

THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF MARK TWAIN

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Introduction

Mark Twain was one of America's great authors. Behind his mask of humor lay a serious view of life. His chief concern was man and how his role in society could be improved. Twain chose not to be a crusader, but his social consciousness in the areas of feminism, religion, and imperialism reveal him to be a crusader at heart.

Closest to Twain's heart were his feminist philosophies. He extolled the ideal wife and mother. Women influenced him greatly, and he romanticized them. Because of these feelings of tenderness and admiration for women, he became concerned about the myth of their natural inferiority.

As years passed, Twain's feminist philosophies included a belief in the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. Maternity was regarded as a major social role during Twain's lifetime since it involved the natural biological role of women. The resulting stereotype that "a woman's place is in the home" largely determined the ways in which women had to express themselves. Twain did not deny the importance of marriage and motherhood, the traditional roles of women. He merely felt women should have a wider choice of life styles and should be judged as individuals with personal rewards being based on personal achievement.

So, his feminist philosophies included the belief that individuals of either sex had unlimited capacities and that when society attempted to define people's roles in life according to their sex, human development was severely limited.

If Twain was concerned about the social role of women, it can be said he was frustrated over the religious life of each individual. The pessimistic determinism which characterized Twain's own religious life led him to believe that religiously man was short-changed. He believed in the doctrine that all acts of the will result from causes which determine them either in such a manner that man has no alternative modes of action or that the will is still free in the sense of being uncompelled. For Twain, there was a need to rebel, a need for man to assert himself against what he felt were religious injustices.

Twain also took a harsh view of imperialism. The idea that the United States sought to convert almost the whole of political science to its own interests alienated Twain. He saw our imperialistic policies of aggression among weaker races. America as a supreme authority over colonies and dependencies was repulsive to him. While some of his contemporaries felt patriotism found its highest expression in imperialism, Twain did not. Indeed, he felt when the United States exercised imperialistic authority, it betrayed its democratic origins.

The humanity of Mark Twain is evident in his concern for his fellow man. His social consciousness aroused others to seek changes for a better society.

CHAPTER I

FEMINISM

Many important social, cultural, and intellectual changes accompanied the vast economic transformation which occurred in the United States during the late nineteenth century. Developments in the natural and social sciences, literature, education, religion, and the fine arts all testified to a vibrant cultural and intellectual life.

This was an age when tradition was challenged. The intellectual and cultural changes of the late nineteenth century produced deep strains and conflicts within American society. People found it hard to adjust to unfamiliar ideas, changing institutional patterns, and different social standards. Nothing upset the fundamental thought patterns of Americans or had such a far-reaching intellectual influence as the ideas embodied in the evolutionary hypothesis of scientist Charles Darwin. In Origin of Species, Darwin stated that man was not the special creation of God but the product of millions of years of evolution. By the late nineteenth century, there was, of course, controversy in scientific and religious circles where evolutionary concepts abounded. Also affected were the fields of law, history,

education and economics. In fact, most aspects of American intellectual life were affected.¹

The application of evolutionary principles to society as a whole became known as "social Darwinism." The chief proponent of social Darwinism was Herbert Spencer, and it was his idea that man was improving constantly through the emerging social processes so that eventually a new human nature and an improved social system would emerge. Although this concept interested Americans initially, by the 1880's many rejected its negativism which held that nothing could be done to improve society; men could only wait for natural social processes.²

A humanistic kind of gospel emerged which was both religious and secular in nature and which spurred Americans on to social improvements. The late nineteenth century was alive with dissenters who refused to accept depression, violent labor-management disputes, slums, the unequal distribution of wealth, child labor, and other undesirable conditions without attempting to discover correctives. Women, desiring to expand their own freedoms, were adding their cries of protest as a socially maligned group which was languishing under numerous legal and social restrictions. Grangers, Populists, labor organizers, a growing

¹Paul Allen Carter, The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 157.

²Ibid., p. 158.

number of church leaders, and scholars insisted that social progress would come less through evolution than through positive human, even governmental, action based on rational thought.³

The spirit of progress and humanitarianism that emerged during the late nineteenth century was very much a part of Mark Twain's creed. It was he who dubbed that period the "Gilded Age", a description he found distasteful. Twain recognized the facade of affluency which characterized a substantial portion of this society, but he also recognized the social injustices of his day. He was caught up in the social consciousness of the period. He possessed a secular humanism including his sense of justice as well as his tender sympathy for those in trouble. But his was an integrity that had matured through the years. There were, at times, inconsistencies between what he said and what he did, but in the sweep of relationships--personal, social, and economic--a complete integration is rarely achieved. He was not a reformer, but, perhaps, rather an overseer of public conscience.⁴

Nowhere is Twain's sense of responsibility and concern more in evidence than in his opinion of women. As an astute observer of humanity, he early began his search for the understanding of the feminine mind. To Mark Twain, woman was a rare and special being who should not be an object of desire but of

³Ibid., p. 159.

⁴Louis J. Budd, Mark Twain: Social Philosopher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 17.

reverential chivalry. He grew up in an intensely sentimental age when it was felt that woman, in her exquisite purity and gentleness, should be the mentor of the male who was made of coarse, masculine clay.

In keeping with the spirit of his age, Twain would maintain a lifelong attitude of reverence towards the women in his life, especially toward those three who were the most important people in his life--his mother, his wife, and his eldest daughter. They, in turn, greatly influenced his views on feminism.⁵

First of all, Twain's relationship with his mother was influenced by the frontier environment in which he grew up. Reverence for women was most significant to Clemens and his contemporaries growing up on the Missouri frontier in the 1830's and 1840's. They were schooled in the Western theories of the day concerning the woman's role in society. Woman was to be respected, and she was to endeavor to exert a gentle tyranny over man in the civilizing process, a condition especially needed in the relatively uncivilized area of the Missouri frontier.⁶

That part of the nation was having its face scrubbed and its hair combed and was opening its eyes to the values of Eastern culture. There was an urgent need for the organization of a stable

⁵Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), p. 2.

⁶Denis W. Brogan, The American Character (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 15.

society, and it was the woman who would be depended upon to provide new insights into the moral and social problems of the day. In seeking their identity, women had to have the skill of meshing personal and public concerns. There were the age-old questions of love and sex, marriage and motherhood plus her decisions concerning a sense of involvement in the development of communities on the frontier.

All the elements of woman's life had to be created. Her home had to be built, and settled community life had to be established. She often suffered from the laxity of the marriage bond through a foot-loose husband or lover, and she endured everything from savage feuds bred in drinking bouts to shiftlessness of man who could and did live much as an animal, taking little permanent interest in his children or their mother.⁷

The woman of the Midwest did become involved. She supported missionaries who came into the wilderness to preach against drink and fornication. She also strived for a stable marriage and became actively involved in the campaign for literacy, mainly to enable her husband to read the Bible in the hope that this spiritual aid would encourage his sobriety and fidelity. She was a part of a vanguard whose behavior and attitudes were intrinsically important to those around her. She was, at times, both

⁷Ibid., p. 16.

self-sacrificing and self-assertive. This was a time of trying out new ways of defining what it was to be feminine.⁸

Twain's own mother was such a feminist. When Tom Sawyer's Aunt Polly undertook the civilizing of Huckleberry Finn, Twain may have had his own experience in mind. He certainly created an effective symbol of a Mississippi Valley boy who was in need of civilizing. If he did have his own experience in mind, it is very likely that Aunt Polly could have been in real life Twain's own mother. Jane Lampton Clemens was a pioneer woman who in earlier years had been a bold horsewoman, cross-country party-goer, and vivacious dancer.⁹

Although Jane Clemens was a forceful personality, she exerted more influence in directing her son's life towards a regard for the plight of others than towards the drive to success. Much of Twain's passionate humanitarianism came from his mother, and with her began his lifelong attitude of reverence towards the women in his life. Because of her guidance in his formative years, he was greatly influenced in reaching the conclusion that woman's greatest contribution was the making of her home a place where one learns the principles of humanity. He once said, "It is at our mother's knee that we acquire our highest and noblest and purest ideals."¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 17.

⁹Dixon Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1952), p. 176.

¹⁰Kaplan, op. cit., p. 3.

While dictating his autobiography, Twain recalled his mother's great compassion for any poor creature in distress. On one occasion, while living in Hannibal, she rebuked cartmen who were beating their horses. She refused to trap rats or kill fleas, and adopted waifs and strays on sight. Tradition has it that on another occasion in Hannibal she defied a Corsican (actually a Pole named Pavey), who was chasing his daughter with the intention of whipping her. She prevented the whipping, and the man went away admiring Mrs. Clemens because she was not afraid of him.¹¹

Twain also recalls in his autobiography that his mother, who was descended from the English Lambtons which claimed several Earls of Durham, never let her aristocratic background overcome her love for mankind. Twain states:

My mother with her liberal sympathies was not intended for an aristocrat, yet through her breeding she was one. However, I can say this for my mother, I never heard her refer in any way to her gilded ancestry when any person not a member of the family was present, for she had good American sense.¹²

It may seem strange to those who read of Jane Clemens to learn that she was not anti-slavery. Her son explains it in this way:

We lived in a slaveholding community; indeed when slavery perished, my mother had been in daily touch with it for sixty years. Yet, kind-hearted and compassionate as she was, I think she was not conscious that slavery was a bald, grotesque, and unwarrantable

¹¹Albert Bigelow Payne, (ed.), Mark Twain's Autobiography (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), Vol. I, p. 118.

¹²Ibid., p. 120.

usurpation. She had never heard it assailed in any pulpit, but had heard it defended and sanctified in a thousand; her ears were familiar with Bible texts that approved it, but if there were any that disapproved if they had not been quoted by her pastors; as far as her experience went, the wise and the good and the holy were unanimous in the conviction that slavery was right, righteous, sacred, the peculiar pet of the Deity, and a condition which the slave himself ought to be daily and nightly thankful for. Manifestly, training and association can accomplish strange miracles. As a rule, our slaves were convinced and content. So, doubtless, are the far more intelligent slaves of a monarchy; they revere and approve their masters, the monarch and the noble, and recognize no degradation in the fact that they are slaves.¹³

The very fact that there was a great deal of affection between Twain and his mother refutes the suggestion made by Twain biographer Van Wyck Brooks that Jane Clemens forced upon her son a life of respectability and conformity. It simply was not in her personality to do so. The evidence is in their relationship and in the manner in which Twain recalls his mother's kindness and understanding in his autobiography.

Certainly a shrewish mother could not have influenced Twain to have the great understanding he exhibited towards the women in his life. His views on feminism were being formulated under the influence of his mother during his early years only to be polished and refined in later years under the influence of his wife.

But Van Wyck Brooks' accusation cannot be taken lightly. His harsh judgment of Jane Clemens centers around a time in

¹³Ibid., p. 123.

Twain's life when he was going through quite a transition. Twain's father died in the spring of 1847. Brooks suggests that Jane Clemens used her husband's death to discipline and reform her mischievous son to remind him to become such a man as his father would have approved of, and to recover the lost gentility of a family that had once been proud.

Brooks gives as evidence a scene from melodrama that Twain fifty-nine years after the event recalled as he dictated to his official biographer, Albert Paine. The recollection endows Jane Clemens with dramatic technique and the oath Twain took at his father's coffin to be a good boy suggests the imagination of Tom Sawyer, part fact and part fantasy. Brooks suggests that Jane Clemens had a great desire to see her son develop into a respectable young man and that she pushed him into an apprenticeship at an early age thus making him a victim of American materialism and settling on him a lifelong frustration in which he was torn between non-conformity and respectability.¹⁴

Losing his father one year and becoming an apprentice the next were traumatic experiences for Twain, but the latter he greatly welcomed. He had been badgering his mother to allow him to leave school. On one occasion, as Twain recalled in an article published in Harper's Bazaar in February, 1910, he

¹⁴Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain At Work (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1967), pp. 82-83.

deliberately exposed himself to a severe case of measles in order to be dismissed from school. So, when Jane Clemens allowed her son to be apprenticed to Joseph P. Ament, owner of a printing shop in Hannibal and editor of the Missouri Courier, a weekly newspaper, she probably was merely tired of keeping her son out of mischief and felt she was placing him in more masterful hands than hers.

Twain probably recalled the accurate version in March, 1909, when he simply stated that he was taken from school at his father's death and placed in the office of the Missouri Courier as a printer's apprentice with no remuneration other than board and clothes by a mother who had no ulterior motive in mind.¹⁵

In the gap between Twain's mother and his wife there were other feminine influences. There were his first girl friends, met during his apprenticeship in Hannibal. He serenaded some of the local maidens and wrote to them. One girl was "Miss Katie" of Hannibal to whom he wrote "Love Concealed." Another sweetheart was "Bettie W." of Tennessee to whom he wrote "The Heart's Lament." But with a special older girl, the adolescent Twain was tongue-tied as he recalls in his autobiography:

Her name was Mary Wilson, (pseudonym), and she was one of the prettiest and dearest girls in the village. She was twenty years old; she was dainty and sweet; peach-blooming and exquisite, gracious and lovely in character. I stood in awe of her, for she seemed to be made out of angel clay and rightfully

¹⁵Ibid., p. 84.

unapproachable by just any unholy ordinary kind of boy like me."¹⁶

Although women such as Mary Wilson who were cast in the romantic mould appealed to Twain, he did not like polite arts and graces carried to the extreme. As a Midwesterner he did not like pretentious women, and perhaps the reason can be found by looking at the Midwestern ladies who were allowing themselves, on many occasions, to be transformed into hothouse flowers. Such women made themselves vulnerable to satire as is evident in an article Twain enjoyed reading in the Palmyra (Missouri) Whig concerning a New Orleans lady who was so fastidious that she would not change her dress before a lithographic likeness of General Jackson.¹⁷

Years later Twain wrote in his autobiography of a woman whom he felt epitomized pretentiousness. The lady was Mrs. John Hay whose husband had been a powerful Secretary of State. Twain, on one occasion in the Hay home, witnessed a scene when the pompous Mrs. Hay with all the force of her personality completely overwhelmed her husband with just one look.¹⁸

Twain also disliked the pretentiousness of some women lecturers on the lecture circuit who became celebrities because of a manufactured notoriety. One of the ladies was Miss Kate

¹⁶Paine, op. cit., p. 129.

¹⁷Wecter, op. cit., p. 178.

¹⁸Paine, op. cit., p. 144.

Field who became a celebrity in 1867 because she was one of the first who hit upon the idea of telegraphing to a newspaper her letter of praise for Charles Dickens who was touring America at the time. Another lady Twain found fault with was Mrs. Olive Logan who rose to fame because of the notoriety given to her by her husband who was a journalist.¹⁹

Thus, it can be understood that Twain, who was so intolerant of sham and pretentiousness in the opposite sex, was happily aware that the women in his own family did not possess these traits. He was particularly proud of his mother who possessed great sincerity and warmth and who always received letters from him wherever he traveled. (He left Hannibal at the age of eighteen to make his way in the world.) Twain recalls in his autobiography his joy in sharing with her his travels as he moved about from city to city and from country to country:

The greatest difference which I find between her and the rest of the people whom I have known is this, and it is a remarkable one: those others felt a strong interest in a few things, whereas to the very day of her death, she felt a strong interest in the whole world and everything and everybody in it. In all her life, she never knew such a thing as half-hearted interest in affairs and people, or an interest which drew a line and left out certain affairs and was indifferent to certain people I am certain that it was this feature of my mother's make-up that carried her so far toward ninety.²⁰

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 157-158.

²⁰Ibid., p. 116.

It is quite evident, then, during this period in Twain's life what he thought of females who stepped out of their traditional role. Two women whom he felt were models of femininity were his mother and his sister. He also sought out matronly sanction from other women. One of these was Mary Mason Fairbanks of Cleveland, Ohio, whom Twain met on the excursion boat Quaker City while traveling as a special correspondent for the Alta California to Europe and the Holy Land.

On that five-month voyage during the summer and fall of 1867, Twain and Mrs. Fairbanks became good friends. The relationship was so meaningful to Twain that he requested that she act as a critic of the travel commentaries he was sending back to the Alta California. Mrs. Fairbanks found a fair amount unacceptable, and whole sheaves of manuscript were torn up and thrown into the water. Mrs. Fairbanks was well qualified as a critic, for her credentials included a stint as a reporter for the Cleveland Herald as well as partial ownership (along with her husband) and management of the paper.²¹

While on the trip, Mrs. Fairbanks achieved the status of "Mother" Fairbanks and remained Twain's confidant for many years. Not only would her knowledge of the newspaper business be helpful to him, but as his mentor and copyreader during their

²¹Ibid., p. 200.

twenty-year correspondence, she refined and polished his skills as a letter writer; something which would be quite useful to Twain during his courtship days.²²

It is significant that Twain's courtship involved the sister of a man he had met on the Quaker City. The girl he was to pursue so avidly was Olivia Langdon of Elmira, New York. Twain was to recall years later that he fell in love with a porcelain miniature of Olivia which was in her brother's stateroom aboard the Quaker City. The date was September 6, 1867, and the boat was docked at Smyrna Harbor.²³

Twain was looking for characteristics of refinement in his mate, and in Olivia he found them. When he met Olivia in December, 1867, he was captivated by her beauty and charm. Their correspondence reveals the growing affection between the two. He had to be cautious and proper in their correspondence, for Olivia was a Victorian lady in every sense of the word. She was completely of her generation in the neurasthenia that affected her throughout her life, driving her into repeated "collapses".

Neurasthenia seems to have been over wide areas, a concomitant of gentility. But it was the look of an ethereal quality, partially due to her ill-health, that appealed to Mark Twain when he first saw her. He was positive that Olivia Langdon was the ideal woman with her beauty of mind, soul, and body. Twain

²²Ibid., p. 201.

²³Ibid., p. 203.

venerated women and their purity, and when he met Olivia, he fulfilled his desire to find the ideal woman to place on a pedestal and worship. His personal makeup and the conventions of gentility surrounding the kind of success he aspired to joined to suppress the recognition of sex as a key motive in human actions, leaving woman, not as an object of desire but of reverential chivalry, a characteristic which would prevent Twain from dealing adequately with the sex theme in his writings.²⁴

So, as their correspondence began, Twain was not overly disturbed that they wrote in terms of friendship--in brotherly-sisterly fashion. Instead, he, who was so enamoured with her, patiently obeyed her rules of propriety and with tongue-in-cheek he wrote to her, all the while understanding her sensitive, solicitious nature and sharing with her his deep respect for her integrity and intuitive wisdom.²⁵

Thus, with Olivia began Twain's years of concern and tenderness for one woman and for women in general. Gone were the satiric jibes at the stock character who stepped out of the traditional role. Twain's concept of feminism was mellowing. He was to become more tolerant toward the plight of women because of his love for Olivia. He kept the image of the cherished

²⁴DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 132.

²⁵Dixon Wecter (ed.), The Love Letters of Mark Twain (New York: Harpers, 1949), p. 132.

and respected mother figure in his heart but now added to it was the adoration of his heart's desire.

He complimented Olivia by sharing with her his innermost thoughts. She was serious but was developing a sense of fun as he teased her by addressing her as "My dear little Gravity." She was literal-minded, and he liked to shock her. He became her comrade and protector and the symbol of youth, the nickname she gave him. She came to worship his wit and creative genius, and he elevated her to the position of supervisor-in-chief of his regeneration, telling her she was the master and conqueror of all his moods.²⁶

Twain fell in love with the girl who satisfied his deepest aspirations, but he was to give her as much as he received; for his vitality rescued her from the depths of timorous living. When Twain's and Olivia's engagement was announced by her father in Elmira, New York, in February, 1869, Twain wrote his good friend Joseph Twichell, pastor of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, that he had "fought the good fight and have won."²⁷

With the marriage in January, 1870, began the years in which Twain's views on feminism were polished and refined. Twain was surrounded by females in his home in Hartford. Olivia

²⁶Ibid., pp. 133-134.

²⁷Ferguson, op. cit., p. 128.

presented him with three daughters. He adored all three but especially the oldest Susan, whom he nicknamed Susy. To Twain his daughter was the personification of good. He even wrote a book about her purity only seemingly the book was about another young girl of a different age, Joan of Arc.²⁸

Twain's way of thinking about Suzy was a throwback to earlier thinking--of the young man of the Midwest revering and placing on a pedestal the women in his life. Susy, along with her mother and sisters was appointed an overseer of her father's behavior, and there are countless anecdotes about how Olivia, Susy, Clara, and Jean "dusted off Papa" after he had committed this or that social blunder. Twain's response to surveillance was that of a boy who enjoyed being scolded.

It was evident that Susy was her father's favorite daughter. He had said she was a feminine version of himself--intense, careless of time, and money, not industrious except in the things in which she was gifted; living on the heights most of the time but occasionally plunging into the depths.²⁹

Twain lost his daughter when she was twenty-one, and there were years of grief when he remembered over and over again that day in the early fall of 1896 when he heard of her death. The year preceding her death had already been unbearable due to

²⁸Mark Andrews, Nook Farm, Mark Twain's Hartford Circle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 134.

²⁹Ferguson, op. cit., p. 270.

speculative misjudgements, and when his round-the-world lecture tour to honor these debts kept him from his daughter's side at the time of her death, he became even more grief-stricken. So, he wrote of her, and this eased some of the pain. One result of this outpouring of writing was Mark Twain's Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc.³⁰

In writing of Joan of Arc, Mark Twain reveals his compassion for the virtuous woman and the social justice due her. He felt great empathy for Joan and believed his book about her was his best. He loved her unselfishness, the innocence of her youth, and her virtues of honesty, dignity, modesty, and humanity. He pictured Joan, girlishly fair and sweet and saintly in her long, white robe, on her way to her execution, and he cried over the shame of it all. He told of her heart that "knew nothing but forgiveness, nothing but pity for all that suffer--let their offense be what it might."³¹ When Twain wrote of Joan the pure and beautiful girl being put to death under the forms of law by a pack of sadistic persecutors, he most likely had Susy in mind.

Mark Twain's Joan of Arc also testified to woman's intelligence and her ability to take a role in top-level matters. Without desexing herself, his Joan also testified dramatically that persistence and even courage exist outside the male frame.

³⁰Ibid., p. 271

³¹Mark Twain, Mark Twain's Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc (New York: Harper and Row, 1924), p. 275.

Appropriately, Twain was later made an honorary member of the Joan of Arc Suffrage League which felt it could genuinely recommend his book because in it the League felt Twain was revealing his belief that the sacred cause of progress demanded equality for the American woman.³²

This interest in female suffrage is a good indication of Mark Twain's compassion for women and their striving to find a more important function in society. The mature Mark Twain was definitely a feminist sympathizer. This was not always so, and it is noteworthy that his early views on female suffrage were visibly changed as a result of his mother's and Olivia's influence--a combination of Midwestern humanism and Eastern bourgeoisie sophistication.

In viewing Twain's opinions on female suffrage when he was a young man, it is evident that he ridiculed any woman who tried to achieve the right to vote. As early as 1865, Twain submitted one of his astute observations on the issue in a "letter to the editor" of the St. Louis Dispatch. There was an astringent kind of humor in his article when he suggested that if the Missouri ladies obtained the right to vote, they would next be campaigning for the office of "state milliner" while leaving their husbands at home to care for their neglected children.³³

³²Louis J. Budd, op. cit., p. 164.

³³Kaplan, op. cit., p. 30.

Twain may very well have written the article to churn out salable copy. He had written an article in the Sacramento Alta California stating that the prospect of woman's suffrage made it "time for all good men to tremble for their country."³⁴ Both in California and Missouri or wherever females stepped out of their traditional role, they were asking to be satirized as far as Twain was concerned. But the Missouri ladies, not realizing Twain's sense of fun, took him seriously, and one irate female who responded anonymously as "Cousin Jenny" accused him and men in general of blindly holding on to selfish prerogatives concerning female suffrage.

This attack prompted Twain to a response in which he promised to speak with the seriousness the occasion demanded. In another letter to the St. Louis Dispatch, he soberly and meekly conceded at once that capable women could do better in many public posts which were held by incompetent men. Twain also conceded that an educated American woman would vote with fifty times the judgment and independence exercised by stupid, illiterate newcomers from foreign lands.

Twain went on to predict that while the "good" women would second the wise males, the "ignorant" foreign women would vote with the "ignorant" foreign men, and so the same level of candidates would win as before the suffragist movement. Not very logically,

³⁴Ibid., p. 31.

he next shifted to arguing that since the "best and wisest" women would always cling to the holy ground of the home, then the ballot would have no result except degrading them "to a level of negroes and men."³⁵

This wild stab at wit having broken his promise to talk seriously, Twain roared on to visions of women who would hide their right age at the polls or pass anti-saloon and even anti-cigar laws. Then he closed:

Content yourself with your little feminine trifles-- your babies, your benevolent societies, and your knitting-- and let your natural bosses do the voting. We will let you teach school as much as you want to, and we will pay you half wages for it, too, but beware! We don't want you to crowd us too much.³⁶

The next date of importance for Mark Twain's involvement with female suffrage was the fall of 1872. In a letter he wrote Olivia from London, he discussed a neighbor of theirs in Hartford, Mrs. Isabella Hooker, whose cause for woman's suffrage Twain had financially supported. Mrs. Hooker was becoming one of the leading feminists of the day and in 1869, had been much responsible for the first women's rights convention in American history. The group met in Hartford and organized the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association which called for a fundamental broadening of equality for women.

³⁵Ibid., p. 32.

³⁶Ibid., p. 33.

Mrs. Hooker's interest in women's rights had become aroused when, on one occasion, she discovered that her lawyer-husband agreed with Blackstone's suspension of legal existence of women. She then read John Stuart Mill's Liberty and the Subjection of Women. After this, she was determined to crusade for women's rights and became involved with women's rights advocates Anna Dickinson, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.³⁷

But when Twain wrote the letter late in 1872, he was angry with Mrs. Hooker, whom he felt had acted scandalously in openly accusing her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, of adultery. He also told Olivia that he felt Mrs. Hooker had stepped out of bounds in that "(She) has been blandly pulling down the temple of Woman's Emancipation and shying the bricks at the builders by moving sublimely among the conventions and congresses of the sex a very Spirit of Calamity; and whatsoever principle she breathed upon oratorically, perished; and whatsoever convert she took by the hand, soon left her."³⁸

But because he was disillusioned with one feminist, his interest in the cause of female suffrage did not wane. The very next year in his essay on "The Temperance Crusade and Women's Rights," he argued that it was unreasonable to keep educated ladies

³⁷Caroline Thomas Harnsberger, Mark Twain: Family Man (New York: Citadel Press, 1960), p. 100.

³⁸Ibid., p. 101.

from voting "while every ignorant whiskey-drinking foreign-born savage in the land may hold office and help to make the laws which degrade the dignity of the former and break the latter at his own sweet will."³⁹ Twain, at the same time, openly recommended that women be admitted to state universities.

By 1875, Twain felt he was a "woman's rights" man. In that year, he delivered a paper to the Hartford Monday Evening Club in which he stated: "All we require of a voter is that he shall wear pantaloons instead of petticoats. We brag about our universal unrestricted suffrage, but we are shams after all, for we are restrictive when we come to women."⁴⁰

By 1891, Twain cared enough to work on an essay that looked into how male chauvinism is handed on, and with a typical surprise, charged that most mothers (but not his own) unknowingly teach their sons to "despise" women as passive-minded and impractical. He went on to argue that the sacred cause of progress demanded equality for the American woman who was revered but who should also be respected. Then, of course, his book on Joan of Arc in 1896 highlighted his concern for the plight of women in society.⁴¹

³⁹Andrews, op. cit., p. 150.

⁴⁰Janet Smith, (ed.), Mark Twain and the Damned Human Race (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), p. 238.

⁴¹Budd, op. cit., p. 164.

The year 1896 was important for another reason. With the death of her daughter that year, Twain's Olivia began to decline into the invalidism that was to last through the remaining eight years of her life. The grief this brought him added to the grief over Susy almost completely destroyed Mark Twain. He recalled all the heartaches he had caused Olivia by his unconventional behavior and also remembered her patience with him and love for him in letting him do what he wished.

When he wrote of Olivia shortly after her death, it was an epitaph of his own loss as well as the greatest evidence of his understanding of the feminine mind, "Wherever she was, there was Eden."⁴²

⁴²Wecter, op. cit., Letters, p. 4.

CHAPTER II

MARK TWAIN'S VIEWS ON RELIGION

Religion in the last third of the nineteenth century was characterized by an unrest brought about by a challenge to traditional religious thought. The impact of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species with its evolutionary concepts was felt keenly in religious circles. In this time of questioning, some turned to their churches asking why the church had not done more for the social ills of mankind. Had the churches failed to deal with social and economic problems? Some felt religious institutions had not dealt effectively with such human problems as labor relations, poverty, war, minority rights, political corruption, as well as other practical matters.

As an outgrowth of this new concern over what direction religion should take, a new religious commitment called the social gospel evolved. This socialized religion was a kind of secular social-mindedness. Among those representing this religion of humanity were Robert Ingersoll and Thomas Huxley. Ingersoll represented an extremely liberal view with his belief in science and his reliance on the power of man rather than on God. Most intellectuals

did not completely reject religion, but instead attempted to accomodate science and religion.¹

An increasing number of ministers forsook religious fundamentalism with its emphasis on personal salvation and adopted instead a liberal, humanistic kind of gospel which found no conflict with evolutionism since the latter, they felt, represented the working out of God's plan for mankind. One of the most liberal theologians who forsook religious fundamentalism was Henry Ward Beecher, minister to an upper-class congregation in Brooklyn and one of the most popular clergymen and lecturers among churchmen. He was concerned with the social and ethical implications of Christianity. This was a lively and sometimes highly emotional conflict that emerged between science and religion. But even though traditional religion was being challenged by humanism and science, most churchmen still preferred fundamentalism, supernaturalism, and a personal kind of salvation.²

Mark Twain allied himself in thought with Ingersoll and Beecher for this religion. Twain's religion had to do chiefly with humanity in its present incarnation and concerned itself very little with any possible measure of reward or punishment in the hereafter. He reacted with compassion to individuals. His humanitarian viewpoints and religious opinions were grounded in his tenderness for

¹Paul Allen Carter, The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 158.

²Ibid., p. 159.

humanity. However loudly he might damn the human race, he always felt it was worth saving. Most likely the religious liberalism of his mature years was based on his profound concern for truth, justice, and human happiness. This much was in contrast to the Calvinistic theology of his early years which he, with his sensitive conscience, believed damned a person to a life of guilt and fear imposed on one by a cruel God.

So, from the first, Mark Twain needed a release from the oppressive and crippling guilt feelings that characterized his personality from its earliest days. He needed an antidote to what he felt was the senselessly unjust Sunday School doctrine of his childhood which always stood behind his mature philosophical pronouncements.³

It is important to look first at Calvinistic Hannibal and view the beginnings of Twain's religious experience. His religion slowly through his own experience and through the influence of certain relatives and friends changed from a belief in a supernatural religion to his religion of humanity.

Twain's religious philosophy during his formative years in which he had a very vivid image of a Calvinistic God can best be viewed through his recollections of his Hannibal days. During those childhood days while he was being indoctrinated in the foundations of Calvinistic determinism, Twain developed a dread of Hell. The

³DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 270.

Presbyterian minister's fire and brimstone oratory impressed his sensitive conscience. He stated in his autobiography that his trained Presbyterian conscience caused him to be concerned over a drunken tramp who burned to death in jail after having used matches given to him by Twain. Twain compares this with the remorse he felt years later when his brother, Henry, died as a result of an explosion on board a steamboat. It was Twain who had arranged for Henry to get a job on the steamboat Pennsylvania that year of 1859. Twain also felt the same guilt feelings when his only son, Langdon, died in 1872. He felt he was responsible for the death since he kept the boy out in the cold too long.⁴

There were other times in which Twain's belief in a vengeful God left a strong imprint on his mind. In his autobiography he spoke of deaths in the community which stirred his Calvinistic conscience filled with guilt and fear:

My teaching and training enabled me to see deeper into these tragedies than an ignorant person could have done. These were inventions of Providence to beguile me to a better life. It sounds curiously innocent and conceited now, but to me there was nothing strange about it; it was quite in accordance with the thoughtful judicious ways of Providence as I understood them. It would not have surprised me nor overflattered

⁴Albert Bigelow Paine, op. cit., pp. 131-132.

me if Providence had killed off that whole community in trying to save an asset like me. Why Providence should take such an anxious interest in such a property, that idea never entered my head, and there was no one in that simple hamlet who would have dreamed of putting it there. For one thing, no one was equipped with it. My repentances were very real, very earnest; and after each tragedy, they happened every night for a long time. But as a rule they could not stand the daylight. They faded out and shredded away and disappeared in the glad splendor of the sun. I believe that for months I was as pure as the driven snow--after dark.⁵

An excellent example of Twain's idea of the white supremacist, Protestant ethic being taught in Sunday School in Hannibal can be seen in his masterpiece, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884). Twain's humanitarian viewpoints are presented with simple warmth in the person and situation of the runaway slave, Jim. When Huck Finn is caught in a dilemma over what to do about Jim, he is torn between following the religious thought that he knows is taught in Church and Sunday School or following his own feelings toward Jim.

He mulls the problem over in his mind:

I began to get it through my head that he was most free--and who was to blame for it? Why, me. I couldn't get that out of my conscience, no how nor no way. It got to troubling me so I couldn't rest; I couldn't stay still in one place. It hadn't ever come home to me before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did; and it stayed with me, and scorched me more and more. I tried to make out to myself that I warn't to blame, because I didn't run Jim off from his rightful owner, Miss Watson; but it warn't no use. Conscience

⁵ Ibid., pp. 133-134.

up and says every time, 'But you knowed he was running for his freedom, and you could have paddled ashore and told somebody.' That was so-- I couldn't get around that no way. That was where it pinched.⁶

Huck's anguish over what to do about Jim continued as their adventures unfolded. If he helped Jim escape, he would be doing something regarded as wicked, but if he betrayed him, he would be betraying a human being--for Huck had learned that Jim was a human being and not a "nigger". Huck had prayed about the situation with Jim, and he had even written a letter to Miss Watson telling her where Jim was. But he tore it up. This symbolized Huck's allegiance to Jim. Huck's dilemma was solved, for he said, "All right, then, I'll go to hell."⁷

So Huck rejected the conventional feelings of Hannibal, those same feelings Twain had been exposed to in his youth. Even though Huck had started by acting as he thought the respectable and religious would in Hannibal, he rejected these prejudices in the end. In Huck's decision, we see Twain's portrayal of an individual's transcending the received Christian ethic of an ante-bellum slaveholding society to a higher commitment, the religion of humanity.⁸

⁶Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (New York: Airmont Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 83-84.

⁷Ibid., p. 189.

⁸Ferguson, op. cit., p. 271.

During his formative years in Hannibal, it is important to note the influence of Twain's family who led him away from his Calvinism. Even though Twain heard of a vengeful God in church, his home life was not so strongly Calvinistic. His mother regularly attended church as well as camp meetings, but she was gentle and kind. Twain spoke of her in his autobiography that "even as Presbyterian as she was, she could be beguiled into saying a soft word for the devil himself."⁹

Twain's father was not a churchgoer. He was a free-thinker who would not discuss religious matters or participate in family religious exercises but who scrupulously observed a personal integrity that Mark Twain took over intact. Twain's uncle, John Quarles, on whose farm Twain spent many delightful childhood summers, was a Universalist who denied the exclusiveness of the Elect and insisted that all will be saved. He often discussed his philosophy with his nephew.¹⁰

The literalness of Twain's childhood religious training began to wane when he left Hannibal to wander. As Twain began his wanderings in 1853, he also began his own independent research into religion. He had read the Bible but could not use the Old Testament God in his own world. Calvinism did not square with his developing tolerance for humanity and was not necessary to the

⁹Paine, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 118.

observance of ethical standards and equable social justice. For a while he had no need to formulate a philosophy. He had no need to justify himself; so, no formal break with the church was made.

But three years later Twain's famous deterministic pessimism, which became so integrally associated with him and to which he held more and more as he aged, became his credo. It is interesting to note how he encountered and embraced the ideas embodied in determinism. First of all, he read many books and articles in the field of religious philosophy while in print shops. He read the works of Thomas Paine who was atheistic. At the other extreme, he read The Necessity of Commitment by Jonathan Edwards, the religious leader of the Great Awakening.

But his systematic reading was not nearly so important as his contacts with individuals who had definite views on religion. His father and uncle have already been mentioned as relatives who helped influence him away from Calvinism. There was another influence, and this one was a friend, a Scot named MacFarlane.¹¹

Twain met MacFarlane at the age of twenty on the eve of his entry into the river pilot's trade. He recalled the encounter years later in his autobiography. Twain had forgotten the man's first name but remembered that they met in January, 1856. They lived at a boarding house in Cincinnati, and Twain spent the

¹¹Mark Andrews, Nook Farm, Mark Twain's Hartford Circle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 67.

evenings by a wood fire in MacFarlane's room listening to this homespun philosopher expound his gospel of scientific determinism, a mechanistic evolutionary theory. According to MacFarlane, the whole glorious process of evolution eventuated in man, a mean and dirty creature whose reason only enabled him to be more base than the subsidiary creatures who preceded him. Twain emphasizes in his autobiography that the difference between MacFarlane's view of man and Darwin's view of man was that MacFarlane felt perfection was not reached in man, instead "man's heart was the only bad heart in the animal kingdom; for it was capable of feeling malice, envy, and vindictiveness."¹²

Thus, MacFarlane's pre-Darwinian evolutionary theory, a theory that was superceded by Darwin fifteen years later, became Twain's own theory with some adaptations. Twain's theory was that the tiniest of seemingly inconsequential occurrences was determined by an inescapable chain of causes leading back to the first energies of the primal atom. Twain felt this deeply, and he illuminated his conviction by vivid description and elaboration. He was equally firm in his defense of a crude kind of psychological determinism based on the assumption that no one has ever held any original idea that did not come to him from some environmental source.¹³

¹²Paine, op. cit., p. 146.

¹³Frank Baldanza, Mark Twain, An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 18.

Later, Twain read Darwin, (perhaps after hearing that Darwin read Twain!), and this undoubtedly confirmed many of these beliefs. The determinism is maintained with the kind of tenacity and profundity that may indicate that the belief is a psychic necessity. There is little doubt that Twain's highly sensitive conscience demanded this release from responsibility and his renunciation of reward. Punishment would conveniently lead to a renunciation of personal accountability. However, in moments of grief, when he heaped recriminatory coals on his own head for the death of Henry or Langdon, he did not invoke this determinism.

Perhaps the bridge between the guilt and the determinism is, mentally, simply a matter of imagery. Clemens delighted in Swift's habit of magnifying the tiny or shrinking the immense. This was one of the distinct pleasures Twain drew from astronomy. He repeatedly sees our world or mankind as microbes in the body of a huge deity. One of the most extravagant of his unfinished fantasies, is an elaboration of this idea called "Three Thousand Years Among the Microbes." When he saw himself as guilty of enormous crimes, he was magnifying his importance in the scheme of things. And when he minimized human scale, he found the solace of not counting, of being an infinitesimal blob in a huge liquid process that went immutably on despite whatever he thought or did.¹⁴

¹⁴Ibid., p. 19.

During Twain's early pilot days on the river from the years 1856 through 1860, his credo seemed to be a compound of eighteenth century deism and rationalism. This religious skepticism was due to his use of reason to arrive at knowledge. He used his sense of reasoning in his criticism of the scriptures and in his belief in natural laws. The significance of science led him to believe natural laws determine man's life.

Twain had removed the superstructure of Revelation and Grace when he left Hannibal and had next erected a scientific determinism based partly on Irish historian W. E. H. Lecky's History of European Morals, partly on his own interpretation of nineteenth century science, and mainly based on MacFarlane's ideas.

By the age of twenty-five, Twain had rejected the faith of his youth, for on March 18, 1860, he wrote to his brother, Orion, "What a man wants with religion in these breadless times surpasses my comprehension."¹⁵ This is a good quotation to show Twain's early dissatisfaction with what he felt was the church's unconcern for the physical needs of humanity.

He wrote this letter to his brother while on the river. Within two years, the two of them would be off to the West. While in the West, he began a habit he would continue the rest of his life. Wherever he went, Twain systematically made friends of ministers.

¹⁵ Andrews, op. cit., p. 68.

Perhaps Twain was searching for a relationship with God through his friendships with members of the clergy or perhaps he enjoyed being with them because they were articulate and educated and were sympathetic to man's needs. It is difficult to say, but one clerical friend certainly made a lasting impression on him during his brief sojourn in the West. The minister was the Rev. Franklin Rising, rector of the Episcopal Church in Virginia City, Nevada. He was one of the humanitarians so looked for by Twain. Years later, Twain, upon hearing of Rev. Rising's death, would recall those days in the early 1860's in the Washoe when Rev. Rising, realizing Twain's vague determinism, tried to bring him to God. Twain told his wife when he heard of the death that the glories of Heaven were about Rev. Rising, and that he felt a great loneliness at the loss of this friend.¹⁶

Other ministers whose acquaintance Twain enjoyed included Frank Walden, a friend from Hannibal days. He wrote Walden on March 14, 1870, complementing him on choosing the ministry as a profession. Twain wrote Walden that the ministry was "the highest dignity to which a man might aspire in this life."¹⁷

When Twain moved to Hartford in 1871, he enjoyed friendships with liberal clergymen of the Congregational Church including

¹⁶Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch, My Father, Mark Twain (New York: Harper Brothers, 1931), p. 251.

¹⁷Dixon Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1952), p. 23.

Rev. Nathaniel Judson, Rev. Edwin Pond Parker, and Rev. Horace Bushnell. Bushnell, who was one of the great preachers of the nineteenth century, believed in solving the problems of the universe by personal rather than institutional religion. Among those under Bushnell's tutelage was Rev. Joseph Twichell, a proponent of liberal Congregationalism and Mark Twain's pastor.¹⁸

Twain, a man of intense emotional ups and downs, brooded over immortality, and after leaving the Nevada Territory and journeying to San Francisco, he contemplated committing suicide. He was unable to leave the religious question alone and could not just formulate a philosophy and forget it. After he left the West to become a foreign correspondent, there is further evidence of a gradual development of hardness and cynicism.¹⁹

Looking further into Twain's religious beliefs during his years of independence, his time spent as a foreign correspondent revealed much of what he disliked about religion. In describing his journey in 1867 to Europe and the Holy Land in his second book, Innocents Abroad, Mark Twain revealed his disregard for the formal aspects of Christianity--the church, the shrines, the sacraments--as so much man-invented sham. He began his criticisms on board the Quaker City, the excursion boat, by describing Sundays aboard

¹⁸Andrews, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁹Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), p. 136.

the boat and the congregational singing at church as "awful choir music which would bring down a storm some day which would sink the ship."²⁰

Upon reaching the Azores, Twain attacked the Catholic Church by describing the typical Portuguese community where "Jesuit humbugery flourishes and where the good Catholic Portuguese crossed himself and prayed God to shield him from all blasphemous desire to know more than his father did before him."²¹ To Twain, the Catholic Church was thriving in an atmosphere of superstition and ignorance.

After observing the Portuguese peasants ignorantly worshipping the unauthentic relics which he called "gimcracks" inside the Jesuit cathedral, Twain was to be exposed to more sham as he continued to tour Europe. In France, he visited the Cathedral of Notre Dame with all its embellishments. He spoke of viewing "a wagon-load of solid gold and silver utensils used in the great public processions and ceremonies of the church."²²

In Genoa, the side-show Christianity was dispelled once again by Twain's common-sense observation. There in the old Cathedral of San Lorenzo Twain viewed what were said to be the ashes of St. John and also a chain which allegedly had confined him when he was in prison. Twain states:

²⁰Mark Twain, Innocents Abroad (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), Vol. I, p. 75.

²¹Ibid., p. 89.

²²Ibid., p. 179.

We did not desire to disbelieve these statements, and yet we could not feel certain that they were correct--partly because we could have broken that chain, and so could St. John, and partly because we had seen St. John's ashes before in another church. We could not bring ourselves to think St. John had two sets of ashes.²³

In Milan, Twain described the treasures of the Cathedral of Milan with its original relics which he had seen before. In Venice, he described the efforts of Venetians to bring St. Mark's body to that city--"that the body must be captured, brought to the city, and that a magnificent church be built over it had been an obsession; and that if ever the Venetians allowed the Saint to be removed from his new resting place, in that day Venice would perish from off the face of the earth."²⁴

In Florence, Twain noted the difference between the poverty of the peasants and the riches of the cathedrals. By this point, he was becoming more than openly derisive; he was becoming hostile. He spoke of a priest-ridden Italy which had groped in the midnight of priestly superstition for sixteen hundred years and of a bankrupt Italian government which allowed its starving peasants to beg outside the doors of its sumptuous churches with all the riches of marble, silk, and precious stones inside.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., pp. 234-291.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 327-328.

He went on:

Now where is the use of allowing all those riches to lie idle, while half of that community hardly know, from day to day, how they are going to keep body and soul together? And, where is the wisdom in permitting hundreds upon hundreds of millions of francs to be locked up in the useless trumpery of churches all over Italy, and the people ground to death with taxation to uphold a perishing government?

As far as I can see, Italy, for fifteen hundred years, has turned all her energies, all her finances, and all her industry to the building up of a vast array of wonderful church edifices, and starving half her citizens to accomplish it. She is today one vast museum of magnificence and misery. All the churches in an ordinary American city put together could hardly buy the jeweled frippery in one of her hundred cathedrals. And for every beggar in America, Italy can show a hundred--and rags and vermin to match. It is the wretchedest, princeliest land on earth.²⁶

Twain would again attack the Catholic Church years later in his books, Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1889), and Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc (1896). In Joan of Arc, Twain depicts the deterioration of the priesthood. He states:

For all Joan's reward, the French king whom she had crowned stood supine and indifferent while French priests took the noble child, the most innocent, the most lovely, the most adorable the ages have produced and burned her alive at the stake.²⁷

In another passage, he dealt with the abandonment of Joan when he stated:

²⁶Ibid., p. 329.

²⁷Mark Twain, Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc (New York: Harper and Row, 1924), p. 13.

Joan stood before the Bishop of Beauvais who made a speech to her which ought to have made even himself blush, so laden it was with hypocrisy and lies.²⁸

In Connecticut Yankee, Twain dealt with the Church's exploitation of the people. However, this time he was not dealing with Joan's fifteenth century Europe but instead with sixth century England. He stated:

The people of King Arthur's British nation were slaves who were in the world for one object and one only: to grovel--and all the thanks they got were cuffs and contempt. The hand of that awful power, the Roman Catholic Church had in two or three little centuries converted a nation of men to a nation of worms. Before the day of the Church's supremacy in the world, men were men and held their heads up, and had a man's pride and spirit and independence, and what of greatness and position a person got, he got mainly by achievement, not by birth.²⁹

Now it is important to look at Twain's religious philosophy during his courtship of Olivia Langdon and during the early years of their marriage. For a few brief years in the late 1860's and during the first half of 1870, Twain's life was similar to a fairy tale. His dominant mood was one of happy exhilaration. The reason for this brief release from his pessimism was Olivia Langdon. Twain wanted to identify with her and attempted to accept her Christianity as his.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 199.

²⁹ Mark Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1917), p. 63.

Her religion was not Calvinistic but one shaped by liberal theologian Thomas K. Beecher who was concerned with the social and ethical implications of Christianity. Olivia's religion was a progressive Christianity, a passive religion. In Elmira, New York, her Sunday School teacher at the Elmira Park Congregational Church was Mrs. Thomas K. Beecher, wife of the minister, and herself a proponent of her husband's liberal religious theories. Olivia was exposed to these unorthodox opinions which freed her thinking, and although she never lost her spiritual interests, her own unorthodox religious views freed her to fare well as the future wife of Mark Twain the skeptic.³⁰

Twain's religion during this time of courtship and early marriage revolved around a God of scientific law, impersonal but just. He had a conventional faith in individual immortality. Twain wrote to Olivia during their courtship that he felt the peace of God would rest upon the two of them, and all would be well. He consoled Olivia at the thought of her leaving home by using imagery of conventional religion in stating that he would try so hard to please her and "to walk as you did in the light and the love of God."³¹

³⁰Caroline Thomas Harnsberger, Mark Twain: Family Man (New York: Citadel Press, 1960), p. 54.

³¹Dixon Wecter (ed.), The Love Letters of Mark Twain (New York: Harpers, 1949), p. 231.

But this religious glow faded while Twain was in Buffalo. The exhilaration had ended by late 1870 amid minor disasters, including two deaths in the immediate family. Twain's official biographer, Albert Paine, states that Twain confessed his skepticism in an unpublished article written in Buffalo in late 1870 in which Twain characterized the God of the Bible as "irascible, vindictive, fierce, and ever fickle."³² He went on to state that he felt the True God steadfastly and impartially governed the universe, and if there were a future life, we would be honestly dealt with and should demand nothing else.

Religion during the Hartford years, 1871-1891, was of secondary importance to the Twain family. The family prayers and Bible readings instituted by Olivia on their marriage were now disregarded by Twain. They settled in a community, Nook Farm, where no one believed in the God of the Old Testament, but instead where all were rebels against the Calvinistic certainties of their childhood. They felt a Christian charity towards their fellow man, but there was no theology behind this feeling. They relied on their own convictions for the ultimate authority behind religion. There was a personal morality, and as long as this was kept intact, they felt the individual's right to determine his own relationship to God should be uncontested.

³²Andrews, op. cit., p. 68.

After looking at the intent of religion at Nook Farm, next it is interesting to look at some of its leading characters. Among them were Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin and a proponent of the religion of love. Her son, Charles, had been tried during the Civil War for the heresy in his approval of the doctrines of evolution. One neighbor, George Washington Cable, irritated Twain by piously observing the Sabbath while they were on a lecture tour together.³³

It is important to note the influence the religion of Nook Farm had on Mark Twain. He accepted the ethical ideals of Nook Farm and shared its religious uncertainty. He, like his neighbors, lived the religion of the Christian ethic. Twain rented a pew in Joseph Twichell's Asylum Hill Congregational Church to be a part of the community life. Rev. Twichell, Twain's friend, was like a father confessor who listened to Twain. Twain confided to Twichell in 1878 that he would never be a believer, that he did not believe in immortality, that he did not believe in a Supernatural Being, and that he felt prayer was superfluous. So, Twain like his neighbors, defended the Christian ethic while he repudiated Christianity. And he, like they, had lost the stabilizing influence of a tangible future life and the coherence of an earthly existence.³⁴

³³Ibid., pp. 71-75.

³⁴Ibid., p. 80.

But he did attend church and not only because he wished identify with the Nook Farm community. His good friend and neighbor William Dean Howells recalled that Twain also had another reason for attending church and that was to please Olivia:

In early days at Hartford, Twain was a constant attendant at the church of his great friend, Rev. Joseph Hopkins Twichell. He had hardly yet examined the grounds of the passive acceptance of his wife's belief; for it was hers not his, and he held it unscanned in the beautiful and tender loyalty to her which was the most moving quality of his most faithful soul.³⁵

In considering Twain's views on immortality, it is interesting to note that Twain had Huck Finn attack the conventional notion of Heaven. He had Huck say in reply to Miss Watson's admonition that he would not go to Heaven if he did not behave:

I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make trouble and wouldn't do no good. Now she had got a start, and she went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So, I didn't think much of it. I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that because I wanted him and me to be together.³⁶

Twain said he did not believe in immortality, but he contradicted himself. Psychic investigation always interested him. His interest in psychic phenomena stemmed from his early

³⁵William Dean Howells, "My Mark Twain," in Mark Twain, A Profile, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. 34.

³⁶Twain, Huckleberry Finn, p. 12.

days as a journalist. Also his wife had been raised from an invalid's bed as a girl by a traveling miracle worker.

Further proof that he was willing to explore and was even hoping that individuality continues beyond death is evident in the events immediately following his daughter Susy's death. Twain encouraged his wife to reach their daughter through a medium. This was while they were in Europe in 1897.

Earlier Twain had jotted down a few lines on spiritualists in his Notebook during the 1880's:

People abuse the spiritualists unsparingly, but I can remember when Methodist camp meetings and Campbellite revivals used to stock the asylums with religious lunatics. We don't cut up when mad men are bred by the old legitimate regular stock religions, but we can't allow wildcat religions to indulge in such disastrous experiments.³⁷

Twain entered many religious comments in his Notebook. During the 1880's, he told of a pitiful world, a useless universe, a violent and contemptible human race governed by a God who does not care. Twain made the comment that, "Religion consists of a set of things which the average man thinks he believes and wishes he was certain."³⁸

³⁷Caroline Thomas Harnsberger, Mark Twain At Your Fingertips (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1948), p. 167.

³⁸Ibid., p. 196.

Twain continued in this same manner:

If I were going to construct a God, I would furnish Him with some ways and qualities and characteristics which the present Bible lacks. He would not stoop to ask for any man's compliments, praises, flatteries; and He would be far above exacting them.

He would not be a merchant, a trader. He would not buy these things. He would not sell, or offer to sell, temporary benefits of the joys of eternity for the product called worship.

He would value no love but the love born of kindnesses conferred; not that born of benevolences contracted for. Repentance in a man's heart for a wrong done would cancel and annul that sin, and no verbal prayers for forgiveness be required or desired or expected of that man.

There would not be any hell--except the one we live in from the cradle to the grave. There would not be any Heaven--of the kind described in the world's Bibles.

God would spend some of His eternities in trying to forgive Himself for making man unhappy when He could have made him happy with the same effort, and He would spend the rest of them in studying astronomy.³⁹

The question arises as to why Mark Twain tormented himself with a pessimistic outlook during the days in which he should have had peace of mind. The answer, perhaps, lies partly in Twain's tendency to exaggerate the weight of his misfortunes. He was still the lost child who tormented himself with his Calvinistic conscience. He possessed an uncertain sense of proportion, a trait that permitted his determinism to unfold. He was, at times, unable to see things in their proper perspective, and perhaps this accounted for his

³⁹Ibid., p. 200.

later recurring sense of guilt over the misfortunes of his family. He was outraged by the smallest breach of ethical decency. Because of his extreme sensitivity, he exaggerated the inhumanity he saw in others and in himself.⁴⁰

Determinism helped Twain evade much of his self-blame. To say that something else or someone else was to blame helped exonerate him from his feelings of guilt, just as he blamed God for man's unhappiness in his Notebook.

He was searching for happiness, but he believed things do not happen by chance but are pre-ordained and that his tortured conscience never would allow inner control. Twain turned to mental healing in 1886 at the summit of his fame when he and his family were free from illnesses. Perhaps Twain thought therapeutics would be a soul cure or a mind cure. This interest in therapeutics took on a more practical aspect in 1899 when Twain's youngest daughter, Jean, had osteopathic treatments in Sauna, Sweden. Jean's doctor was Heinrick Kellgren, a Swedish faith healer whose healing method known as "Swedish Movements" seemed to Twain a wonderful cure for all ailments.⁴¹

Twain also had an interest in Christian Science and praised the placidity and calmness of mind that seemed to result from any acceptance of Christian Science tenets. But at one time he did have

⁴⁰Ferguson, op. cit., p. 211.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 212.

some uncomplimentary remarks about Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, its founder. A letter was written late in Twain's life, on August 7, 1909, to a friend, J. Wylie Smith, in which he stated:

My view has not changed. To wit, that Christian Science is valuable; that it has just the same value now that it had when Mrs. Eddy stole it from Quimby; that its healing principle (its most valuable asset) possesses the same force now that it possessed a million years before Quimby was born; that Mrs. Eddy--the fraud--organized that force and is entitled to high credit for that. Then with a splendid sagacity, she hitched it to the shirt-tail of religion, the surest of all ways to secure friends for it, and support.⁴²

At times for Twain, religion was a sub-category of his dislike of hypocrisy; for he stated in Connecticut Yankee:

This nation like all the others spewed upon the earth is ready to shout for any cause that will tickle its vanity or fill its pocket. What a hell of a Heaven it will be when they get all those hypocrites assembled there.⁴³

Twain attacked hypocrites, but his greatest attack was against himself. His exaggerated compassion brought doubts of his treatment of his immediate family. He felt he had harrassed Olivia and undercut her religious faith. When her daughters were small, she had enjoyed playing a role in their religious instruction, but as time passed, she became more and more indifferent to religious

⁴²Albert Begelow Paine, (ed.) Mark Twain's Letters (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1917), Vol. II, p. 833.

⁴³Twain, Connecticut Yankee, p. 142.

matters. During their stay in Hartford and afterwards, she worshiped her husband far more than she loved her God.

Twain's oldest daughter, Clara, told of his self-censuring letters based on the idea that some of his frankly expressed criticisms of her mother's religious faith might have caused her mental suffering sufficient to bring on her serious illness after Susy's death in 1896 until her own death in 1904. Twain made the statement: "I drove you (Olivia) to sorrow and heartbreak just to hear myself talk."⁴⁴

But there is no indication that Twain's family felt mistreated. Although Olivia was high-strung and nervous, she had enormous self-control. Her religious experience had always been a passive one and had not changed in this respect. The family spent happy hours at Quarry Farm, the Langdon estate outside Elmira, where Twain wrote pleasureably but aimlessly, making a great deal of money all the while. It was difficult for his family to remember that he was famous, and Clara felt it was because he possessed a reverent nature and a humble one.

Clara knew her father professed to have no faith in any orthodox religion. On one occasion she recalled:

A pathetic sort of old lady arrived who wished to pour out her adoration for Mark Twain and his works. Before leaving, she begged to kiss my

⁴⁴Gabrilowitsch, op. cit., p. 252.

father's hand in reverence. Quite seriously and sympathetically, he submitted to this trying compliment. At the door she said, 'How God must love you!'

'I hope so,' he said, but when the door had closed behind her, he added, with a wistful light in his eye, 'I guess she hasn't heard of our strained relations.'⁴⁵

Once when Clara observed her father observing icicles on branches, she wondered how his adoration of nature could coincide with his doubt of the existence of a creative God. She concluded that he, whose imagination delighted in the superhuman, must have been objecting to a smaller human conception of God.⁴⁶

The catastrophes of the 1890's which struck Twain and his family drove him to despair and bitterness. Some years before, he had established his own publishing firm to publish his books. The firm had been expanded in order to publish the memoirs of General Grant. But the over-extended business was mismanaged, and it faltered. The freezing of credit in the panic of 1893 had done more damage, and the firm had to go into a receivership. This drained Twain's fortune and his wife's as well. Always a speculator, Twain had poured a quarter of a million dollars into the Paige typesetting machine which failed altogether and carried Twain down with it, just at the time his publishing firm went bankrupt.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 259.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 144.

So, in 1895, at the age of fifty-nine, Twain started a round-the-world lecture tour to pay off his creditors, dollar-for-dollar. He was saddened by the recent discovery that his youngest daughter Jean's personality change was due to epilepsy. Medical science was almost helpless then against this disease. Also, Twain was ill with rheumatism and bronchitis. But this trip was for the sake of honor. He decided that Olivia and Clara would accompany him on this trip which proved to be profitable both financially and spiritually. For although Twain was at times physically and emotionally drained from his demanding schedule, he was delighted at the realization of the extent of his fame. He was honored in country after country by kings and common men alike. He even paused for a few hours while on tour in India to watch the Hindus worship. The pessimistic Twain, who for a moment was sentimental and wistful, told his daughter that he loved to see evidences of a belief in a higher life in others.⁴⁷

But tragedy struck the Twain family once again unexpectedly. While in London on the return trip, one year, one month, and one day after the family had left Elmira with Twain's favorite daughter, Susy, waving goodby, the family learned that Susy was seriously ill with meningitis. She died before the family could reach her.

With Susy's death began the overwhelming bitterness of Mark Twain. He had tried to be faithful to his ideals of nobility by

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 159.

honoring his debts, and as a reward for it, he and Olivia had lost their greatest treasure. He felt no charitable God could have done such a thing. While he consoled his wife with the thought that, in death, Susy had found the richest gift the world could offer, he could find no consolation for himself, and in the violence of his grief, he told his daughter, Clara, that the world was horrible and hellish.⁴⁸

Twain and Olivia could not return to the house at Hartford which held memories that were too heartbreaking. Instead, they secluded themselves in a house on Tedworth Square in London. The only religion during this last eight years of their marriage was in the realm of spiritualism. Olivia visited a palmist in London in order to try to reach Susy, but she found only frustration.

Twain began to voice his desolation. He hated God for punishing Olivia who was only going through the motions of living, and he began to write to ease his sorrow. He wrote of Joan of Arc in 1896. She was a heroine Twain worshipped. Joan reminded him of Susy, and he was moved to tears many times while writing the book. Also, while still thinking of Susy, it was necessary that he write a follow-up of his lecture tour. This he did in 1897 with Following the Equator, but it was a laborious task.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 177.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 178.

Twain wrote and wrote compulsively as is revealed in two letters he wrote to his friend William Dean Howells. In one letter he said, "I bury myself in work up to the ears, long hours--eight and nine at a stretch sometimes."⁵⁰ Twain revealed in another letter to Howells that besides the sadness over Susy, he was writing for another reason. He feared his creative talents were gone and that his image of self had been impaired. He wrote about this in August, 1898:

Last summer I started sixteen things wrong, three books and thirteen magazine articles. I could only make two wee little things, fifteen-hundred words altogether succeed--only that out of piles and stacks of diligently wrought work, the labor of six weeks unremitting effort.⁵¹

There were years of frantic writing, especially from 1898 to 1904. During these years, Twain poured out his hatred for a cruel God. Besides his bitterness over Susy and Jean, Olivia sank deeper into invalidism. His own health began to crumble. He cursed God, but he could not die. The lowest point of his pessimism was marked by his savage reflections about God in What Is Man, a collection of argumentative, analytical chapters between an old man much like Twain and a young man who holds to the ordinary Christian assumptions about

⁵⁰Bernard DeVoto, "Symbols of Despair," in Mark Twain, A Profile, (ed.) Justin Kaplan (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. 72.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 73.

man and morals. These dialogues and letters were published in 1906 and even then anonymously because Twain felt it was such a savage publication.⁵²

He wrote to Rev. Twichell five years earlier about What Is Man. It was, of course, then unpublished, and he spoke of it as his "Private Philosophy." He wrote on January 29, 1901, that he had planned it fifteen years earlier but had written it in 1898. He said he had tried to read it to his wife, but she would not listen to it because she knew it would make her sad. Twain reasoned that truth always had that effect on people.⁵³

In this work which he called his Gospel, there are evidences of the strain the calamities had wrought upon Twain. He wrote that self-interest and self-approval were the mainsprings of human conduct. He assaulted the illusions of free will, integrity, decency, and virtue and used the familiar logic of determinism; the fixed universe, the sequence of cause and effect from the beginning of time which holds man helpless. It was a mechanistic philosophy in which man is a machine moved only by exterior forces. Free will is denied as is creative life because man cannot create if he is not responsible, if he is helpless. Surely man could not be blamed since the chain of circumstances holds him fast to a vindictive God. In asserting man's cowardice, this work asserted that man is not responsible, and if

⁵²Ibid., p. 74.

⁵³Letters, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 704-705.

man is not responsible, then man cannot be held responsible. Twain was crying for absolution of the guilt he felt for the catastrophes which had befallen his family. It was a far cry from the freedom of man to make a moral choice as in the inspiring climax of *Huckleberry Finn*.⁵⁴

There were other dark writings. Twain's most vehement attacks on theological Christianity came in the *Mysterious Stranger* published posthumously in 1916. With the loss of Olivia in 1904, his despair was even greater. He needed a crutch to ease the psychological burdens of overwhelming guilt. He found it with his dream philosophy. It brought him back from the edge of insanity. His dilemma was solved and the accusations of his "trained Presbyterian conscience" were stilled. He was exonerated; it was all a dream.⁵⁵

In the *Mysterious Stranger*, Twain wrote of a wicked world visited by a mysterious stranger in sixteenth century Austria. The setting, Eseldorf, is much like Hannibal. (Perhaps Twain psychologically wanted to return to the safer days of his youth.) The boys the mysterious stranger talks with are much like Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer. Young Satan is a vehicle for Twain's derision of

⁵⁴ DeVoto, op. cit., p. 75.

⁵⁵ Mark Twain, Mark Twain's Works: The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 1.

of the God whose vengefulness creates human pain. Satan expresses Twain's dream philosophy:

Strange! that you should not have suspected years ago--centuries, ages, eons, ago!--for you have existed companionless through all the eternities. Strange indeed, that you should not have suspected that your universe and its contents were only dreams, visions, fiction! Strange, because they are so frankly and hysterically insane--like all dreams: a God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single one happy and who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave His angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required His other children to earn it; who gave His angels painless lives yet cursed His other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body.

You perceive, now, that these things are all impossible except in a dream. You perceive that they are pure and puerile insanities, the silly creations of an imagination that is not conscious of its freaks--in a world, that they are a dream, and you the maker of it. The dream-makers are all present; you should have recognized them earlier.

It is true, that which I have revealed to you; there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream--a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a thought--a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought wandering forlorn among the empty eternities.⁵⁶

The dreadful things alleged against mankind were now tolerable because they had been removed far away, and over them was the peace of a distant dream. Twain again used his dream philosophy in the "Great Dark" in Letters From the Earth. He had found the symbols of despair in this selection. He wrote of a ship traveling through

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 138, 139, 140.

stormy darkness, hemmed in by ice, and directed by some unknown will. It sailed a sea where no chart can be had and where monsters lurked that might destroy at any moment. One of the travelers aboard was the Mad Passenger who made observations on the illogicalities and absurdities of human civilization.

Some details of Twain's life are reproduced in this selection. He expressed sorrow over the six years of calamities preceding 1898 by comparing them to the catastrophes which befell the Edwards family in his story. But Twain was now safe, for there was a Superintendent of Dreams who told him his wife and children could not be hurt since they were dreams. In Dreamland, dream had triumphed over reality.⁵⁷

The question arises as to why Mark Twain did not turn to God in his time of trouble. The answer lies in the personality of the man. Twain's heart craved for God's love and mercy for mankind, but he who craved compassion most, turned away from God in time of trouble because of his own Calvinistic conception of God was that of One whose major crime was inventing Hell.

Twain, the humanitarian, who would have carried the weight of the world on his shoulders, could not accept God's reasoning in giving to mankind the choice between Heaven or Hell. The necessity for humility and atonement, acceptance and faith in God's will as a

⁵⁷Bernard DeVoto, Letters From the Earth (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 302.

part of the Christian experience and the paradox of a demanding God yet a loving God alienated Twain. He was a man of the Gilded Age who believed in intellectual honesty, the scientific position that that which could not be proved was not to be believed.

CHAPTER III

IMPERIALISM

At a peace conference in Paris in the fall of 1898, American negotiators demanded and received formal possession of the Philippine Islands from a defeated Spain. Several months later, American soldiers were fighting Filipino patriots who had wanted complete independence instead of a mere exchange of colonial masters.

It seems America had changed from a self-contained Republic into a far-flung empire, contradicting its democratic principles. This change in American foreign policy brought varied responses from prominent Americans who were concerned about the social conscience of the country. Foremost among those who were critical of the newly imperialistic American was Samuel Clemens who believed that the tone of American life had deteriorated lamentably since the Civil War.

After 1865, the American people were tired of conflict and war. They wanted to live in peace both at home and with the rest of the world. They had gigantic tasks to grapple with at home: reconstruction, the settling of the West, and the development

of their industries. These tasks, rather than foreign affairs, occupied their major interests and energies.¹

Yet, there were a number of Americans who continued even during this period to urge that the United States develop a strong foreign policy and one of participation rather than of isolation. Among these Americans were such men as James G. Blaine, who, when he first headed the State Department in 1881, was interested in extending our influence in the Pacific. Blaine had taken steps to keep England and Germany from controlling the Hawaiian Islands. These he declared to be "a part of the American system."²

Actually, as early as 1854 there had been talk of annexing the islands as well as other territories. Such territorial expansionists as President Grant in the decade of the 1870's, Blaine in the 1880's, and President McKinley in the 1890's believed that industrialism was making the United States one of the most powerful nations in the world. Our country sought new frontiers. Our enormous surplus of agricultural and industrial goods meant the United States had to find foreign markets; so, the country was caught up in a world-wide imperialism. Capitalists in the United States began to invest their money in foreign enterprises instead of domestic industry. Such investments by the end of the nineteenth

¹Frank H. Tucker, The White Conscience (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 139-140.

²Ibid., p. 141.

century amounted to \$500,000,000. This investment was not tremendously large in itself, but the individuals and corporations with money so invested possessed powerful political influence and encouraged our government to acquire new territory and protectorates.³

Intellectual currents further shifted America's attitude toward empire. When Americans first spun out their plans for commercial expansion across the Pacific Ocean to Asia, the profit motive was combined with the idea of being God's agent such as the British ideal of service to mankind epitomized in Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden." A general racism appeared early in American history and was reflected in comments by founding fathers Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. America had received help from Europe in developing its ideas about non-white races. When colonialism attained new heights in the nineteenth century, it was not surprising that racism flourished, too. The racist derivations of Darwinism and various pseudo scientific theories of race superiority encouraged a Western abuse of power.⁴

The theories of social Darwinism as propounded by the followers of Charles Darwin were one of the cardinal ideological pillars of imperialism and racism. Though he did not plan it in such a way, Darwin strengthened and supplemented the corollary to

³Ibid., p. 142.

⁴Thomas A. Bailey, The Art of Diplomacy (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 50.

Calvinism which viewed those who prevailed or became strong as "God's elect." Darwin did consciously build on the foundation laid by the famous student of population problems, Malthus. Darwin, who projected a "survival of the fittest" kind of attitude, revealed a clear belief in national superiority in his work, The Descent of Man. This belief is much like racism although in this book Darwin denies that "pure races" exist. But his belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority comes close to being a superman doctrine.⁵

Darwin's theories were now made applicable to international relations. Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan were all glad to shoulder the white man's burden, reap the wealth and glory and show themselves fittest and destined to survive. And America, spurred on by the elemental mastery drive, Darwinism, and nationalism found vocal spokesmen of expansionism in such men as Senator Albert J. Beveridge who expressed ideological reasons for imperialism mainly in the duty the people of the United States had to mankind.⁶

John Fiske, a proponent of the Darwinian philosophy, argued that the American democratic system of government was clearly the world's fittest and must spread over every land on the earth's surface. Josiah Strong found racist and religious justification for expansionism. The Anglo-Saxon race was now centered in the United

⁵Ibid., p. 51.

⁶Ibid., p. 52.

States, and we possessed an instinct or genius for colonization.

Here, then, is the rationalization for manifest destiny. Now that the continent was conquered, it was the duty of the United States to become a world power. Some pointed to God, saying this was His wish. This idea was echoed in a great variety of forms, by a large number of businessmen, scholars, and politicians. The combination was irresistible. The scholars furnished the scientific and historical argument; the businessmen pointed to the potential profits, and the politicians justified it on the point of national honor and glory and also party advantage. A very definite influence was the nation's leading newspapers from which came the frankest expressions of imperialism. The New York Journal, New York World, and the Washington Post encouraged our government in its imperialistic policy.⁷

While editors of these newspapers called upon Americans to take up new responsibilities, a revolution broke out in Cuba in 1895 against the Spanish masters there. This naturally concerned the United States which had thousands of dollars of investments in the islands. When the United States became involved in the ensuing Spanish American War, President McKinley echoed the sentiments of many Americans in thinking of the war as a matter of high moral obligation. McKinley denied that territorial ambitions were

⁷Ibid., p. 53.

involved and felt that excessive demands after the war was won might diminish the shining reputation of the United States. He and the American people felt this was a humanitarian venture to end Spanish oppression in Cuba. War was idealistic, but it came at a time when imperial expansion was in vogue among Western powers.⁸

Yet, McKinley's attitude toward acquisition changed noticeably during the course of the war, so much so that on July 6, 1898, several months before the peace treaty was signed to end the war, Congress adopted a joint resolution annexing Hawaii to the United States. Two weeks later, President McKinley said there would be no armistice unless we got Puerto Rico and Guam. The United States' hunger for the Philippines continued to grow as peace negotiations were in progress. The final treaty insured the freedom of Cuba and granted to the United States the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam for a payment of twenty million dollars.⁹

The American policy of annexation angered Filipinos and those Americans who concerned themselves with misapplications of American political theory to the Philippine occupation. These anti-imperialists would have been interested in a resolution which reached the American Senate in January, 1899. The proposed resolution stated that the government of the United States did not have constitutional power to acquire territory and govern it as a colony.

⁸Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), p. 397.

⁹Ibid., p. 398.

Annexationists did not agree, stating that the Constitution did not apply by its own force to new possessions like the Philippines or Puerto Rico since they were dependencies and not an integral part of the United States. But annexation was endorsed by a divided Senate with the Vice-President casting the deciding vote.

But there remained the native Philippine independence forces under Emilio Aguinaldo who fought extended American military occupation. Supported by the populace, they would not give up but fought a stubborn guerilla-type war of resistance. It took more than three years of hard fighting by 60,000 American soldiers to make the Filipinos receptive to the program of "uplift and Christianization" that President McKinley had vowed to accomplish. Before the insurrection was put down, American forces had to resort to the same concentration camp methods that the Spanish had used to combat the guerillas in Cuba. Thus, a movement that had started as an effort to liberate the Cubans ended in a drive to subjugate the Filipinos.¹⁰

But the venture into imperialism which President McKinley called the "new and untried paths of empire" was not acceptable to all Americans. Anti-imperialism developed into something of a crusade. Imperialism was not like Manifest Destiny in principle. America was going beyond its continental borders and reaching out for empire. The rule over millions of distant alien peoples by

¹⁰Ibid., p. 399.

force, which is the idea of imperialism, could not be harmonized with the self-rule of the people which is the principle of democracy. More Americans were persuaded to join the ranks of anti-imperialism only after the Spanish-American War and with our involvement in the Philippines. American opponents of annexation might have made a more effective campaign if they had really felt that the Philippine Islands were capable of independent political life. In actuality, the Filipinos did have a sufficient concept of nationality to get by with foreign rule, but expansionists did not view the people this way. Expansionists won the argument to the extent of convincing President McKinley that the United States should annex the Philippines.¹¹

From 1898 to 1900, hundreds of prominent politicians and private citizens denounced American imperialism in newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets and made countless speeches on the subject. They were fighting the acquisition of Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines in Congress, also.

It is noteworthy to mention some of those involved in the anti-imperialism campaign. Ex-President Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland were anti-imperialists as were many active politicians of both major political parties. Among the Democratic anti-imperialists were presidential aspirant William Jennings Bryan and former cabinet members Richard Olney and J. Sterling Morton. Republican anti-imperialists included three New England senators, George F. Hoar,

¹¹Ibid., p. 400.

Eugene Hale, and Justin Morrill, House Speaker Thomas Brackett Reed, and John Sherman who served as Secretary of State in 1897-98 before retiring and entering the ranks of the opposition.

The many reformers and political independents who flocked to the banner of anti-imperialism included in their numbers, Carl Shurz, E. L. Godkin, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., and Jane Addams.

Several prominent university presidents were included in the list of anti-imperialists. Among them were David Starr Jordan of Stanford, Henry Wade Rogers of Northwestern, and Charles W. Eliot of Harvard. Other academic figures in the movement included Yale's William Graham Sumner, William James and Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard.

A few labor leaders joined anti-imperialist leagues, notably Samuel Gompers. Steelmaster Andrew Carnegie was the most prominent anti-imperialist businessman. He was joined by other businessmen who feared change and conflict, preferring business as normal, if possible, notably Edward Atkinson, George F. Peabody, and Henry Willard.

Former abolitionists like Thomas Wentworth Higginson discovered a new moral cause in anti-imperialism as did sons of Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Lloyd Garrison.

Finally, a host of writers became anti-imperialists, among them William Dean Howells, Edgar Lee Masters, Hamlin Garland, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, George Washington Cable, and Samuel Clemens.¹²

¹²Robert L. Beisner, Twelve Against Empire (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), pp. 10-15.

principled dislike for the feudal patterns beneath the surface of the natives' easy-going life. It was this dislike that decided him in favor of the Protestant missionaries; while cynical about their secondary motives, he approved their proselyting as an inroad on rigid, benighted superstitions. His hope was that American influence of every kind would stretch out toward Hawaii.¹⁴

The year following his visit to Hawaii, Twain found himself once again outside the continental United States--this time he was in Southern Europe and the Holy Land. He was acting in the capacity of roving reporter for the Alta Californian. Twain had carried abroad his qualms about the gallantry and good sense of the common man, and his travel letters tell of the dirt, poverty, begging, and disease that showed up as early as the Azores and reappeared later during the remainder of the trip. He was judging these conditions by the current gospel of success, blaming conditions either on laziness or lack of interest for applied science. Twain, who firmly believed that poverty continues to haunt only those who deserve it, came close to inverting all the reactions to be expected from a backwoods democrat when he voiced his appreciation of the business-like ways of France's Napoleon III and Russia's Alexander II because of the inventive energy put to use in their countries

¹⁴Ibid., p. 23.

for the cause of progress in rebuilding cities and improving transportation. He indicated that backward countries might wake to better ways and use some of this inventive energy.¹⁵

When Twain returned to the United States in the fall of 1866, he went directly to Washington, D. C. to the office of William Stewart, the newly elected senator from Nevada, in the capacity of his personal secretary. At the same time, he retained his position as a syndicated columnist. So it happened that he was in Washington when a reciprocity treaty with Hawaii was up for approval by Congress in March of 1868. Twain was aware that from the point of view of United States expansionists, the Hawaiian Islands were the most important of the Pacific Islands. Not only was Hawaii closest to the United States of all the groups of islands in the Pacific, but those engaged in China trade and in the whaling industry found it a convenient base from which to conduct their Pacific operations.¹⁶

When the treaty failed because too many senators suspected that reciprocity was meant as a step toward annexation, Twain was disappointed, for he still felt that if the islands were to belong to anyone, they might as well belong to the United States. It is significant to note that Twain was aware of the sentiment of west

¹⁵Mark Twain, Innocents Abroad (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), p. 200.

¹⁶DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 200.

coast businessmen who were in favor of closer relationships with Hawaii. These businessmen had better luck in 1868 when the Burlingame Treaty with China was signed assuring a continued flow of coolies while promising to curb their mistreatment. Twain was elated. In the New York Tribune on August 4, 1868, he wrote an article entitled "The Chinese Mission: What Mr. Burlingame Has Accomplished" which climaxed with the cry that the "vast commerce of 400,000,000 of industrious people must soon pass to us alone almost. It (the treaty) acquires a grand field for capital, labor, research, enterprise--it confers science, mechanics, social and political advancement."¹⁷

It is significant to note that Twain was, at time, painfully changeable. His attitude toward foreign policy was not essentially dogmatic. Concerning China and Hawaii, he was, for the most part, subservient to his friends, the Pacific coast businessmen. Twain probably honestly believed that America's technological knowledge would help the people of China and Hawaii as well as fill the pockets of American businessmen. And as did most Americans, Twain all too simply equated progress with the proliferation of material goods. The most civilized country was the most individualized. To annex would be to uplift as he interpreted the word.

But perhaps he was more dedicated to the idea of progress than most for as Earl Hilton points out in his work, "Mark Twain's

¹⁷Ibid., p. 201.

Theory of History" (Papers Michigan Acad. of Science, Arts, and Letters, 1951, published 1952), Twain did not hold the evolutionary view of history but "inherited the historical theory of the reformers of the late eighteenth century Enlightenment--hence his interest in progress."¹⁸

But during this time, Twain was anti-expansionistic concerning Alaska, the Virgin Islands, and Cuba. From the first mention of buying Alaska in 1867, he echoed hostile epithets such as Walrussia, referring to the walruses of Alaska then owned by Russia, and devised hostile farces such as one about an Alaskan iceberg that, before melting away, floated in and out of the jurisdiction of several countries.¹⁹

The chance that America might buy the Virgin Islands evoked "Information Wanted," a wild routine about the difficulty of living on volcanic St. Thomas, and the talk about taking Cuba moved him to pure savagery. Though willing to make exceptions for his friends and their interests in China and Hawaii, as far as Alaska and the Virgin Islands were concerned, he basically agreed with the "little America" position that foreign real estate, unlike foreign trade, dangerously built up federal over state government at home and gave

¹⁸Floyd Stovall, (ed.) Eight American Authors (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1963), p. 337.

¹⁹Ferguson, op. cit., p. 202.

the politicians more patronage to misuse. The inconsistencies here only indicate the complex nature of the man and his changing attitudes.²⁰

Twain was definitely interested in politics, but ethics had always interested him even more. He weighed moral values too closely to ignore their working in public affairs. As yet, he had little respect for any peoples who were outside the pattern of an industrial society, but after moving to Hartford and Nook Farm, the progressive influence on him from friends he was making there with their belief in tempering money-getting with ethical purpose greatly affected him. More and more he had reason to classify himself in the echelon that earned its comforts but that nevertheless ought to help out the unfortunate. Even Twain's earlier glacial contempt for the Indians was thawing under pressure from his neighbors.²¹

But Twain still maintained an interest in American investments in China, and on one occasion, he used what political influence he had to further American interests there. In late 1880, he asked former President Grant to dissuade the Chinese government from closing its Educational Mission, a school it had set up at Hartford to steep some of its bright young men in Western culture. Twain was well aware that Yung Wing, the Chinese minister at Washington, was fighting to save this school because the minister wanted to see

²⁰Ferguson, op. cit., p. 203.

²¹Charles Neider, (ed.), Autobiography of Mark Twain (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 250.

his country eased into the orbit of American capital. By the spring of 1881, Twain also became a go-between in a more direct drive to undercut European control of investments in Chinese railroad building and similar projects. As it turned out, the school at Hartford was lost, but eventually Twain took Yung Wing to meet Grant to propose an American railroad syndicate for operation in China.²²

As time went by, the shadows over Mark Twain's final years were cut by many signs of a freshly vibrant humanity in which he viewed all men as alike no matter what the color of their skin. He had contemplated the definition of progress, and his humanity and sense of fair play began to speak out against a self-interest which at times could be short-sighted and work for the wrong cause. Hank Morgan, placed in the thirteenth century England by Twain in the Connecticut Yankee (1889), speaks of the Gilded Age when he says, "That government is not best which secures mere life and property--there is a more valuable thing--manhood."²³

But it was while on his round-the-world lecture tour in 1895-96, that Twain became aware of the ramifications of imperialism. Greeted by European officials at every Asian and African port, he became keenly aware that the scramble for colonies was spreading like wildfire. As usual, his first impulse when he got uneasy about

²²Budd, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

²³Mark Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), p. 137.

a situation was to burlesque it. In Following the Equator (1897), the follow-up of his tour, he settled for a flippant analogy comparing the quest for empire with stealing from neighbors' clotheslines. That he was disturbed over what he had seen is evident in this statement from the book, "The universal brotherhood of man is our most precious possession, what there is of it."²⁴

Twain was in Vienna in 1898 when the United States became involved in the Spanish-American War. He cheered his country on against the Old World armies in Cuba. And he scolded his fellow tourists who felt the home front had fallen into an imperialistic mood.

Twain's daughter, Clara, recalls that when the United States sent word to Spain that the Cuban atrocities must end, her father felt his country occupied the highest moral position ever taken by a nation since the Almighty made the earth. He even jokingly suggested he might enlist. At this time, to him, the war was still a noble cause. Twain, like many other Americans, had faith in our foreign diplomacy and was comforted when Congress asserted in the famed Teller Resolution its determination to leave the Cuban people, following the island's pacification, in possession of their government.²⁵

²⁴Budd, op. cit., p. 265.

²⁵Clara Clemens Gabilowitsch, My Father, Mark Twain (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), pp. 213, 214.

The seeds of the Philippine War were sown in the peace treaty with Spain. For President McKinley's peace terms, for which neither the United States nor Spain was prepared, were that Spain should not only free Cuba, but cede to the United States all her West Indian possessions, and sell us the Philippine Islands. When this treaty, the Treaty of Paris, made the United States owners of the Philippines in 1899, Mark Twain, who was disturbed over this move, inquired of Grover Cleveland if it was possible to have the Supreme Court pass on the legality of the treaty. Cleveland did respond that he had inquired into the matter but to no avail. It was to be Mark Twain who pushed the matter later through a literary barrage.²⁶

Twain was concerned over the Philippines where the United States was fighting to establish sovereignty. The three years of war there distressed him. Aguinaldo, the leader of the insurrection, had assumed that the Philippine Islands, like Cuba, would receive their independence as a consequence of the Spanish-American War. After American forces occupied Manila in August, 1898, however, Aguinaldo withdrew his Filipino insurgents from the city. Philippine disillusionment culminated with the announcement of the Treaty of Paris.

On February 4, 1899, a clash outside Manila set off what soon evolved into a long, costly war for control of the islands.

²⁶Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), p. 361.

The insurrectionary government controlled almost all the islands in the archipelago and commanded an army of 20,000. The native forces, having general support among the people but lacking modern weapons, resorted to guerilla warfare which spread rapidly through the islands. To put down this insurgency, the United States spent millions of dollars, committed thousands of troops, and resorted to drastic anti-guerilla tactics.²⁷

But Twain was just as concerned over the Boer War between the English and Dutch in South Africa and the Boxer Rebellion in China because all these conflicts reflected the quest for empire.

He expressed his concern over his widespread imperialism in several letters written while he was still in Europe. In one letter written from England on January 25, 1900, he wrote to his good friend, William Dean Howells concerning the Boer War:

Privately speaking, this is a sordid and criminal war, and in every way shameful and excuseless. Every day I write (in my head) bitter magazine articles about it, but I have to stop with that. For England must not fall; it would mean an inundation of Russian and German political degradations which would envelope the globe and steep it in a sort of Middle-Age night and slavery which would last till time immemorial. Even wrong--and she is wrong--England must be upheld. He is an enemy of the human race who shall speak against her now. England must be upheld. I talk the war with both sides--always waiting until the other man introduces the topic. Then I say, 'My head is with the Briton, but my heart and such rags of morals as I have are

²⁷Tucker, op. cit., pp. 145, 146.

with the Boer--now we will talk, unembarrassed and without prejudice.'²⁸

Twain spoke out against imperialistic atrocities in South Africa once again when on January 27, 1900, he wrote to a friend in Hartford, the Rev. Joseph Twichell, and voiced his concern:

The Boer is popularly called uncivilized. I do not know why. Happiness, food, shelter, clothing, wholesale labor, modest and rational ambitions, honesty, kindness, hospitality, love of freedom and limitless courage to fight for it, composure and fortitude in time of disaster, patience in time of hardship and privation, absence of noise and brag in time of victory, contentment with a humble and peaceful life void of insane excitements--if there is a higher and better form of civilization than this, I am not aware of it and do not know where to look for it.²⁹

Twain goes on to say in the same letter what he had said in his letter to William Dean Howells just two days before. He repeats that his heart is with the Boers, but that:

We must not utter any hateful word about England in these days nor fail to hope that she will win in this war, for her defeat and fall would be an irremediable disaster for the mangy human race. Naturally, then, I am for England; but she is profoundly in the wrong, Joe, and no (instructed) Englishman doubts it. At least that is my belief.³⁰

Twain wrote another letter to Twichell from London on August 12, 1900, telling him of a planned return home in October

²⁸Albert Bigelow Paine, (ed.) Mark Twain's Letters (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1917), Vol. II, pp. 692, 693.

²⁹Paine, Mark Twain's Letters, Vol. II, p. 695.

³⁰Ibid.,

but, more importantly, expressing his sentiments concerning the Boxer Rebellion in China:

It is all China, now, and my sympathies are with the Chinese. They have been villainously dealt with by the sceptered thieves of Europe, and I hope they will drive all the foreigners out and keep them out for good. I only wish it; of course, I don't really expect it.³¹

Perhaps Twain sounds placid in this letter, but once he reached the United States, he began to speak out against the atrocities committed for imperialistic gains. Soon after arriving home in late 1900, Twain was asked to introduce a talk by Winston Churchill, fresh from his exploits in the Boer War. The event took place at the Waldorf-Astoria in December, and this was Churchill's first American lecture audience. Twain struck a courteous and friendly tone. But he went on to question the morality of provoking the Boers into a war they could not win; conceding we were just as wrong in our treatment of the Filipinos, he closed with the barb that England and America, already kin in blood and government and lofty purpose, were now alike in their imperialism. This statement startled Churchill into giving a partial apology and full notice that Twain had decided that the American crusade against Spanish tyranny in Cuba was changing to raw conquest in the Pacific.³²

³¹Paine, Mark Twain's Letters, Vol. II, p. 699.

³²Kaplan, op. cit., p. 362.

He was to protest in many different ways and began to write openly against the American policy in the Philippines and the missionary propaganda which had resulted in the Chinese uprising and massacre. So, he had become a sort of general spokesman which the public flocked to hear, whatever the subject. He spoke out loudest when speaking was most dangerous--that is, in wartime. The United States was in the thick of her war with the Filipinos when Twain published his terrible announcements that the enemy was right, that the United States was wrong, and that the flag was being dishonored. Twain could not have written in this manner had there been censorship of the press. But even in the freest society such a position requires considerable courage. It also requires a very deep devotion to some ideals that "dishonored" flag has stood for.³³

Even though years later Twain vowed he was no reformer, he certainly gave the appearance of being one. He wrote a New Year's Greeting which was published in the New York Herald on December 30, 1900. He entitled it "A Greeting From the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century." In it he discussed the unholy alliance of Christianity, cash, and colonialism. In saluting the twentieth century, Twain speaks of Christendom:

She returns bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored from pirate raids in Kiao-Chou, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of hypocrisies.

³³Smith, op. cit., p. xiv.

Give her soap and a towel, but hide the looking glass.³⁴

The very next month, Twain continued in this same vein by writing "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." He then sought advice on publishing it, evidently hoping for encouragement. The wrong advice from his friend, Rev. Twichell, was received. Twichell's letter is now lost, but Twain's answer is not:

I can't understand it! You are a public guide and teacher, Joe, and are under a heavy responsibility to men, young and old; if you teach your people--as you teach me--to hide their opinions when they believe the flag is being abused and dishonored, lest the utterance do them and publisher a damage, how do you answer for it to your conscience? You are sorry for me; in the fair way of giving and take, I am willing to be a little sorry for you.³⁵

He continued:

I'm not expecting anything but kicks for scoffing, and am expecting a diminution of my bread and butter by it, but if my wife will let me I will have my say. This nation is like all the others that have been spewed upon the earth--ready to shout for any cause that will tickle its vanity or fill its pocket. What a hell of a heaven it will be when they get all these hypocrites assembled there!³⁶

Olivia Clemens "let" her husband publish the article. His old friend William Dean Howells also had no doubt that he should publish, although he did suggest that he hang himself afterwards.

³⁴Smith, op. cit., p. xiv.

³⁵Paine, Mark Twain's Letters, p. 704.

³⁶Ibid., p. 705.

(Howells, himself, was writing against imperialism--however, less tempestuously than Twain.) So, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" appeared in the February issue of the respectable and liberal North American Review. The effect, according to Twain's biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, was "as if he had thrown a great missile into the human hive . . . Whatever other effect it may have had, it left no thinking person unawakened."³⁷

The title for his article is from St. Matthew 4:16:

The people which sat in darkness saw
great light.

Twain's purpose for writing the article was to enlighten people about the atrocities of imperialism. He wrote of China and the reparations extracted by the Christian missionaries representing the managers of the Blessings-of-Civilization Trust. The managers included President McKinley, Joseph Chamberlain, the Kaiser, and the Czar. Twain felt it was bad enough that two thousand Americans were part of an international army which in August, 1900, took the city of Peking from the Chinese armies led by the Boxers because of anti-foreign rioting by the Chinese.

But what followed was worse. The American Board of Foreign Missions collected for loss of life and property in the Chinese rebellion national fines amounting to thirteen times the indemnity. Twain went on to state with much satire:

³⁷Smith, op. cit., p. 5.

This money will be used for the propagation of the Gospel . . . What we want of our missionaries out there is, not that they shall merely represent in their acts and persons the grace and gentleness and loving-kindness of our religion, but that they shall also represent the American spirit.³⁸

He spoke of the Philippines:

The game was in our hands, but we lost the chance to add another honorable deed to our good record. The more we examine the mistake, the more clearly we perceive that it is going to be bad for the business. The person sitting in darkness is almost sure to say, 'There must be two Americas; one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kills him to get his land.'³⁹

Twain went on to analyze our foreign policy and asked the question:

Shall we go on conferring our civilization upon the peoples that sit in darkness or shall we give those poor things a rest? We were only playing the American game in public. In private, it was the European quality in us, stealing a helpless people's liberties.⁴⁰

Here Twain was referring to the deeds of the British and their Prime Minister, Chamberlain, who after discovering gold and diamonds in the farmlands of South Africa, elected to use the force of their military to burn the countryside, erect strings of blockhouses, and maintain concentration camps in which masses of the civilian population perished.

³⁸Ibid., p. 9.

³⁹Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁰Ibid.

The storm broke after the publication of this article. Among Twain's critics were several influential New York Congregational ministers. These publications were welcomed by the members of the Anti-Imperialist League whose ranks Twain joined in 1901. The League's members were influential men such as E. L. Godkin, William Graham Sumner, Charles Eliot Norton, and Andrew Carnegie.

The League's hardcore members were veteran mugwumps, Cleveland Democrats, or elderly Republicans who wished for the return of the days of Rutherford Hayes. In economics, they were liberals who still believed the peaceful magic of inventions and industry and heartily favored sending American products over the farthest oceans. Some members of the League believed imperialism was against our traditional policy of isolation. And a few were even radical enough to not want contamination by "inferior" races.

Many members were opposed to use of force because it led to increased power for the scheming politicians in Washington and the wasteful militarists. Twain remained with the League as long as it could afford stationery.⁴¹

Twain followed the lead of the League before going off on his own lines of analysis. This included his ideas on our Open Door Policy in China. In trying to formulate his ideas about our foreign policy in China, Twain had earlier wanted to accept his

⁴¹ Edward Wagenknecht, Mark Twain: The Man and His Work (New York: Harpers, 1935), p. 375.

friend, Secretary of State John Hay's manifestoes at face value. Hay interpreted the Open Door Policy as a reciprocal trade agreement. Twain and Hay had been friends for years. In his autobiography, Twain states:

I first knew him when he was an obscure young editorial writer on the New York Tribune in Horace Greeley's time, and he (Hay) was one of the few men on the staff who wasn't afraid of Greeley.⁴²

But Twain decided our Open Door Policy there was, after all, imperialistic because we, by establishing a powerful and somewhat exaggerated American concern for the commercial and territorial integrity of China, rendered any nation which might challenge Chinese diplomatic policy the potential enemy of the United States. Traders, missionaries, and officials shared the responsibility for creating and sustaining this strange and unprecedented spirit of paternalism toward China. So, Mark Twain, who had grown hostile to missionaries of all churches, found it easy to proclaim publicly his disapproval of American missionaries in China.⁴³

Even though the fact that the arrival of the United States as a great power symbolized rather than caused by the "splendid little war," had caught the imagination of most Americans, Mark Twain kept taking risks by being outspoken in his opposition to

⁴²Paine, op. cit., p. 232.

⁴³Kaplan, op. cit., p. 365.

American imperialism. Even at banquets he left a trail of tart ambiguities and sly moral preaching.⁴⁴ There was much rueful comment about how America's leading humorist had turned moralist. An editorial in the Louisville Courier-Journal reflected the new Twain image:

A remarkable transformation, or rather development, has taken place in Mark Twain. The genial humorist of the earlier day is now a reformer of the vigorous kind, a sort of knight errant who does not hesitate to break a lance with either Church or State if he thinks them interposing on that broad highway over which he believes not a part but the whole of mankind has the privilege of passing in the onward march of the ages.⁴⁵

But Twain appreciated the new image and continued to speak out in his new vein. In 1902, at one speaking engagement, Twain told of the Anglo-Saxon Ends of the Earth Club in which a retired regular army officer of high grade said:

We are of the Anglo-Saxon race, and when the Anglo-Saxon wants a thing, he just takes it. He does not reveal his private morals to the public view. The human race keeps two sets of morals in stock--the private and real, and the public and artificial. The public motto is 'In God We Trust' and the private one is 'When the Anglo-Saxon wants a thing, he just takes it.'⁴⁶

By October, 1904, Twain was "whetting up" for King Leopold of Belgium. He shaped up "King Leopold's Soliloquy" in response to what the world was discovering about the brutality with which

⁴⁴Neider, op. cit., p. 345.

⁴⁵Paine, Mark Twain's Letters, Vol. II, p. 703.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 346.

the Belgians were squeezing profits out of their African colony, the Belgian Congo. Twain's article, which essentially contained the same argument that he used against our involvement in China, thoroughly upset King Leopold's agents who rushed out a forty-seven page pamphlet in reply. Adding another vice-presidency to his list, Twain took an active hand in guiding the Congo Reform Association so long as it had any weight. To aid the Association, he wrote to friends in the State Department, enclosing documents and leaflets, and made at least two trips to its offices, where he was treated with the courtesy due an important diplomat. Eventually, he drew an answer from Secretary of State Elihu Root who argued that the United States had no right to enter a formal protest in behalf of the exploited natives. After a little grumbling, Twain accepted this verdict because Hay had held the same line.⁴⁷ As late as 1910, in his last year of life, Twain let it be known that he was still available for service against King Leopold.

When he scrawled Letters From the Earth in 1906, he was ill and weary of human cruelties, but he was not indifferent to these cruelties. So, he tinkered with more arguments for cooling war fever. The arms race moved him to grate that man "will always thirst for blood."⁴⁸

⁴⁷Budd, op. cit., p. 180.

⁴⁸Mark Twain, Letters From the Earth, (ed.), Bernard DeVoto (Harper and Row: New York, 1962), p. 106.

In Letters, Twain spoke of an America before it was corrupted by imperialism:

We free citizens of the Great Republic feel an honest pride in her greatness, her strength, her just and gentle government, her honored name, her stainless history, her unsmirched flag, her hands clean from oppression of the weak and from malicious conquest, her hospitable door that stands open to the hunted and the persecuted of all nations--proud of lofty patriotism which we inherited from our fathers--which we have kept pure and which won our liberties in the beginning and has preserved them unto this day. While that patriotism endures, the Republic is safe--her greatness is secure and against them, the powers of earth cannot prevail.⁴⁹

Then Twain continued that it is against the traditions of America to war against a helpless people for the object of robbery. He was alluding to the 1906 occupation of the Philippines. He blamed our involvement on a "silly, empty phrase, Our Country Right or Wrong."⁵⁰ Those who objected to this concept were supposedly traitors. He asked, "Who is Country?" and answered his own question:

"It is the common voice of the people. Each of you, for himself, by himself, and on his own responsibility must speak."⁵¹

Twain had spoken but this time not publicly. He had shifted his attack from newspapers to this parable of Adam's Great Republic which could not be saved because of corrupting imperialism. The

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 107-108.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 107.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 108.

command to speak out which was made to the people of America was not published, by his own request, for many years. He was tired and deserved a rest. He, who so vehemently cursed both kings and commoners as members of the "damned human race" with its missionary and political imperialism, could not bear to publish these Letters. Perhaps it was public opinion that influenced him. He had always felt public opinion shriveled at the slightest touch. He had always declined to commit himself to being a systematic reformer. His celebrity had become addictive and had begun to blunt his purpose. He said it best himself, "Only dead men can tell the truth in this world."⁵²

Conclusion

Lifelong concern with society and its politics was vital to Mark Twain. Was he a moral or an immoral man? This can be answered by viewing his record of concern for mankind. He, who had come to believe that the social and moral leaders of his youth were merely apologists for dollar civilization and the status quo, felt keenly his responsibility as a citizen of the American System. Because of his passion for honesty, he always sought to challenge the platitudes that can cover up obvious injustices if nobody questions them.

More widely and deeply read than anyone else who ever wrote books, he shared the life of America--printer, pilot, soldier, silver

⁵²Kaplan, op. cit., p. 366.

miner, gold washer, sharer of flush times, a shaper of the Gilded Age--he more completely than any other writer shared the American Experience.

Who, then, had more right than he to analyze the American System? Perhaps he was much better at seeing where society had been than where it would go. Nevertheless, he could never give up on that society no matter how much he dammed it.

Twain's belief in the Brotherhood of Man prevented him, at times, from revealing his most stinging attacks on the human race. He courted the favor of his contemporaries, but he possessed enough moral bravery to be an overseer of the public conscience. The points he made against the archaic blind allegiance to party and country perhaps projected him into the future as a prophet of modern peace movements. His was a quest for a warless world where a man could have an independent mind, free of the excesses of nationalism and the prejudices that usually accompanied them.

The Brotherhood of Man was so heavy on his mind that he could not forget it. Fittingly, he named his last home Stormfield, a token of his bitter struggles to establish the truth but also of an ideal, the Brotherhood of Man and universal tolerance which he now held without reservation. This is the legacy he left mankind.

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THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF MARK TWAIN

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Lifelong concern with society and its politics was vital to Mark Twain. Behind his mask of humor lay a serious view of life. His chief concern was man and how his role in society could be improved. He, who had come to believe that the social and moral leaders of his youth were merely apologists for dollar civilization and the status quo, felt keenly his responsibility as a citizen of the American System. 'Because of his passion for honesty, he always sought to challenge the platitudes that can cover up obvious injustices if nobody questions them. Twain chose not to be a crusader, but his social consciousness in the areas of feminism, religion, and imperialism reveal him to be a crusader at heart.

Closest to Twain's heart were his feminist philosophies. He extolled the ideal wife and mother. Women influenced him greatly, and he romanticized them. Because of these feelings of tenderness and admiration for women, he became concerned about the myth of their natural inferiority. As years passed, Twain's feminist philosophies included a belief in the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. During much of Twain's lifetime,

the stereotype that "a woman's place is in the home" largely determined the ways in which women had to express themselves. Twain did not deny the importance of marriage and motherhood, the traditional roles of women. He merely felt women should have a wider choice of life styles and should be judged as individuals with personal rewards being based on personal achievement.

So, his feminist philosophies included the belief that individuals of either sex had unlimited capacities and that when society attempted to define people's roles in life according to their sex, human development was severely limited.

If Twain was concerned about the social role of women, it can be said he was frustrated over the religious life of each individual. The pessimistic determinism which characterized Twain's own religious life led him to believe that religiously man was short-changed. He believed in the doctrine that all acts of the will result from causes which determine them either in such a manner that man has no alternative modes of action or that the will is still free in the sense of being uncompelled. For Twain, there was a need to rebel, a need for man to assert himself against what he felt were religious injustices.

Twain also took a harsh view of imperialism. The idea that the United States sought to convert almost the whole of political science to its own interests alienated Twain. He saw our imperialistic policies of aggression among weaker races. America as a supreme authority over colonies and dependencies was repulsive to

him. While some of his contemporaries felt patriotism found its highest expression in imperialism, Twain did not. Indeed, he felt when the United States exercised imperialistic authority, it betrayed its democratic origins.

Perhaps more widely and deeply read than any other American who ever wrote books, he shared the life of America--printer, pilot, soldier, silver miner, gold washer, sharer of flush times, a shaper of the Gilded Age--he more completely than any other writer shared the American Experience.

Who, then, had more right than he to analyze the American system? Perhaps he was much better at seeing where society had been than where it would go. Nevertheless, he could never give up on that society no matter how much he dammed it.

Twain's belief in the Brotherhood of Man prevented him, at times, from revealing his most stinging attacks on the human race. He courted the favor of his contemporaries, but he possessed enough moral bravery to be an overseer of the public conscience. The points he made against the archaic blind allegiance to party and country perhaps projected him into the future as a prophet of modern peace movements. His was a quest for a warless world where a man could have an independent mind, free of the excesses of nationalism and the three prejudices that usually accompanied them.

The Brotherhood of Man was so heavy on his mind that he could not forget it. Fittingly, he named his last home Stormfield,

a token of his bitter struggles to establish the truth but also of an ideal, the Brotherhood of Man and the universal tolerance which he now held without reservation. The humanity of Mark Twain is evident in his concern for his fellow man. His social consciousness aroused others to seek changes for a better society. This is the legacy he left mankind.

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