

CHAPTER IV

SENTIMENTS OF THE HUMAN MIND WHICH HAVE RULED SOCIETY

BUT while an equality of human rights may be posited as a logical ultimatum that satisfies the reason it must be remembered that the practical ultimatum is the organization of society on true principles, instead of on false principles.

In Britain, the constitution of civil society, like that of ecclesiastical society, has only once been subjected to systematic arrangement.

The Church, as one association, presented itself under the form of the Papacy; the state, as one association, presented itself under the form of the feudal system. The Papacy was the complete organization of the Church on false principles; the feudal system was the complete organization of the state on false principles; and the history of modern society is the history of the gradual destruction of those two great systems.

The feudal system was organization on false principles, but it was organization; and so long as the organization was genuine and spontaneous, the feudal system was the true and living expression of man's necessities. The leader was a leader, a lion-heart who could dare and do. He led because he could lead, and was followed from instinct, which knows its leader and follows him. But when the feudal system was trans-

planted from the field to the court the life of feudalism was gone.

It became hereditary, and as neither courage nor skill are hereditary, hereditary warriors are mummies. When the force organization of society gave way to the law organization of society, the hereditary principle was transplanted into the legislature, and men became hereditary legislators. But wisdom is no more hereditary than courage and skill; and the hereditary system of legislation—the parchment feudalism—became as inefficient as the hereditary system of defence—the pennon feudalism. A new element was required, and a new element appeared—wealth produced by trade,—not merely trade, but trade beginning to be organized and systematized.

It must be observed that the feudal system had no place for the trader. The trader is a non-feudal element in society, and belongs to a different system of organization. His day is fast approaching, and he will ultimately push out hereditary feudalism from the direction of the state. He began without a place, without a rank, and almost without ordinary protection. He asserted his claims, however, and at length society began to admit a portion of the trade principle. This, like everything else, began on false grounds; with privileges, charters and a hundred other interruptions to the laws of nature. Finally the burgesses were tolerated because they had money and could pay taxes, and gradually the traders have pushed their way against the parchment lords. The Commons have taken up the power. The Commons are partly knights who represent proprietors of land, and partly citizens and burgesses, chosen by the mercantile interest of the nation. The lords have retired in solemn decency,

and the knights and burgesses direct the affairs of Britain.

To suppose, however, that this change is ultimate, would be contrary to all the teaching of history. Parchment lordship is contrary to the credence of modern times. Men are beginning to believe that he who does not work ought not to be supported, as those who do work support the whole. The war lord worked, and worked hard. He fought, or was ready to fight, and his life was at stake for his wages. He deserved his reward. He was a man who led men; and so long as he was a real war lord, and war was the real pursuit, he was a genuine man, and filled an office for which men were willing to accord him wages. When he became a parchment lord, he still worked. He made laws and ruled the country. He was to a certain extent necessary, like the bishop, who once worked also, and ruled the church. And in former days, the rule of the Church was no more a jest than the rule of the state. It was a real office—a thing not of silks and drawing-rooms; but of the translation of the Word of God, and appearance at the martyr's stake when requisite. The bishop was a pastor, a real, genuine pastor, who had a flock and cared for it; and even now, if it were possible to reanimate the bishop, and make him again a leader, a genuine leader of men, there is no man in the country who could count followers with him. But the office is no longer requisite.

Every human system dies, but beneath the surface of the human systems there is a reality which does not die—a reality which evolves. All systems preserved by law beyond their natural existence are mummy systems. So long as the credences last, the systems

are natural, and do not decay, but when the credence advances, the system is no longer the expression of man's requirements; and the system if preserved can do evil, and only evil. With the advance of credence the system ought to advance also; for man in perpetuating systems perpetuates only the expression of his former ignorance. The trading community are fast, very fast, pushing out the parchment holders: merchants are now the notables, the men of note who express the requirements of the country.

But the pursuit of money is no more the ultimate pursuit of man than the pursuit of war or pleasure. The trader, in his turn, must cede the first place to those who express man's higher requirements. Money is a means, not an end; and when those who represent the means have played their part, those who represent something beyond the means will assert their claims, and push the trader from the direction of the State. Man is a rational and a moral being, and his rational and moral nature must ultimately prevail to determine the arrangements of society.

Out of the courtly pleasures grew courtly policies, and it became the ambition to be a statesman. An age of policy ensued, but the policy statesman is making way for the trader. The trader's day is now, and every day will see the policy and pleasure laws clearing away because they interfere with trade. The policy system is not yet dead, only dying.

Trade imperceptibly, and almost unconsciously, begins to influence policy, not by denying that policy ought to rule, but by discovering and making manifest that certain acts which were assumed to be politic are actually disadvantageous; that they involve loss and not profit, and consequently that they ought not to be done; and the moment acts of policy come to be

accurately measured instead of having their value assumed, the policy system is defunct, and political economy, which has grown out of it, supersedes it. That political economists will ere long take the direction of the state, appears beyond a doubt.

But neither is political economy the ultimate. It is a step beyond policy, as the reign of court policy was a step beyond the reign of court pleasure. But it is logically insufficient. There are questions which it cannot answer, or dare not answer. It must take the money management of the state, and determine the mode in which taxes should be levied, as well as the amount of taxes; and, in determining the mode in which taxes ought to be levied, it must come between two parties,—the laborers who create the wealth of the country, and the landlords who consume the rents. This position will bring political economy to a stand. The difficulty is insoluble to political economy, and a new system must grow, develop, and assume the direction of the country. This new system is necessarily politics, or the science of equity.

Political economy professes to teach how value grows, increases, accumulates, and who makes it. The latter question, solved by a fair exposition of ascertained facts, first systematized, and then reduced to a law, lands society on the grand question, "To whom does it belong?" With this question political economy, as such, has no concern. It is beyond political economy, higher than political economy, and is what political economy is not,—it is final in theory. Let political economy be as perfect as any science can possibly be, beyond it there lies the question, To whom—to what persons—does the created value belong? And first and foremost must come the question of the land. "Who is the proprietor of the created value?" This

question arises necessarily so soon as political economy has discovered who creates the value. And thus, politics, or the science of equity, springs necessarily in chronological order out of political economy; and when economists have directed the state affairs up to those questions which they cannot answer, they must cede the first place to the true politicians, or themselves become true politicians. And when that period arrives, the political evolution is complete, and there is the reign of equity or justice.

On these grounds, imperfectly as we have advanced them, may be projected the natural probability of a period yet to come, when justice shall be realized on earth, to be followed by a period when Christianity shall reign supreme, and call into real and systematic action the higher and nobler sentiments of man.

CONCLUSION

Beneath the outward formula of science there lies the everlasting truth, as beneath the outward forms of nature there lies the everlasting power.

Posterior to the science of equity comes theology—natural theology. By natural theology we do not mean that which is accepted by the Church, but we mean such a natural theology as shall convince intellect as intellect, and thereby produce a unity of credence for the whole race of men.

We have, therefore, to inquire what kind of theology can be taught by reason, assuming in the first place that natural theology is impossible in its complete form until men have arrived at a knowledge of the natural universe.

Against the traditions of false gods and erroneous worship, science enters the lists. It assumes as its

first proposition, to base credence on evidence, and thereby to evolve truth instead of error or superstition. Consequently it will invariably manifest itself in scepticism. Scepticism in its legitimate form is doubt, and doubt is one of the great elements of humanity absolutely requisite to place knowledge on a secure basis. Truth can have nothing to fear, but everything to hope, from the most accurate survey that men can possibly take of the region open to cognition.

Scepticism has to achieve the destruction of superstition, but in the place of superstition it has nothing to substitute. That man should permanently refrain from a theological credence is out of the question. There is either nothing whatever, or there is some permanently enduring something that was anterior to man, that underlies all the operations of nature, and that constructed, and continues to construct, all the varied mechanisms, physical and mental, with which man is acquainted; and this permanent element which man posits, in accordance with the laws of his reason, is what is meant by God. God therefore has a necessary existence to the human mind; and the main question is not whether there is a God—but what, in fact, are the attributes of God?

That there is a proof of God's existence, and of his power and wisdom, so perfectly conclusive that it shall command the assent of the reason of mankind, we have no possible doubt; but that such an argument can be drawn from physical science (further than power is concerned), we by no means admit.

In the works of nature, and the operations of nature man intuitively perceives by his reason a power of force; and the primordial force, if we make nothing

objective but matter, necessarily lands us in pantheism, which is at present the theological credence of a large portion of the scientific men on the Continent. And out of this pantheism there is no scientific exit until mind is made objective, and the facts of mind are brought to bear on the facts of physics; so that what was before only a primordial force becomes an intelligent agent, of whom power is the attribute. Pantheism is the theology of physical science; and if there were no other science beyond physical science, pantheism would be the last final form of scientific credence.

The physical world does not present within the field of contemplation the operation of mind. For this we must turn to man. Man, when made objective, is found to be possessed of intellectual capacity, of executive power, and also of a moral nature, which lays on him the imperative obligation of designing certain ends, and of refraining from designing certain other ends. And as man is as much a portion of nature as is matter, we must have a power of such a character as would account for this moral nature of man, and to have this we must have the transformation of mere natural theology into moral theology. Men may assume the character of the Moral Ruler of the universe, but proven, in the same manner as any other portion of science, it never can be, till moral science is actually achieved and taught as a branch of knowledge.

Nor are we to admit mere assumptions, and presumptions, and speculations, as science in the world of morals any more than in the world of matter. Either it is true that a definite rule of moral action can be discovered by the reason, or it follows of course that rules of action are not naturally imperative; and

if they be not naturally imperative it can only be a superstition to consider them as obligatory.

We have already considered human action as far as it involves the laws of political economy which treats of the production of wealth. After that comes social science, treating of the distribution of wealth, and finally, politics, which treats of the laws which should regulate interference.

These last two alone are entitled to the name of moral science, which lays down the laws of human duty. Thus, the consideration of man's relation to man is the first period at which moral science makes its appearance.

Every attempt to make a more complete theology than science really warrants, only produces scepticism on the part of those who find an inconclusive argument advanced as a demonstration. Moral theology, strictly and purely scientific, is at present impossible (that is, impossible for the world): and impossible, because moral science has not yet made its appearance, and because moral theology depends on moral science, and is an inference from it. In Britain, of course, Scripture is the source of theology, and moral theology is derived from the written revelation. But on the Continent, philosophy is the theology of the great mass of thinking men; and their theology, derived from the revelation of nature, does actually follow the development of science. And as scepticism was first posted with its negation, and then pantheism with its more general affirmation, and now, instead of a mere power, an intelligent power is beginning to be seen as absolutely necessary to explain the phenomena of nature, we may rest assured that, with the development of social science and moral science (which cannot fail to undergo their evolution in their order),

there will arise necessarily a moral theology, and the world will be indoctrinated with the theology of a moral Deity.

Now, if it be true that all human science ends in morals, and that natural theology follows the development of science (and it can never legitimately be in advance of science), then natural theology will come ultimately to be a purely scientific moral theology, and will thus be brought to the point where man identifies the God of Nature with the God of Scripture. And thus the long-lost unity will be once more restored.

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