature'.

All the ideas reviewed thus far play some part in the works of the 1840's. In the historical works of this period, Carlyle's celebration of heroism, Teutonism, the Middle Ages, and the inspirational and social value of religion, appears in part or sometimes _in toto_. These ideas could be broadened to take in other heroic ages such as the Islamic expansion, the Reformation, and the Puritan period. It was not just the European Middle Ages that Carlyle admired; the scope of his ideas proved wider than the English medievalists of the early nineteenth century, a fact that is sometimes overlooked, probably as a result of the later popularity of _Past and Present_. Though some had thought the author of _Chartism_ a Tory, his vision of the past was steeped in a way of looking at History far different from Southey or the Young Englanders.[1]

Carlyle's Teutonism is, of course, an explicit pointer as to where he drew his inspiration and many of his ideas from: the German influence on Carlyle's view of History has never been denied. Yet it has been mostly emphasized by critics in its earliest stage: that is, during the formation of Carlyle's literary and ideological personality up to 1834. Though the bulk of Carlyle's German reading did take place then, the persistence of his debt to Germany is not usually given enough of its due.

Carlyle wrote to Gustave d'Eicthal in 1831:

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1. With the exception of Coleridge, none of the Tory thinkers were versed in the writings of the German Idealists, and even Coleridge saw Goethe through Anglican spectacles. (see J.M. Carré, _Goethe en Angleterre_, Paris, 1920, 67-71.) medievalists of the early nineteenth century were successors to the antiquarians of the previous century such as Bishop Percy and Thomas Warton. (see Ernest Bernbaum, _Guide Through The Romantic Movement_) to which might be added the philosophy of Burke.

> Or if our Symbol of God is henceforth to be his own great Universe, and our Gospel the acted History of Man, then to my view is such religion ill-named the Saint-Simonian; inasmuch as it has been the Religion of all thinkers... for the last half-century: of Goethe,...of Schiller, of Lessing, Jacobi, Herder.[1]

Whatever might be the distinguishing features of these figures in the light of critical scholarship, for Carlyle's purposes, they all represented one unfolding movement of recreativeness.[2] They taught him to look at the Universe as the great symbol of God, and to see the history of mankind as humanity's gospel. It would thus be useful to see where German writers might have had an influence on Carlyle in the ideas we have discussed thus far.

Carlyle would have read Lessing's widely influential, Education of the Human Race. This work proposed a scheme of development for the human race, through childhood, youth and maturity, in which religious truth developed in line with the increased capacity of each stage. Lessing introduced a greater subtlety to what can be found elsewhere in the Enlightenment's discussion of historical periodicity: he did not rebuke ignorance as barbarism when it appeared in an early stage of human development. Also, where Gibbon or Hume might preach religious toleration with the sardonic irony that hides an indifference of contempt,

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1. Letters, 5. 278-79.

2. Carlyle's view has of course been criticized by purists. See R. Wellék, History of Modern Criticism, 3. 96.

Lessing displays a genuine sense of the unity of religion.[1]

If Lessing opened to German thought the importance of tolerance and relativity in viewing the past, his appreciation of growth would help foster the development of organicism. Especially important for Carlyle, his idea of the childhood of the human race would be explored more fully by Herder and Hamann. Significant for Carlyle's equation of youth with spontaneity and noble language, Herder's research with Hamann at Königsberg led to important stress on the development of language in its cultural context. Both thinkers attacked the Enlightenment's abstraction of Reason: "There is no 'reason' as an entity, there is only a process, an activity of man as a total personality, and language is an indispensable instrument of this process, merging with it".[2] Carlyle echoes the basic concept when he designates language as "the element in which Thought lives", stressing the correlation of a noble language and a noble spirit, so following the two Germans in seeing man in his entirety.

Johanes Hamann was certainly known to Carlyle;[3] his ideas on the language of early man bear striking resemblance to the latter's. "The speech of primitive men was sensation and passion, and they understood nothing but images. It was in music, song and poetry that they expressed themselves. Moreover, great poetry...is not to be

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1. 'Why should we not in all positive Religions see nothing other than the order in which the human understanding everywhere solely and by itself is developed and must continue to develop, rather than either smile or carp at any one of them?' Education of The Human Race, 266.

2. Copleston, History of Philosophy, VI. 145.

3. See Essays, I. 49.

attributed to a superior capacity of understanding and observing rules. Homer and Shakespeare created their works by genius, not by applying intellectually apprehended rules. But what is genius? The genius is a prophet whose inspiration is divine. Language and the arts are products of revelation".[1] Readers of Heroes and Hero-Worship would find it redolent of such ideas.

Jacobi's value for Carlyle, according to C.F. Harrold, was the influence he had in forming Carlyle's attitude to Kant's categorizations of reason and understanding.[2] Jacobi was temperamentally inclined to construe Kant's reason as an intuitive receptacle of faith above rational interpretation, and this appealed to Carlyle in his desire for a mystical approach to faith.

Carlyle's accentuation of the value of faith owes much in its expression to Goethe and Schiller, as he himself testified. In the Lectures, Carlyle began his delineation of the Middle Ages by quoting Goethe on the alternation of ages of belief and unbelief. These were "two opposite principles in human nature" according to Goethe, and "human history, as far as we are able to perceive it, is the contest between these two principles".[3] When he came to discuss the Reformation, Carlyle quoted Schiller with approval: "Genius is ever a secret to itself, the strong man is he that is unconscious of his strength".[4] In this

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1. Copleston, op. cit.,I36.
2. Carlyle and German Thought, 125.
3. Lectures on the History of European Literature,54.
4. Ibid., 119.

case the strong man was Luther, who, though a poor man, a son of a miner, had in him the best elements of German character: quietness, depth, sincerity and fearlessness. The illustration is instructive for it shows how Carlyle shapes his different source ideas in his own mind: Schiller's idea of the unconscious, the heroic, and the Teutonic, all merge in the figure of Luther.

The influence of Tieck and Novalis, of the second generation of German Romantics, helped shape Carlyle's vision of the Middle Ages.[1] Tieck was the source of Carlyle's idea of religion in the medieval period, as a sheltering canopy. It is, however, from Friedrich Schlegel that he absorbed more defined views not only on the Middle Ages as a period, but on Teutonism, and the value of the epic as reflective of the heroic spirit. Schlegel's Lectures on the History of Literature Ancient and Modern helped Carlyle in his writing of his History of German Literature.[2] As a source of ideas on hitherto neglected periods of European culture, Schlegel's work must have been very useful. It covers the early German background to the Nibelungen Lied; the age of chivalry and the Crusades; and characterizes epic poetry. Where Schlegel deals with a similar topic to Herder in his Ideen, it is constructive to compare them both with Carlyle, for the ideas of these two thinkers were perhaps his most direct source material.

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1. For the influence of Novalis on Carlyle, see Harrold, 'Carlyle and Novalis'.

2. See Hill Shine's introduction and notes.

This is particularly so in the case of the Middle Ages where Herder's and Schlegel's views present a contrast. Herder deprecated the influence of the Medieval Catholic Church for being intent on its own power, and promoting knowledge and culture only when these were in its own interests, and barring them when not.[1] He hated the superstition, tyranny and ignorance of the Middle Ages; he disliked the influence the 'spiritual' department of the Church, such as its monast*e*ries, exerted over the secular life of the people. Though at times Herder's view of this near-barbaric period seems to echo the philosophes, he had different reasons for his hostility. It is really as a German patriot and a protestant that he acidly observes how the vernacular languages were suppressed by monkish Latin, whilst his Lutheran pietism and German love of domesticity is scarcely veiled behind his contempt for the bad order of the monasteries, their wasteful celibacy, and the idlers who roamed Europe in the guise of pilgrims. Significantly, Herder resented the political subordination of the German emperors to the Papacy, and indeed, of State to Church.

Herder's patriotism is an expression of his belief in the volk spirit. Schlegel's cultural patriotism is no less evident, but it is modified by his Catholicism. He is quite explicit in his defence of the Middle Ages: "The

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1. Ideen, Book XIX.

middle ages are, sometimes, regarded as a chasm in the history of the human intellect, a void space as it were between the genius of antiquity and the civilization of modern times".[1] But in fact knowledge of the ancients "never entirely perished"; ancient authors were preserved but hazard easily accounted for the loss of their works when often only a single manuscript contained most of an author's writings. Saxon bishops sent to Greece for teachers of Greek, whilst Alfred and Charlemagne both stimulated learning. "Much that is noblest and most excellent in the improvements of modern times was born of medieval genius".[2]

The whole period from Charlemagne to the Reformation was for Schlegel an age of Imagination as opposed to Reason. His defence turns to enthusiastic celebration:

> The beautifully silent process of growth necessarily precedes the appearance of the blossom, whilst the blossom, in its turn, reveals its graces before the matured charms of fruit are displayed. As in individuals, growth is the poetic bud of life, so in the career of nations there are moments of sudden development and intellectual expansion. With this universal spring-time of poetry, in the history of Western nations, the age of the Crusades, of chivalry, and love-songs may be fittingly compared.[3]

In this one passage can be seen the ideas of organic growth proceeding silently, of spring time and youth, culminating in the Crusades, chivalry and love songs - all of which were so influential for Carlyle.

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1. Lectures on the History of Literature Ancient and Modern, Lecture VII.
2. Ibid., 158.
3. Ibid., 159.

Both Herder and Schlegel agreed that Germany deserved the praise for chivalry. According to Herder, chivalry in Europe sprang first of all from the old German warrior caste. It was later nourished by contact with the Arabs in Spain, and appeared in Provence. But when united with Norman valour "it gained a wider spread, and deeper root in Europe".[1] Schlegel likewise extolled the exploits and myths of the pagan German tribes, and thereafter the contribution of the Christianized Germans to Medieval culture.[2] He praised the spirit of tenderness and tragedy of the Nibelungen Lied which he compared in its theme to the Iliad; his proud respect for Germany led him to deny that the Minnesangers were directly influenced by the Provencal troubadours. Like Herder, Schlegel pointed to the chivalric spirit already present in the pagan German tribes, which he believed was revitalized during the time of the Normans.[3]

Carlyle's Teutonism - in particular his claim of the chivalric spirit for the old Germans, and his praise of the Nibelungen Lied - would clearly have been stimulated by these two German critics. The respective attitudes of these three to the Crusades displays variant temperaments.

For Herder, the Crusades were simply a mistake. "Chivalry arose not from the crusades, but the crusades from chivalry"; and the Crusades robbed chivalry of its "proper honours".[4] Schlegel sees in the Crusades their value

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1. Ideen, 370.
2. See Schlegel, Lectures VI and VII.
3. Ibid., 177.
4. Ideen, 378.

as a rejuvenescence; as a literary critic, he is less interested in the actual wars, but rather the prospect of heroism meeting heroism. The age of chivalry was ripe for the interaction of different fictions; as the Persians had infected the Arabs with epic tales, so the Arabs influenced the West, and even the West the Arabs.[1]

Carlyle, as we saw, viewed the Crusades as an expression of belief. Like Herder and Schlegel he was well aware of the height of civilization of the Arabs, yet it seems that the bloody confrontation of two religious civilizations in the name of belief did not appear incongrous to him. His idea of the marriage of Teutonism and Christianity is another borrowing from Schlegel, though with altered emphasis. Schlegel sees the marriage in literary terms: Christianity on its own could not be a direct subject for poetry, but it could invest heroic poetry with a higher, nobler meaning "...the very features that distinguish it from the heroic poetry of other nations and ruder ages, are in their nature and origin essentially Christian".[2] For Carlyle, the marriage, essentially, makes for the refining of the heroic spirit in action to nobler ends. The Germanic characteristics of valour and order are strengthened by a deeper infusion of belief; we are not told what particular values Christianity added, except perhaps that of humility. As with the Crusades, Carlyle's espousal of belief <u>per se</u> seems open-ended.

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1. Schlegel, Lecture VIII, 180-184.
2. Ibid., 201.

One more point should be mentioned. Carlyle must have taken his idea of the epic as the proof of a heroic people from Herder and Schlegel. Herder stressed that the Arabic tongue, and its greatest expression, the Koran, stood as an epitome of the Arabs.[1] Likewise, Schlegel considered that an epic poem embodied the spirit of a nation. Epic poetry was superior to all other literature because "Heroic poetry...imples the existence of a nation, one which either is, or has been: a nation which has recollections, and a great past, rich in legendary lore, with an original poetic mode of thinking and a mythology".[2] The heroic poem thus embodied all that was best in a people: "A single monument, like that of the Cid, is more invaluable to a people than whole libraries of genius and wit, without national associations".[3] Schlegel's accent on the nation-spirit thus stretched beyond Germany to Catholic Spain. Carlyle celebrated the value of great literature in the life of a nation, seeing, like Schlegel, the glory of Spain in Cervantes; that of Italy in Dante; and, following Herder, that of the Arabs in the Koran.[4] For Carlyle, Shakespeare was more important to Britain than her empire.[5]

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1. Ideen, 348.
2. Schlegel, 261.
3. Ibid., 194.
4. See Lectures on the History of European Literature, lects. V and VI.
5. See 'The Hero as Poet', Heroes and Hero-Worship.

If Carlyle drew his inspiration for the age of heroism from Schlegel in particular, he assimilated, as critics agree, Fichte's idea of the great man or hero to his own purpose. B.H. Lehman was perhaps too peremptory in saying "the Theory of the Great man was already complete in 1832".[1] It is true that in the 1831 essay 'Schiller', Carlyle describes heroes, as he would again many times, as "fire-pillars" of the world; and that in Sartor, and his essays 'Biography' and 'Johnson', Carlyle had established his ideal of the hero. But by the time he expounded his theory at length in Heroes and Hero-Worship, Carlyle, as we saw, had been developing his idea of the heroic epochs in History. Carlyle had yet to fit the hero to his age in an historical view; from Fichte's theory of the hero, he might have been able to develop a clearer association of hero and heroic age.

Fichte continues, as well, the organic representation of historical growth seen in the other German thinkers. "There is not only Time", he wrote in the Nature of the Scholar, "but there are times, and succession of times, epoch after epoch, and age succeeding age".[2] God willed that the development of the moral life of man be the sole purpose for the manifestation of His attributes and the existence of any created thing. But:

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1. B.H. Lehman, Carlyle's Theory of the Hero, 88.
2. Fichte, The Nature of the Scholar, (Popular Works, 1.) 226.

> The original Divine Idea of any particular point of time remains for the most part unexpressed until the God-inspired man appears and declares it. What the Divine Man does, that is divine. In general, the original and pure Divine Idea - that which he who is immediately inspired of God should do and actually does - is...creative, producing the new, the unheard-of, the original.[1]

Thus the 'Divine Man' is no less than an avatar to the age in which he appears, and which through him becomes new. Although Carlyle does not consistently apply this premise in Heroes and Hero-Worship, for reasons we shall discuss, Fichte's idea of the great man helped him form the heroic age around the hero, and so weld the two concepts into relation with each other. The hero, seeing into the Divine Idea, produced the original teaching necessary for a given epoch. Through him, an age grew to be creative and original. Fichte stimulated Carlyle's developed vision of the hero, where he is the centre-point of the age of heroism. This we can see in Heroes and Hero-Worship.[2]

This series of lectures, delivered in 1840, evidently pleased Carlyle most of all his lecture series. First of all, he worked them into a state for publishing; secondly, judging from his letters, they caused him a special amount of nervous excitement. "My faculties these two years have lain dormant; I feel impatient to get repossession of them", he wrote to John in 1839.[3] Now he was formulating a message which, though not entirely new, still expressed his ideas of hero-worship in a form more complete than ever

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1. Ibid., 229.
2. It will be remembered, the work's full title is 'On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History'.
3. MS., NLS:523.68.

before. "My former Lecture", he wrote to Alick of his Lecture on Mohammed, "which they call the best I ever delivered, was far too good; it shivered my nerves all in pieces; and I have lost about the fourth part of my sleep ever since".[1] "I mean to shew that Hero-worship never ceases", he wrote to John, "that it is at bottom the main or only kind of worship".[2]

The six lectures are linked by recurrent imagery, themes, and a tentative overall scale of values. In structure, they repeat the same simple pattern: some opening remarks introduce the general theme of heroism in the context of the lecture's subject; an account follows of the salient features of the life of the hero in question, with commentary interspersed; and a concluding summary dwells, where suitable, on the greatness of belief and the achievements of the hero.

Repetition of series of imagery characterizing the attributes of heroism, re-inforces Carlyle's basic theme that hero-worship never ceases. An imprecise but discernible periodicity is applied. The hero is first taken for divinity, then a prophet, a poet, until the age's estimate of him appears to decline, and the man of letters is reached. In earlier times, it is clear that the appearance of the hero meant the inauguration of an age of belief, though again in

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1. New Letters, I. 195.
2. Ibid., 189.

later times this principle appears to fall off. A saviour's character is therefore attached to the hero: he is the one awaited by History. He is said to be of one essential stuff, and his particular role is adapted to the values of the time. These then, are the basic considerations of the work.

The first lecture - 'The Hero as Divinity' - is significant for its choice of subject. If he must start with pre-history and myth, Carlyle might have chosen from the Classical world. His choice of Germanic myth is further proof of his Teutonic predilection. At one point Carlyle gives a clue to his special interest in German paganism: "It is interesting also as the creed of our fathers; the men whose blood still runs in our veins, whom doubtless we still resemble in so many ways".[1] The creed of the German pagans retained a truth; Carlyle will not accept it was an allegory, for him this would have meant it was but half-believed. It was founded on an immediate response to the wonder of the universe. The first men worshipped nature with the "free open sense of a child",[2] as Lessing and Hamann had indicated:[3]

> To the wild deep-hearted man all was yet new, not veiled under names or formulas; it stood naked, flashing-in on him there, beautiful,

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1. Heroes and Hero-Worship, 16.

2. Ibid., 7.

3. 'What Hamann says is that at the beginning every phenomenon of Nature was for man a sign, a symbol, a guarantee of divine communication, a living word. Language was a natural response to the perception of Nature as a divine word'. Copleston, VI.136.

> awful, unspeakable. Nature was to this man, what to the Thinker and Prophet it for ever is, preternatural. This green flowery rock-built earth, the trees, the mountains, rivers, many-sounding seas; - that great deep of azure that swims overhead; the winds sweeping through it; the black cloud fashioning itself together, now pouring out fire, now hail and rain; what is it? Ay, what?[1]

The pagan Germans had a vision, seemingly, which modern man had lost. To them the universe was naturally apprehended in physical rather than moral terms. "Force, Force, everywhere Force; we ourselves a mysterious Force in the centre of that. 'There is not a leaf rotting on the highway but has Force in it: how else could it rot?'"[2] The self-quotation says much: this is indeed Teufelsdröckh's message of wonder repeated once more, as indeed the above extract echoes the style of Sartor. In Heroes and Hero-Worship, the theme of wonder is very important: it is the requirement of each hero that he have the faculty to behold life and the universe with wonder.

It must be said that the treatment of facts in this first lecture opens Carlyle to criticism. He was speaking before the time of Max Müller and modern anthropology; his predecessors were the Romantics, the Grimm brothers and Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel had concluded that there were perhaps two Odins, one a mythical figure, the other a "younger,

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1. Heroes and Hero-Worship, 7-8.
2. Ibid., 8.

and doubtless historic Odin" whose" home had, originally, been among some of the German tribes" at the time of the spread of Christianity among them.[1] Carlyle follows Schlegel in taking Odin to have been historical. Indeed, his theory depended on it, not only because it stated the hero was first taken as divinity, but because Carlyle wished to make the pagan creed originate with a great figure. The creed itself, with its tinge of heroic fatalism - its "Destiny inexorable" - evidently appealed to Carlyle. In 'The Hero as Divinity', Carlyle was doing homage to the heroic Teutons.

Carlyle's use of imagery expresses the idea of the hero-avatar awaited by the age. He comes as lightning from heaven setting on fire "dry dead fuel".[2] "The great man, with his free force direct out of God's own hand, is the lightning. His word is the wise healing word which all can believe in".[3] In the second sentence we catch, perhaps, the voice of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. Yet another source of imagery is St. John the Apostle: the hero, we hear in the first lecture, is "the living light-fountain", and "the light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world".[4]

In dealing with Mohammed, Carlyle came to a subject with overt religious rather than mythic associations:

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1. Lectures on the History of Literature...150-51.
2. Heroes, 13.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 2.

"The Hero is not now regarded as a God among his fellow-men; but as one God-inspired, as a Prophet".[1] Carlyle explains: "We have chosen Mahomet not as the most eminent Prophet; but as the one we are freest to speak of. He is by no means the truest of Prophets; but I do esteem him a true one".[2] There was no danger of anyone converting to Islam.

In December 1838, in a letter to John, Carlyle mentioned he had been searching his brother's trunk for a copy of the Koran and was "wae" not to find one.[3] Occasional remarks interspersed his letters: "I am reading the Koran; partly with a view to lecturing";[4] "I am literally horribly bilious (reading the Koran too!)..."; [5] "I am deep in perusal of the Koran; a strange crowdie of a thing".[6] In his lecture, Carlyle emphasized the Koran's significance for Moslems, and added: "We also can read the Koran; our Translation of it, by Sale, is known to be a very fair one.[7] I must say, it is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook.

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1. Ibid., 42.
2. Ibid., 43.
3. MS, NLS : 523.60.
4. MS, NLS: 523.76.
5. T.C. to John Forster, MS, V & A: F 48. E2. 60.
6. MS, NLS : 523.77.
7. George Sale, The English Koran, translated with Notes and a Preliminary Discourse, 1734.

A wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite...Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran".[1]

Later letters do not indicate Carlyle ever made the Koran his favourite reading, yet references to Mohammed persist throughout the Works, and notebooks. His first acquaintance with the Prophet of Islam was probably in Gibbon's Decline and Fall,[2] and his first contact with the Arabs through the Arabian Nights. Sale's Preliminary Discourse would have furnished him with the salient information, and for a bigotted view of 'Mahomet the Imposter', he could have read Prideaux's Life of Mahomet.[3]

Nevertheless, why did Carlyle chose Mohammed? He might have chosen an accepted Hebrew figure, like David. As it is, Carlyle's references to the Biblical faith in its historical settings are very few, a fact that did not escape Christian friends and critics. The modern reader might not appreciate how unorthodox was Carlyle's choice. In the eighteenth century, Sale had had to be wary of centuries of prejudice against Mohammed, not to speak of clerical power. Though in 1840 Carlyle would not be branded an 'enthusiast', this was a time when religious subjects had suddenly acquired a sharp edge. Carlyle's choice of Mohammed, fed as it must have been by the Germans' praise of the Koran's epic qualities and the Romantic interest in the East, yet answered to a personal predilection. Islam was another facet of his belief in the power of mights and rights in History.

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1. Heroes, 64-65.
2. Decline and Fall, ed. J B. Bury, vol. V
3. H. Prideaux, The True Nature of Imposture fully displayed in The Life of Mahomet, 1698. Carlyle refers to Prideaux in the lecture.

The Koran, though incoherent, was the work of an active, natural, uncultivated man. Like the pagan German, Mohammed had looked into the heart of nature. A wild son of the desert, he had grown up "alone with Nature and his own Thoughts".[1] He asked the same question of the Universe as the first man: "What is this unfathomable Thing I live in, which men name Universe?" Then further: "What is Life; what is Death? What am I to believe? What am I to do?"[2] To these questions (which are characteristically Carlyle's and could not appear in any of the sources) Mohammed responds by prayer and meditation, and concludes that "'Allah akbar, God is great'", and man must submit to him in "'Islam'".[3]

Though Carlyle follows Western commentators in ascribing a Jewish and Christian influence to Mohammed's doctrine, what stands out in the lecture is the single force of the Prophet's own genius. Mohammed's genius consisted in his ability to sweep away all the worn-out formulas of Arabia, from the gods of the Kába to the 'jangling' Syrian Christian sects. The hypothesis that he was an ambitious hypocrite simply could not account for the fact of the remarkable sway Islam had from Mohammed's lifetime onwards. "A greater number of God's creatures believe in Mahomet's word at this hour than in any other word whatever. Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain, this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived and died by? I, for my part, cannot form any

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1. Heroes, 52.
2. Ibid ., 54.
3. Ibid., 56.

such supposition. I will believe most things sooner than that".[1]

This advocacy of Mohammed exemplified Carlyle's belief that a truth will, in the event, establish itself and remain in continuance as long as its intrinsic value would allow it. This, and Carlyle's personal liking for Mohammed's valour and sincerity, led him to make the claim he did for Islam:

> To the Arab Nation it was as a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world: a Hero-Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe: see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has grown world-great; within one century afterwards, Arabia is at Grenada on this hand, at Delhi on that...Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a Nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. These Arabs, the man Mahomet, and that one century, - is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark, on a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand; but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada! I said, the Great Man was always as lightning out of Heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame.[2]

This passage is crucial because it contains so much of the conviction Carlyle would like to marshal forth in the support of his hero. There is the emphasis on belief leading to heroic deeds and greatness, "the man Mahomet" who galvanizes a people ("These Arabs") and an age ("that one century"). Moreover, the image of lightning, explosive power for dry fuel, light and flame, have been developed at length. Then

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1. Ibid., 44.
2. Ibid., 77.

there is the appeal to historical fact: Carlyle repeats twice that the Arabs spread "from Delhi to Grenada"

'The Hero as Prophet' was a success: "This is the first strong affirmation in the whole of European literature, medieval and modern, of a belief in the sincerity of Muhammad".[1] If the imaginative re-creation of the phenomenon of Islam was Carlyle's most successful 'heroic' exercise, the remaining four lectures, though each has its appeal, nevertheless display a falling off. For several reasons, the central thesis of the lectures, that the hero is the redeemer of society, suffers a decline.

First, Carlyle insists that nature makes the heroes "of one stuff": "the Hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into".[2] The poet "could not sing the Heroic warrior, unless he himself were at least a Heroic Warrior too. I fancy there is in him the Politician, the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher; - in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these".[3]

Carlyle's lecture on Dante, though excellent in itself, cannot maintain this thesis of the hero-redeemer. Of course, Dante should never be classed as one, yet Carlyle does just this, describing him as superior and liable long to outlive the memory of Mohammed. The logical flaws are obvious: no nation has believed in Dante, incalculable

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1. Montgomery Watt, 'Carlyle on Muhammad', 247.
2. Heroes, 78.
3. Ibid., 79.

though his artistic influence may have been for Italy and Europe. Carlyle suggests Dante epitomized ten centuries of Catholicism in the Divine Comedy: in which case, he is the perfect delineator of the spirit of an epoch that has reached its fruition. Dante does not, like Mohammed, inaugurate a new era, he ends one. Dante, or Shakespeare, for that matter, does not fit the category of the hero who infects others with belief and creates a new epoch.

When he returns to the reformer, in 'The Hero as Priest', Carlyle is able to return to his essentially activist conception of the hero. Luther and Knox are said to have destroyed what Dante once believed, such was the challenge of the age. Carlyle says the Reformers were rediscovering the power that Odin and Mohammed apprehended: the power to be "genuine" and "sincere" which only came with belief. Their role was formed for them: they must destroy the old formulas which had grown into insupportable idolatry.[1]

This lecture implies an apparent but undefined periodicity: we find there were the following heroic ages: that of German paganism; next the Catholic Christians of the Middle Ages; the Moslems; then the Reformers, particularly the Puritans.[2] However, when it comes to fitting his last five heroes at the end of this chain, Carlyle has great difficulty. With the exception of Cromwell, none of these heroes is able to live up to the heroic ideal. We must go back to the Hero as Poet to see why:

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1. Ibid., 120-125.

2. '..thank the Heavens for Old Romans, Moslems, still more Old Christians, nay, Puritans or Modern Christians, 'Believers', each after his kind, Luthers, Mahomets'. Wilson, Carlyle on Cromwell and Others 249.

> The Hero taken as Divinity; the Hero taken as Prophet; then next the Hero taken only as Poet: does it not look as if our estimate of the Great Man, epoch after epoch, were continually diminishing? We take him first for a god, then for one god-inspired, and now in the next stage of it, his most miraculous word gains from us only the recognition that he is a Poet, beautiful verse-maker, man of genius, or suchlike! - It looks so; but I persuade myself that intrinsically it is not so.[1]

Yet, unfortunately, it is so. Carlyle is himself the testimony, for when it comes to viewing the Hero as Man of Letters, he remarks: "With a mournful sympathy we will contemplate, if not three living victorious Heroes...the Tombs of three fallen Heroes!"[2] The hero's reception is not only not assured, it is sometimes tragic: the frequency with which the image of an ill-received Burns recurs in Carlyle is indicative of the dilemma he saw in fitting his theory of hero-worship into the modern context. Burns symbolizes the decline of hero-worship.

The problem is not just that Heroes and Hero-Worship mixes the roles of the contemplative and active man, though this in itself causes confusion. Its vital difficulty is that the closer he moves to the modern period, the more does Carlyle's hero-worship come awry. Cromwell is the last successful example of Carlyle's hero-type; the imperfection of Napoleon points to Frederick the Great. Carlyle would find out too late that for him the modern hero, that is one

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1. Heroes, 84.
2. Ibid., 177.

coming after the age of Cromwell, was an impossibility. His successive chain of new eras had no new link after the Puritan epoch.

It has been seen how Carlyle makes his heroes embody the values of which he approves - how Odin had to exist in order to incarnate the religion of wonder and valour of the first men, and how Mohammed's career bore out Carlyle's doctrine of the identity of might and right in History. In fact, it is so apparent that Carlyle's heroes are a vehicle for his own ideals that the question that is inevitably raised - why create the hero? - is partially answered.

Clearly, to a large degree, Heroes and Hero-Worship is a vehicle for Carlyle; for the strong, earnest character he admired, and the believing, active one he could have wished himself to have been. It is as though, unconsciously, Carlyle had taken up a Yeatsian poetic mask.

Thus we read of "Dante...intense in all things; he has got into the essence of all"; and "...I fancy, the rigorous earnest man, with his keen excitabilities, was not altogether easy to make happy".[1] (How did Jane Carlyle, sitting in the audience, react to this remark of her husband's?). Mohammed and Cromwell are of a similar mould: intense, unaccomodating, sincere and rude of speech, above all terribly in earnest about the rights and wrongs of the world. Even Rousseau, whom Carlyle admits was "not what I call a strong man",[2] was nevertheless "heartily in earnest".[3] In

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1. Heroes, 95, 87.
2. Ibid., 184.
3. Ibid., 185.

fact, all Carlyle's heroes have the mark of visionaries who cannot be moved from their belief One is also reminded of Carlyle's earlier exercise in hero-worship: the reminiscence of James Carlyle of 1832. Carlyle's heroes were indeed "projections of Carlyle writ large", and even "Scotland writ large" as well.[1]

Carlyle's capacity for identification with outstanding figures manifested itself early, as his admiration of Schiller displays. The advance from hero-admiration to hero-worship did not mean a great change; moreover, in German philosophy, in the theory of Fichte, Carlyle would soon find articulation of the Romantic cult of the hero.

Romanticism, with its individualistic emphasis, was almost founded on the hero. Napoleon seemed the embodiment of the heroic spirit. But every man looked into himself for evidence of this spirit or prided himself on recognising it. After Fichte and Saint-Simon, there followed many aspirants to the title of hero and deliverer, some bizarre and deluded, others, like Mazzini, Michelet and Mickiewicz, effectively great figures. Politics, philosophy and the arts all produced Titanic figures.[2] In the light of the pervasiveness of hero-projection in the Romantic period, criticism which singles out Carlyle's theory of hero-worship

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1. LaValley, Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern, 241.

2. 'At bottom, both Michelet as well as Mazzini, like indeed all the [political] Messianic writers we have been examining, may be charged with Personal Messianism. Each of them considers himself to be the Messiah...' J.L. Talmon, Political Messianism: the Romantic Phase, 275. See H. Schenk, The Mind of The European Romantics; Morse Peckham, Beyond The Tragic Vision, for its discussion of Beethoven, Balzac and Carlyle as transcendental heroes.

as unique and/or proto-Nietzschean reveals itself as limited and historically naive.[1]

Still, some have criticized Carlyle's view that "The History of the World [is] the biography of Great Men" [2] as a recantation on his earlier statement that History is the essence of innumerable biographies. Yet if we remember how Carlyle's earlier position was founded on his religious interest in individual men, it is not far to look in order to find another powerful stimulus for Carlyle's hero-worship: religion. The language Carlyle uses is so heavily charged with religious echoes that this influence hardly needs to be expanded. Religion, according to Carlyle, "stands upon [hero-worship]; not Paganism only, but far higher and truer religions - all religion hitherto known".[3] "The Greatest of all Heroes in One - whom we do not name here".[4] The majority of the heroes in Heroes and Hero-Worship are in some way or another concerned with religion. Indeed the norm, as has already been intimated, is the fighter in a religious cause; he who would change History apocalyptically in the name of spiritual belief.

Nor does Carlyle do injustice to ordinary men. All are fitted into his vision of the heroic epoch. Everyman enlarges upon the previous theorem of the universe; it is

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1. See Lehman: 'Carlyle was not the originator, but rather the popularizer of the theory of leadership'. 170.

2. Heroes., 13.

3. Ibid., 11.

4. Ibid.

the Great Man who expedites the march from one epoch to another. There had been: "Whole ages, what we call ages of Faith...original; all men in them, or the most of men in them, sincere. These are the great and fruitful ages..."[1] Heroes and Hero-Worship does not escape the millenialism of its time. In the exultation of his theory, Carlyle declares: "In all this wild revolutionary work, from Protestantism downwards, I see the blessedest result preparing itself: not abolition of Hero-worship, but rather what I would call a whole World of Heroes. If Hero mean sincere man, why may not everyone of us be a Hero? A world all sincere, a believing world: the like has been; the like will again be, - cannot help being".[2]

It is when he comes to envisage the future heroic society that Carlyle's prophecy reveals the natural limitations of a theory so rooted in past historical epochs, but at the same time defines more clearly the role of the hero in society. The hero has in mind a particular form of social order, one that Carlyle extrapolates from the past and applies to future; his example is John Knox: "The unforgivable offence in him is, that he wished to set-up Priests over the head of Kings. In other words, he strove to make the Government of Scotland a Theocracy...He did mean that Kings and Prime Ministers, and all manner of persons, in public or

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1. Ibid., 126.
2. Ibid., 127.

private, diplomatising or whatever else they might be doing, should walk according to the Gospel of Christ, and understand that this was their Law, supreme over all laws...But how shall we blame him for struggling to realise it? Theocracy, Government of God, is precisely the thing to be struggled for!"[1] In fact, this was what other prophets, priests and kings had done: "Hildebrand wished a Theocracy; Cromwell wished it, fought for it; Mahomet attained it".[2] Society was thus, theoretically, to be founded on the law of God, of which the mediator was the hero.[3]

This ingredient in Carlyle's thought does not come from Germany, it originates in the Calvinism of his upbringing. Of all the Protestant Reformers, Calvin was the most concerned with the relationship of Church and State, and indeed with Church organisation. Where Luther separated Church and State, making the Church the spiritual department of the State, Calvin made the Church instructor and regulator of the State's conscience. "Calvin demanded that the Church should exercise its purely spiritual functions unhindered, unhampered, and uncensured by the State".[4] But Church and State were intimately related; they "can as little do without one another as body can do without soul or soul without body".[5]

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1. Ibid., 151-152.
2. Ibid.
3. 'Carlyle's great men and heroes...must not be misinterpreted: they are not Nietzschean supermen, outside the moral order, beyond good and evil, but rather instruments of God's Will, executors of a decree which is not of their choosing and does not serve their individual purposes'. R. Wellek, 'Carlyle and the Philosophy of History', 67.
4. A.M. Hunter, The Teaching of Calvin, 194.
5. Ibid.

The Church in Calvin's Geneva exercised a "system of ecclesiastical police"[1]; prosecuting such misdeeds as contravening laws of church attendance and worship, and various manifestations of what it considered blasphemous. To Calvin, religion "was an essentially moral thing, vindicating its claim to authority over the minds and souls of men only by its ethical effects".[2] The Libertines of Geneva were pursued in earnest; whilst with the transportation of Calvinism to Scotland, the Kirk session endeavoured to maintain public morality by actively exposing and punishing adultery and similar immoralities.

The ethical rigour which Calvinism manifests is paradoxically wedded to a doctrine whose rigid pronouncement of predestination in matters of election and reprobation would seem to make moral law indifferent. Since salvation was the result of God's free grace and owed nothing to individual effort, why should such discipline be exacted by society? Yet the interrelationship of faith and works in Calvinism is axiomatic for an understanding of its practice.

The elect were in principle without need of the Law (either Old Testament or Natural Law), since they were justified through Christ, his indwelling spirit spurred them to deeds of holiness. For them, the value of the Law was that it kept them on guard; for the unregenerate, it was their condemnation. So: "if election was not conditioned

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1. F. Wendel, Calvin, 85.
2. Hunter, 222.

by holiness, it eventuated in a holiness that was at least recognisable and appreciable". Nevertheless, "no man dare presume on the assurance of election to continue in sin...If it is not immediately realised holiness, at least the seeds of it are there and prove themselves by the indefatigable endeavour after holiness which results from the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart".[1]

Because Calvinism did not encourage introspection as to individual salvation or reprobation, but presumed on the individual's active pursuit of his duty confident in the faith that good works were the fruit of election, it proved a stimulation to active participation in society.

This is the key to Carlyle's concentration on the faithful activity of his heroes: belief in Carlyle corresponds to Calvin's indwelling grace. Both produce good works, both are founded on religious certitude. "It is well said... that a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him... the thing a man does practically believe...does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest".[2] Thus: "Answering of this question [of religion] is giving us the soul of the history of the man or nation. The thoughts they had were the parents of the actions they did;...it was the unseen and spiritual in them that determined the outward and actual; - their religion, as I say, was the great fact about them".[3]

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1. Hunter, 115.
2. Heroes, 2-3.
3. Ibid., 3.

How clear is the value the faith of the elect had in Carlyle's eyes. It is the foundation of his idea of the power of the hero and the heroic age; for Carlyle has, in effect, widened Calvin's elect to take in the believing men of all the heroic ages he admired. This faith must express itself in moral terms. Mohammed's belief is founded on the recognition: "That man's actions here are of <u>infinite</u> moment to him, and never die or end at all; that man, with his little life, reaches upwards high as Heaven, downwards low as Hell, and in his three score years of Time holds an Eternity fearfully and wonderfully hidden: all this had burnt itself...into the wild Arab soul".[1] Mohammed knew the "Infinite Nature of Duty".[2]

Now in Carlyle, as in Calvin, the moral side of religion is to be forced home. The religious hero fights for the implementation of 'God's Law' - for a theocracy. The whole question of authority in society turned on recognition that: "There is a God in this world; and a God's-sanction, or else the violation of such, does look-out from all ruling and obedience, from all moral acts of men. There is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience".[3] The ruler thus must have divine sanction, and his power be exercised morally. Given this, his law must be obeyed, for it was divine. Hence Carlyle's accent on finding the true king who thereby "<u>has</u> a divine right over me".[4] For all his arbitrary exaltation of the hero and his

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1. *<u>Heroes</u>*, 75.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 199.
4. Ibid.

power later on, it must be understood that Carlyle's fundamental concern was that these be morally founded. Yet Authoritarianism was the dangerous element present in the theocratic doctrine as here construed, and as Calvin's reign in Geneva had shown.

Having vindicated Mohammed in his lectures, Carlyle at the same time discovered that another misunderstood historical figure - and hero-needed rehabilitation. "Poor Cromwell - great Cromwell! The inarticulate Prophet" was one way in which Carlyle phrased this in his last lecture 'The Hero as King'.[1] "Had England rallied all round him - why, then, England might have been a Christian land!"[2] The hero, and the ideal of a theocratically ordered society, being thus embedded in his mind, it is not surprising Carlyle spent the next five years trying to re-create them.

He had originally taken up the subject in order to write an article at the request of Mill at the end of 1838. Serious reading commenced in the new year, when he informed his mother that he was turned "partly towards Oliver Cromwell and the Covenant in England and Scotland".[3] Though informed already that someone else was to write the article, Carlyle read on. After the lectures in 1840, he was immersed, he wrote to John Sterling, in "Puritan Histories Scotch and English". Yet it seemed that there was "no great epoch known at all so buried under rubbish as this of Cromwell

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1. Ibid., 217.
2. Ibid., 227.
3. New Letters, I. 147.

and his Puritans".[1] His view of Cromwell became "clearer, and clearer", as he wrote to Sterling in 1842, "as of a great man, almost as of a kind of god: but the means of representing it?...It lies buried under the centuries of quackeries, scepticisms..."[2]

This struggle with his sources was responsible for the long period spent on Cromwell, which stretched on to the completion of Cromwell's Letters and Speeches in 1845 (a second edition, including more material, occupied him the following year). During this period, Carlyle made copious notes, wrote much that was destroyed,[3] and did not finally resolve to edit and elucidate the letters and speeches until early 1844.

An interesting medley of undated notes and narrative, until recently overlooked by scholars, is in the Forster Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum.[4] This shows how Carlyle struggled with his main historical subject at the same time as he noted thoughts many of which were included in Past and Present. Alexander Carlyle printed some of this material together with more of what must have belonged to the original MS. in 1898, as Historical Sketches of Notable Persons and Events in The Reigns of James 1 and Charles 1.

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1. Ibid., 213
2. Ibid., 250.
3. Froude, III. 358-9.
4. MS, F 48.E 36., 'Statesmen of The Commonwealth'. (See K.J. Fielding, introductory essay in Carlyle Past and Present.) Hereafter cited as Forster MS.

These dislecta membra from Carlyle's Puritan studies continue pre-occupations seen in Heroes and Hero-Worship. They debate the question of the true spiritual church; lament the chasm of two centuries between Carlyle and his hero; reveal an affinity for Cromwell; and discuss the dualism of morality. Each pre-occupation is a reflection of Carlyle's search for a moral, social order. He at the same time is conscious of dwelling in two separate ages: the Puritan and the modern.

Sometimes Carlyle can fuse the two; for example, in the similarity he discerns between Laud's dead episcopalian formula, and Puseyite ritualism. Laud's service at Holyrood Castle is likened to army drill:

> Here you observe due Altars in the East, the Four Surplices just lifted out of lavender foldings...men bowing at the name of Jesus, bowing at many things, response, re-response, and Collect of the day, men answering like clock-work to the fugle motion, so that when you say,'Ground arms', they make one simultaneous rattle of it, and the manoeuvre is perfect.[1]

In his portrayal of Puseyism, there is a similar stress on artificality and mechanism:

> Vain to attempt reviving what is dead; caput mortuum will not live again. Have an eye for knowing what is extinct... How many interesting *Neo Catholic, Puseyite and other charitable pluperfect persons, like zealous officers of a spiritual Humane love?* Human Societies one beholds struggling with breathless half-frantic assiduity, with surgical bellows, hot cloth and pietism...to recal some vital spark which has forever fled![2]
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1. Historical Sketches...,302.

2. Forster MS., 51.

Both in respect of Laudian Anglicanism and Puseyism, there was an old formula virtually without spirit endeavouring to be a reality.

The question was: "How the true Church will relate itself to the practical State"; this was ever "the question of questions. How the seeming church will do it, is...a most unimportant question". Returning to Calvin's ideal, Carlyle envisages "Church and State..[as] Theory and Practice. Church is our Theorem of the invisible Eternity", (in transcendental terms); "wherein all that we name world in our earthly dialects, all from royal-mantles to tinkers' aprons, seems but as an emblematic shadow. Emblematic...for thou wilt discern that the real Church of men does always transfigure itself in their temporal business".[1] Again, this is the Puritan mysticism of Sartor.

The problem of the true Church is related to the moral vision of the people, and this reflects their way of looking at the universe. Carlyle insists the doctrines of Heaven and Hell once contained an ethical truth, which was originally understood, and must remain when the literal sense was no longer believed. They symbolized "that same infinite distinctiveness between right and wrong". One must not overlook this essential truth in looking at the doctrine; not "put /the pagoda before the god; ..forget that the coat is not cause of the man but consequence of him".[2] As with his

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1. Historical Sketches, 275-76; Forster MS., 52. (Quoted as A. Carlyle).

2. Forster MS., 14.

representations of the different churches, Carlyle is aiming at essential truth rather than the exterior which is mere symbol of the truth.

The past then, was not only interesting for its remains, but instructed men that beneath these there had originally been a truth. "Is it only true that men were alive? Are old shadows, and emblematic traceries on cobwebs the only truth in this bright celestial terrestrial /Universe, -divine still in every fibre of it". The problem of viewing the evidence of the past is related to the eternal splendour of the universe - "Unfathomable, unnameable Force/Beauty, Terror, Wonder, Worship looking forth from every fibre of it, * beautiful, terrible, worthy of worship by man"* This raises the perennial problem of men's veiled vision: "But indeed a man's universe is the shadow of Himself. A man is the author of his own universe..."[1] To understand History, Carlyle is saying, men must have an eye to behold the divinity of nature. The correlation brings us back to his central vision which he shared with the Germans: History and the universe were Carlyle's Bible. All these extracts from the Forster MS. display him in quest of an essential truth, buried beneath excrescence, in an historical epoch. The stress on moral vision and the true Church reveal Carlyle's pre-occupation with a moral, social order. Carlyle was searching for the heroic, the moral and what was for him the beautiful; what, perhaps, might be rescued

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1. Ibid. * * inserted above.

and projected into the future as the stuff of a new, heroic era.

When he turns to Cromwell, Carlyle sees the embodiment of his search:

> I confess I have an interest in this Mr. Cromwell; and indeed, if truth must be said, in him alone. The rest are historical, dead to me; but he is epic, still living. Hail to these, thou strong one; hail across the long-drawn funeral aisle and night of Time! Two dead centuries, with all that they have born and buried, part us; and it is far to speak together: how diverse are our centuries...yet our Eternity is the same: and a kinship unites us which is much deeper than Death and Time.[1]

It was this affinity with Cromwell as the one living figure of his time that finally made Carlyle give up his historical notes and use the primary material of Cromwell himself, thus reviving his hero in his habit as he lived.

Carlyle's introduction to Cromwell's Letters and Speeches reiterates the difficulties caused him by his sources. It was a problem founded on the organic development of History which this time is seen to involve the rotting of the evidence of the past. Not only did no satisfactory history of the Puritan Revolution exist, but the pamphlets and narratives that did present some record were unedited. Moreover, the nineteenth century had wandered far from the seventeenth: a hiatus in historical memory had occurred. Left were the labyrinthine commentaries of 'Dryasdust', the minutiae-minded, unimaginative historian of modern times.

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1. Historical Sketches, 346; Forster MS., 94 (Quoted as A. Carlyle).

Carlyle focusses these thoughts in familiar imagery: the heroic spirit of the Puritans is expressed in images of light, lightning and fire; rot and dirt seem to encompass the milieu of the historians of the "Pedant species", that also, "like the owl in any sudden brightness, has to shut its eyes..." The dead historical period itself is sunk, like the kingdoms of darkness and death, in the material of two centuries past. To rediscover the heroic spirit of Puritanism is to descend like Orpheus after Eurydice, or Hermoder, the Norse hero, in search of Balder, who is entrapped in "Hela's Death realm".[1]

Despite these obstacles, Carlyle proceeds to characterize the essential spirit of Puritanism. It resolves itself into two elements: the intense faith of the seventeenth-century English Squire, and his active promotion of his Calvinist beliefs. Against Laud's episcopalian formula ('Four surplices at Allhallow tide'), the Puritans had grasped the moral imperative of man's existence: "That the 'Sense of difference between Right and Wrong' had filled all Time and all Space for man, and bodied itself forth into a Heaven and Hell for him: this constitutes the grand feature of those Puritan, Old-Christian Ages; this is the element which stamps them as Heroic, and has rendered their works great, manlike, fruitful to all generations".[2]

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1. Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, 1-11.
2. Ibid., 51.

"The English Squire of the Seventeenth Century clearly appears to have believed in God, not as a figure of speech, but as a very fact, very awful to the heart of the English Squire".[1] His impelling faith was neither cant nor hypocrisy; the Puritans were not Machiavellians, neither were they merely constitutional reformers fighting for the liberty to tax themselves. "Our ancient Puritan Reformers were ... inspired by a Heavenly Purpose. To see God's own Law, then universally acknowledged for complete as it stood in the holy Written Book, made good in this world". The faith of the Puritans thus issued in the desire actively to establish "..Eternal Justice; that God's Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven".[2]

Faith results in certitude and activism then. "He that works and does some Poem", Carlyle says admiringly, "not he that merely says one, is worthy of the name of Poet". Cromwell's deeds, not his words, make him great. "Cromwell, emblem of the dumb English, is interesting to me by the very inadequacy of his speech".[3] He embodied the genius of the unconscious, then: moreover, he was English, Teutonic.

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1. Ibid., 58-59.
2. Ibid., 81-82.
3. Ibid.78.

However, the unconscious now had other associations: Cromwell is prone to "hypochondrias" (which "all great souls are apt to have"); his temperament inclines to sorrow and melancholy, but also to courage. "The depth of our despair measures what capability and height of claim we have to hope. Black smoke as of Tophet filling all your universe, it can yet by true heart-energy become flame, and brilliancy of Heaven".[1] Extremities dwell together in the unconscious, Carlyle is saying; there is a kinship between inspiration and madness.

All this serves by way of introduction to the letters and speeches themselves. The rest of the first two volumes of Cromwell in the Centenary Edition are taken up with Cromwell's military career. This is followed by means of Cromwell's letters, supplemented by Carlyle's comments, and a digest of historical events and persons, often supported by quotations from documents written by Cromwell's contemporaries (such as Sprigge, Whitelocke, the Commons Journals, and so on). The last two volumes occupy an inordinate space since they consist mainly of Cromwell's speeches to Parliament as Lord Protector. The work thus falls into the two halves of Cromwell's public career: soldier of God, and statesman of the Commonwealth.

"The old Narratives", Carlyle says, "written all by baffled enemies of Cromwell, are full of mere blind rage, distraction and darkness; the new Narratives, believing

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1. Ibid., 50-51.

only in 'Macchiavelism', etc. disfigure the matter still more".[1] Cromwell, as a hero, must have been sincere: "Neither was it, I think, - 'by master strokes of duplicity' that Cromwell steered himself victoriously across such a devouring chaos; no, but by continuances of noble manful simplicity,...by meaning one thing before God, and meaning the same before men, not as a weak but as a strong man does".[2]

Carlyle does not defend Cromwell singly against each accusation of his critics. Cromwell's behaviour with regard to the self-denying ordinance, the conflicting interests of Presbyterian Parliament and Independent New Model Army, the execution of the King, and other such questions, is not defended in detail. Where he relates such events, Carlyle often refrains from comment, but always maintains his belief in Cromwell's sincerity before God.

Though he has little to say on the political aspects of Cromwell's career, Carlyle does report the military activities in detail. Cromwell's consistent request that the glory be given to God (thus linking his success with Heaven's cause after each victory) soured those hostile to his cause, and later critics advanced hypocrisy and ambition as their motive. To Carlyle, Cromwell's reports were the mark of his sincerity and heroism: "If modern readers suppose them to be 'cant,' "

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1. Ibid., 264.
2. Ibid., 265.

he writes after Cromwell's account of the storm of Bristol in 1645, "it will turn out an entire mistake". The reader's own sincerity is called into question instead: "I advise all modern readers not only to believe that Cromwell here means what he says; but even to try how they, each for himself in a new dialect, could mean the like, or something better!"[1]

This turning of the tables reveals much about the kind of spirit in which Carlyle wrote Cromwell. Probably never before had his attitude to his subject been so devotional.

This faith in Cromwell is seen in a letter to Edward Fitzgerald, dated January 1844: "In the British Museum I find the original of the Letter about Naseby; written from Harborough that very night of the Battle: I tried hard to find some shiver in the hair-strokes, some symptom that the man had been bearding Death all day; but there is nothing of that sort there; a quite composed Letter, the handwriting massive, steadfast, you would say almost firmer than usual".[2] Carlyle's conviction, as well as Cromwell's courage, speaks for itself.

Yet manifestly there were difficulties. Cromwell's heroism involved shedding of blood: the King's for example ("I reckon it perhaps the most daring action any

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1. Ibid., 228-229.
2. New Letters, I. 304-05

Body of Men to be met with in History ever, with clear consciousness, deliberately set themselves to do".[1]).

In the beginning of 1648, the Army leaders held a prayer-meeting at Windsor, aware that their negotiations with the Presbyterians, in the majority in Parliament, were leading nowhere, and that Parliament was eager to come to terms with the King and dismiss the Army. The prayer-meeting expressed the penitence of the Army leaders for allowing their sinfulness to lead them to deal with a treacherous King. They resolved to exercise their power, to cower Parliament and bring the King to justice.

Carlyle adds:

> Abysses, black chaotic whirlwinds: - does the reader look upon it all as Madness? Madness lies close by; as Madness does to the Highest Wisdom, in man's life always: but this is not mad! This dark element, it is the mother of the lightnings and the splendours; it is very sane, this![2]

This is not merely rhetoric, because the point it is making is a very important one. What we are entitled to question is Carlyle's impartiality when it comes to judging whether the inspiration in question is heaven's, or some other's.

When the Army march to London, determined to deal with Parliament, Carlyle points out they had "decided to have Justice...; to see God's Justice done, and His

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1. Cromwell, I.413
2. Ibid., I. 318.

judgements executed on this Earth". Again, we find, "the abysses where the thunders and splendours are bred, - the reader sees them again, laid bare; and black Madness lying close to the Wisdom which is the brightest and highest."[1] Colonel Pride's regiment purges the recalcitrant Presbyterians; what Carlyle considers to be God's justice is effected by sheer force of arms. "By what Law?", Carlyle figures the cowled Parliamentarians asking - and Hugh Peter, their preacher, answers with Carlyle's evident approval: "'It is by the Law of Necessity; truly, by the Power of the Sword'".[2]

Yet exhilaration with power wielded in the name of the Almighty seemed to mark Cromwell's career through Ireland. The storming of Drogheda resulted in two thousand being put to the sword by Cromwell's soldiers. Cromwell wrote "this bitterness will save much effusion of blood". Future garrisons would be so terrified they would surrender at once - which they mostly did do. Still, Cromwell adds: "I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood".[3] Cromwell is exacting his vengeance, in the name of God, for the 1641 massacre of Protestants in Ireland. Carlyle sees Cromwell

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1. Ibid., I.408.
2. Ibid., I. 409.
3. Cromwell, II. 56, 60.

simply as "Heaven's lightning" bringing horrible "Surgery" to Ireland.[1] He stands by his hero against rose-water philanthropists in an outburst that has proved notorious.

Carlyle does get closest of anyone in laying open the motives behind Cromwell's violence in Ireland and elsewhere. Cromwell's conviction that he was the arm of God is clearly put across. It is the identity of Cromwell-Carlyle which is behind the work's success as a presentation of the real, Calvinist-inspired Cromwell. But it is this also that constitutes the disturbing element in the book. In his linkage of inspiration and madness, Carlyle raises a profound problem. But his judgement is not equal to his intuition. His support for Cromwell, his sheer exhilaration with the irrational force of the unconscious, make Carlyle unable to distinguish between 'Higher Wisdom' and bloodlust. This is probably the point of departure in Carlyle's theory of rights and mights. Elsewhere the inspired act is known by its fruits.

The last two, long-winded volumes of Cromwell see Carlyle's exhilaration on the decline. Carlyle hardly hides his feeling that Cromwell won the war but lost the peace. Parliaments proved obdurate, peoples apathetic, friends turned hostile - the rule of the saints never materialized. The theocracy was what all the fighting was for, and its prospect dissolved into the Restoration,

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1. Ibid., II.51.

and "two godless centuries". Though he adds the disclaimer: "Puritanism was not the Complete Theory of this immense Universe",[1] Carlyle's frustration is intense. This was the last heroic age, the last period of light before the modern chaos. In the intervening "two Godless centuries", England had forgotten the Cromwellian experience: what Cromwell had achieved had been lost.

Cromwell is therefore expressive of Carlyle's frustration at the limitations of his theory of hero-worship, and the breakdown of continuity between the two ages. The spectre loured over the writing of the book, and perhaps explains partly Carlyle's indulgence in frenzy.

The jottings in the Forster manuscript show his mind wandering to the particular problems of his own age. History must illuminate the present after all, the past in itself was no place to remain in, "we belong not to the seventeenth century; we are alive here, and have the honour of belonging to the nineteenth!"[2] These thoughts crystallized when he saw the Poor Law 'Bastilles' in Cromwell's native Huntingdonshire, and read of weavers' revolts and Chartist demonstrations in the particularly bad year of social distress, 1842.

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1. Cromwell, IV.184.

2. Historical Sketches, 275.

Carlyle had been watching the growth of the Anti-Corn Law League. His view of the early Victorian industrialist was grim: "I went one day to the Corn-Law Conference", he explained to his mother in July 1842:

> ..it became painfully clear to me that these poor people too had small chance to do much good. If their Corn-law Repeal were granted them, they would just go on as they had done; amassing money, fulfilling their desires, their appetites and whims; living without God in the world; therefore without sympathy for man in the world; answering of their Brother as Cain did: "Am I my Brother's keeper?" I paid my Brother his wages, no more can he ask of me; what more have I to do with him? - These men think, and practically believe, there is no other reality but money at all.[1]

To Alick that Spring, he wrote: "The distress of the county appears to mount higher and higher:...what the issue or the remedy is to be no mortal knows". It was no good blaming Peel who had not yet repealed the Corn Laws; "we are all to blame; we have forgotten what was right and reasonable; seeking after Mammon...we have travelled long on that path, and it leads towards ruin..."[2]

In the Forster MS., Carlyle speculates further on these modern developments in society. The nomadic barbarian had dwelt once in the unordered "fishing state" before society settled and entered the agricultural "ploughing state". Now the world of the nineteenth century with its pursuit of wealth, commerce, its gambling in ruin and loss "with thousands of unsold shirts and millions of naked backs", seemed a reversion to the anarchic fishing state.[3]

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1. New Letters, I.267.
2. Ibid., 266.
3. Forster, MS., 50.

That laissez-faire entrepreneurial capitalism was founded on moral anarchy producing wealth for a few and poverty for many, and reduced human relationships to the level of "cash payment, the sole nexus", Carlyle had stated in Chartism. Now the pronounced tone of the preacher, hitherto confined to his letters, would become his public strain. In Past and Present Carlyle adopted for the first time the overt role of social prophet.

Now the theme of mights and rights appears in a harsher light. The universe we see in Past and Present is a frightening one, founded upon a rigidly weighed justice meted out with literal, arithmetical consistency. Nature is figured as a goddess in whom there dwells a celestial beauty and an infernal darkness. She asks of man: "'Knowest thou the meaning of this Day? What thou canst do Today; wisely attempt to do?'" According to man's answer he prospers or goes to ruin, for nature is deathly harsh to those who answer wrongly; then, nature "is a dumb lioness, deaf to thy pleadings" who mangles her victim with teeth and claws.[1]

This universe is a strange mixture of Calvinistic rigidity and dualism, and of transcendentalism. Judgement is fixed and sure, though its operations may take a century or two. "In the centre of the world-whirlwind", we are reminded in the style of Carlyle's favourite Book of Job ,"

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1. Past and Present, 7.

"verily now as in the oldest days, dwells and speaks a God".[1] But the next sentence adds: "The great soul of the word is *just*"; the 'soul of the world' is a phrase after the transcendentalist philosopher Schelling. Moreover, beneath "the transient outer Appearances" man must know there exists Nature's truth, elsewhere termed "Destiny, Existence...this grand unnamable Fact in the midst of which we live and struggle".[2]

The transcendentalist world of *Sartor* with its Puritan mystical ethic has simply acquired a more fixed Calvinistic sanction. The Law is binding on man, even if he knows it not. To contravene it is to move nearer the "Tarpeian Rock". Heaven's laws are compared to man's, her court juxtaposed alongside Westminster Court, and with heavy humour man is reminded which court's sentence is eternal.

Justice is in fact pre-destined in true Calvinist fashion. Though the world is in travail with evil, the righteous and noble will have victory. "Towards an eternal centre of right and nobleness, and of that only, is all this confusion tending".[3] We must await the issue. All battles measure the mights and rights of the participants and apportion justice accordingly. Wallace struggled, though he might not have known it, not for annulment of the union with England, but so that Scotland might enter it on fairer terms. "The falsehood alone...will be

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1. Ibid., 8.
2. Ibid., 7, 8.
3. Ibid., 12.

conquered..abolished..but the truth of it is part of Nature's own Laws, coöpérates with the World's eternal Tendencies, and cannot be conquered".[1]

The theme of mights and rights now fits into a picture in which we can see more clearly its derivation. A Calvinist providence is wedded to the organicism of the Idealist: might and right struggle to assert themselves in the realm of society, and History is a record of their eventual balancing out, expressed in terms of organic growth and decay. What has been called Carlyle's "proto-evolutionism" is thus an amalgam of Calvinism and German thought.[2]

In such a universe, the destiny of contemporary Britain stands arrayed. The opening pages of Past and Present show a picture of men "enchanted" in workhouses built by the Poor Law Act, while around them, like fields of corn crying to be reaped, the natural riches of England lie unexploited. This is the unordered, anarchic society of "the fishing state". Political economy with its theory of wages, production, supply-and-demand has produced this. "O, what a waste is there"; Carlyle laments in viewing such enforced idleness, "of noble and thrice-noble national virtues; peasant Stoicisms, Heroisms...Soul of a Nation's worth".[3] "In the midst of plethoric plenty the people perish".[4] (The phrase expresses the act as well as the

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1. Ibid., 12-13.
2. See E. Bentley The Cult of the Superman; H. Grierson, Carlyle and Hitler. For a better understanding of the relationship between Protestant pietism and German Idealism, see F. Lea Carlyle:Prophet of Today, and Cazamian, Carlyle.
3. Past and Present, 3.
4. Ibid., 6.

didacticism of the work).

Carlyle sees the nation as a community, and her problems as communal ones. The entrepreneur may think he is growing wealthy, but in reality his wealth, like the virtues of the peasants, is enchanted. "Who is it that it blesses; makes happier, wiser, beautifuler, in any way better?"[1] This was a potent text; in it we catch the echoes of Arnold and Ruskin.

The solution lay not in what Carlyle calls the "Morrison-Pill hypothesis",[2] whereby an easy, painless cure was to be administered. What is required is a change of heart on the part of everyone. In practical terms there must be more wisdom and better leadership. For this we return to the hero who can lead the community back to the divine law. "If we walk according to the Law, the Law-Maker will befriend us; if not, not".[3] The test of this was how well a nation performed its hero-worship.

It is in this immediate context that the second book, 'The Ancient Monk' should be viewed. This book is an example of successful hero-worship. However, its overall relation to the work has caused much comment on the grounds that this is not clearly enough defined.

Carlyle introduces comparisons, certainly, between this world of the past, and present nineteenth century society. "Ultra-Chartist Danes" harass King Edmund and

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., 26.
3. Ibid., 25.

his Saxon people, causing social unrest comparable, it is suggested, to that of modern times.[1] In contrast to the present, however, in the twelfth century there were no ballot-boxes, ten-pound franchises or game-preserving aristocracy. Nevertheless, Past and Present suggests the same perspective of organic growth presented in Chartism. What Carlyle has done is to arrest this in the twelfth century, and centre on that time as with a telescopic lens ("Will not the reader peep with us into this singular camera lucida...")[2] The means of doing this is provided by the Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakeland. Carlyle's comparison of Jocelin to Boswell expresses the gratitude he felt for finding such a source. It was the discovery of this document that made the work possible.

The historical view of Past and Present is not a crude comparison of one era to another, therefore. Strictly, we are not presented with a straight comparison between an heroic past and a dismal present, but are transported back into history to re-capture the sense of a living age. The monastic ideal was not yet "ready for 'dissolution', by a Henry the Eighth or some other".[3] It was a social formula which still held some life then, but Carlyle is not interested in the formula: he is not defending the medieval monasteries or the cult of miracles

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1. P&P., 54.
2. Ibid., 43.
3. Ibid., 58.

or saints. It is the essential truth he is again in search of: the foundation of that age was its faith. "Religion lies over them like an all-embracing heavenly canopy, like an atmosphere and life-element, which is not spoken of, which in all things is presupposed without speech".[1] This idea may be an adaption of Tieck's idea of the Middle Ages; it also embodies Calvin's ideal of the true church, and Schlegel's unconscious age of faith: Carlyle has absorbed all these into his own imaginative projection of the essential spirit of religion.

As Carlyle has re-created it, the twelfth century monastery appears as a semi-theocratic community, founded on an unconscious faith and, in Abbot Samson, presided over by a hero who embodies the Christian ideal: "Is he not [the monk's servant, as we said, who can suffer from them, and for them; bear the burden their poor spindle-limbs totter and stagger under; and, in virtue of <u>being</u> their servant, govern them, lead them out of weakness into strength, out of defeat in to victory!"[2]

This mark of the Christian hero is only a passing image, however; we have again the Carlylean hero in Abbot Samson, a man who is made to govern and establish order, whose faith establishes him in the practical business of improving the world.

The monastery under the previous Abbot, Abbot Hugo, had fallen into debt from outside, and bad order within.

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1. Ibid., 60.

2. Ibid., 91.

"Abbot Samson had found a Convent all in dilapidation; rain beating through it, material rain and metaphorical... Willelmus Sacrista sits drinking nightly...Our larders are reduced to leanness, Jew harpies and unclean creatures our purveyors; in our basket is no bread".[1] Once an obedient, cowled monk himself, Samson knew the principle of authority now the monks had managed to elect him to office. They resent his authority at first, but: "There exists in him a heart-abhorrence of whatever is incoherent, pusillanimous, unveracious, that is to say, chaotic, un-governed; of the Devil, not of God".[2]

Samson sets about ordering the affairs of the monastery, ridding it of its exploiters, restoring discipline inside, and raising its authority in the neighbourhood. "Wheresoever Disorder may stand or lie, let it have a care; here is the man that has declared war with it...Let all sluggards, and cowards, remiss, false-spoken, unjust, and otherwise diabolic persons have a care..."[3] Samson is both judge and authority: "Willelmus himself, deposed from the Sacristy and all offices, retires into obscurity .."[4] Those who once helped or impressed the abbot by their deeds are now rewarded, though he practises no nepotism. Even King Richard has to yield to Samson's judgement, after an initial outburst. "Coeur-de-Lion is very dreadful, but not the dreadfulest. Videat Altissimus".[5]

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1. P & P, 87.
2. Ibid., 88.
3. Ibid., 92.
4. Ibid., 93.
5. Ibid., 114.

The faith of Samson that issues in such deeds is expressed in terms characteristic of the Carlylean hero. It has the familiar basis in wonder, duty and the sense of the infinitude of right and wrong: "Wonder, miracle encompass the man; he lives in an element of miracle; Heaven's splendour over his head, Hell's darkness under his feet. A great Law of Duty, high as these two Infinitudes, dwarfing all else, annihilating all else, - making royal Richard as small as peasant Samson, smaller if need be!"[1]

Carlyle rebukes the suggestion that such a faith was superstition:

> The 'imaginative faculties'? 'Rude poetic ages'? The 'primeval poetic element'? Oh, for God's sake, good reader, talk no more of all that! It was not a Dilettantism this of Abbot Samson. It was a Reality, and it is one. The garment only of it is dead; the essence of it lives through all Time and all Eternity!-[2]

This then, is the essential, heroic faith. In Samson it had issued in heroic action that had ordered his immediate environment. Such was the effect of heroes on the world; it was built up by their work: "The hands of forgotten brave men have made it a World for us..."[3] Samson had only been rescued from oblivion because of Jocelin's Chronicle, but this anonymity did not detract from the work that had been done. "..Genuine WORK alone, what thou

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1. *P & P*, 116.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 132.

workest faithfully, that is eternal, as the Almighty Founder and World-Builder himself. Stand thou by that; and let 'Fame' and the rest of it go prating".[1]

In the last two books, Carlyle proposes this heroic faith and its fruits - now proclaimed in the 'Gospel of Work', the latest gospel, but an eternal one - in further commentary on the ills of modern society. Many of his familiar homilies are repeated: atheism and deism are rebuked, the world of the materialists is reproved in a number of different figures. Carlyle borrows, for example, a Moslem story recounted by George Sale: that of the Dead Sea men who heard and did not respond to Moses, so becoming apes. For Carlyle it becomes symbolic of the modern materialist whose response to the universe was the image of the inanity of his own soul. In the same category is the Englishman whose "hell" is "not - getting on", and the hedonistic man whose anxiety is over his loss of appetite. All had lost their way, equating soul with banal self-gratification.

In contrast, Carlyle interweaves examples of epic deeds of the forgotten, unconscious regiments of the past. They drained marshes, erected buildings (Christopher Wren), circumnavigated the world (Columbus), generated industrial power (Brindley), all against the odds of their environment. But while these deeds were being performed,

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1. Ibid., 135.

society's institutions had grown moribund. The spectre of the "two godless centuries" is revived by Carlyle, and the empty controversies of the Post-Restoration church compared to the individual heroism of sailor and inventor whose work was "the one God's Voice we have heard in these two atheistic centuries".[1]

The language of Past and Present reflects Carlyle's role of prophet. It figures him as law-maker as well as warner. The language of the old religion is wedded to an up-to-date vision of the contemporary world. This attempt to fashion old truths according to the needs of a new time betrays Carlyle's uncertainty. He vacillates between dogmatism and relativism; there is an interchange of absolutes, from 'Nature's Laws', he proceeds to invoke the 'Eternal Laws', the 'Maker's Laws' and then 'God's Laws'. "When a Nation is unhappy, the old Prophet was right and not wrong in saying to it: Ye have forgotten God, ye have quitted the ways of God, or ye would not have been unhappy".[2] It is significant that when Carlyle wishes to make an obvious religious judgement, he reverts to the language of his Calvinist inheritance. "To speak in the Ancient dialect, we 'have forgotten God'"[3]: the use of quotation marks is indicative of the problem of language.

In the passages on heroism and the gospel of work, Carlyle's language has a strong Biblical strain. "Blessed

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1. P&P, 169.
2. Ibid., 28.
3. Ibid., 136.

is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness"; the beatitude is amplified as if it were a text - "He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it!"[1] He borrows the image of the Potter's wheel from Ezekiel; making "Destiny" the potter, and the human soul the piece spinning on the wheel, Carlyle expresses in a different way the Goethean-Calvinist idea of God sitting at the loom of time weaving the life of each individual.[2]

There is a pervading tendency to string together long phrases, with substantives that characterize some class of virtues Carlyle is eulogizing: "And again, hast thou valued Patience, Courage, Perseverance, Openness to light; readiness to own thyself mistaken, to do better next time?"[3] Again, here is the voice of the preacher; here Carlyle practises inversion and makes a rhetorical appeal to the reader (a dominating feature of the whole work). Not only Biblical texts are used. Goethe's poem, which Carlyle has taken as a psalm, quoted once in full, divided into lines, and stanzas, and verbal echoes, is repeatedly interspersed throughout the last two books. It gathers around it familiar associations of heroism and Teutonism; one of its stanzas concludes the work.

The richness of ideas, language and texture of Past and Present is indeed, as Cazamian says, an "oppressive

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1. Ibid., 197.
2. See Hunter, 302.
3. Past and Present, 198.

richness".[1] Carlyle does not succeed in making his themes coherent. After the powerful opening, and the imaginative realism of Book Two, the work loses its way in the bulk of the final two books. It is perhaps eighty or a hundred pages too long. As Grace Calder showed, passages are exchanged in the final version from the opening book to the later ones. This makes a significant point about the repetition in the work.

No longer (as in Chartism) does a unifying theme synthesizethe two elements of social criticism and history. It is not apparent how the heroic faith of the past is to create the new order, tantalizingly introduced as an industrial society with a hierarchy of labourers and captains of industry.

Further important points on education and emigration schemes, and the creation of cleaner towns with recreation facilities lack due prominence, owing to the superfluity of material. Perhaps Carlyle might have sacrificed his exhaustive characterisations of the "Idle Aristocracy", the "Working Aristocracy", fictional representatives of nineteenth century politics, manufacture, and so on, so as to expand the picture of a collectivised, stratified society, motivated by a heroic ideal, which we only catch a glimpse of in the gospel of work.

The fundamental problems of Past and Present are thus those of form, and the two roles of artist and prophet.

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1. Carlyle, 200.

In Past and Present, difficulties raised by the protean character of Carlyle's invention are not circumvented by throwing his thoughts into a fictional form, sustained by an editor and a loose narrative, as they were in Sartor. The mind of the prophet will no longer adapt to the mind of the artist. The artist no longer can produce forms suitable for clothing a simple religious message.

By 1846, Carlyle had created three works of significance expressing his heroic faith and endeavouring to postulate a new social order. This new order was founded on an ideal extrapolated from the past; though perhaps an eternal ideal, it was ill-fitted to the conditions of the modern age. Carlyle had managed to throw his social message into an historical form. However, his search for eternal values in the past seemed to involve him in friction with the present. For, though History appeared to bolster Carlyle's spiritual faith, it appeared also to lead him to the point of alienation from his own time.

CHAPTER FOUR

AUTHORITY OR CHAOS? STOICISM AND FACT

After Cromwell, Carlyle wrote to his mother in 1846: "In all probability this is the usefullest business I shall ever get to do in the world; this of rescuing the memory of a Noble and Thrice Noble Man from its disfigurement, and presenting him again to a world that stands much in need of the like of him.."[1] Yet two years later, writing in his journal after a gap of four years, he was assessing his achievement in a more sober light:

> For above two years now I have been as good as totally idle, composedly lying fallow. It is frightful to think of! After getting out of 'Cromwell', my whole being seemed to say, more sulkily, more weariedly than ever before, 'What good is it?' I am wearied and near heartbroken. Nobody on the whole 'believes my report'. The friendliest reviewers, I can see, regard me as a wonderful athlete, a ropedancer whose perilous somersets it is worth sixpence (paid into the Circulating Library) to see; or at most I seem to them a desperate half mad, if usefullish fireman, rushing along the ridge tiles in a frightful manner to quench the burning chimney.[2]

This sense of alienation from reviewers who would not believe his report, and would not come to help him, deepened Carlyle's feeling of isolation and prepared the way for a complete break with Liberal circles.

Two issues in particular focussed his attention in 1848: the distress in Ireland, and the revolution in France. He had visited Ireland in 1846, and now the years of famine were gathering to a head. Carlyle wrote articles for The

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1. New Letters, II.17.
2. Froude, III. 452-53.

Spectator and The Examiner in the Spring of 1848 stating his concern. 'Legislation for Ireland', and 'Ireland and the British Chief Govenor'[1], expressed Carlyle's criticism of the record of the Whig administration in Ireland, and of Lord John Russell in particular. In 'Repeal of the Union', Carlyle delivered a long, scathing attack on prevailing attitudes to Ireland as he understood them. Ireland was geographically tied to England, though England reaped no good from it. England's record in Ireland was bad, but there was no question of Ireland going her own way as some Irish politicians demanded. A higher law than parliament's made the Union "unrepealable". The bond must be recognized on both sides; it was a relationship comparable to the "Sioux" and "Chactaw" Indians and the "Yankee Englanders" in America; Ireland must accommodate herself or like the American Indians become "extinct; cut off by the inexorable gods".[2]

Carlyle's position would appear one of conservatism. There must be no political concessions to nationalism; behind his remarks is a suggestion of repressive methods. Even so, the rights of the Irish poor must be attended to; they must be fed and not left to rot as the Whig administration seemed to let them. Carlyle seemed to believe that the philosophy of laissez-faire would lead the Whigs to accommodate with O'Connell and the tie between the two countries be dissolved.

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1. In The Examiner and The Spectator respectively, May 13, 1848.

2. The Examiner, 29 April, 1848.

His threat to the Irish demagogues is a thinly-veiled attack on O'Connell, 'The Liberator'. It did not prevent his friendship with the patriots of Young Ireland.[1]

Carlyle's reaction to the February revolution in France was complex. He wrote another article for The Examiner lauding the dismissal of the sham King Louis Philippe and his minister, Guizot ('Louis Philippe', March 4, 1848). One further article, not usually ascribed to Carlyle by bibliographers, was 'The French Republic'. Proofs of this article show that the original, to be called 'Prospects of The French Republic', contained a controversial claim that Britain,like the French Republic, was practically a republic,"or Government of Talkers...a Republic surmounted by civil-lists, and various theatrical fringings, and inert heraldic supporters". The question in future would be "whether now a Republic, surmounted by a bit of tricolor bunting, can subsist without any fringings or inert heraldic supporters at all?"[2]

Such an irreverent view of the British Constitution, with its implication that monarchy and nobility were "fringings" and "heraldic supporters" really unnecessary for the practical republic towards which Britain moved, was too dangerous for the editors of The Examiner. The paragraph containing these remarks was excluded, and the article, as it stood, stated that the inevitable arrival of democracy

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1. See Duffy, Conversations with Carlyle.
2. Proofs in Victorian & Albert Museum, MS, F.48.E18.329.

was now a fact, and welcomed the Provisional Government now sitting at the Hotel de Ville.

Carlyle wrote to John Forster accepting the editor's position: "I see well, by Fonblanque and by all manner of British Editors at present, those paragraphs wd [sic] involve you in a controversy, which is literally as deep as the world, - which hangs too on the verge of Owenism, Chartism, and all manner of ignominious abysses and chaoses, and ought not to be inconsiderately begun".[1] The question was how far democracy must go; Carlyle moves beyond the matter of the heraldic supports and poses the confrontation of the two radicalisms - bourgeois radicalism and the 'patriotism unlimited' (as he had phrased it in The French Revolution) of the socialists.

Such a confrontation, he told Forster, would have to be faced; it would be begun and end "some centuries hence"; all "'reform' so-called and 'revolution'" which did not "take this along with it, as the one basis it has to rest on", was "Girondism, and Cobdenism and George-Groteism, smitten with eternal barrenness, and to a certain extent accursed of Gods and men!"[2] Carlyle saw clearly in 1848, as he had in the previous revolutionary struggle in 1793-4, that the real political question was the division between the bourgeois radicals and the more virulent strains of democrats from the working class movements, whom he believed were destined to sweep the former away.

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1. MS, V & A: F.48.E 18.33.
2. Ibid.

Moreover, it is also clear that Carlyle had developed no new fondness for 'Girondism'. His "fixed faith", he told Forster further, would not become the world's until it was "cleared of 'Ballot-box questions', 'Slavery and Anti-slavery questions', and whole oceans.. of 'constitutional' and other trouble".[1] This was the old faith of the prophet of sansculottism.

In 1848, Carlyle's vision was still sharp enough, therefore, to behold the class divisions which in fact did lead to the backlash of the June Days; the mild democratic republicans who found themselves sitting alongside socialist republicans at the Hotel de Ville, would connive at the repression of the latter soon enough. His sympathies, in England at least, were not with the middle-class radicalism of Grote and Cobden. Was Carlyle then a Left-revolutionary?

The interest Carlyle took in the National Workshops of the Provisional Government gives a clue. The 'organisation of labour', as he termed it, was "the question of questions", he wrote to Thomas Erskine. It "vitally behoved the poor French Provisional to attempt a solution".[2] "The principal question", he wrote to Alexander Scott, "would be, Do the Ouvriers actually earn their franc and half daily, under these conditions [of the National Workshops], or are they merely paid so much daily, and made very miserable in the process?"[3] The Provisional Government had in fact handled

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1. Ibid.
2. Froude III. 463.
3. New Letters, II. 61.

the organisation of labour half-heartedly as a sop to the socialists; the issue would contribute greatly to the downfall of the revolutionary government. Carlyle seems to have been suspicious that this in fact was the case. His personal interest in the scheme was rooted in his concept of social order. He did not see state-directed labour as a glorified dole, but as a means of social redemption, as he had explained in Past and Present.

Nevertheless, the question of social order soon became the nexus. The reaction to the European revolutions placed Carlyle in a quandary. Of General Cavaignac's part in the June Days, he wrote to his mother: "Perhaps no man in all the world could have had so cruel a duty laid upon him as that of cannonading and suppressing these wretched people, whom, we may say, his father and brother and all his kindred had devoted themselves to stirring up; but he saw it to be a duty, and has bravely done it".[1] This highlights the complexities of Carlyle's position: he sympathized with the people, knew that Godefroi Cavaignac and Joseph Mazzini and others had virtually incited them to revolt, but was looking for an authority which could abort the chaos of social disorder.

Carlyle was virulently opposed to the sham kings whom the revolutions displaced. He despised the bourgeois radicals whose rhetoric had raised the masses to revolt, but

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1. Froude III. 472.

whose interest was laissez-faire in social and economic relations. Their glib use of democratic phraseology - their 'Talking' - sickened him. But Carlyle entertained no hope in the extreme democrats of the Left: he was by now convinced of the dualism of wise govenors and unwise governed. "Fraternity, liberty &c., I want to explain, is not the remedy at all; but true government by the wise, true, and noble-minded of the foolish, perverse, and dark, with oragainst their consent".[1] One contemporary noted: "Carlyle was enthusiastic for the Emperor Nicholas and the Russian form of Government; and in France he was hoping for a great deal from General Cavaignac, a sort of Cromwell, who would put an end to the Parliamentary velleities of the French".[2]

It was no surprise that, as Froude related, Carlyle's early elation as he watched the events of 1848 turned to profound disappointment by the end of the year. Though Louis-Philippe was gone, the reaction that crushed the revolutionaries brought back the old sham kings. The Pope was restored after his expulsion; Carlyle "was sickened at the self-satisfied complaisance with which the upper classes in England and everywhere wilcomed the victory of reaction".[3] He would see with loathing Louis Napoleon, the 'Copper Captain', made dictator of France.

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1. Ibid., 463-64.
2. Wilson, Carlyle at His Zenith, 298.
3. Froude, III. 476.

These events, coupled with the appalling sights he witnessed on his second visit to Ireland in 1849, confused and depressed Carlyle. The contempt he felt for Britain's present governors was joined to a deep-seated horror of disorder and idleness as he toured Ireland. To the social sin of the administration was added the individual sin of the Irish poor themselves. As Duffy admitted, Carlyle blamed not only the workhouse he saw in Kilkenny, but also the indolence of the Irish poor there.[1]

Parliament was at this time debating the issue of Negro Slavery again. Non-government in Ireland and the loosing of the constraint on Negroes amounted, in Carlyle's eyes, to a great conspiracy. "Blacklead these two million idle beggars", he said of the Irish, "and sell them in Brazil as Niggers, - perhaps Parliament, on sweet constraint, will allow you to advance them to be Niggers!"[2] For in his eyes, the emancipated Negro was in a better position than the 'emancipated Irish pauper'.

In 'The Nigger-Question', Carlyle explained this correlation further. His attitude towards slavery was inherent in his puritan frame of mind. In September 1840, Carlyle informed his mother that some women slavery abolitionists had left Cheyne Row:

> ...terribly disappointed that I would not crusade with them in favour of the black slaves, as the one thing needful; I told them, as usual, that the green and yellow slaves, grown green with sheer

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1. Duffy, Conversations with Carlyle, 74.
2. Wilson, Carlyle at His Zenith, 173.

> hunger in my own neighbourhood, were far more interesting to me! I added moreover that I myself had been a slave all the days of my life; and had still a hard battle to fight... to get any portion of my own just will made good...[1]

Here Carlyle explains what would remain his basic position:

the poor at close hand were the first slaves to attend to; he himself was "a slave" who must needs regulate his personal demands on life according to the facts of the greater world. "The Gospel which this World of Fact does preach to one differs considerably from the sugary twaddle one gets the offer of in Exeter-Hall", he wrote to Emerson in 1845.[2] Earlier, in 1833, he had written to Mill: "Jesus of Nazareth was of all men the least of a 'Penny Lady' or comprehensive universal Soup-Kitchen character".[3]

'The Nigger Question', printed in Fraser's in December 1849, did no more than repeat this essentially stern view in the context of a comparison between the situation in the West Indies and Ireland. It was a characteristically Carlylean piece, replete with blunt irony and a distorted view of the facts, but not intended to create the uproar it did do. Indeed, Carlyle's ironical editorial introduction to the "address" reported by an "Absconded Reporter", and the bracketed remarks on the imaginary audience's reaction, reveal his consciousness of the controversial nature of the piece. This is another of Carlyle's defence-mechanisms - the doctrines reported are admitted by the editor to be "pretty much in a 'minority of one' in the present era of the world!"[4]

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1. New Letters, I. 210.
2. Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle, 384.
3. Letters to John Stuart Mill...etc., 86.
4. Essays, IV. 348.

The address is to a fictitious "Universal Abolition-of-Pain Association", the first suggestion of Carlyle's ironical view of philanthropy. The speaker is afraid lest his "philanthropic friends" make this into a "Sluggard-and-Scoundrel Protection Society;"[1] another coining similar to his most celebrated one of later invention - "The Heaven and Hell Amalgamation Society". Although Carlyle had entered what would for him develop into a serious battle, he never lost his Swiftian wit.

There is indeed further irony of a pungent type in 'The Nigger Question', employing language that proved highly unfelicitous in the changed atmosphere of the modern age. The image of "'Sweet blighted lilies'" (deriving, Carlyle informs us from: "the American epitaph on the Nigger child") becomes a satirical refrain. Though in the British Isles, Chartist riots were being suppressed, and Irish rebels were getting banished, "sweet blighted lilies, they are holding-up their heads again!" - England, having nothing to do but "vote the supplies, and <u>wait</u> with arms crossed till black Anarchy and Social Death devour us also" could still be happy in the knowledge "Our beautiful Black darlings are at least happy".[2] This language would be read in a very different sense to that which Carlyle intended; it "was surely more a rhetorical device than an expression of racial disgust: a disastrous artistic miscalculation, rather than a revelation of his uncontrolled racism".[3]

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1. Ibid., 349.
2. Ibid., 350.
3. G. Workman, 'Carlyle and the Govenor Eyre Controversy: An Account with some New Material', 85.

Still, there is no doubt that as Dr. Campbell has suggested, "the Negro is treated patronisingly, as inferior, one capable of being treated rationally, yet a basically simple man, enjoying life to the full 'when the soul is not killed in him!'"[1] Once emancipated, the Negro is envisaged opting out of arduous labour in preference for a diet of ready pumpkins.

Carlyle's view of the Negro, then, was that his 'emancipation' had placed him in a preferable position to that of the starving Irish. The more favourable surroundings in which he dwelt at least provided him with food to sustain him. It was this idea that led Carlyle to assault two apparently different quarters which nevertheless in his mind bore dual responsibility; the Political Economist and the Christian Philanthropist were an unholy alliance: "Exeter-Hall Philanthropy and the Dismal Science led by any sacred cause of Black Emancipation, or the like, to fall in love and make a wedding of it..."[2] The Political Economists propounded the freeing of all ties to accommodate market forces. They also militated against governmental intervention in Ireland, which was not anyway a paying proposition. However, in the West Indies, they had encouraged emancipation for its ending of the tie of slavery and creation of a free labour force to be recruited on the supply and demand principle. Christian philanthropy had therefore been abetted by the product of eighteenth century

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1. I. Campbell, 'Carlyle and The Negro Question Again', 280.
2. Essays, IV. 354.

scepticism,yet it too was founded in the sentimentalism of that time. Together, the two were carrying on the emancipation principle to the unloosening of all social ties.[1]

It is apparent that Carlyle's refusal to support the abolition of slavery was wedded to both principle and circumstance: he was ignorant of the true facts of the Negro's position, but let it be overridden by his anxiety for the social position in the British Isles of the victims of laissez-faire entrepreneurialism. He made the evident, but not unprecedented or indeed unrepeated mistake, of mistaking a true principle in the propaganda of the enemy. Nevertheless, it is also clear that in response to the ideology of the enemy, Carlyle's own standpoint was hardening. He was beginning to envisage a fixed hierarchy in the world; the Negro was in permanent inferiority to the whiteman, the horse is not far below him. (It will be remembered what part the horse plays in Carlyle's satire of nineteenth century labour relations; the stratification in 'The Nigger Question' is not to be taken wholly seriously.) The whiteman leads in clearing the forests and swamps, and supervising the sugar-cane crop, which the Negro harvests. If freedom for the Negro mean, as Carlyle believed, deterioration in the sugar crop, then the Negro must be forced to work.

What was clear was that Carlyle and Liberal opinion were moving irretrievably apart. Where 'humanitarian' was acquiring all the sanctity of a successful sectarian slogan, Carlyle allowed himself to fall decidedly on the

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1. Ibid.

opposite side, with crucial effect to his subsequent reputation.[1] "A paper published in Fraser about Niggers has raised no end of clamour", he wrote to his sister Jean after 'The Nigger Question' had appeared; "poor scraggy critics, of the 'benevolent' school" were barking like dogs over the neighbourhood. He prophesied: "that will be neither chaff nor sand to what they will hear in these 'Latter-day Discourses'".[2] The article had in fact been only the prelude to a series of pamphlets on social questions, published sequentially between January and August, 1850. These, issued in volume form as The Latter-Day Pamphlets, gave vent to all the accumulated responses to contemporary society stored up since the completion of Cromwell.

Three basic constituents figure in the Pamphlets: first, Carlyle's reaction to the political prospects of Britain and Europe after 1848; second, his views on 'emancipation' and philanthropy; thirdly, his analysis of the social effects of trade and commerce. Behind all three is his apprehension of the moral and spiritual state beneath the ideology and practice of society.

These pre-occupations are interwoven in the highly figurative tapestry of the Pamphlets. Nevertheless, in pamphlets 1, 'The Present Time'; 3, 'Downing Street'; 4, 'The New Downing Street'; 5, 'Stump-Orator; and 6, 'Parliaments', the political view preponderates. In number two,

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1. See the important article by M. Goldberg, 'A Universal "howl of execration": Carlyle's Latter-Day Pamphlets and Their Critical Reception', in Carlyle and His Contemporaries, ed. J. Clubbe.

2. New Letters, II. 86.

'Model Prisons', concentration is on the philanthropic question; whilst the last two pamphlets, 'Hudson's Statue' and 'Jesuitism', deal especially with the economic practice of the age.

'The Present Time' establishes a vision that towers like a pillar over the series. It expresses Carlyle's recognition that another new era had arrived. In its opening pages a more concentrated vision of apocalypse is presented than is to be found even in Sartor and The French Revolution. Carlyle's assessment of the meanings in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions is alive with the immediacy of the actual events, where the two previous works had maintained a literary remove.

The time declared that old Europe was doomed, and in the wake of its destruction must arise a universal re-birth or total ruin.[1] Echoing the Old Testament prophets, 'Carlyle proclaims: "few of the generations of men have seen more impressive days. Days of endless calamity, disruption, dislocation, confusion worse confounded..."[2]

The prospect of a 'reforming Pope' (Pope Puis IX, who began, as it was thought, a liberal, and ended by declaring Papal Infallibility in 1869) was for Carlyle symbolic of the message of 1848: the powers of Europe, spiritual and temporal, had been exposed as shams. The

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1. cf for example, Joel 2.2. 'A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness... there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it...'

2. Latter-Day Pamphlets, 1. On the title page, Carlyle inserts once again the 'Twelfth hour' quotation from Richter.

Pope was endeavouring to refound an authority that was in itself an anachronism: "By the rule of veracity, the so-called throne of St. Peter was openly declared, above three-hundred years ago, to be a falsity, a huge mistake..."[1] The Pope, like the Kings of Europe, had fled, to be replaced by revolutionary mobs and barricades in 1848. Their precipitate flight had been self-acknowledgment of their sham. The sanctity of kingship was deposed, "Everywhere the Official holy-of-holies was scandalously laid bare to dogs and the profane..."[2] Whatever the pursuant reaction may have accomplished, the revolutions had exposed the imposture of present-day Kings.

The great question was now universal democracy which "has declared itself as an inevitable fact of the days in which we live".[3] None knew where next it might arise, perhaps it would even be in Russia. It is a looming spectre "this universal big black Democracy..."[4]; greeted by the foolish with a "multitudinous efflux of oratory and psalmody",[5] it was in fact a mournful spectacle. For the removal of sham kings which had left "no King except the Public Haranguer, haranguing on barrel-head, in leading article; or getting himself aggregated into a National Parliament to harangue"[6] - this had in fact opened the way

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1. Ibid., 2.
2. Ibid., 5.
3. Ibid., 8.
4. Ibid., 9.
5. Ibid., 10.
6. Ibid., 6.

to chaos, or non-government. The whole spectacle was unparalleled: "Since the destruction of the old Roman Empire by inroad of the Northern Barbarians..."[1]

The prognosis is similar to that of The French Revolution, but there is a new tone; exhilaration for sans-culottism has turned to fear of "universal big black Demo-cracy". The fall of Rome had been invoked in the earlier context, now there is a real fear of what the "inroad of Northern Barbarians" means in practice.

Behind the politics of democracy, Carlyle's mind is confronted by a spreading, formless anarchy. Modern conditions were stifling heaven's law; the noble minority were swamped in the anonymity of the multitude. This had dire moral consequences, the anarchy of the free market is linked with the fall of the 'Sacrament of Marriage':

> Cut every human relation which has anywhere grown uneasy sheer asunder; reduce whatsoever was compulsory to voluntary, whatsoever was permanent among us to the condition of nomadic: - in other words, loosen by assiduous wedges in every joint, the whole fabric of social existence, stone from stone; till at last, all now being loose enough, it can...be overset by sudden outburst of revolutionary rage...[2]

The threat of street barricades is continually invoked in the Pamphlets. The fruit of the nomadic state is now clearly seen to be revolution.

Carlyle looks about him for the cause of this loosening of ties and its consequent moral anarchy. Behind

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., 25.

the oft-repeated, symbolic examples of the emancipated Blacks in Jamaica, the idle hoards roaming Connemara, and the rebellious needlewomen in the streets of London, Carlyle fixes the blame on Liberal economics and political jargon. The Prime Minister's speech which concludes 'The Present Time' makes the point. He is addressing an assemblage of Irish paupers, whom he is informing with strong emphasis that the workhouse will no longer support them in their idleness. The creators of the workhouses had left the paupers to roam abroad unguided, like horses, putting them temporarily in "Idle Workhouses". The paupers had been spoken to in the temporary jargon of emancipation, freedom, suffrage, and so on, but this had only been an expedient, a lie.[1] They had been mislead by their govenors, they were not 'free':

> Foolish souls, I say the whole world cannot emancipate you. Fealty to ignorant Unruliness, to gluttonous sluggish Improvidence, to the Beer pot and the Devil, who is there that can emancipate a man in that predicament?...nothing but God the Maker can emancipate him, by making him anew.[2]

In a letter of November 1849, Carlyle accused the Liberals of stimulating the 'revolt' of needlewomen, renegade housemaids who had turned to the streets calling themselves needlewomen rather than obey their superiors. "Last night", he told Forster, "I read <u>five</u> old <u>Chronicle</u>

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1. Ibid., 39.
2. Ibid., 42.

Newspapers: on prostitute Needlewomen,...etc. etc. - terrible proof to me once more that the Gospel according to Macculloch, with Paul Cobden's Epistles General to the Churches, and the sublime doctrine of salvation by Frustrate with Nihilism and Laissez-faire have been weighed in the balance and found wanting".[1] Carlyle's blaming of the Liberals for this social chaos, like his attitude towards slavery, was a matter of mistaking propaganda. He was reacting to the bewildering social turmoil stimulated by the industrial revolution and break down of the old agrarian community by blaming the elements who were using these conditions for their momentary economic and political advantage.

The remaining five pamphlets on government and elections reveal further Carlyle's distance from the forces at work in the developing, democratic society. In 'Downing Street' and 'The New Downing Street', Carlyle agitates for a cessation of the parliamentary system and elections, and advocates a clearing out of the present Downing Street which is likened to an Augias's stable, needing a Herculean labour to be cleansed. The droppings of the last two hundred years must be cleared out; the bureaucracy of pedantry and red-tape must go. The whole system would have to be scrapped; where now it would be as well to "fling out your orange-skin among the graduates, when you want a new Premier",[2] an appointed cabinet of six to twelve able men

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1. MS, V & A: F 48.E18 .46.
2. Pamphlets, 100.

was what was really needed. If human worth were once more reverenced it might yet be possible to get the "Ten Ablest Men in England" to preside over her affairs. Sir Robert Peel was faced with the task of cleaning out the stables; perhaps the Queen could appoint the able men independently of Parliament, to carry on the government.

The political argument repeats at greater length the rudiments of the newspaper articles of 1848. It develops their pre-occupation with Ireland and the revolutions, and includes the expressions 'Chief Governor'[1] and 'Regiments of the New Era'[2] which had appeared in the articles. The inane terminology of the day is also aped: 'Voluntary Principle', 'Supply-and-Demand', 'Leave-it-alone',[3] 'Dangers of Centralisation'; together with many coinings obviously Carlyle's own. 'Anarchy plus a street constable'[4] and 'Constituted Anarchy'[5] are his figurations for contemporary government; 'Talking-Apparatus'[6] and 'National Palaver' for Parliament.[7] Titles are continually re-iterated: 'Reform Premier'[8], 'Majesty's Chief Governor',[9] 'Hansard

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1. Ibid., 37 et postea.
2. Ibid., 43 et pos.
3. Ibid. 27 et pos.
4. Ibid., 20 et pos.
5. Ibid., 29 et pos.
6. Ibid., 93 et pos.
7. Ibid., 100 et pos.
8. Ibid., 142 et pos.
9. Ibid., 149 et pos.

Debates',[1] 'Reformed Parliaments'.[2] Carlyle invents a phrase to figure the issue he wishes to place for the attention of government - "Irish Giant, named of Despair"[3] is the problem the Home Office must face, with its synonyms 'Irish Giant' and 'Pauperism'.

To carry on his debate with the political institutions and shibboleths of the time, Carlyle also invents fictitious personages whom he quotes. 'My friend Crabbe' is frequently quoted with approval. Crabbe holds forth against British Liberty, constitutional government, electoral reform and so on. British liberty is to Crabbe the liberty to leave alone open cesspools, and let labourers go idle with no work.[4] Neither does he wish to be governed by small-men chosen by "ballot-boxes, caucuses, and hustings-beer barrels".[5] Familiar authorities like Sauerteig and Smelfungus are quoted for their knowledge of case details, or their opposite viewpoint to the one prevalent. The invention of personages can be the means of ridiculing political procedure: "the Honourable Felix Parvulus" competes with the "Right Honourable Felicissimus Zero" for the premiership".[6] (felix is perhaps meant as a satire on the happiness rhetoric each politician may have borrowed from the Utilitarians).

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1. Ibid., 30 et pos.
2. Ibid., 92 et pos.
3. Ibid., 94 et pos.
4. Ibid., 30.
5. Ibid., 140.
6. Ibid., 100.

Carlyle's imagery, as has often been remarked upon, displays a proclivity to deal with disease, waste and effluvia. The Foreign and Colonial Offices are full of droppings; a parliamentary speech floats like a dead dog on the Thames, neither going away nor abating in stench, but re-appearing, though drowned the Summer before. More specialized chains of imagery are developed from Carlyle's now well established concern with dualism: "Human Stupidity" and "Devil's Darkness" are obstacles in the battle for "God's Light.."[1] The infernal is often utilized; one example is the stalking of the Stump-orator by Beelzebub and Satan, to whose company he belongs as a "son of chaos". The language of commerce is adapted as an ironical metaphor: a false speech is like a false banknote - it will not be accepted at the bank. "Nature's Account" is the one that matters and to this the Stump-orator has no access. The present stock of worth at Downing Street is exhausted - it too has no credit in heaven's bank and is heading for bankruptcy.

It must be remarked that while Carlyle's invention and wit are very much in evidence in the Pamphlets, his tendency to create long, inflected passages of neologisms, epithets and hyphenated word groupings can lead to a general sense of muddiness and heaviness.

Carlyle relies on the effect of accumulation in

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1. Ibid., 113.

laying one figure upon another, repeating those of the Black Jamaicans, Irish paupers, and distressed needlewomen, now singly, now all together, giving a fresh turn to the figure according to its new placing each time. An example of this can be seen in another figure - that of the Jews, Jesus and Barabbas. The man hawking in the streets of London crying "'Ou'Clo's'" is an example of heaven's judgement - he is a specimen of the judged Jewish race. The sin of the Jews was to prefer Barabbas to Jesus.[1] The justice of heaven is invoked again later on, and its example is again instanced in the man crying "' Ou' Clo's'"; meanwhile, in a still further context, the part of Barabbas has been accented so that he now has an equal vote with Jesus. In the earliest context and the last, the point being made is against democracy: the Jews' use of universal suffrage did not make them choose rightly; Barabbas may have equal vote with Jesus in a democracy, but can their respective worth ever be the same?

If the rebellion of needlewomen and the emancipation of blacks evinced a breaking loose of ties in the lower human strata, the cossetting of criminals was inexplicable to Carlyle, and represented a lurch towards chaotic social disintegration.

Carlyle had visited Newgate Prison in 1825 and in his description of his impressions in a letter home he noted

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1. Ibid., 33.

how the inmates seemed to have no sense of moral guilt, but only an animal soul.[1] His Calvinist awareness of justice and punishment was evidently stirred by his visit to Pentonville gaol which stimulated 'Model Prisons'. It seemed to him that the reprobate were being nursed in their sin. It was a total distortion of the reforming impulse to deal with the wicked first. The loosening of the dualism of reward and punishment seemed of a piece with the loosening of all other ties. Again, the perpetrators of this were the Liberally-minded in politics, and the Christian philanthropists.

At Pentonville, it seemed that the inmates were under special care. They had good food, clean facilities; old methods of punishment such as the treadmill had been abolished. A Chartist prisoner had been provided with pen and paper to write a book - his circumstances were enviable to the author harassed with cares.

The govenor of the prison had, in effect, been given the mandate to reform the prisoners by love. The project was hopeless: "These abject, ape, wolf, ox, imp and other diabolic-animal specimens of humanity, who of the very gods could ever have commanded them by love? A collar round the neck, and a cartwhip flourished over the back" would better serve.[2] "By 'love'",Carlyle iterates, not by

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1. Letters, 3.241.

2. Pamphlets 56.

deterrent punishments, the prisoners were to be kept in order.[1] His catalogue of animal imagery, the epithet 'diabolic' juxtaposed besides 'love', express his horror of the proposal.

Why begin reform on "Scoundrelism" on "the Devil's regiments of the line" was his question.[2] He addresses first the prisoners:

> To feed you in palaces, to hire captains and schoolmasters and the choicest spiritual and material artificers to expend their industries on you, - No, by the Eternal! I have quite other work for that class of artists; Seven-and-twenty Millions of neglected mortals who have not yet quite declared for the Devil...Who are you, ye thriftless sweepings of Creation, that we should forever be pestered with you? Have we no work to do but drilling Devil's regiments of the line?[3]

Around the prison were the hovels of those still struggling to keep out of sin's way, who had "not yet quite declared for the devil". There was the place to begin.

Addressing himself now to the Philanthropists, Carlyle flays out against "this sugary disastrous jargon of philanthropy".[4] Recalling the benevolence extended to "Quashee" as well, he exclaims "O this universal syllabub of philanthropic twaddle!"[5] The error was in the sentimentalist view of Christianity held by those bent on good causes. Christianity did not prescribe love of scoundrels - "Just

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 59.
4. Ibid., 66.
5. Ibid., 68.

hatred of scoundrels, I say; fixed, irreconcilable, inexorable enmity to the enemies of God". This modern creed was "the rotten carcas of Christianity" so different from that professed by Oliver Cromwell.[1] Where he had once done God's judgements, Carlyle envisages a comparison with the eloquent denunciation of capital punishment by Mr. Hesperus Fiddlestring, "inculcating the benevolences on platforms".[2]

The motivation of the philanthropists was itself suspect. Theirs was: "A blind loquacious pruriency of indiscriminate Philanthropism"[3] - they were blind to the true laws, loquacious about their opinion, prurient and indiscriminate in the object of their philanthropy. Moreover, Carlyle states at the outset of 'Model Prisons' his suspicion that behind the rhetoric was self-interest, especially in the case of the cotton-spinners who could draw political advantage from the philanthropic cause. The "great majority" remained sunk in the meanwhile in "egoistic scepticisms, busied in chase of lucre, pleasure, and mere vulgar objects", while a "select minority" (the philanthropists) were "bending all their strength to cure them by methods which can only make bad worse, and in the end render cure hopeless".[4] Such then, was Carlyle's view of Mid-Victorian philanthropy.

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1. *Pamphlets*, 70.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 51.
4. Ibid., 50-51.

Still, behind the exaggeration and violence of expression, a note of pity is caught: "The materials of human virtue are everywhere abundant as the light of the sun: raw-materials, - O woe, and loss, and scandal thrice and threefold, that they so seldom are elaborated, and built into a result!"[1] Carlyle could not entirely conceive of men evil by nature; humanity, originally pure but distorted by social conditions is behind his vision. Here is the same note of pity as that expressed for the St. Ives enchanted poor. As with his stand on the slavery issue, implanted in his distorted view was a vital principle: as the Irish paupers went neglected, so the poor who really needed help slipped through the charitable net of Victorian philanthropy.

Carlyle's argument was judged by his contemporaries and in turn by posterity, as proof of madness, sadism or psychic disorder. But beneath the spleen, how true was his view of Victorian philanthropy?

Charity was designed to offset the inequalities and deprivation intrinsic to a laissez-faire economy. Victorian philanthropy was the fruit of an individualistic social ethos, and was wholly voluntarist in character.[2] Carlyle's association of philanthropy with political oratory was not unfounded, the "Anti-Corn Law League envelopes were

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1. Ibid., 65.

2. See W.L. Burn's discussion in, The Age of Equipoise.

decorated with Biblical texts, for in repealing the Corn Laws the support of the religious public was essential".[1] The self-laudatory, ostentatious character of the philanthropic movements was also factual: "through the subscription list one could display one's wealth to public view, co-operate openly with the aristocracy, and thus buy a place in public life and even a seat in Parliament".[2] Much money was spent on propaganda, and Carlyle's argument that philanthropy was not benefiting the right people but pampering the egos of the philanthropist could be observed in: "The numerous charity balls, philanthropic dinners and <u>conversaz-iones</u>, the pretentious central offices..."[3] Even Carlyle's argument about anti-slavery was not his alone: "The [Chartist] <u>Northern Star</u> spoke of factory owners who starved their employees in order to obtain the resources for large public donations to charity. It became a commonplace to urge Exeter Hall to concentrate on white slaves in the factory districts at home".[4]

In the last two pamphlets, 'Hudson's Statue' and 'Jesuitism', Carlyle approaches what he believed was the real motivation behind Victorian society. In these, his satire is more cogently directed at the Victorians' worship of God and Mammon. It is also further wedded to his anxiety at the levelling character of democracy. The

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1. B. Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', 356.
2. Ibid., 364.
3. Ibid., 363.
4. Ibid., 372.

political terminology of universal suffrage and the electorate is carried over into commerce. Thus Bobus Higgins, "Sausage-maker on the great scale" has pushed "the trade in sausages" to such a length that he "gains from the universal suffrage of men's souls and stomachs ten thousand a year by it". "Ten thousand a year", Carlyle stresses - twice the wages of "The Bishop of our Diocese" who at least has "human sense and breeding of various kinds".[1]

Commerce thus proved democratic, but also corrosive of not only genius and authority, but quality. Higgins's sausages are "not even good sausages...but only extremely vendible ones; the cunning dog!"[2] So too Hudson, the "King" of Victorian entrepreneurs had expedited the growth of railways by appealing to the greediest instincts of the public. "What the desire of every heart was, Hudson had or seemed to have produced: Scrip out of which profit could be made. They 'voted' for him by purchasing his scrip with a profit to him".[3] The "scrip" in actual fact proved worthless when the railway bubble burst; for Carlyle counts on the knowledge of Hudson's downfall and the loss to the investors which accompanied it. The leaders of commerce had first supported Hudson, then beat a hasty

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1. Pamphlets, 270.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 264.

retreat when he fell, on the discovery of his malpractice. Carlyle's choice of Hudson is thus a mordant one for satirising Victorian commerce: Carlyle was elevating an embarrassing figure to the rank of King; in making Hudson epitomize the commercial world, he was exposing the sordid reality behind the veneer of wealth.

Nevertheless, Hudson answered not only to the greed of the entrepreneurs but to that of the public also. He, not Cromwell, should fittingly receive a statue, for he is the true object of the nation's worship. (Again, Carlyle touches a raw nerve: twenty-five thousand pounds had been contributed towards Hudson's statue before his downfall). Carlyle figures Hudson's statue in sacrilegious images: he was the "Incarnation of the English Vishnu",[1] he was to be worshipped by this erection of a statue in "brazen metal" -

> The new Apollo Belvidere this, or Ideal of the Scrip Ages. What do you think of it? Allah Illallah; there is still one God, you see, in England; and this is his Prophet.[2]

The mock religious terms are almost all-inclusive: Vishnu, the God of the Hindu Trinity; the "brazen-metal" image, recalling the Golden Calf of the Israelites; the superb parody of the Moslem declaration of Faith; the Greek ideal of beauty. There is only wanted an allusion to the professed religion of England, and Carlyle obliges with the most cutting irony of all: "..Hudson, - though I mumble about

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1. Ibid. 255.
2. Ibid., 256.

my thirty-nine articles, and the service of other divinities, - Hudson is my god, and to him I will sacrifice this twenty-pound note: if perhaps he will be propitious to me?"[1]

Few more effective satires on the religious practice of the Victorians can be found.

'Jesuitism' expounds Carlyle's assessment of the spiritual principle involved in all this. Since the Restoration, the soul of Jesuitism had reigned in England, though its body - the Jesuit Order - was dead. Loyola had proselytised for a symbol he no longer believed in and which was therefore cant. The Jesuit faith took the devil into partnership with God. This was the spiritual state of the nineteenth century, and the result was the tumult and revolutions seen all around. The English Church was not the religion of the English; "modern man's religion"[2] is summarized in Sauerteig's 'Pig Philosophy'. This famous satire is Carlyle's Swiftian exposition of the materialist hedonism of the apologists of the age. The universe is a swine's trough; excellence consists in the obtaining of a grander share of pig's wash. Carlyle's reductio ad absurdum of the aims of his time expresses them in all their banality.

Yet the gospel of consumerism is not enough to satiate men's hunger. As the Pamphlets began with the trumpet-call to a new era, they end with the insistence that material progress is not enough. A spiritual atrophy, like that which enchanted the wealth of the rich man in Past

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1. Pamphlets, 257.

2. Ibid., 315.

and Present, but now on a grander scale, is seen to haunt the modern world. "You are fed, clothed, lodged as men never were before; every day in new variety of magnificence are you equipped and attended to; such wealth of material means as is now yours was never dreamed of by man before:- and to do any noble thing, with all this mountain of implements, is forever denied you".[1] Though he voyage to the planets, Carlyle echoes the Psalmist, man will not be able to escape the hollowness of his new world: "you cannot escape from that inexorable all-encircling ocean-moan of ennui".[2] This was a potent text that Carlyle had voiced as early as 1850; many a social prophet and poet would take it up in the years to come. Carlyle's enunciation of it in The Latter-Day Pamphlets has been surprisingly overlooked.

The high note of anger, the violence of expression - these may have been responsible for vitiating the message of this work. Certainly, its stance, "terribly against 'voting' philanthropy, etc., etc...",[3] as Carlyle himself put it in a letter to John, must disaffect the Liberals. But Kierkegaard and Nietzsche did that and still receive credence. Perhaps the answer lies in the misunderstanding of the alternative Carlyle offers in this work. His "brutal secular Calvinism"[4] has thus far been a bar to further penetration of the message behind the work.

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1. Ibid., 336.
2. Ibid., 337.
3. New Letters, II. 85.
4. G. Levine 'Sartor Resartus and the Balance of Victorian Fiction', 132.

Carlyle's fear of the political and social advance of democracy calls forth the antidote of his personal brand of Calvinism. The end of sham kings was not enacted in order to bring in the self-rule of the foolish multitudes. The figure of the necessary hierarchy on board the ship traversing Cape Horn is one way of expressing Carlyle's refusal to accept the idea of social equality. Where such a state existed - as in America - nothing great could emanate. "The Universe itself is a Monarchy and Hierarchy", is Carlyle's insistence, "Eternal Justice" ruled over it, however much it might be a "commonwealth of 'voters'".[1] The tension here is between Carlyle's theocratic idea of an absolute authority (the Creator) and the agreement of men amongst themselves. Carlyle was insisting on an authority; a democratic society could have none but the consensus of the people. The whole basis of Carlyle's search for a theocratic social order is founded on his refusal to accept the authority of the people. On this he established his rigid hierarchy of wise and unwise, leaders and led. But above both was an Absolute.

There are thus two aspects involved in Carlyle's theocratic alternative, a stratified social order, and (what has been generally overlooked) a divine law.

> The need is not for a Parliament, but for a King, and ten or more of the most capable individuals he can gather

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1. Pamphlets, 21-22.

round him. To find real intellect a man must first himself possess it. The mass of the population certainly did not have it; what is demanded of tnem is obedience and reverence. Government must be representative, not of the partiality and ignorance of the populace, but of the genius that is available from twenty-seven million: "Is not this Proposal the very essence of whatever truth there is in 'Democracy'; this, that the able man be chosen, in whatever rank he is found?...All that Democracy ever meant lies there: the attainment of a truer and truer Aristocracy, or Government again by the Best".[1] No reform by democratic means will bring this about: "From above we shall have to try it; the other is exhausted..."[2] Indeed, Carlyle remembers how in Abbot Samson's time the Church managed to elevate its leaders from humble origins. Modern methods where "Democracy clamours, with its Newspapers, its Parliaments, and all its Twenty-seven million throats"[3] inspired him with no confidence, however.

Carlyle is certain that: "The mass of men consulted at hustings, upon any high matter whatsoever, is as ugly an exhibition of human stupidity as this world sees".[4] Elsewhere he iterates his conviction, echoing yet again the Hebrew Scripture: "Can any man bring a clean thing out of

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1. *Pamphlets*, 119-20.
2. Ibid., 142.
3. Ibid., 143.
4. Ibid., 242.

an unclean? ..Voracities and opacities, blended together in never such cunningly-devised proportions, will not yield noblenesses and illuminations..."[1] Carlyle had not been brought up to view all men as equal. True, Calvinism had its democratic side (in the stalwart independence of the believer, be he peasant or nobleman: Carlyle certainly retained his pride in his social background); but it was founded upon a dualism of elect and reprobate.

Spiritually, the mass of men were reprobate and slaves to sin. "Nature and severe Destiny, not mere act of Parliament and possession of money-capital, determine a man's slavehood...the fact is, slaves are in a tremendous majority everywhere; and the voting of them... is a nuisance in proportion".[2] Carlyle translates the spiritual state of men into the secular terms of modern-day politics.

The freeman, on the contrary, is sustained by the right, and good works come from him, as from Calvin's elect. "The freeman is he who is loyal to the Laws of this Universe; who in his heart sees and knows, across all contradictions, that injustice cannot befall him here". He is sustained in the knowledge "that except by sloth and cowardly falsity evil is not possible here".[3] Nothing could crush the confidence of God's elect. Such a man was "well worth consulting, and taking the vote of, about matters temporal".[4]

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1. *Pamphlets*, 274.
2. Ibid., 250.
3. Ibid., 251.
4. Ibid., 252.

Yet Carlyle was evidently bemused as to how such men could be found in the modern world. How many men in these days adhered to his strict concepts of duty and order? The Stump-orator, and those who listened to him were expressing the moral chaos within themselves in the emptiness of their speech and brutality of their actions (the "balder-dash and beer" of the hustings). Wisdom was at a premium; talk and stupidity abounded; lying and departure from truth were everywhere in evidence in parliamentary debate and at electioneering time. Men were thus moving ever farther from Nature's voice. No wonder Carlyle could suggest no specific procedure whereby the able men could be found. Above all, was "intellect", as he conceived it, really in existence? For Carlyle, "intellect" must necessarily include moral qualities, all other cleverness was barren. Yet such a balance of morality and intellect depended upon conviction, - good works must have the motive power of faith.

Nevertheless, it was essential to find the wise, and build round them the theocratic state. Such a state would "render existence possible, existence desirable and noble, for the State's subjects".[1] In other words, the majority could be straightened into order by the power of the State. It will advertise for men to command regiments of people "in the ways of industrial and moral well doing". State intervention would also stimulate private industrialists to do likewise "thus will all Masters of Workmen,

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1. Ibid., 164.

private Captains of Industry, be forced to incessantly co-öperate with the State and its public Captains".[1] The work force themselves might even share the profits and participate in the managing of their enterprise. Carlyle was envisaging a collectivized state.

But the whole question of order and authority in this state rested on a factor, usually overlooked by critics of Carlyle's 'fascism', yet absolutely germane to the State's successful functioning. To build a theocratic State - one which fixes the social function as well as the personal moral duties of the individual, and so brings about a collective redemption - was required the sine qua non of a codifiable, divine law.

In condemning the nurturing of criminals, Carlyle expressed his criterion for meting out punishment: "That you may do the will and commandment of God with regard to him; that you may do justice to him. ...Find out what the Law of God is with regard to a man; make that your human law.."[2] Here was the proposition; how would it be accomplished? Soon afterward we read: "What this Law of the Universe, or Law made by God, is? Men at one time read it in their Bible. In many Bibles, Books and authentic symbols and monitions of Nature and the Word...there are still clear indications towards it...And if no man could now see it by any Bible, there is written in the heart of every man an authentic copy of it direct from Heaven itself..!"[3]

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1. *Pamphlets*, 166.
2. Ibid., 75.
3. Ibid., 78.

This flexible scale of values is the clue to the weakness of Carlyle's thought. It might be good that the divine law could be found in so many places - but what exactly was it? Carlyle has moved from the Hebrew Bible to the Bible of the universe again, and in the name of the latter suggests a law as rigid as that of the Old Testament. A Decalogue supplemented by a Talmud, a Koran codified into the shari'ā, might be foundations on which to erect a theocracy - appeals to nature and the human heart were not so sure. Paradoxically on this point Carlyle seems to place himself nearer Shaftesbury than Moses.

It is not in fact this weakness which has particularly worried Carlyle's critics. These have mostly criticized his illiberalism, authoritarianism and Old Testament ethic. The originality and the shortcomings of Carlyle's theocracy - its idea of a collectivized state governed by the most able, accountable not to the electorate but to the Absolute; the problem of finding the best men, the exact nature of the divine law - will continue to be overlooked so long as the belief in popular sovereignty prevails.

The Latter-Day Pamphlets thus suggest the fundamental problem of order and authority in the modern age, as well as pointing to the moral failure of materialism. They are properly Carlyle's last serious exercise in social criticism and prophecy, and they end the call for individual and social re-birth he had been voicing since the composition of Sartor Resartus.

The reason why is not far to seek. Not only did no one now believe his report, he had, according to David

Masson, set half the kingdom against himself. As the Mid-Victorian period of comfortable self-complacency established itself, no one particularly heeded the voice of so disaffected a critic of society. Where Carlyle had once been praised for his elevation, he was now criticized for impracticality.[1] "After 1850 the shadow [of the French Revolution] faded, the tensions went out of society and some of the hardships disappeared".[2] Pragmatism and simplistic assumptions took their place.[3] There now seemed no opposition to the materialist attitudes Carlyle had early attributed to the 'Age of Machinery'.

This state of affairs was exemplified by the Great Exhibition of 1851. Some might see it, like Prince Albert and The Times, as a sign of the coming unity of mankind; many more clearly saw it as vindication of material progress and the British Constitution.

Carlyle reacted predictably to the material ostentation and rhetoric of progress. "Palaver, noise, nonsense and confusion, in all its forms, has been the order of the day", he wrote to Alick who was now in Canada; "all fools rejoicing; the few wise men sitting silent, and asking only 'How long, How long!'"[4] The tone of frustrated resignation is significant. Material increase brought with it new manifestations to sour Carlyle's delicate social palate.

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1. See M. Goldberg, 'A Universal "howl of exacration"', for these remarks.
2. G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, 33.
3. See Burn, The Age of Equipoise.
4. Marrs, 684.

Where a decade earlier he had been grieved to think of the poverty that had caused local fencing to be taken as firewood by the poor, he now reacted grimly to the spectacle of "this enormous effulgence of wealth,..with it..luxury and gaudery and folly..."[1] London was "stretching out on every side", he wrote to Varnhagen von Ense in 1854; "to me [it] is frightful and disgusting; for we are already two millions and more; and our new populations are by no means the beautifullest of the human species, but rather the greediest and hungriest from all ends of the Earth that are flocking towards us".[2] He characterized the city in letters to Alick in such images as "wild roaring whirlpool", "whirling", "confusion", "roaring element".[3]

Personal anxieties deepened Carlyle's alienation. His wife was jealous of his friendship with Lady Ashburton. Friends like Emerson and Forster had distanced themselves after the appearance of the Pamphlets. Worst of all, complaining of ageing himself, Carlyle knew his mother's death to be imminent. The letters of 1853, the year of her long illness and eventual death, are particularly trenchant in their pessimistic appraisals of the age. Workmen who had not completed work on the sewers nearby were held up as an example of the fallacy of 'Emancipation'.[4] Chadwick, he shrewdly added however, had been fighting twenty years to bring clean water to London and had told Carlyle recently

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1. New Letters, II. 187
2. Last Words, 277.
3. Marrs, 692 - 738.
4. T.C. to Jean Aitken. MS, NLS:514.33.

the task was too much for him. In contrast, a certain Albert Smith had gained the attention of London "lecturing about his 'Ascent of Mount Blanc' to Cockney audiences 3 daily - 16,000 apply for admission". Smith recouped five thousand pounds a year for this. "Is not 'universal suffrage' the grandest manager of things that ever was?".[1]

Carlyle's attitudes toward the age underwent little change between 1850 and 1870. In 'Shooting Niagara: and After?' the aversion to "gaudery and folly" is repeated in his announcement of the arrival of "Cheap and Nasty". Three things were now sure of fulfilment in this "hugely critical" epoch: Democracy would give complete 'liberty' to all, and government would be conducted by counting heads. Churches and Christianity itself, acquiescing in 'Liberty of Conscience', would eventually "evaporate at its leisure". Free Trade meanwhile would obtain "in all things temporal, spiritual and eternal", and introduce the reign of "Cheap and Nasty".[2] This was associated in particular with the cheap housing being erected everywhere by the jerry-builder.

Emanicipation of Negroes and servants, strikes and lock-outs, trade union terrorization - new examples of disorder appear alongside familiar ones. Carlyle is particularly astonished at the failure of the government to deal with the Reform Bill or Hyde Park Riots of 1866. In this case, as in the Govenor Eyre controversy, government is seen to

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1. Ms, NLS:514.34.
2. Essays V. 1-2

give in to the mob. Here was further proof of the absence of ties or constraint. Carlyle phrased his call for strong government in his petition to Parliament on behalf of Eyre: "THAT seditious Incendiaries, of black-savage type or of white-savage risen without cause into open murderous Rebellion, are not the just objects of sympathy; and that the peaceable populations, whom they will drown in blood if their Guardians and Governors prevent not, are".[1] To counter this lawlessness, Carlyle calls for the drilling of the population into order and discipline.

'Shooting Niagara' tells the story of Carlyle's development in the almost forty years since 'Signs of the Times'. Its fear of mob violence, indiscipline, and its call for martial order under the supervision of the aristocracy suggest a marked conservatism. That Carlyle should have placed any hope in the aristocracy he had formerly so vigorously rebuked in The French Revolution is indicative of his failure to come up with answers for the on-going maladies he had characterized so well in his early essay.

Yet even in this, his last public statement on social developments, Carlyle's reforming impulse is present. He laments that human souls must be born in an environment of "congeries of plastered bandboxes".[2] He was now seventy, and would leave Ruskin to carry on the struggle for social reform which Carlyle had done so much to stimulate. For the rest, heartily disapproving of Gladstone's rhetoric and

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1. Workman, 99.
2. Essays, V.33.

Disraeli's subterfuge, Carlyle in his old age lapsed into an apolitical conservatism. On the one hand he is to be found advising John to invest in Russian Government stock "to the credit of that great man the Czar and his potent imperial enterprises";[1] in almost his next letter he urges his brother to do the same for an Artisan's Dwelling Scheme.[2]

Seeming to countenance revolution as late as 1848, Carlyle suddenly applied the brake. However, on the vital matter of society's cement, religion, Carlyle sustained, even accentuated, his iconoclasm. Where Sartor had gently satirised the worn-out husk of religion, in The Latter-Day Pamphlets, Carlyle had included the established religion in his broadsides. Here he had dwelt on the withdrawal of real religious practice from the social arena. In The Life of John Sterling, Carlyle not only attacked the institution, but for the first time he recorded his clear disagreement with the creed.

Carlyle undertook a life of Sterling, the closest friend of his middle years, ostensibly to present Sterling in his true colours, not, as he claimed Julius Hare had portrayed him, as an agonized cleric. Sterling had only been a curate for eight months, "but he was a man, and had relation to the Universe for eight-and-thirty years".[3] Even so, Sterling's struggle with the orthodox creed was

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1. MS, NLS: 528.3.
2. MS, NLS:528.8.
3. The Life of John Sterling, 3.

too symbolic of the shaking of the nineteenth century theological foundations for it to remain a personal matter. The liberal clergyman Hare had got into trouble with orthodoxy over his lenient treatment of Sterling; in Carlyle's hands the whole issue was widened into no less than a personal characterization of the religious state of the whole age.

"This Life of Sterling", Carlyle wrote to Joseph Neuberg, "...is a very slight Book, but it has quietly and piously occupied me, and was a thing I had to do: a light Portrait...of an unimportant but very beautiful, pathetic and rather significant Human Life in our Century .."[1] Carlyle had said it: Sterling's life was both "unimportant", as far as greatness went, but "rather significant", given the way it was lived. In the book's introduction, Carlyle speaks in language reminiscent of the 1820's and 30's: "..I have remarked that a true delineation of the smallest man, and his scene of pilgrimage through life, is capable of interesting the greatest man..."[2] So the events of the life in question are presented with loving care and Carlyle's inimitable regard for detail (Sterling's early life, parents, radical exploits and so on).

But there is also another dimension: the individual life is part of an age. Carlyle writes through Sterling as he had written through Jean Paul or Schiller;

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1. MS, NLS: 551. 18.
2. Life of John Sterling, 7.

but where his early essays had seen him moving from the individual to the age, stretching outwards until he could characterize the spiritual landscape of the age through Sartor, in Sterling, the age is already uppermost. It forms the individual in its own current:

> Striving towards the sunny heights, out of such a level and through such an element as ours in these days is, he had strange aberrations appointed him, and painful wanderings amid the miserable gas-lights, bog-fires, dancing meteors and putrid phosphorescences which form the guidance of a young human soul at present![1]

This passage from Carlyle's summary remarks continues a chain of images of darkness, dying light, fog and artificial illumination established earlier on.

After his Cambridge days, Sterling had been faced with the choosing of a profession. He had piety and valour, but his course was not at all an assured one "in this bewildered place and epoch of the world". It was true that every man found himself at any time in more or less a mad world and must trust to his own qualities to make it a little saner. "And yet perhaps of no time or country, for the last two thousand years, was it so true as here in this waste-weltering epoch of Sterling's and ours". It was a particularly wild world Sterling found himself in: "A world all rocking and plunging, like that old Roman one...; the abysses, and subterranean and supernal deluges, plainly broken loose.."[2]

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1. Ibid., 266.
2. Ibid., 38-39.

This again is the imagery of the latter days, but unlike the judgemental tone felt so ubiquitously in Carlyle's previous writings, there is a new one: of fact and stoicism. It is as though Carlyle had resigned himself to stating the situation, and accepting it as determined.

The use of latter-day imagery in Sterling is purposeful, and creative in its individual employment of Old Testament prophecy. "In the wild dim-lighted chaos all stars of Heaven gone out",[1] Carlyle echoes the prophet ('The sun and the moon shall be dark, and stars shall withdraw their shining').[2] This idiom, created by the Hebrew prophets, was repeated in the New Testament; it had obviously influenced Richter's vision of the twelfth night, and we find Carlyle aware of them all: "No star of Heaven visible, hardly now to any man".

Yet Carlyle works his own variations: "the pestiferous fogs, and foul exhalations grown continual, have, except on the highest mountain-tops, blotted-out all stars.." The imagery of vapour and murk suggest the uncongenial conditions of spiritual life of the last age.

Next, Carlyle reveals the purposiveness of these images: "will-o'-wisps, of various course and colour, take the place of stars". These are the so-called spiritual leaders of the day: "here and there an ecclesiastical luminary

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1. Ibid.
2. Joel 2.10.

still hovering, hanging on to its old quaking fixtures, pretending still to be a Moon or Sun, - though visibly it is but a Chinese Lantern made of paper mainly, with candle-end foully dying in the heart of it". The language suggests a very effective comparison between real and artificial light, associating church leaders with the light that leads astray into bogs ("will-o'-wisps") and then the dying light which shows in a fantastical casing ("Chinese Lantern...candle end foully dying"). The whole theme is an interpretation of the traditional imagery of the Last Day, with variations, in terms of the sham clergy of the modern age. Against a background of "wild-surging chaos" with only "sudden glares of revolutionary lighting", the clergy are a spent power, the sun and moon which no longer give their light.[1]

The position of Sterling is in fact not much different from the disoriented young men mentioned in 'Characteristics'. He too is unable to find shelter in the old; the professions of Law and Medicine are also uncongenial to him. He lacked even the stability of character to join in the political activities of the 'Talking Era'. However, there was Literature "the true Canaan and Mount Zion of a Talking Era".[2] Sterling contributed to the Athenaeum and visited the shrines of wisdom of the time - the Saint-Simonians, Wordsworth, and above all - Coleridge.

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1. Life of John Sterling, 39.
2. Ibid., 43.

Carlyle's portrait of Coleridge has received frequent comment; few have seen it as Carlyle's last exercise in literary portraiture (that of Voltaire in Frederick The Great is really burlesque). It is true, as critics have observed, that Carlyle's ten pages on Coleridge declare his animus against the latter's defence of Anglicanism.[1] This fits the major theme seen above. Yet there is another aspect involved which has further bearing on Carlyle's later spiritual orientation.

The discussion of Coleridge centres on his influence as a thinker: he had had a powerful influence over young men; Carlyle knew it still persisted in broad churchmen like Hare and Maurice, and even in Puseyism.[2] Coleridge's criticism of the age's atheism and materialism had once been Carlyle's. Yet now his judgement of Coleridge's transcendentalism is a hard one. This is partly because it led him "after Hume and Voltaire had done their best and worst with him, [to] profess himself an orthodox Christian ...",[3] and, what was much the same, it lead him from reality:

> One right peal of concrete laughter at some convicted flesh-and-blood absurdity, one burst of noble indignation at some injustice or depravity, rubbing elbows with us on this solid Earth, how strange would it have been in that Kantean haze-world, and how infinitely cheering amid its vacant air-castles and dim-melting ghosts and shadows![4]

It is apparent then, that Carlyle criticised

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1. See E. Neff, Carlyle, 237-38; C.R. Sanders, Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement, 155.
2. Life of John Sterling, 104.
3. Ibid., 53.
4. Ibid., 57.

Coleridge for his "hocus-pocus of 'reason' versus 'understanding'" which was used to prove the validity of the Church of England.[1] And he also deprecated Coleridge's retreat from the world. This was a part of Carlyle's hardening attitude to Literature: he criticized Emerson for the same 'transcendental moonshine'.[2] While recognizing the genius of Coleridge, Carlyle saw its waste.[3] It seemed the nineteenth century man of letters was no saviour after all: the failure of Coleridge suggested his inoperative capacity in modern conditions. In his miniature essay on Coleridge, Carlyle satirises not only the man but Idealist attitudes he had himself once held. This farewell to the man of letters was thus another aspect of Carlyle's fact and stoicism.

The twin themes of religion and Literature are intertwined by Sterling's later years. Having burnt himself out, as a revolutionary sympathizer in the disastrous Torrijos affair, and as a planter in the West Indies - Sterling returns home and becomes a curate. According to Carlyle, this was the influence of Coleridge at work. Sterling's sanctuary in the "old church" is seen as retreat - it is likened to a bereaved young woman taking the veil. Again, Sterling is lead astray by "will-o'wisps" and "Old-Jew" stars which had gone out.[4]

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1. Ibid., 60.
2. See Froude, III.473-4.
3. See Sanders for Carlyle's references to Coleridge in the Works, letters and journals.
4. Life of John Sterling, 96.

Sterling, meanwhile, had written a novel, Arthur Coningsby, and he was soon to develop serious religious doubts. Carlyle figures Sterling deciding: "'What is incredible to thee, thou shalt not, at thy soul's peril, attempt to believe! - Elsewhither for refuge, or die here'".[1] We recall that Coleridge had said once "he 'had skirted the howling deserts of Infidelity'"; and Carlyle had added, "...but he had not had the courage, in defiance of pain and terror, to press resolutely across... to the new firm lands of Faith beyond..."[2] Now, it was as though Coleridge and Carlyle were fighting for Sterling's soul; according to Carlyle, Sterling finally followed, not the author of The Constitution of Church and State, but that of Sartor Resartus.

Yet even here was a paradox: for the biographer of Sterling was no longer the author of Sartor whom Sterling had known. It is doubtful, as one critic suggests, that Carlyle intended to make Sterling's life a victory for Literature.[3] The treatment of Coleridge, and the deprecation of the luxuriousness and idleness of indulging in the Arts seen later in the work, suggest far otherwise. Sterling's literary life had little distinction, and though Carlyle spends extra space discussing his works, it is clear he does it as a friend and not a critic. In The Life of Sterling, Carlyle has moved beyond the 'art' of Sartor; his wholescale vision of the age rejects even this:

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1. Ibid., 105.
2. Ibid., 60.
3. LaValley, 313.

> And the Age itself, does it not, beyond most ages, demand and require clear speech; an Age incapable of being sung to, in any but a trivial manner, till these convulsive agonies and wild revolutionary overturnings readjust themselves? Intelligible word of command, not musical psalmody and fiddling, is possible in this fell storm of battle.[1]

It is evident from this discussion that Carlyle, rather than Sterling, is the major figure in the book. His invalid friend is pictured as a firm stoic "willing to suffer when Heaven said, Thou shalt; - and withal, ...willing to rejoice also, and right cheerily taking the good that was sent..."[2] This is the stoic Carlyle of later years. Also in Sterling is the Carlyle of Fact: he stands astride Coleridge and the Church of England, bidding them press resolutely across the howling deserts of Infidelity. It was necessary. For all its humble subject, the book is uncompromising in its repetition of the arrival of the latter days, if quieter and more stoic in tone than ever before. Its hero is indeed Carlyle, the stoic agnostic who had the courage to lead the way into the wilderness - an act for which his early admirers could not thank him.[3]

Like his later social conservatism, this stern agnosticism accompanied Carlyle all of his final years. "He used to say that he never felt spiritually at ease until

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1. Life of John Sterling, 195-196.
2. Ibid., 264.
3. 'Carlyle led us out into the wilderness and left us there'. Clough to Emerson, 1849.. Wilson, Carlyle At His Zenith, 53. See also D. De Laura 'Arnold and Carlyle', and 'Carlyle and Arnold: The Religious Issue', in Carlyle Past and Present; K. Tillotson, 'Matthew Arnold and Carlyle'.

he left the Church and the Churches behind him, and went out into the 'bare desert' where was a temple not made with hands".[1]

Carlyle's reaction to theological controversies was cavalier: Maurice's dispute with orthodoxy over eternal damnation was 'splitting of hairs' - he would have done best to leave the Church.[2] "Great emotion about 'the Oxford Essays' bless them", he wrote to John in 1861 during the 'Essays and Reviews' controversy. "To me of no more interest than rig-ma-rea".[3] "Church and State and all the arrangements of a rotten society, often seem to me as if they were not worth 20 years' purchase", he wrote to Alick in 1851, "and the thing that will follow them is nearly certain to be greatly worse than they".[4] "In a century or less all Europe will be republican - democratic", he told Allingham; "nothing can stop that. And they are finding out their old religions, too, to be mere putrid heaps of lies".[5]

Nevertheless, despite his keen iconoclasm, Carlyle was not happy to envisage the disappearance of social cement. He had made his work virtually synonymous with the celebration of belief, yet he knew the modern age to be one of chronic spiritual paralysis. The later years are black ones owing to this impasse.

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1. Espinasse, 196.
2. Wilson, Carlyle To Threescore-and-Ten 53-54.
3. MS, NLS: 525.73.
4. Marrs, 688.
5. Allingham, 261.

The whole problem - alienation from the age, deprivation of religious solace - can only be seen to have been exacerbated by Carlyle's last 'labour of Hercules' - his history of Frederick The Great. It both expressed and deepened his sense of apocalypse. The avenues Carlyle had followed hitherto: Teutonism, celebration of the unconscious, heroism, the heroic leader, the age of faith - all were exhausted during his work of thirteen years duration. Moreover, he embarked upon it in a mood of isolation and pessimism. A contemporary described Carlyle at this period rolling forth, in a public railway carriage, "denunciations of railways, nineteenth centuries, steam-engines, cheap literature, 'clever' people, and civilization generally".[1] Rome, he told an admirer, was like the nineteenth century, rejoicing in its material progress, whilst "death was nigh".[2]

Frederick the Great appealed to Carlyle as "the last real King that we have had in Europe...and nothing but sordid loud anarchy till the next".[3] He had been "a kind of intermitting pursuit" with Carlyle "all my life".[4] In 1852, his choice of Frederick was confirmed. He told Varnhagen von Ense that his love for Frederick grew as he read[5]; but to Jean he admitted Frederick was not "half

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1. Wilson, Carlyle To Threescore-and-Ten, 236.
2. Ibid., 265-6.
3. Last Words, 263.
4. Ibid., 266.
5. Ibid.

or tenth-part such a man as Cromwell".[1] Carlyle faced a mountainous task: there were a waggon-load of books on Frederick, he told John, but not "one genuine Book yet exists on the subject".[2] He must get a chronology in view, he informed Varnhagen; there were all the difficulties of sorting out names of participants, unedited source material, including diplomatic correspondence, and actually visiting the sites of Frederick's battles.[3]

The problems of research deepened; but worse, the subject began to grow uncongenial. At the beginning, Carlyle could write: "I honour Fritz greatly for being a man of unsubduable healthy elasticity and shiftiness..and also of perfect veracity...in spite of his fox like cunning, and French-polished royal ways.."[4] But there was the problem of his age:

> Frederick's Century did nothing that I can completely approve of and rejoice in, except cut its own throat, and so end its dishonest nontimes, in the French Revolution!

Moreover, the problems had not stopped then of course:

> Alas, and I begin to see that even that process was a much more lengthy, miscellaneous and dismal one than I had in former times imagined. A long ugly Slough of Despond indeed; and in the outlook beyond...it is as if almost nobody would go along with me![5]

Frederick the Great represented no escape route from the nineteenth century; Carlyle could not eschew the spiritual chronology of modern History he had established so early in his career.

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1. New Letters, II. 142.
2. MS, NLS: 515.23.
3. Last Words, 268-271.
4. TC to Joseph Neuberg, MS, NLS: 551.20.
5. MS, NLS:551.75.

The dilemma crystallized in his hero. The tale is told in the work itself; according to one report, Carlyle admitted "he had been mistaken" about Frederick, he was "no worshipful man".[1] The trials Carlyle endured were no secret: there had not for "hundreds of years" been a literary man "got into so insoluble unfortunate, and in fact heart-breaking subject", he informed John in 1861. Yet he must press on, whatever genius he had now meant "'transcendent capacity of taking trouble'".[2] Frederick became the object of a stoical resolve not to leave a task undone. It was published, originally in six volumes in four installments between 1858 and 1865. In length, it is comparable to Gibbon's Decline and Fall.

The first three volumes in the eight volume Centenary Edition, deal with the foundations of the Hohenzollern dynasty and the childhood and youth of Frederick. Carlyle's portrayal of the stormy family life of the household of the Prussian royalty, presided over by the rugged King Frederick William, shows no diminishing in his literary genius. But his wit (the early volumes led Emerson to describe Frederick as "the wittiest book ever written"[3]) is wedded to the prejudices and arbitrary judgements of Carlyle's last period.

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1. M. Conway, Thomas Carlyle, 105.
2. MS, NLS: 517.21.
3. Froude, IV. 306.

Carlyle's introductory remarks repeat the points raised in letters. Frederick was the "last of the Kings", ushered in the French Revolution and closed "an Epoch of World-History".[1] Carlyle's aim was to revive the ideal of kingship lost in the noise created by the Revolution.

"One of the grand difficulties in a History of Friedrich" was "That he lived in a Century which has no History and can have little or none", one "so opulent in accumulated falsities". The question was "how extricate the man from his Century?"[2] This was indeed the question.

Then there was the matter of historical method. Carlyle revoices the standpoint of the prophet-historian, the diviner and seer of History. Sauerteig exclaims no dryasdust could interpret "the...entirely indubitable Revelation of the Author of this Universe". An inspired man was needed, one who in the future could use the historian's gift "to illuminate the dark ways of God".[3] Carlyle would find these ways very dark as far as the eighteenth century was concerned.

Carlyle's long narrative of Frederick's ancestors, and the birth of the Kingdom of Prussia, is conducted in the meticulous, allusive style he had long ago developed for his historical writing. It charts the growth of Brandenburg, with the adhesion of East Prussia, until it becomes the

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1. Frederick The Great, I. 6.
2. Ibid., 8.
3. Ibid., 18-19.

domain of the Hohenzollern dynasty. A principle of order and right was establishing its might in time.

> The House went on steadily increasing, as it were, from the first day; the Hohenzollerns being always of a growing, gaining nature; - as men are that live conformably to the laws of this Universe, and of their place therein...[1]

These are "a thrifty, steadfast, diligent, clear-sighted, stout-hearted line of men".[2]

Since developing his Teutonism in the 1830's, Carlyle had not had such opportunity to express his ideal at length. The electors of Brandenburg had beaten into order the anarchic, non-German Wends in their territories. Frederick Barbarossa is eulogized as one of the early German heroes. The noble order of Teutonic Knights had settled heathen Prussia in the thirteenth century: "They fought much and prevalently; galloped desperately to and fro...In peaceabler ulterior times they fenced-in the Nogat and the Weichsel with dams, whereby unlimited quagmire might become grassy meadow, - as it continues to this day".[3] Such actions were better "than puddling away one's poor spiritual gift of God...in building the lofty rhyme, the lofty Review-Article...Times alter greatly".[4]

At the Reformation, Brandenburg followed "the Law of Heaven" - in accepting or rejecting it, a nation

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1. Ibid., 88.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 95-96.
4. Ibid., 98.

expressed what life it possessed. Carlyle's judgement of the nations which refused - Austria, Spain and Italy - is adverse. He appeals to modern times to prove his point: "all men may see where Austria now is".[1] But France was "the sharpest-cut example" - "a hairsbreadth of becoming actually Protestant", she undertook to "massacre Protestantism"[2]. Yet Heaven's messenger returned again to her in 1792. Thus does Carlyle discern 'the dark ways of God' in modern History. France is the scarlet woman throughout Frederick The Great; the work expresses as no where before Carlyle's ethnic Protestantism.

The marriage of Teutonism and Protestant order is perfected in Frederick William and his soldiery. He, correctly, is seen as the creator of the Prussia of Frederick's inheritance. Early in the work, Frederick William and his soldiers emerge as its true heroes. "Remarkable men, many of those old Prussian soldiers", of which The Anstalt of Desau, the 'Old Dessauer', is the pre-eminent drill master. "Grim hirsute Hyperborean figures, they pass mostly mute before us..."; dumb, embodiments of Carlyle's idea of the unconscious, indulging it is true in gambling and drinking. Yet these are the mythical hero-ideal of Carlyle's late, alienated years, as the free use of mythic epithets suggests. "From the times of Tacitus and

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1. Ibid., 222.
2. Ibid., 223.

Pytheas, not to speak of Odin and Japhet, what hosts of them have marched across Existence..."[1] Even in the modern age Carlyle thought he could still see the line: "Truly and really", he wrote to Emerson after his first visit to Germany in 1853, "the Prussian Soldiers, with their intelligent silence, with the touches of effective Spartanism I saw or fancied in them, were the class of people that pleased me best".[2]

Frederick William embodied the type. He was "spartan", thriftily ordering his domestic and court affairs; "rugged as a wild-bear" in disciplining his retinue.[3] (There were "no bursts of parliamentary eloquence in him, nor the least tendency that way".[4]) His country too was ordered in the "rustic simplicity" congenial to "a homespun man". He was a "rugged Orson", yet "full of sensitiveness, rough as he was and shaggy of skin".[5] In short, he was the ideal, Teutonic sworn enemy of chaos; "The great Drill-sergeant of the Prussian Nation", he fulfilled Carlyle's authoritarian dictums that every nation must first be drilled, and that no nation not "governed by so-called 'Tyrants'" under rule and law "ever came to much in this world".[6] This was well-calculated to displease the reviewers.

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1. Ibid., 332-33.
2. Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle, 490-91.
3. Frederick, I.339.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 341-44.
6. Ibid., 346.

Carlyle's admiration for Teutonism and the unconscious virtues contrasts with his ridicule of the feminine artificiality of French manners and court etiquette. Yet in so doing he must cross his hero, for Frederick, drilled according to his father's strict regimen, reacted by adopting a love for the French and their 'effeminate' ways. He donned finery, played a flute, grew curly locks, and studied Latin - all against the command of Frederick William. "This King did not love the French, or their fashions, at all"[1] - needless to say. But neither did Carlyle approve of his hero's preference for the French language and neglect of things German. The terrible battle that ensued between father and son is powerfully portrayed, with rough humour by Carlyle, who does not reprove Frederick William's harshness. Yet Carlyle laughs uneasily in this clash between the untutored, Teutonic ways of the father and the French ways of his son. He might already have had his doubts about Frederick.

A further complication was Frederick's religious training. This opened the wider, fundamental matter of the current of the age. Frederick was tutored in "Edict-of-Nantes Protestantism, a cross between Bayle and Calvin".[2] It was sterile, spiritless, and from it arose Frederick's "aberrations in matters of religion, which became notorious by and by".[3] Carlyle intimates that Frederick adopted the

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1. Ibid., 351.
2. Ibid., 423.
3. Ibid., 424.

sceptic, irreverent view of religion fathered by Bayle. The French manners and religious scepticism of his hero was the price exacted of him by the age.

Frederick William does not die until the middle of volume three. Frederick is by then twenty-eight, yet the length devoted to his early life in the work is disproportionate. He inherits many important things from his father. First, he has a wife married to him at his father's bidding whom he virtually ignores. Then there are the marks of his father's discipline, which had taught him to wear "a cloak of darkness" and to hide his real feelings. Next, was an abhorrence of Austria, whose minister at the Prussian court had done so much to cause bitterness between Frederick and his father over the Double Marriage with England. But most significant of all, despite the unhappy upbringing which steeled him to his later career in stoicism, Frederick inherited his father's Prussianism in the form of the Prussian military machine. Frederick realized this was his mainstay when it came to fighting for his existence.

With the death of Frederick William we sense that the interest has departed from Carlyle's task. He is left with a distant figure - reserved, cynical, the product of the two contrasting cultures. With Frederick William the direct influence of the Prussian half has gone; it lives on in the battles and in his beloved soldiers. The French side manifests itself all too readily as time passes - above all, in the antics of Voltaire, it is brought to disrepute.

The greater world of the eighteenth century, which robbed Frederick of a religious sense, was the theatre in which he must at first survive and at last conquer. Carlyle admits at once that most of what it did and preoccupied itself with came to nought. Yet he had had to work painstakingly through its petty intrigues, fermented by egotism and dynastic rivalry, manifest in its diplomacy and wars. He recounts much of the manoeuvring, reluctantly, often wittily, as in the case of "Kaiser Karl VI., head of the Holy Romish Empire",[1] posthumous agency of discord through the 'pragmatic sanction' he worked so hard for in his lifetime: "You would have said, the first question he asks of every creature is, 'Will you covenant for my Pragmatic Sanction with me? O, agree to it; accept that new Law of Nature: when the morrow comes it will be salutary for you!'"[2]

This kind of ridicule works particularly well with Carlyle's use of distinguishing features. There is "Anne of Russia with the big cheek",[3] and Prince Eugene of Austria who wears snuff "in both waistcoat-pockets" and "has (as his Portraits still tell us) given up breathing by the nose".[4] In later years, England will be both foe and ally to Prussia. Her King is George II, "little George", who reappears "(now an old gentleman of sixty), with his martial Fat Boy the Duke of Cumberland",[5] whose only military success was Culloden.

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1 Frederick, II.17
2. Ibid., 26.
3. Ibid., 399.
4. Ibid., 27.
5. Frederick IV.425.

Another object of Carlyle's wit - August the Strong, King of Poland and Saxony - is emblematic of the century in seamier ways. Carlyle adds a further epithet: he becomes August 'the Physically Strong', an allusion to his power of withstanding a life of total debauchery. He appears at the grand-scale example of eighteenth century court extravagance and buffoonery, the Camp of Radewitz. Here, Carlyle informs us, History adds another superlative to August's achievements: he had the greatest strength, the largest bastard progeny, and now displayed the most sumptuous outlay. He has been suffering from a diseased toe:

> Poor devil, he was full of good humour too, and had the best of stomachs. His amputated great-toe does not mend: out upon it, the world itself is all so amputated, and not like mending! August the Strong, dilapidated at fifty-three, is fast verging toward a less expensive country: and in three years hence will be lodged gratis, and need no cook or flunky of either sex.[1]

In its stoical remove, the passage has an almost Shakespearian detachment.

It is at August the Strong's court that Frederick is seduced, and initiated into a moral depravity of the time: "his life for the next four or five years was 'extremely dissolute'". Still Crown Prince, he is figured "wallowing like a young rhinocerous in the mud-bath".[2] Carlyle apologizes for his hero; it was "'The age of bronze and lacker'", though "relieved truly by a backbone of real Spartan iron" - his father's Prussian drill - "this was all the world he ever got

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1. Frederick II. 260.

2. Ibid., 119.

to dream of. His ideal, compared to that of some, was but low; his existence a hard and barren, though a genuine one, and only worth much memory in the absence of better".[1] The last phrase preludes Carlyle's coming disenchantment with his limited hero.

One of the chief problems of the later volumes - one which Carlyle acknowledges himself - is the unwieldy relation of diverse material and the problem of sources. These are often cited as though second-hand, coming from an informer. Carlyle had several assistants doing research for him, and sometimes he would lose an original reference and have to make recourse to his notes.[2] The "readable little human book"[3] on Frederick had turned into a history of eighteenth-century Europe.[4] The narrative moves from the intrigues of court diplomacy, apparently trivial incidents in Frederick's life, and preparations for new European wars, to battles in the New World between England and France, and England and Spain over the 'Jenkin's Ear Question'.[5]

One important theme which can be seen in the alternations is an evident comparison between the Prussian ideal, and the conscious, 'gesticulating' Gallic character. We turn from the heroic fronting of life and death in the successive campaigns, to Voltaire's plays and libels.

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1. Ibid., 120.
2. See Morse Peckham, 'Frederick The Great', in Carlyle Past and Present.
3. T C to Joseph Neuberg. MS, NLS: 551.63.
4. Froude, IV. 92.
5. See end of vol. V.

The battle scenes themselves account for much of the bulk of the work. Sometimes masterpieces of narrative, combining detail with 'atmosphere', they also display the Homeric trait of occasional nods.

Carlyle's interest in the military campaigns is another facet of his predilection for the unconscious; men seemed to achieve greater proportions in time of revolution or war. "It is in great moments only when life and death hang on the balance that men become veracious, sincere", Carlyle had written in the early 1840's.[1] In peaceful times, particularly in this age, they were to be seen "driven, or driving, to pasture, to market, - not at all in a heroic manner".[2]

In battle, the Prussian troops joined this unconscious element with a native stoicism. They would move forward in regularity, stoically facing the barrage of the enemy. They were Frederick William's creation, and also that of a past epoch. Their 'peasant stoicisms' were of a pedigree that went back beyond the century they lived in. "A pious people, of right Teutsch stuff, tender though stout", they sing a psalm before marching into battle with the Austrians at Leuthen; "except perhaps Oliver Cromwell's handful of Ironsides, probably the most perfect soldiers ever seen hitherto".[3] Indeed, in the Old Dessauer, there was a stoicism more pagan than Christian. Before Kesseldorf, "he reverently doffs his hat, as had always been his

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1. Forster MS. 170.
2. Ibid.
3. Frederick, VI.325.

wont, in prayer to God, before going in". His prayer is: "' O Herr Gott, help me yet this once; let me not be disgraced in my old days! Or if thou wilt not help me, don't help those Hundsvögte' (damned Scoundrels, so to speak)..." "That is the Old Scandanavian of a Dessauer's prayer", comments Carlyle approvingly.[1]

Frederick, in comparison, is found to write verses during trying times: "He is not a brooding inarticulate man, then; ...not to be struck dumb by the face of Death itself".[2] Carlyle never succeeds in penetrating the real quality of his hero; for Frederick was heroic after a fashion. The architect of Prussia's victories, even though sometimes by default of his enemies or the happy chance of events, he survived through times of great success and of almost imminent destruction. Nevertheless, different though he was to what Carlyle had hoped, Frederick and he could establish a rapport on the basis of their stoic acceptance of life's victories and defeats. After the disaster at Kunersdorf, Frederick is portrayed in heavy stoic mood:

> A fixed darkness, as of Erebus, is grown habitual to him; but is strictly shut up, little of it shown to others, or even, in a sense, to himself. He is a traveller overtaken by the Night and its tempests and rain-deluges, but refusing to pause; who is wetted to the bone, and does not care farther for rain. A traveller grown familiar with the howling solitudes; aware that the Storm-winds do not pity, that Darkness is the dead Earth's Shadow: - a most lone

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1 Frederick V.180.

2 Frederick VI. 239-40.

> soul of a man; but continually toiling forward, as if the brightest goal and haven were near in view.[1]

This is a sombre projection of Carlyle's own frame of mind as he struggled onward in his apparently never-ending task. Like Frederick, he too was living in a fixed darkness, isolated from the world. He could yet frame his hero in a limited manner according to his own heart; Frederick expresses the dark Carlyle of later years whose religion was fact and stoicism.

However, there was also the cynic as well as the stoic, the patron of the light French. As if to vent his disapproval of Frederick's French manners in a quarter where blame could best be fixed, Carlyle satirises the little colony of French savants gathered around Frederick since his days as Crown Prince at Reinsburg. It was here that Frederick had began his correspondence with Voltaire. The relationship between the two men is characterized by Sauerteig in such terms:

> 'Voltaire was the spiritual complement of Friedrich,...what little of lasting their poor Century produced lies mainly in these Two. A very somnambulating Century! But what little it <u>did</u>, we must call Friedrich; what little it <u>thought</u>, Voltaire!'[2]

"Realised Voltairism" was the net product of the eighteenth century. The <u>philosophe</u> and the philosopher-king were the "two Original Men" of the age.[3]

This was accepting the undeniable: the French influence over Frederick. Once Frederick William was "at

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1. <u>Frederick</u> VII.88.

2 <u>Frederick</u> III.177

3. Ibid.

rest from his labours", sleeping "with the primeval sons of Thor",[1] Frederick is greeted by the "gazetter world" which rejoices "in the prospect of having a philosopher King" - "Voltaire and mankind waiting applausive!"[2] As Crown Prince, Frederick had written the Anti-Macchiavel, under Voltaire's influence, suggesting in it the King's responsibility to his subjects ("Hero-Kings were long used to be silent" Carlyle remarks[3]). On his accession, Frederick introduced such reforms as freedom of the press, toleration of religion, and gathered round him his philosophers and academicians. This King is "of a steel-bright or stellar splendour" with a tinge of "light stoicism".[4]

Frederick's correspondence with Voltaire is likened to a "fine duet" in which Frederick is "the truer singer" and Voltaire "the Phoebus shows himself acquainted with the art, and warbles in seductive quavers, now and then beyond the pitch of his voice".[5] Voltaire corrects his patron's French verse; Frederick practises Voltaire's sarcastic contempt for religion in ridiculing a Te Deum mass sung for his benefit. Here is no Cromwell or Luther with "heavy whip", is Carlyle's rejoinder, Frederick's "lighter whip" of sarcasm must do until the French Revolution.[6]

Whilst Frederick is performing on the battle field, Voltaire is performing in French society. Carlyle seems to square off the conscious, Gallic against the valiant,

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1. Ibid., 273.
2. Ibid., 281-83.
3. Ibid., 243.
4. Ibid., 306.
5. Ibid. 199.
6. Ibid., 347.

unconsciousness of the Teutonic. Voltaire's conquest is the Parisian audience which receives his play Meropé with extravagant applause, one Duchess expressing her approval by kissing him - thus Voltaire "is made immortal by a kiss".[1]

When he comes to Berlin after the second Silesian War, Voltaire and Frederick have a showdown. Already we saw Voltaire gossiping about his benefactor in his letters. Nimble and half-affectionate to the King, in private Voltaire wittily compares Frederick to his pet dog. Such wit eventually gets him into trouble: he quarrels with the King's "French colony of wits", libels Maupertius in his pamphlet 'Akakia', published against Frederick's express command, but manages to leave Prussia as a friend. Soon Voltaire is engaging in further abuse and is seized by Frederick's agent at Frankfurt, and imprisoned for a short while until the King sets him free.

"With the whole world to choose from, one fancies always he might have done better!"[2] is Carlyle's opinion on Frederick's patronage of the quarrelsome and vain French (Maupertius is inordinately vain, but even this cannot excuse Voltaire). The King's taste and character is called into question. "His love of Wisdom was nothing like deep enough, reverent enough, and his love of Esprit (the mere Garment or Phantasm of Wisdom) was too deep".[3] But Carlyle's own satirisation of Voltaire and Frederick's savants has also been called unfair.

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1 Frederick IV.408.
2 Frederick V.336.
3. Ibid.

The French character is displayed to further disadvantage in the diplomacy of France. In the hands of Pompadour (Carlyle repeats Frederick's remark - "Je ne la connais pas") and the treacherous Beilleisle, France is seen as the Mephistopheles of Europe, conjuring up wars and setting German states against one another for her own advantage. The English, haphazardly governed by Walpole, later veraciously by Pitt, have the biggest purse; they are dumb and stupid but muddle through against the sinful Gallic enemy because "for a Nation, as for a man, it is very behoveful to be honest, to be modest, however stupid!"[1] It is France who suffers from the Thirty Years War; failing in Europe she loses the Americas and India to England, and in bankruptcy hastens "towards the General Overturn" to arrive "in about thirty years".[2]

It is in delineating Frederick's part in all this that Carlyle displays his most arbitrary touch. From being a light, not deeply thinking man, Frederick is made to embody Carlyle's own religion of 'Fact':

> Facts are a kind of divine thing to Friedrich... this is essentially what Religion I have found in Friedrich...it is an invaluable element in any man's Religion, and highly indispensible, though so often dispensed with![3]

This 'religion', a truncated version of Carlyle's previous

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1. Frederick, IV.206.
2. Frederick, VII.179.
3. Frederick, IV.216.

view of mights and rights, now lacking any real moral criteria, explains Frederick's success in making Prussia a power in Europe.

Carlyle sees Frederick's sudden seizure of Silesia - motivated, as Frederick owned, by a thirst for glory - in the context of the eventual emergence of the Fact of Prussia. The duplicity involved on all sides in the European wars is resolved into the struggle for the emergence of this 'Fact'. Unfortunately, Carlyle displays some of Frederick's cynicism by countenancing his activities. Frederick's "rights" over Silesia did not involve "just rights" so much as the power to make his right valid. "If you have rights and can assert them into facts do it; that is worth doing!"[1] When Frederick plays one ally against another, Smelfungus explains the laws of the game, acquitting him of any blame: "Magnanimous I can by no means call Frederick to his allies and neighbours ...but he thoroughly understands, he alone, what just thing he wants out of it, and what an enormous wigged mendacity it is he has got to deal with...he is at the gaming-table with these sharpers; their dice all cogged;...And in short, to win his stake out of that foul weltering medley, and go home safe with it if he can" is his aim.[2] There is, then, no clear morality to "this game of fast-and-loose", for "it will have to be granted that you cannot work in pitch and keep hands evidently clean".[3]

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1 Frederick, III. 406.
2 Frederick, IV. 265.
3. Ibid., 270.

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1. Frederick, III. 406.
2. Frederick, IV. 265.
3. Ibid., 270.

The problem of squaring this realistic assessment of the world of Realpolitik with a view of History as the dark ways of God is one Carlyle fails to solve. As his apologies for Frederick's character have a hollow ring, his vindication of his political career in terms of its accordance with the world of 'Fact' is regrettable. Carlyle's 'didactic destiny' has now lost all its moral attributes: 'Fact' is backed up by the arbitrariness of might. This is in turn associated with Carlyle's Teutonism - his love of German valour and order. Much is made of the orderliness of Frederick's troops in Silesia, and the support he received there from the Protestant part of the population. When later it comes to partioning Poland, the 'Eternal Laws' are said to favour Prussia since she is orderly, and the tool of judgement on the anarchic Poles.[1]

The mistaken premise in Frederick The Great is that it is dealing in facts, when in reality these are merely Carlyle's prejudices. The work's judgements represent the sad decline of Carlyle's role as prophet-historian.

Having created the state which would later lead Germany, Frederick's "Hercules-labours"[2] were in Carlyle's view finished. Though twenty-three years of life yet remained to him, the civil reforms of this last period are skimped. His value to Prussia was as a military genius: this was his one quality Carlyle could appreciate in the end.

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1. Frederick, VIII.119-122.

2. Ibid., 1.

The last attempt to see his own age through the eyes of History, Frederick The Great, displays Carlyle's earlier preoccupations hardened into rigid dogma. Teutonism, Militarism, Protestantism are baldly eulogized; there too is Carlyle's anti-Gallicism, disparagement of the conscious in his satirisation of the activities of academicians, constitutionalists, writers and reviewers. But neither is the Legitimism of the old order spared: the etiquette of court, the absolutism of the ancien régime and the carnality of its representatives are roundly dismissed.

Carlyle emerges as an authoritarian-iconoclast, an admirer of order and discipline, not realizing, as Augustus Ralli pointed out,[1] that these too could be devoted to materialist ends. Holding fast to a myth of peasant heroism and unconscious valour, Carlyle does not truly envisage the age of blood and iron. Indeed, his articulation of mights and rights in the amoral terms of this last history is ominous, but it is the product of an isolated, despairing man. In 1870 he would celebrate the downfall of the old strumpet France little knowing that a nation founded on "Facts of Arithmetic, Geometry, Gravitation, Martin Luther's Reformation and what it can really believe in.."[2] would press his doctrine of the unconscious to far other realms of hysteria and madness.

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1. A. Ralli, Guide to Carlyle, II.334.

2 Frederick VII.491.

Carlyle saw it as strange that Frederick, like Voltaire, had not foreseen that the anarchies born in their century would lead to the French Revolution.[1] These anarchies - "unappeasable Revolt against Sham-Govenors and Sham-Teachers" - had not ended then either. Carlyle projects them far into the future: "Only when the Spontaneous Combustion breaks out...then has the Event come; there is the thing for all men to mark and to study and scrutinise as the strangest thing they ever saw". Centuries of it were still ahead: "Say Two Centuries yet, - say even Ten of such a process: before the Old is completely burnt out, and the New in any state of sightliness?" This was the "Millenniumof Anarchies", the "consumation of All the Anarchies that are and were".[2]

The new age and the apocalypse was indeed an ongoing process, one "much more lengthy, miscellaneous and dismal than I had in former times imagined". In re-iterating the same theme from which he had embarked in his vision of History and Society forty years before, Carlyle realized only too well how potent was that theme.

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1. Frederick, VIII. 5.

2. Ibid., 2.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

By the choice of the issues he wrote on, and the authority and skill he brought to them, Carlyle displayed the originality of his intellect and the power of his understanding. First German thought, next the French Revolution, then Chartism and the question of the arrival of democracy, and the problem of authority in the modern world - each subject was new when Carlyle took it up. Further, he retained his independence from the influences which had helped stimulate his work on these subjects.

As German thought proved a formative influence on the nineteenth century, so the problem of interpreting the new world inaugurated by the French Revolution dominated the century's political and social analyses. While much influenced by the Germans in his characterization of the post-Enlightenment epoch, Carlyle took note from the Saint-Simonians and retained in his social judgements the stamp of the covenanting inheritance he shared with Edward Irving.

In his vision of the social tensions of the first half of the nineteenth century, and his warning of an apocalyptic retribution descending upon the higher classes in Britain as it had done two generations before in France, Carlyle touched the hidden fears of the upper strata of society, as well as giving expression to the cause of the

downtrodden. He probed the radicalism of the time, in particular the Utilitarians, but stood apart from any radical school. In the debate on the living conditions of the people, Carlyle's was the puissant voice which opened many of the issues neglected by the middle-class radicals.

I have suggested that one overall theme embraced Carlyle's writings on each of these subjects. Through looking through History as well as through viewing the direct symptoms of his own age, Carlyle came to the conclusion that the modern age was one of transition, in which disorder figured in social, political, and religious institutions. History had reached a turning point: its immediate prospect was downward, but there must be a rebirth. The old order had passed away, but the new one had not yet appeared. The time was still "in pangs of travail with the new".

This overriding prophetic theme of the new age and the apocalypse consistently figures in Carlyle's Works, from the view of society's prospects post-1830, in Sartor Resartus, to the reversion to the source of the theme in the outbreak of the 'Millenium of Anarchies' at the close of the eighteenth century, which is envisaged at the end of Frederick The Great. It undergoes alteration according to the context in which it appears in the Works, and the changes which proceeded both within Carlyle himself and the nineteenth century.

In the earliest period, stimulated by German Idealism, Carlyle penetratingly characterized the 'Age of Machinery'. He suggested the deadening spiritual effects of scepticism and rationalism, and adumbrated the vital necessity of an all-pervasive spiritual belief for the cohesion of the fabric of society. At the same time he recognized the decline of orthodox religion and the secularization of society, decades before its effects were clearly manifest.

In 1831, the apocalypse figure in Sartor as the impending dissolution of society under the impact of the forces of irreligion let loose by the Enlightenment. However, this was considered necessary before the re-birth of the new age could take place. Meanwhile, the elevated Teufelsdröckh expressed Carlyle's detached, lyric exhilaration with the new theme.

The radical Carlyle of the 1830's castigated the higher classes in the name first of inward reform. He deprecated the emphasis on external, 'mechanical' reform alone which was the message of the political radicals. Though on the side of the poor against the respectable classes, Carlyle wanted not extension of the franchise but a re-infusion into society of a sense of mystic wonder in order to achieve a higher morality. He at the same time developed the idea of the unconscious as a dynamic force, capable of cleansing society by means of a subterranean outburst like Sansculottism.

The French Revolution was the clue to the modern

age; the apocalyptic climax of the theories of the Enlightenment working on the rottenness of the ancien régime. In the explosion both were shown to be destroyed by a retributive justice embodied in the inexorable force of Sansculottism. Still, the Utilitarians and the game-preserving aristocracy in Britain seemed to represent the same alignment of principles in the socially distressed period of the 1830's. The dual perspective of the eighteenth century and this later time suggested in The French Revolution implied the continuation of the apocalypse. Carlyle underlined the message in Chartism.

The transitional period was the 1840's when Carlyle developed his concept of the unconscious into a general periodicity of heroic ages of faith - a process already suggested in 'Signs of tne Times' and 'Characteristics'. The theory of the great man, also established in the previous decade, was now amplified. The heroic age and the hero were fitted together, and a theocratic ordering of society was the suggested ideal.

The investigation of past 'new eras' and the articulation of the idea of the hero-redeemer of society retained the apocalyptic theme. History was a succession of apocalyptic changes wrought by religious heroes like Mohammed, Luther, Knox and Cromwell. The Puritan age closed the succession of heroic epochs for the time being; but the theocratic ideal Cromwell had fought for was the eternal foundation of the new era.

However, the study of Cromwell and his time

revealed the chasm separating Carlyle from the age in which he lived. It was, as he had stated before, unheroic and unfounded in the unconscious. But it now seemed clearer than ever that the modern age would not accept the ideals of hero and theocratic social order.

The 1848 revolutions for a moment seemed to vindicate Carlyle's pronouncements on the apocalypse. But where he had once welcomed upheaval, Carlyle now feared the chaotic effect the forces of change were having upon the fabric of society. The new age now portended no good, the prospect of renewal seemed far off. At the same time, the situation had acquired urgent proportions. From the detached observer of Sartor, the author of The Latter-Day Pamphlets had become a confused, disorientated man.

Carlyle's recognition of his incapacity to influence the tide of events, and his recognition of the ascendancy of the secular democratic era, were essential ingredients in the 'decadence' of his last period of 1850 - 1867. He now concentrated his attack on the mechanism of democracy, which was seen as the tool of the middle classes, but potentially their destroyer. The rebellion of the lower strata of the social order was being perversely incited by the laissez-faire philosophy of the middle classes.

Frederick The Great revealed Carlyle's alienation. Affrighted by the prospect of anarchy and amorphousness spreading throughout social relations through the leverage of laissez-faire, Carlyle came down on the side of

order in the form of the military force of Prussia. Only an authoritarian force, embodying the power of the unconscious, and now identified with Carlyle's Teutonic predilection, could abort the social chaos. In advocating the strengths of the Prussian military state, Carlyle came the closest ever to allegiance to an identifiable political reality. However, his desire to be iconoclastic and his indulgence in Teutonic myth suggest Carlyle's Prussianism was not extended as a real alternative. Carlyle had already exhausted his developed vision of historical heroic epochs. He was left with the 'Millenniumof Anarchies', begun after the death of Frederick: the apocalyptic process could not be by-passed, but instead appeared far worse than Carlyle had first imagined.

Stylistically, Carlyle's development paralleled this process of alienation. The confidence and artistry of Sartor, and the imaginative sweep of The French Revolution, display Carlyle at the height of his artistic powers. In Past and Present, his style remains creative but there is no longer the same inventiveness in dealing with form. The Latter-Day Pamphlets reveal the frustrated note of the later period; the style is often turgid and convoluted, though still bristling with satire. Frederick displays wit too, but it is underlaid by a tone of weariness with human folly, and there is no longer the burlesque and abandon found in Sartor. Many pages are flat; where the younger man composed poetic history, the ageing one writes prosaic historical narrative.

Certainly, there is a change in Carlyle. This has often been construed politically, and this has perhaps been the source of misunderstanding and exaggeration. Carlyle retained an antipathy to the middle classes throughout his life; this achieved its clearest expression in his treatment of the Girondins. He associated them with the mechanical behaviour in politics and religion first argued in 'Signs of the Times'. In later years his contempt for the spreading ideology of material progress and liberal institutions, associated with the Victorian middle classes, only grew sharper.

From making the revolutionary mob, in The French Revolution, the embodiment of the unconscious which sweeps away conscious middle-class formulas, Carlyle turned later to the drilled Prussian soldiery as the repository of the same force. Long an opponent of the idle aristocracy, it has been suggested by some that Carlyle eventually turned to them, hoping for a Junker caste to keep the masses in order. From being a friend of the people, Carlyle is supposed to have defected to the enemy.

In reality, too much stress has been laid upon Carlyle's reputed political ideology; and theapolitical nihilism of his position, from as early as 1837 when The French Revolution appeared, has been overlooked.

Carlyle was a religious man. John Locke considered that God did not unmake the man when he made the prophet. This is a valuable proposition to keep in mind when viewing Carlyle's strikingly prophetic writings, so replete with the shortcomings of his human nature.

At the core of the theme of the new age and the apocalypse is the announcement of the dying out of the social influence of religious belief, and the warning of the dire consequences of such a result for the modern world. This remains a constant in Carlyle's writings.

The decline of religion was to be met by the eternal religious truths, denuded of their superstitious adhesions, as enunciated in Sartor Resartus. To recreate a religious feeling in society, Carlyle advanced his faith in the wonder of the universe and the divine significance of man and his history. Work was the means of spiritual realization; a stoic ingredient was transmuted into a heroic fortification of the will in order to create order out of a frightening, mysterious universe. A Protestant ethic subsisted alongside this mystic faith: men were still to know the need for renunciation and the fulfilment of duty.

This faith acquired its theocratic ingredient through Carlyle's enlargement of the theocratic element in his native Calvinism, under the influence of his historical studies. History re-inforced Carlyle's sense of the efficacy of belief, especially as evinced in the heroic community of believers, such as the Moslems and the Puritans.

As the withdrawal of an effective religious spirit in the nineteenth century grew apparent, Carlyle's optimism disappeared. The Gospel of Work, denuded of its spiritual élan, became a burden to be borne in 'The Nigger Question'. The stoic ingredient underwent a similar change, ending as a subdued resistance to fate.

But Sartor had insisted that society could not stand without the "Pericardial and Nervous Tissue" of religion. In The Latter-Day Pamphlets, Carlyle struggled with what he saw as theproblem of authority and social order in a society motivated by materialist ends alone. He asked whether liberty was not a greater evil than the ills it was supposed to cure, and how without a spiritual authority wisdom could prevail against the partiality and ignorance of the mass of men.

However, Carlyle's own prescriptions for the problem reveal the limitations of the man. His attempt to present an alternative of an organically unified society established on religious sanctions founders in the vacuum of authority it seeks to redress. Carlyle's theocracy is based on no religious authority but his own and bears heavily the imprint of its Calvinist inspiration.

The theme of the spiritual nadir of the Last Days is expressed in compact form in The Life of John Sterling. Here Carlyle underlined his insight that the old religious orthodoxy was no longer the channel of a real spirituality. It was a "will-o'-wisp" that led astray. In his delineation of the bleak spiritual climate of the mid-century, with its repetition of the original message of apocalypse, Carlyle expressed the limitations of his prophethood.

Carlyle had postulated a spiritual vacuum that he could not fill. The change from the early to the later Carlyle can be expressed as the change from a man who believed he could still hold to what was for him a religious view of the world, to one who, in the face of events, no longer was able to do so.

Carlyle's theory of History seemed to have brought him to an impasse as well. For he could not conceive, in such an epoch, from where the much needed hero who could inaugurate the new age might come. Refracted in Carlyle's millennialconcept of the hero, however, in spite of the apparent decline in the scale of its heroes, Carlyle may half-consciously have been displaying characteristics of an age-long hope which pre-dated the nineteenth century. In that century too, in the more humble souls of the age who filled the ranks of the Irvingites, Millerites, the Mormons and other millennial religious sects, was an expectation of "the Christ that is to be". Carlyle was still attached to a mode of thinking which looked heavenwards for an answer to the ultimate problems confronting the destiny of mankind.

APPENDIX

ARNOLD AND RUSKIN: TWO ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES TO THE CARLYLEAN IMPASSE

Carlyle 'the beloved man' of Arnold's youth, became, in spite of a persisting influence on Arnold's ideas and expression, a source of disquiet to the later Arnold. I wish to show how, in part, this is a reflection of Arnold's attitude toward the Carlylean impasse that I have demonstrated, and with which I hope to show Arnold too was involved. I shall also try to demonstrate how Ruskin, finding himself in a similar position, developed the impasse in an alternative fashion to Arnold. The comparison will, I hope, add a further dimension to the path I have already shown Carlyle take.

Why was the influence of Carlyle, one of the 'puissant' voices of Arnold's Oxford years, such an important one for him? The young Arnold and Clough read Carlyle's Essays in the 1840s and introduced Carlylean expressions into their letters. These were the essays of the first period of Carlyle's career, and though the greater tones of Sartor Resartus and The French Revolution had now to be added, the voice to which Clough and Arnold were attuned was the same that had drawn Emerson to the isolation of Craigenputtock in 1833. The blend of idealism and puritanism these works displayed, surmounted by a wide ranging critique of a new age, represented an attractive topicality for the young and idealistic. Almost all the circles open to new and liberal thought were open to Carlyle.

The outburst which Carlyle's 'Nigger Question' and Latter-Day Pamphlets launched in 1849 and 1850, shocked, as well as Arnold and Clough, erstwhile admirers like Mill and Emerson. Arnold had particular cause for disappointment. His own early development bore comparison with the path already trodden by the older man. By 1849, Arnold too had lost his belief in orthodox Christianity; he too had turned to the Romantics and found there no healing gospel to reassimilate him into society. With the help of Carlyle, Arnold had come to revere Goethe, and he was also an admirer of such German figures as Lessing and Herder. Above all, Arnold's poetry, which was mostly written in the sequence 1849 to 1855, displays a comparable malaise, restlessness, loss of faith and hope - even failure in romance - to the Carlyle of 1818-1826.

The key to Arnold's identification with Carlyle was these very similarities. We are reminded of the relationship of Goethe and the young Carlyle. In 1827, Carlyle wrote of the rare prospect in Goethe of "the calm supremacy of the spirit over its circumstances" [Wilhelm Meister, I.24]. A year later, he wrote:

> For Goethe has not only suffered and mourned in bitter agony under the spiritual perplexities of his time; but he has also mastered these, he is above them, and has shown others how to rise above them. [Essays, I.210].

In March 1848, Arnold writes to his mother of Carlyle's article 'Louis-Philippe':

> How deeply restful it comes upon one, amidst the hot dizzy trash one reads about these changes everywhere ... The source of repose in Carlyle's article is that he alone puts aside the din and whirl and brutality which envelop a movement of the masses, to fix his thoughts on its ideal invisible character. [Letters, 1.3-4]. 1

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1. Letters of Matthew Arnold, ed. G.W.E. Russell, 2 vols., London and New York, 1895.

Arnold's picture of Carlyle's "restful" influence (he uses the same adjective in a letter to Clough dealing with the same subject) and his position of "repose" reminds us of Carlyle's Goethe, with his "calm supremacy" over his environment.

For the young Arnold, it must have seemed that Carlyle himself had inherited the shoes of his beloved Goethe. In his works, Carlyle had built for himself the stature of one who was delineator of the age of change. Their autobiographical content also suggested that, like Goethe, Carlyle had mourned in agony under the time's spiritual perplexities, but had arisen above them, and mastered them.

He made the announcement in 'Characteristics' that: "the Old has passed away: but, alas, the New appears not in its stead; the Time is still in pangs of travail with the new" [Essays, III.32]. But it was a mystery that only yielded its answers step by step. The rest was action. Carlyle seemed to stand a calm figure, bestriding the storms of the time.

Carlyle and Arnold both had their Wetherian experiences. The unsuccessful lover of Marguerite declaims the isolation of all men:

> ... in the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live alone. [Poems, 124.1-4][1]

In throes of love's pain, young Wotton Reinfred surveyed the stream of human generations:

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1. The Poems of Matthew Arnold, ed. Kenneth Allott, London, 1965.

> Their multitude affrights us; the living are but a handful; one wave in the boundless tide of ages. Who could grieve for his own light afflictions in this universal doom? 1

"No, we are strangers here; the world is from of old."

The words this time are those of Empedocles:

> ... 'tis we,
> And not the world, are new;
> Our cry for bliss, our plea,
> Others have urged it too -
> Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before.
> [Poems, 165.207-11].

The sentiment of Empedocles echoes Teufelsdröckh - as indeed the sorrows of Wotton Reinfred are embodied in Sartor Resartus. Teufelsdröckh's answer was: "Foolish soul! What Act of Legislature was there that thou shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to be at all." [Sartor, 153.].[2] On the contrary: "the Self in thee need to be annihilated" [Ibid.].

The recipe for the soul of Sartor, with its stoic-Goetheanethic, was congenial to the young Arnold who (like the young Carlyle) read Epitectus and Marcus Aurelius. And Sartor's Goethean vision of the universe as a divine temple retained its power after Arnold had come to know Goethe's favourite Spinoza. The voice of Carlyle seemed to renovate the old truths; his powerful personality charged the individual to action.

The revelation of 1849-50, uncovering Carlyle's terrible, frustrated sense of impasse, destroyed Arnold's

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1. Last Words, 121.
2. Sartor Resartus, Centenary Edition, ed. H.D. Traill.

conception of the 'restful' sage. The author of the bracing Sartor must now have appeared to Arnold as a Samson shorn of his strength. From now on, Arnold's references to Carlyle stress the exact opposite of his earlier praise for Carlyle's 'repose'. The calm voice was gone; instead, Carlyle seemed further testimony to the noise and din of the modern age - "damned times", Arnold wrote to Clough in 1849. Everything was "against one - the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities, light profligate friends, moral desperadoes like Carlyle, our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties."[1] No wonder then that Arnold's and Clough's disaffection with Carlyle seemed to be "attended with the bitterness of a sense of almost personal betrayal".[2]

'Empedocles on Etna' was written between 1849 and 1852, at the height of Arnold's disaffection, but it still incorporated much of Sartor's ethic. Arnold was evidently still much pre-occupied with Carlyle's influence. The hero who reads "in all things" his "own deadness" [Poems, 188.322] reflects Arnold's own "sickening consciousness of our difficulties", as well as a suggestion of the broken stature of Carlyle. The words of disillusionment that Empedocles addresses to Pausanias could as easily have been spoken by

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1. Letters of Matthew Arnold to A.H. Clough, ed. H.F. Lowry, 111.

2. D. DeLaura, 'Arnold and Carlyle', 125.

Arnold to Carlyle:

> What? hate, and awe, and shame
> Fill thee to see our day;
> Thou feelest thy soul's frame
> Shaken and in dismay?
> What? life and time go hard with thee too, as with us;
> [1852; see Poems, 160-1. 112-16.]

Empedocles' fatalism owes something to Carlyle. Arnold's withdrawal of 'Empedocles' in 1853 had, as Kathleen Tillotson suggested, a lot to do with Arnold's attitude to the Carlyle who he and Clough felt had delivered them to the desert.

Arnold was in the wilderness, and he felt Carlyle was partly to blame. Carlyle was now one of the "rigorous teachers" who had "seized" his youth, "and purged its faith" [Poems, 288. 67-8]. But Carlyle had also been a source of sustainment too: Arnold's resentment of Carlyle was probably mixed with regret. Arnold's poetry between 1849 and 1855 figures him trying to come to terms with his own spiritual dilemma and at the same time viewing it in the light of those who had come before. Carlyle's offence was not so much that he had taken Arnold and Clough's generation into the desert, but that he had left them there to fend for themselves. Each one of them must find his own way out of the impasse.

Of those who had come before and "attained ... to see their way" [Poems, 132. 47-8] in a troublous age, Arnold could see only three figures: Wordsworth, Goethe, and the 'Obermann poet'. But of these, Wordsworth did not share the trials of modern man; his

> ... eyes avert their ken
> From half of human fate;[Poems, 132. 53-4]

Goethe too "pursued a lonely road", and though "strong", "with a spirit free", his achievement, like Wordsworth's, was

his own [Ibid., lines 57-64]. Wordsworth is a solace, but no beacon. Goethe is remote - lofty and serene (in this like the Goethe of Carlyle), he is to be revered but can hardly be emulated. The distance is partly that of time too:

> ... though [Goethe's] manhood bore the blast
> Of a tremendous time,
> Yet in a tranquil world was passed
> His tenderer youthful prime. [Ibid., lines 65-8]

Arnold's generation is too far removed:

> But we, brought forth and reared in hours
> Of change, alarm, surprise -
> What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
> What leisure to grow wise? [Ibid., 133. 69-72]

Even Wordsworth had outlived his time and "grew old in an age he condemned" [Poems, 246. 28]. Carlyle had been able to write to Goethe in the 1820s as his spiritual father; Arnold's misfortune was to have been born too late.

In 'Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse', Arnold underlines the feeling of distance of his own generation from the age of the Romantics:

> Our fathers watered with their tears
> This sea of time whereon we sail,
> Their voices were in all men's ears
> Who passed within their puissant hail.
> Still the same ocean round us raves,
> But we stand mute, and watch the waves.
> [Poems, 290. 121-6]

First to respond to the age of change, "our fathers" had been carried on by the sea of time. Their "puissant hail" no longer reached those coming later on the same ocean. Arnold sees his generation "mute" watching the waves. Their dilemma was that they no longer had the greatness to match up to their time - and they were now isolated from those who had come before.

Arnold's view of some of the other Romantics derives from Carlyle. Kathleen Tillotson pointed out how "the pageant of [Byron's] bleeding heart" and Shelley's "lovely wail" recalls Carlyle's view of Byron "'cursing his day'", and Shelley "filling the earth with inarticulate wail" [Essays, III. 31]. But in the Obermann poet, Senancour, Arnold proffers his third figure who attained to see his way:

> - The hopeless tangle of our age,
> Thou too hast scanned it well! [Poems, 133. 83-4.]

Arnold's choice of Senancour is almost a reversal of Carlyle's estimate of the Romantics in the 1820s. According to Arnold, Obermann had learned the new time well, and his voice was "fraught too deep with pain" for men to love it. He sits "immoveable", as "death", his "head ... clear", his "feeling chill" - in "icy...despair" [Ibid. lines 85-88]. Carlyle had moved from the turbulent, storm-tossed figures of Romanticism - Werner, Friedrich Schlegel, Hazlitt, even Richter - and exalted Goethe as the conqueror of Romantic unbelief and despair. Arnold chooses 'Obermann' for this very despair:

> Greater by far than thou are dead;
> Strive not! die also thou! [Ibid. lines 91-2]

Here is a melancholy apparently hardly beyond the Werther stage; 'Obermann' counsels either death or seclusion:

> He who hath watched, not shared, the strife,
> Knows how the day hath gone. [Ibid. 134. 101-02]

That Arnold should have chosen of all figures Senancour to represent the wisdom of the earlier generation, shows that for him Carlyle's apparent claim of having conquered the Romantic malaise in Sartor Resartus had in the event proved nugatory.

Arnold is thrown back once more into the 'nightmare unbelief' in the worse knowledge that he has been preceded in the unavailing struggle by several generations.

It is in this dark realm that Arnold's voice achieves its own distinctiveness. The 'darkling plain' is Arnold's re-phrasal of Caryle's impasse; it is less a world of turmoil and apocalyptic upheaval than a dark nether region of ignorance and confusion. The poet's response is influenced by the teaching of Carlyle, Wordsworth, Goethe and Senancour - but the voice is Arnold's own.

In this universe man is bidden, in Teufelsdröckhian fashion:

> Nurse no extravagant hope;
> Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair!
> [Poems, 172. 424.]

But Teufelsdröckh's message remains at the stage of 'The Everlasting No'. The poet is not girded for action. He is not to be redeemed by working in society, but remains impotently looking on:

> For most men in a brazen prison live,
> Where, in the sun's hot eye,
> With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
> Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,
> Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.
> [Poems, 269. 37-41.]

Rest is never ordained for ordinary men; life affords only a continuing struggle awakening "gloom", until:

> Death in their prison reaches them,
> Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.
> [Ibid., lines 49-50]

He who seeks the dangerous voyage into the unknown sea (the amorphous image of the sea or ocean is the one Arnold invariably applies to life) is prey to its violent

moods, and sails without a course:

> Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
> Still standing for some false, impossible shore.
> [Ibid., 270. lines 68-9.]

The lines convey an unmitigated defeatism.

In spite of his enthusiasm for Senancour, the blank monotony of Arnold's verse never rises to the emotional pitch one associates with Romanticism. Like the Romantics, Arnold turns to nature to provide an answer - or at least some solace. But he can neither settle on a developed philosophical approach, nor forge some dramatic image. Nature is not the void, hostile universe that confronted the bereaved Teufelsdröckh. Arnold toys with the Wordsworthian nature of beauty and solace ('The Youth of Nature') and Goethe's still, unresting and eternally ordered world ('Quiet Work'). But the stoic vein runs deeper; Nature is separate, other than man:

> We, O Nature, depart,
> Thou survivest us! this,
> This, I know, is the law. [Poems, 251. 1-3]

At best, this can be touched by a Spinozist warmth:

> Calm soul of all things! make it mine
> To feel, amid the city's jar,
> That there abides a peace of thine,
> Man did not make, and cannot mar. [Poems, 257. 37-40]

Nature yields few secrets to man. He is the new-born creature, of short duration; Nature is seemingly without end.

There is no revelation for Arnold in the bible of history either. 'The Future' expresses an uncalibrated determinism:

> A wanderer is man from his birth...
> As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.
> [Poems, 263. 1, 7.]

Men are only moved by their environment:

> Only the tract where he sails
> He wots of; only the thoughts,
> Raised by the objects he passes, are his.
> [Ibid., 264. 24-6]

Built into this simplistic view of history is a circularity that gives the poems a weary pre-determination. The past is continually viewed from the impasse of the present age. Men and women in past ages had visions, but no bard today feels himself, as Moses did once, in touch with the divine. The idea is almost the same as that in 'Biography', where Carlyle shows that 'revelation' in its old sense has ended for modern man. Arnold's recognition of the fact is more pessimistic. His view of history is wholly foreshortened to the sick age he lives in, though this is only a stage on the route of the "river of Time":

> Bordered by cities and hoarse
> With a thousand cries in its stream.
> And we on its breast, our minds
> Are confused as the cries which we hear,
> Changing and shot as the sights which we see.
> [Ibid., 266. 53-7]

It may be that modern cities will grow "in a blacker, incessanter line" along the banks of the river. Nineteenth century "trade" may grow "denser" and the "din" increase; and yet:

> ... what was before us we know not,
> And we know not what shall succeed.
> [Ibid., lines 69-70]

There is an inevitable enervation in this unadorned agnosticism. The mid-nineteenth century, where England:

> Stupidly travels her round
> Of mechanic business,...[Poems, 473. 81-2]

and where all that is good (such as Wordsworth, or the voices of Arnold's youth) are past - becomes a fixation. Indeed,

this is the central vision of Arnold's poetry: not only the individual, but society and modern history itself is out on the darkling plain. There is no sure progress ahead and only a mourned link with the immediate past. Arnold's impasse, though elegaic and much more subdued, is quite similar to Carlyle's.

Such a theme only warrants several memorable poems. 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse' expresses it in a less detached, more personal strain than Arnold's other poems. Dead voices of the recent past bear witness to their personal experience of the impasse. There is also a catch of the present in the lines:

> Achilles ponders in his tent,
> The kings of modern thought are dumb;
> [Poems, 290. 115-6]

It is a fair guess that Achilles is Carlyle, whose voice echoes through the poem,[1] above all in the famous:

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,
> [Ibid., 288. 85-6]

Arnold's central images of the sea of time and the noisy batallions of the twilight age are expressed with a peculiarly piquant immediacy in 'Dover Beach'. The theme of isolation and impasse is captured in a single momentary mood. Academic elegizing gives way to a feeling of a real, human predicament. The first strophe sets a scene of loneliness, the second transfers the imagery of the external landscape to the spiritual landscape of the time, the third perfectly synthesizes the two in the emotional relationship of two people. The:

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1. See Kathleen Tillotson, 'Matthew Arnold and Carlyle', in Mid - Victorian Studies, G. and K. Tillotson, 233-5.

darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night
[Poems, 243. 35-7]

recalls the words of 'Characteristics':

Here on Earth we are Soldiers, fighting in a foreign land ...
[Essays III, 43.]

Not only does it illustrate that, as Kathleen Tillotson says, "Arnold responded especially to the poet in Carlyle",[1] it underlines how, in his finest poem, Arnold's apprehension of his theme is overseen by Carlyle.

The wanderer between two worlds has to wait in a state of suspension, hoping:

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity. [Poems, 292. 157-60]

In his most celebrated poem, 'The Scholar Gipsy', Arnold looks backward, encapsulating in the subject-figure of the piece, a desire for historical suspension:

- No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
[Poems, 339. 141-6]

The Scholar-Gipsy, the youthful half-dandy figure whose mask he adopted himself when young, fulfils Arnold's dream in breaking free of the clutches of time. The ever-recurring "new beginnings", "new disappointments", the commercial round, the disillusionment of knowledge - none of these things can touch him:

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1. Tillotson, 217.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife -
Fly hence, our contact fear! [Ibid., 342. 201-6]

Carlyle too had found his solace in the seventeenth century - in a far different hero-projection. The two choices say a lot about their respective creators in their reaction to their time. They also illuminate a strand of feeling running through nineteenth century literature: the wish for escape into a fancied more favourable period.

However, 'The Scholar Gipsy', written between 1852 and 1853 at the nadir of Arnold's stay in the darkling plain, did not fulfil his new criteria of poetry. The effect of the 1853 Preface to Arnold's poems was certainly to be felt in his later poetry. But this did not mean an infusion of the animating quality Arnold saw in Homer and Shakespeare, although he modestly claimed it for 'Sohrab and Rustum'. In 'Balder Dead', composed between 1853 and 1854, there remains the spirit of elegy for the old world. But there is also the germ of the quasi-millennial ingredient that is the new feature in the prose works of the late 1860s and '70s, and of 'Obermann Once More'.

The kinship between 'Balder Dead' and Arnold's later prose and poetry has remained open to debate; but he so clearly draws the parallel between Balder and Christ that it is tempting at least to see the whole poem as a loose allegory of the demise of Christianity - if not to see Balder's millennial vision of the new, restored Asgard as a link with 'Obermann Once More'. When Hermod meets Balder

for the second time in Hell, Balder tells him:

> ... I am long since weary of your storm
> Of carnage, and find ... in your life
> Something too much of war and broils, ...
> [Poems, 387. 503-5]

Balder is fatigued with the world portrayed in 'Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse' and 'Dover Beach', and sees instead the distant prospect of:

> ... an earth
> More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits
> Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved,
> Who then shall live in peace as now in war.
> [Ibid., 288. 528-31]

The new "verdant" earth looks forward to the "green, new earth" of 'Obermann Once More'.

'Balder Dead' is a poem of transition; re-iterating the mood of the darkling plain, it embodies the possibility, for the first time, of a complete re-birth. Arnold, however, introduces the idea in a long 'dramatic' poem, whose subject is Norse myth. The subject itself suggests no way out of the impasse: Balder remains in Hela's death-realm. Only a complete shattering of the sorry state of things can reform them according to the heart's desire.

Arnold's course from the completion of 'Balder Dead' shows that he felt unable to do this in his poetry. When he comes back to poetry to write a major piece in 1865, Arnold brings with him doctrines formulating in his prose. And the world of Arnold's prose is wholly different to that of his previous poetry.

The message of the new 'Obermann' is established upon the foundations of Arnold's newly conceived historical view. Where the younger poet had his vision foreshortened

on the Romantic and post-Romantic eras, the author of 'Obermann Once More' has adopted an almost schematic, even dialectical view of history. Kenneth Allott suggests [Poems, 518] that Arnold derived this view from his father's way of looking at history. The early poem 'Progress', and also 'Revolutions', show Arnold experimenting with the parallel between the late Roman world and the modern age. Both poems are reacting to the religious controversies of the mid-century and foreshadow Arnold's religious prose writings.

'Progress' refutes the radical view of those:

> Who cry aloud to lay the old world low
> To clear the new world's way..
> [Poems, 261. 15-16]

By the 'old world' here is meant the solace of religion. Arnold's answer is:

> 'Say ye: "The spirit of man has found new roads,
> And we must leave the old faiths, and walk therein?"
> Leave then the Cross as ye have left carved gods,
> But guard the fire within!'
> [Ibid., 262. 25-28]

In 'Revolutions', we see the second important criterion of Arnold's religious criticism. Conserving the spirit of Christianity must go with adapting it to the needs of a new order. Previous empires had made part-availing but transitory attempts to form "the word God would" according to their respective orders:

> One day, thou say'st, there will at last appear
> The word, the order, which God meant should be.
> [Poems, 281. 17-18]

In that day men would know it:

> The band will quit man's heart, he will breathe free.
> [Ibid., line 20]

'Obermann Once More' is a curious synthesis of the impasse of Arnold's darkling plain and his view of a coming new order. 'Obermann' now tells Arnold:

> 'Thou fledst me when the ungenial earth,
> Man's work-place, lay in gloom.
> Return'st thou in her hour of birth,
> Of hopes and hearts in bloom?'
> [Poems, 522. 77-80.]

In what sense, we might ask, had 1865 yielded "hopes and hearts in bloom" not vouchsafed to 1845? The answer is supplied by Arnold's new periodicity: the Roman world expired by its own fatalism and sickness. Christianity replaced it:

> 'A conquering, new-born joy awoke,
> And filled her life with day.'
> [Ibid., 524. 115-6]

But "centuries came and ran their course"; belief receded until Christ's influence finally died, and like the monks in 'Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse', men were left: "Regar-d[ing] his death-place dumb" [lines 161, 178].

The pattern becomes familiar: the French Revolution came, in true Carlylean fashion, as a new revelation. It melted the icebergs of the old order, but only to leave a world in limbo, about which the poet proclaims:

> '"Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
> Your social order too!
> Where tarries he, the Power who said:
> See, I make all things new?"'
> [Poems, 529. 229-32]

It is now that the oracle utters words unthinkable to the Arnold of twenty years before; but understandable to the Arnold who had learned to expect a re-birth in the modern age parallel to Christianity's rise from the Roman Empire:

'Despair not thou as I despaired,
Nor be cold gloom thy prison!
Forward the gracious hours have fared,
And see! the sun is risen!

'He breaks the winter of the past;
A green, new earth appears.
Millions, whose life in ice lay fast.
Have thoughts, and smiles, and tears.'
[Ibid., 531. 281-8]

The promise of 'Revolutions' has apparently been realised:

'The world's great order dawns in sheen,
.....
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,
With happier zeal pursued.' [Ibid., 532. 293, 295-6]

There has been, apparently, a second revelation after the French Revolution. We might well ask from where, for this would constitute a veritable route out of the impasse. But Arnold's poem is vague - its visionary machinery ("The vision ended. I awoke") - leaves us none the wiser. However, the source of Arnold's new optimism is not far to seek.

The message of joy which Obermann delivers is a development of Arnold's Preface of 1853, and it rests on Arnold the aspiring religious critic:

'One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again!' [Ibid., 533. 323-4]

recalls Arnold's quotation of Schiller in 1853: "All art ... is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy" [Poems, 592].

The road 'Obermann Once More' records is that of Arnold's religion of poetry, "... as the shade of Obermann silently disappeared in the early morning, another ghost went with it. Is it too much to say that it was the ghost of a poet? There was left upon the slopes above Geneva a disciplined and less distracted man, for whom the world was now in

making."[1]

Any assessment of Arnold's apparent achievement in moving out of the impasse, therefore depends upon a reading of his prose. Some may agree with John Heath-Stubbs that: "Arnold commands our respect, because he made no attempt to close his eyes to the discouraging spectacle presented by the loss of traditional faith and intellectual standards, but went forward to find his own path across the Darkling Plain."[2] Others might suggest that Arnold took a detour, and assessing Arnold's attempt "to restate the creeds in modern terms",[3] recall Carlyle's criticism of Coleridge:

> What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible, - that, in God's name, leave uncredited; at your peril do not try believing that. 4

It is indeed ironic that whereas Carlyle's historical view became foreshortened in the late 1840s in reaction to the grave impasse he attributed to the age, the hitherto agnostic historical outlook of Arnold should have developed into the grand schematic vision we find in 'Obermann Once More'.

One other Victorian writer meets the Carlylean impasse on the course directed by Carlyle. Like Carlyle, Ruskin

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1. C.B. Tinker and H.F. Lowry, The Poetry of Matthew Arnold, London and New York, 273-4.

2. The Darkling Plain, London, 1950, 106.

3. Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies, 282-3.

4. Life of John Sterling, 60.

found himself facing a blind alley in the Victorian age. Ruskin's appreciation of the great epochs of art in history led him to praise the Gothic period in architecture and deprecate the Renaissance, though he marvelled in the sixteenth century painters Veronese and Tintoretto. His battles on behalf of the Gothic, and the modern genius of Turner, were over when Ruskin awoke in the late 1850s to despisal of Victorian art and life. Carlyle's sense of impasse was heightened by his vain search for the heroic in the nineteenth century; Ruskin reached a similar position when his love of beauty received the impact of mid-Victorian industrial ugliness.

Ruskin's criticism of the mechanical character of the Victorian Age in 'The Nature of Gothic', has features in common with Carlyle. His fervour for the Gothic craftsman of the middle ages goes with acceptance of his humanity and imperfection. Like Carlyle's predilection for the heroism of the half-formed Teuton kindred, Ruskin sees the strength of Gothic as a natural, unconscious development of human faculty. Both men hated mechanism because their Romantic spirit gloried in the mystery of the created world. Against this, mechanism was artificiality, the regularizing that arose from the narrow intellect:

> ... the finer the nature, the more flaws it will show through the clearness of it; and it is a law of this universe, that the best things shall be seldomest seen in their best form. ... And therefore, while in all things that we see or do, we are to desire perfection, and strive for it, we are nevertheless not to set the meaner thing, in its narrow accomplishment, above the nobler thing, in its mighty progress; not to esteem smooth minuteness above shattered majesty ... [Works, X. 190-1]

Ruskin accepts Pascal's flawed man, and esteems man most when he aspires to create "shattered majesty". So one must take the craftsman with his imperfection, "look for the thoughtful part of them, and get that out of them, whatever we lose for it, whatever faults and errors we are obliged to take with it." [Ibid.] When the mechanical worker stops copying a curved line with "perfect precision", and is asked "to think about any of those forms" in "his own head, he stops". His execution becomes faulty. "But you have made a man of him for all that" [Ibid., 192].

To make men work mechanically you must"unhumanize them", so that their souls become projections of the form of the "cogs and compasses" they work on. "On the other hand, if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing; and the engine-turned precision is lost at once" [Ibid.]. But to make men work mechanically is to condemn them to slavery. "Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle ... [we recall the vindication of the Rights of men in Chartism] ... and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls with them, ... to make the flesh and skin which ... is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with, - this is to be slave-masters indeed ..." [Ibid., 193].

Ruskin demands that the whole man be taken into consideration. It is "souls" and "flesh and skin" which are broken by industrial machinery. The mechanisation of

labour was the greatest single factor making for the discontent of the masses. But the mechanisation of labour was the means whereby the capitalist made his fortune. The deadness of soul produced in the labourer by machinery was in large degree caused by the capitalist's pursuit of material wealth. Not only was the pursuit of wealth yielded by the machine in opposition to nature, it was against religion.

This is where Ruskin meets Carlyle most fully. In giving away his copy of Past and Present, he writes: "I have sent you a book which I read no more because it has become a part of myself, and my old marks in it are now useless, because in my heart I mark it all." [Works, XXVII, 179.] Again and again, Ruskin tries to expose the fallacy of 'the enchanted wealth' of Past and Present. Continually, he is asserting that one cannot love God and mammon. Carlyle's and Ruskin's independent, evangelical religious inheritance proves a more enduring source of communion than the cultivation of Goethe and German Romanticism Carlyle and Arnold once shared in common.

Ruskin's social criticism can never be fully appreciated if divorced from its impelling religious force; but Ruskin came to this new role, like Carlyle, with no orthodox religious creed. His unconversion from a narrow Puritanism in Italy in 1858 occurred relatively late. Indeed, the relinquishment of his creed seems to have stimulated Ruskin's social criticism. But the loss of faith and adoption of his new role, in opposition to the economic and political theories of the age, meant loneliness and isolation. He wrote:

"All my old religious friends are casting me off; or, if they speak, their words are as the brass and the cymbal" [Works, XXXVI. 364]. Thus Ruskin opens himself to the Carlylean dilemma of reforming a society from which he is religiously estranged and socially isolated.

And in Ruskin too, as in Carlyle, Arnold and the other Victorian intellectuals, personal loss of faith is a painful thing. Yet Ruskin faces the impasse full on: where Arnold shies away from the reality of social problems, retreating to theology to salvage the beneficial spirit of religion, Ruskin turns to the very problems that, he holds, attest the real failure of religion. The pains of unbelief of the sensitive soul out on the darkling plain are as nothing compared to the sorrow the collective non-observance of religious morality holds for Ruskin, the reformer. Not so much personal unbelief, but the effective unbelief evinced by the deeds of his contemporaries, agonizes Ruskin. His consciousness of the sickness of his age is even more extreme than Carlyle's, and far more radical than Arnold's.

Ruskin could not distance himself from this alien world, secluded in a study like Carlyle, or raised to the lofty heights of 'criticism' as Arnold. Be it in the current world of the monthly periodical, or the immediacy of the lecture room, Ruskin meant to find out his audience. The 'non-believer' sets about re-Christianizing the practical life of a people who - professing religion - really cling to a hollow husk as the Jews had done.

"I know no previous instance in history," he writes

in Unto This Last, "of a nation's establishing a systematic disobedience to the first principles of its professed religion [whose] writings ... not only denounce the love of money as the source of all evil ..., but declare mammon service to be the accurate and irreconcileable opposite of God's service ..." [Works, XVII. 75-6].

Whilst professing belief in the Gospel, the richer classes adhered to "the modern soi-disant science of political economy, based on the idea that an advantageous code of social action may be determined irrespectively of the influence of social affection" [Ibid., 25.]. Their conception of justice in economic and social relations was determined by the crude arithmetic of a creed which took "the human being merely as a covetous machine". All that needed to be taken into account was "by what laws of labour, purchase, and sale, the greatest accumulative result in wealth is obtainable" [Ibid.].

Ruskin needs to devote a lot of space merely to prove that in order for one man to become rich, many others must suffer poverty, and that it is economically as well as humanly unsound to treat a servant or employee as a machine from which the optimum output is to be obtained. As in his plea for the craftsman in 'The Nature of Gothic', Ruskin argues that the servant is not "an engine of which the motive power [is] steam, magnetism, gravitation, or any other agent of calculable force. But ... on the contrary, an engine whose motive power isaSoul ... an unknown quantity." [Ibid., 29.]

Ruskin follows Carlyle in insisting that human ties - "affections" - must be taken into account in commerce. He opines a wholly different view from the one prevalent, one that calls for co-operation in place of competition between servant and employer. The market requires "martyrdoms" and "heroisms"; society demands, if need be, that its merchants sacrifice themselves rather than cheat. The whole force of Ruskin's argument is a continuation of Carlyle's claim that Cain is his brother's keeper.

Unto This Last is coherent because Ruskin had single-mindedly joined battle with the political economists, as in open debate. His moralism is impassioned but not despondent, stating laws he considers self-evident to Christians, and arguing for a social justice corrective of the Victorians' mistaken idea of charity. All is aimed at producing that true wealth which is "Life" - that which sustains happy and noble human beings. The argument is further pursued in Munera Pulveris and Time and Tide, but Ruskin's bitterness and aberrations have begun to grow.

We catch too, in Unto This Last, the notes which, later contorted into pained declamations against seemingly ever-accumulating evils, are the mark of Ruskin's eventually total alienation.

The ominous imagery of illness and approaching judgement appears only briefly. Modern wealth produces people i a "dim-eyed and narrow-chested state of being" [Works, XVII. 56]. There is the suggestion that by the prosperous part of the nation, Christianity is only "verbally" considered divine [Ibid.]; that in aiming to possess the world's riches a Christian England is unable to compare with "the virtues

and treasure of a Heathen [nation]" [Ibid.]. Capital, Ruskin says, is evil if accumulated for itself:

> ... capital is the head, or fountain head, of wealth - the "well-head" of wealth, as the clouds are the well-heads of rain: but when clouds are without water, and only beget clouds, they issue in wrath at last, instead of rain, and in lightning instead of harvest...
> [Works, XVII. 99-100].

Thus wealth stored up and not bountifully distributed yields destruction - "lightning instead of harvest". The idea that nature's storm-clouds can carry divine judgement is here suggested figuratively. Later, in his firm conviction that the storm-cloud actually brought judgement, Ruskin became the sad victim of his pathetic fallacy.

But the twin themes of the corruption of the temple, or the ruination of religion at the hands of mammon; and the starvation of the poor by the rich, acquire a prominence that surmounts everything else among the lectures of the 1860s, published as Sesame and Lilies and The Crown of Wild Olive.

The reading of books, public life, the patronage of art and science - all are surmounted by Ruskin's continuing argument with hypocritical Christianity, in 'Of King's Treasuries'. The effects of loving money whilst pretending "belief in a revelation which asserts [it] ... to be the root of all evil" are seen in the coroner's report taken from The Daily Telegraph. Ruskin uses the bare facts of the death by starvation of a Spitalfields "'translator' of boots" ("Dr. G.P. Walker said deceased died from syncope, from exhaustion from want of food") as proof of his assertion that the nation's supposed Christianity is part of its corruption. It is nothing more than a dramatised fiction -

"gas-lighted, and gas-inspired Christianity"; it were better to get rid of the furnishings of the temple - the "smoke" and "organ pipes" and "painted glass", and "look after Lazarus at the doorstep" [Works, XVIII, 90-96.].

Lazarus re-appears in 'Work' [Lecture 1, The Crown of Wild Olives], after similar press cuttings as above. In particular, paupers in the Andover Poor Union had been found "sucking the marrow from the bones of horses which they were employed to crush". "You see my reason for thinking that our Lazarus of Christianity has some advantage over the Jewish one. Jewish Lazarus expected, or, at least, prayed, to be fed with crumbs from the rich man's table; but our Lazarus is fed with crumbs from the dog's table." [Works, XVIII, 411]. The comparison is cutting: its effect is purposely to evoke a deep sense of shame. Christian Lazarus is really worse off than Jewish Lazarus; and any comparison of themselves with the Jews was not at all flattering to Victorian Christians.

The above is an example of Ruskin's ironic method of using the Bible to shame its avowed proponents - those who should hear and obey it "at their peril" [Works, XVIII, 394.]. He achieves a similar effect by comparing Victorian Christianity to corrupt paganism or Judaism. In architecture, Gothic is now used solely for churches, Ruskin says; once the style had served all uses: "it signifies neither more nor less than that you have separated your religion from your life" [Works, XVIII, 440.]. The Gothic style is the synagogue style "which you think, like the fine frankincense

should be mixed for the tabernacle only, and reserved for your religious services" [Ibid.]. It was but one sign that Victorian Christianity was sinking "back into gross Judaism" [Ibid., 442]. Again, Ruskin questions the respectable, well-to-do middle classes, whether or not they believed the poor-child sweeper-of-crossings was equal to their beautiful children, in Sunday clothes and with a feather in their hats. Of course not: providence had placed them in unequal positions:

> Ah, my friends, that's the gist of the whole question. Did Providence put them in that position, or did you? You knock a man into a ditch, and then you tell him to remain content in the "position in which Providence has placed him". That's modern Christianity.
> [Works, XVIII, 422.]

Ruskin intrudes into the dark areas of his contemporaries' religious conscience - those which the prudish would prefer unspoken of. "If you address any average modern English company as believing in an Eternal life; and then endeavour to draw any conclusions from this assumed belief, as to their present business," - the real 'practical' result of their belief - "they will forthwith tell you that 'what you say is very beautiful, but it is not practical'. If, on the contrary, you frankly address them as unbelievers ... and try to draw any consequences from that unbelief, - they immediately hold you for an accursed person ..." [Works, XVIII. 392]. Victorian 'practicality' meant, in effect, business practicality - the mammon worship that was completely opposed to the spirit of their supposed beliefs. Ruskin expresses this 'practicality' in the mordant parable in the 'Mystery of Life and its Arts', where children established in

a beautiful house begin to fight over its treasures, and to acquire them for "the brass-headed nails that studded the chairs" - at the instigation of "two or three of the more 'practical' children ..." [Works, XVIII. 164-5.].

Ruskin pointedly concludes that since it is no longer true that "a general audience is now wholly, or even in majority composed of ... religious persons":

> ... with the so-called Christian, I desired to plead for honest declaration and fulfilment of his belief in life, - with the so-called Infidel, I desired to plead for an honest declaration and fulfilment of his belief in death.
> [Works, XVIII. 394.]

What Ruskin actually says, through the mouth of "a preacher, in comfortless, but faithful zeal", is very significant. The antinomian Christian believed he would receive his reward, in spite of all his barbarities, in the next world. But for the unbeliever, there is the knowledge that no Master looks over the plight of the poor and rewards them in a future existence:

> ... you may crush them, before the moth, and they will never rise to rebuke you; - their breath, which fails for lack of food, once expiring, will never be recalled to whisper against you a word of accusing ... [Ibid., 397.]

Would it not be more heroic than the Christian, for the unbeliever to treat these fellow creatures with dignity and succour, knowing they have but one chance in life and then must perish?

Thus Ruskin meets the intractability of religious uncertainty full on. He frankly admits doubt, but says: let this be a spur to reform the world even at so late an hour. The injunctions of the Gospel have never been taken

seriously; let them be put into practice even in these times of disquiet. The disquiet itself is in great measure caused by the failure to live by the Gospel. Yet the teachings of Christ, Ruskin never tires reminding his audience, are still the most efficacious reform programme for improving the conditions of their fellow men. Believers in Christianity ignored them "at their peril", and those who no longer accepted the creed could still apply them on grounds of humanity.

Ruskin would have agreed with Tennyson that more faith could be found in honest doubt than in half the creeds - so long as it eventuated in action. His aim is similar to George Eliot's, but he does not relinquish the name of the Gospel to preach a thinly disguised Christian ethic.

Ruskin's evangelical background had influenced him so completely that he could not give Christianity up when there was the question of bringing to light the inhumanity of man to man. Every day, not just the Last Day, was a day of judgement. "It waits at the doors of your houses - it waits at the corners of your streets; we are in the midst of judgement" [Works, XVIII. 180].

Ruskin's brave attempt to meet the religious crisis of his time in such a way was in itself a wonderful defiance of the impasse. But it represented no solution, either in terms of his own peace of mind, or of changing the problems he addressed.

The situation had got out of control. Mammon - service was not only starving the poor: the capitalist was arming the nations; his foreign loans, so discreetly defined

as commerce, were fuelling inevitable future war:

> As far as the east is from the west, so far our sins are - not set from us, but multiplied around us: the Sun himself think you he now "rejoices" to run his course, when he plunges westward to the horizon, so widely red, not with clouds, but blood?
>
> [Works, XVIII. 432]

This is not gratuitously lurid; Ruskin could employ satire just as effectively in order to make the same point. Warfare had been necessary in the past, perhaps; Englishmen engaged in it, as they did in cricket and trade, as 'play'. War was the recreation of the aristocracy. But the game has a horrible realism for the peasants whose lives and houses it claims, and then: "modern war, - scientific war, - chemical and mechanical war, - how much worse than the savage's poisoned arrow!" [Ibid., 472]. Ruskin's satire has the faculty of changing fanciful dreams into terrible nightmare.

It was a nightmare that was all too real. By 1870, Ruskin is prophesying the inevitability of class war owing to the misgovernment of the poor by the upper classes; war between nations owing to the arms commerce of the capitalists; and spoliation of the natural environment because of the pursuit of mammon and the hardening of men's souls. This is not to say that Ruskin did not envisage a new order; his practical and impractical attempts at beginning the reform of economics were to have a potent influence on reformers of the future. But the storm-clouds of Ruskin's personal tragedy grew, and they became allied in his mind with the pathetic fallacy we saw forming in Unto This Last. And despite his fanciful homilies for chivalrous lords and

ladies, his diversions into etymology and the formation of clouds, Ruskin's later works display a frighteningly literal grasp of matter mixed up with his impertinency.

Ruskin's quixotic battle was against fearful odds. Much of what he saw ahead would come true. Perhaps few others saw as keenly as he did that European civilization was morally uncivilized. Ruskin transformed the impasse of personal doubt and alienation into a scale too great for one man, because it seemed to become the impasse of a whole age, perhaps a civilization. It would have been better for his sanity had he been able to follow Arnold's path, and invented an aesthetic, surrogate religion.

There is indeed an interesting divergence in the alternative reactions of Arnold and Ruskin to the Carlylean impasse. Arnold's path up to 1853 or 1854 compares substantially with Carlyle's situation in 1849, except that Arnold has explicitly revoked much of what Carlyle tried to achieve before 1831. Both Arnold and Carlyle respond to the barrenness of the modern age - both revert to experimentation with past frames of mind, or simply project their wishes back into the past. Then Arnold apparently adopts a new outlook, perhaps through compromise, and creates for himself a new role as apostle of culture to the raw Victorian audience.

Ruskin responds to the later Carlyle, and takes up the challenge of awakening the religious conscience of the respectable classes. He seeks to conquer the personal impasse by challenging a collective spiritual vacuum. His

course proved prophetic, but personally disastrous. His disciple Morris channelled his vision of apocalypse into a socialist revolution. But Carlyle's vision of the apocalypse could be carried to such lengths that in Ruskin it became a major factor in his eventual insanity. Both responses to Carlyle's impasse suggest, however, that Carlyle's is an exceedingly important consciousness for an understanding of Victorian culture.

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