

CARLYLE'S IDEA OF GOD AND MAN'S DESTINY

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ABSTRACT

Among critics there has been considerable divergence of opinion on almost all aspects of Carlyle's writings. This contradiction and confusion can be traced in part to the fact that Carlyle's stand has an emotional and personal basis which makes an objective assessment of the man difficult, and in part to the fact that most critics have taken Carlyle's theories singly with no understanding of the one central theory upon which all others depend. This thesis is an attempt to draw together the scattered parts of this central theory and to show that Carlyle had a unified and consistent philosophy with it as a core.

Basic to Carlyle's philosophy is the concept of a God (or Divine Idea) who has infused the physical universe with moral force. The physical universe is therefore a complex of forces, moral force originating with God, and immoral or amoral forces arising from the material nature of the universe. The tendency in the resultant struggle of these forces is always towards good and God since only acts which agree with the divine Laws of Nature can survive. Man, too, is a physical being imbued with a divine soul. It is the nature of the soul to worship God in all his manifestations and to seek truth and justice. A Selbst-todtung, that is, a partial annihilation of self, is required to free man from his material desires and to turn his energies to the service of his spiritual self and of God.

Because all men are joined by a common brotherhood in God,

intercourse between them is marked by a sense of justice and affectionate loyalty. And in society man finds scope for the full development of himself. The core of a society is a hierarchy on which all men are ranked, their position on the hierarchy being determined by the extent to which they understand God's plan for the universe and work to further that plan. Those who see the plan most clearly and work most effectively are the Heroes. Work here means acting according to the Divine Plan to bring order out of chaos, and is, in this sense, a form of worship.

In our universe the struggle of the ideal to manifest itself in the actual results in constant change, but throughout the change, whatever of good has been discovered by one generation is preserved and passed on to the next because the soul of man prefers good and abhors evil. Thus man is the agent of historical change, but God, acting through the soul of man, is the first cause. The study of history must therefore begin with the study of the men involved, but final explanation of history lies with God. It is the office of the artist-historian to show how order has been created out of chaos and how ideals have gradually got themselves recognized.

Some critics have charged that in later life Carlyle made judgments and held opinions completely contradictory to his earlier opinions. Particularly, it is charged that he took an illiberal political stand, that he became an admirer of successful power, and that he turned against the common man. Whether these charges are true or not, the opinions upon which they are based are derived from the same philosophy which Carlyle delineated in Sartor Resartus. It is the claim of this thesis that Harrold was right when he said that, "By the autumn of 1834, the struggling, self-torturing young man of 1819 had fashioned for himself a fairly consistent philosophy

of life,"¹ and, furthermore, that Carlyle persisted in this philosophy to the end.

¹ Carlyle and German Thought, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1934, p.2.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Throughout the winter of 1880-1881 the 85 year old Thomas Carlyle had been steadily failing. On February 5, 1881, he died. There was an immediate offer of burial in Westminster Abbey, but Froude, respecting Carlyle's own wishes, declined and made the long, sad trip to Ecclefechan to bury his friend beside his father and mother. Then he returned to London to begin his work as literary executor to one of the most vigorous men in the history of English literature. Shortly thereafter the Reminiscences appeared, and with their publication broke a storm of controversy.

The issue in the quarrel that followed boiled down to a question of Carlyle's personality and character. To some of Carlyle's admirers Froude's editing overstressed the irritability of the man and his defects as a husband. Froude, in the quiet faith that he was presenting the truth, and that the truth could not hurt a true man, refused to recant, but set about his next work, the Life of Carlyle. The more ardent Carlyle admirers, however, unable to tolerate the thought of any blemish in their hero, would not rest. C.E. Norton published a rival version of the Reminiscences, gravely noting that he had corrected in the first five pages of the Froude edition more than 130 errors in punctuation, use of capitals,

quotation marks, and the like.¹ Alexander Carlyle came from Canada to spend a good part of his life trying to clear his uncle of the stigma Froude had put upon him. And D.A. Wilson wrote a long and rambling biography, putting Carlyle always in the most favourable possible light and slyly refuting whatever of Froude he could.

The argument was, in its way, petty, and it was carried on in a petty fashion.² In the end, Froude's faith in Carlyle and in his own editorial judgment was justified. Most people were willing to accept that in a man so devoted to an ideal of justice, irritability was merely the flaw that proved him human. Yet, petty as it at first may seem, the issue becomes a vital one, for at bottom it is a question of personalities -- the personality of the critic in reaction to the personality of Carlyle, or rather, with what the critic imagines

¹ C.E. Norton, "Introduction", in Thomas Carlyle, Reminiscences, London, Macmillan, 1887, vol. 1, p. vii.

² To realize the pettiness of the method of argument, we need consider only the history of the phrase "gey ill to deal wi'". It was a phrase often used by Carlyle in his family letters with reference to himself. Froude picked out the phrase, amended it to "gey ill to live wi'", and used it to substantiate his claim that even the Carlyle family found Thomas a difficult person. Norton objected that Froude, in changing "deal" to "live" had completely changed the meaning of the phrase; he also objected that Froude harped on the incorrect version, "repeating it at least six times in the course of his narration." (Letters of Thomas Carlyle, Macmillan, 1888, vol. I, pp. 44-45n.) Later D.A. Wilson made a cunning attack on the same point. Without mentioning the controversy centering around the phrase, He devoted a page of his Carlyle biography to an explanation of its origin and its place as a family joke among the Carlyles, concluding with the remark that it would be "... misleading to a stranger." (Carlyle till Marriage, London, Kegan Paul, 1923, p. 198.)

Carlyle's personality to have been. So much of Carlyle's power and persuasion was personal and so much of his appeal emotional that a critic's interpretation depends greatly on how he personally feels about the man Carlyle. As a result, few critics have been able to write objectively about Carlyle.

Thus, though the Froude controversy died away, it had the effect of shifting interest from the works to the man. Moreover, it foreshadowed in the ferocity of its partisanship the pattern of much of the subsequent criticism of Carlyle, a pattern wherein a critic voluntarily or involuntarily finds himself taking sides either for or against Carlyle. John MacCunn has succinctly summed up the result of this partisanship:

. . . when friendly [his readers] are content to take Carlyle as a man of intuitions -- intuitions as abrupt and unconsecutive as those of the Hebrew prophets to whom, and not without justification, they are wont to liken him; and when unfriendly they are not without a leaning towards that critic of The Sun who wrote down 'Sartor Resartus' as 'a heap of clotted nonsense'.¹

To see to what extremes of interpretation either of these two views can lead we need only compare two estimates of the Latter-Day Pamphlets. The first is by Henry Larkin, a man who knew Carlyle personally:

And so we leave the Latter-Day Pamphlets. The sincerest utterances of a compassionate, stormful, and courageous heart, since Luther stood before the Diet of Worms. As the days roll on, and our troubles increase, they will become more and more credible. They will work their own appointed work, in spite of all gainsaying. They

¹ "The Anti-Democratic Radicalism of Thomas Carlyle", in Six Radical Thinkers, London, Edward Arnold, 1910, p. 141.

will carry their God's message as far as it will go, -- 'and, what is a great advantage too, no farther'.¹

The following, representative of the anti-Carlyle view, was written in 1927 by Norwood Young:

So ended Latter-Day Pamphlets. They began with inhumanity and concluded with the narrowest Puritanism. They denounced all mankind, from Black Quashee to Jenny Lind.²

To one man, a friend, the Latter-Day Pamphlets mean courage, sincerity, compassion. To another they are inhuman. Both judgments are extreme, and they are so opposed that it is difficult to believe that these two men are attempting an assessment of the same work. We can only take it that the two opinions are completely subjective, more helpful for that they reveal about Henry Larkin and Norwood Young than for what they tell about Thomas Carlyle.

Most literary figures have been the centre of some sort of controversy, but few have been interpreted in so completely a contradictory manner on all points of their writing. With Carlyle, so many opposing views have been put forward with regard to what he was and what he wrote that it is impossible to get from a critical work a true picture of the man or of his meaning. A brief glance at a few opinions reveals the extent to which interpretation and assessment of Carlyle are confused and contradictory.

¹ Carlyle and the Open Secret of his Life, London, Kegan Paul, 1886, p.278.

² Carlyle, His Rise and Fall, London, Duckworth, 1927, p. 255.

On such a seemingly simple question as "Does Carlyle believe in a life after death?" we can find Eric Bentley stating categorically: "As a mature man [Carlyle] had no belief in the immortality of the human soul".¹ Larkin, on the other hand, writes with equal assurance that Carlyle had ". . . an inarticulate belief in the infinitely just 'Most High God' . . . and in an Individual Immortality".² Norwood Young notes that Carlyle expressed many times in his letters the belief that members of his family would meet again after death.³ Young also quotes Masson, who knew Carlyle well, as saying: "He liked to think that there is a life beyond the grave".⁴ Obviously the critics cannot help us here. If we would know how Carlyle felt about immortality we must go to Carlyle's works and discover the answer for ourselves.

Carlyle's work in German literature was once considered one of his main contributions to the development of English literature and philosophy. But was he really England's discoverer and grand patron of Goethe and the German transcendentalists? Hensel, a German author, thinks he was:

¹ The Cult of the Superman, London, Robert Hale, 1947 (1944), p. 39.

² Larkin, op. cit., p. 355.

³ Cf D.A. Wilson, Carlyle to the French Revolution, London, Kegan Paul 1924, p. 155. From a letter to his sister Jean on the death of a favourite sister Margaret: "I trust that the Almighty may one day restore here to us and us to her" ✓

⁴ David Masson, Carlyle, Personally and in his Writing, 1885, p. 92. Quoted in Young, op. cit., p. 314.

Ein grosser Teil seiner Wirkasmkeit bestand ja darin, seine Landesleute auf die grossen deutschen Geisteshelden aufmerksam zu machen, ihnen zu zeigen, dass in diesem "deutschen Mystikern" Schatze verborgen seien, ohne die auch England nicht weiter fortleben könne. Er war der Wegweiser in das gelobte Land.¹

Larkin claims that Carlyle, deprived of his German masters, could never have risen to his true intellectual stature and moral strength.² On the other hand, C.E. Vaughan claims Carlyle's interpretation of Kantian philosophy was a ". . . travesty of the original"³, while Bentley calls Carlyle ". . . a mere expropriator in this territory"⁴, and Young asserts Carlyle neither understood Goethe nor had the intellectual sympathies necessary to understanding him.⁵ Hill Shine states baldly that Carlyle's acquaintance with German philosophy was almost solely second-hand:

The more one studies Carlyle's connection with German philosophy, the more evident it becomes that Carlyle read little in the primary sources and that he derived much of this philosophy from secondary or popular sources.⁶

During Carlyle's life-time there had been considerable talk of the superior nobility and morality of life in the

¹ Paul Hensel, Thomas Carlyle, Stuttgart, Frommann, 1902, p.210.

² Open Secret, p.9.

³ Carlyle and his German Masters, 1910, quoted in Young, op. cit. p.100.

⁴ Cult, p.49.

⁵ Rise and Fall, pp. 64-65.

⁶ "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem during the Year 1826-27", Publications of the Modern Language Association, vol. 50 (1935), p.812.

days before the advent of industrialization had brought upon the world the hypocrisy and materialism of present-day civilization. Carlyle himself wrote a good deal about the earlier periods of history and made much of the times of Odin, Mohamet, and Abbot Samson. Did he then join the Romantics in yearning for the return of those earlier days? One writer answers this question with a positive "Yes" accounting for his answer by saying:

Carlyle's preference for the past to the present is connected with his hero-worship. The past was the time of heavy fists, and it was also the time of individual predominance, while the tendency of progress is to raise the general level of humanity.¹

The contrary view is expressed by Paul Hensel, among others:

Es wäre aber durchaus verkehrt, wollte man nach solcher Äusserungen Carlyle zu einem blinden Bewunderer des Mittelalters stempeln. Für ihn war die Vergangeheit niemals Gegenwart in dem Sinn, dass er an Stelle der Gegenwart gewünscht hatte, die Vergangeheit zu setzen. Man kann ihn insofern allerdings einen Romantiker nennen, als er sich klar bewusst war, dass vergangene Weltanschauung, vergangene Ideale wohl im Geist wieder lebendig gemacht werden können, und dies war für ihn sogar eine der Hauptaufgaben der Geschichtsschreibung. Doch blieb er ein Mann der Wirklichkeit in dem Sinn, dass er alle Versuche, eine vergangene Weltanschauung ins wirkliche Leben wieder zurückzuführen für einen Anachronismus, für die schlimmste Versündigung wider den Geist der Geschichte hielt.²

Once again there is no agreement among the men who write books.

To answer this question too, we must trust our own resources

¹ "Carlyle's Early Kings of Norway", The Nation, vol. 23 (21 September, 1876), p. 185.

² Hensel, Thomas Carlyle, p. 142.

rather than critics.

It has been common to call Carlyle a prophet -- an Old Testament prophet according to many.¹ Yet as early as 1897 H.D. Trail in the Introduction to the Centenary Edition of Carlyle's works maintained that he was ". . . a prophet who had perished"² while on the other hand David Gascoyne, writing in 1952, called Carlyle ". . . our great national prophet, . . . a writer who is still full of import to living men and women."³

Turning to a broader and more important aspect of the man, we might ask where his socio-political sympathies lay. "With Labour!" cry the Labourites, remembering his bitter fights with Laissez-faire, his impassioned plea for those in the poor-houses, and his famous slogan, "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work."⁴ Yet, a generation earlier, Mr. Larkin had been

¹ Cf. Julian Symons, Thomas Carlyle, London, Gollancz, 1952, p.160. ". . . the mantle of an Old Testament prophet worn by a man with the Visual sense of a great painter." Also, John MacCunn, op. cit., p.141. See ultra, p.3,

² In Past and Present, London, Chapman Hall, 1897, p.14,

³ Thomas Carlyle, Supplement to British Book News: No. 23, London, Longmans, Green, 1952, p.8.

⁴ Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present, London, Chapman and Hall, 1897, p.18. In this thesis all reference to Carlyle's works is to this, the Centenary edition, except that the MacMechan edition of Heroes has been used. The following quotations are representative of those who stress Carlyle's affinity with the ideals of the Labour Movement: "More truly than Ruskin is Carlyle the parent of British Socialism and the forerunner of the Labour Movement." (Mary Agnes Hamilton, Thomas Carlyle, 1926, quoted in Young, Rise and Fall, p.370) "Almost all English Socialists have received their first decisive impetus towards Socialism from the writings of Carlyle, Mill, Ruskin, Henry George." (Bernstein, My Years of Exile, 1920, quoted in Young, Rise and Fall, p.370).

sure that "Carlyle was the best and truest friend [our landed and industrial aristocracies] had ever had."¹ MacCunn, trying to fit Carlyle into the Nineteenth century political scene, finds that "he is neither Tory, nor Whig, nor Radical (in the ordinary sense of the word), except indeed as he may be made to fill office admirably in all these parties as 'Devil's advocate'."² The one thing that emerges here is that Carlyle was certainly not orthodox in his political thinking.

In recent years there has been considerable discussion of the relationship of Carlyle's thought to Fascist and Nazi theories. H.J.C. Grierson was the first to point out the doctrinal similarities when, as early as 1933, he chose as his topic for the Adamson Lecture to the University of Manchester "Carlyle and Hitler". Shortly thereafter there appeared in the Saturday Review of Literature an article entitled "Carlyle rules the Reich", wherein Joseph Baker Ellis stated baldly: "We need an international interpreter to introduce us to Hitler and the movement Hitler represents. Carlyle is the man."³ And. C. Wright, writing in the Roman Catholic journal Commonweal a decade later gives his article on "Carlyle and the Present Crisis" the sub-title "Another God for the Nazi Pantheon".⁴

¹ Open Secret, p. 361.

² Six Radical Thinkers, p. 142.

³ Vol. 10, no. 9 (November, 1933), p. 291.

⁴ Vol. 38 (18 June, 1943), pp. 219-220.

Bertrand Russel in his essay "The Ancestry of Fascism" finds both Nietzsche and Carlyle in the Nazi family tree.¹

This charge Carlyle's disciples cannot allow to go unanswered. David Gascoyne strikes out against those who would put Carlyle on the Nazi roster when he says:

One of the most frequent of modern misunderstandings of Carlyle is the idea that, because he was one of the critics of Democracy and an admirer of Heroes, he must have been one of the thinkers who prepared the way for Totalitarianism, along with Houston Stewart Chamberlain and the Comte de Gobineau. This is a disgraceful misunderstanding and could only have grown so common in a society which had ceased to know any longer what it means to believe in anything higher than self-interest and the necessity for compromise.²

A similar opinion is offered by Eric Bentley:

Carlyle and Nietzsche in twentieth-century politics have been useful to the German governments in search of authorities to impress the intelligentsia . . . [but] if Hitler himself is indebted to literature it is more probably to the paranoiac wild-west stories of Karl May . . . than to the rather more advanced thought of Carlyle and Nietzsche. Alfred Rosenberg has, of course, been close to Hitler, but his debt to Carlyle and Nietzsche is amost nil.³

Ernst Cassirer also objects to the attempt to make Carlyle a prophet of Nazism:

. . . I cannot accept the judgment I find in recent literature on the subject. What Carlyle meant by 'heroism' or 'leadership' was by no means the

¹ See Bentley, Cult, p. 250.

² Gascoyne, op. cit., p. 11.

³ Cult, p. 247.

same as what we find in our modern theories of fascism.¹

And one final opinion on the subject, this one surprisingly enough from the man who first pointed out the affinity between Carlyle and Hitler:

... it is absurd or unjust to suggest that Carlyle ever came to such an identification of right with might as is frankly accepted by a Nietzsche or a Hitler for a Stalin.²

One of Carlyle's admirers, Frederick Roe, far from seeing him as a prophet of totalitarianism, finds in passages of Carlyle ". . . the very essence of democratic doctrine, -- faith in the worth of the individual irrespective of rank and in the power of education to awaken and develop that worth."³ Roe goes on to develop this liberal vein of thought in the following manner:

Carlyle's democracy goes even further. He was a vigorous and life-long champion of three great principles which underlie modern progress and which were established only after prolonged popular struggle; -- the right of private judgment as won by the Protestant Reformation, the right of a people to revolt against prolonged oppression, and the right of tools to him who can use them"⁴

The well-known political scientist, F.J.C. Hearnshaw, would not only deny that Carlyle had any sympathy for democratic govern-

¹ The Myth of State, Doubleday, New York, 1955 (copyright 1946), p.270.

² H.J.C. Grierson, "Thomas Carlyle", in Proceedings of the British Academy, 1940, London, Oxford University Press, p.321.

³ The Social Philosophy of Carlyle and Ruskin, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1921, p.75.

⁴ Loc. cit.

ment -- "He [Carlyle] ardently believed in government of the people for the people but not by the people"¹ -- but would also deny that Carlyle had any understanding of democratic doctrines, for he wrote quite bluntly: "Carlyle did not believe in liberty at all."²

Earlier an anonymous writer in The Nation had gone much further than this and said "It was impossible for him to be a liberal, for he had a profound disbelief in man."³ The charge here is more than illiberality, it is complete misanthropy. Yet Leigh Hunt once said of Carlyle: "I believe that what Mr. Carlyle likes better than his faultfinding, with all its eloquence, is the face of any human creature that looks suffering and loving and sincere."⁴ In the last two quotations at least, we have a definite reflection of personal prejudice, antipathy on the part of the writer in The Nation -- the tone of his entire article is very bitter -- sympathy on the part of Leigh Hunt who for years was a neighbour of the Carlyles in Chelsea.

We may well conclude this survey of Carlyle criticism with an examination of judgments of Carlyle as an historian. History was very important to Carlyle. He devoted much of his energy to the study and writing of it. Moncure

¹ "Thomas Carlyle", in The Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age, London, Harrap, 1932, p.47.

² Loc. cit.

³ "Thomas Carlyle", vol. 32 (17 February, 1881), p.110.

⁴ Quoted in Gascoyne, op. cit., p.8.

Conway called Carlyle ". . . a great historian -- one who, of all living men, perhaps, has most profoundly studied the relation of individual minds and characters to events of world-wide import."¹ We must remember, however, that Conway (although he sided with Froude in the Reminiscences controversy) was a thoroughgoing Carlyle disciple. Norwood Young, whom we have by this time come to recognize as a man not psychologically or philosophically in tune with the Carlyle spirit, makes this sweeping condemnation of Carlyle's History of the French Revolution:

Carlyle's view of the Revolution is mistaken from beginning to end, because he was incapable of freeing himself from acquired convictions, and was therefore unable to see the facts as they were The reader who desires to obtain a true account of what actually occurred, should avoid Carlyle's dramatic moving picture.²

Quite the opposite view is taken, however, by G.M. Trevelyan. Writing on the occasion of the opening of the Carlyle house in Chelsea he said:

It is significant that Mr. Morse Stephens, who has spent years in studying the latest material of French Revolution history, who knows as intimately as any man the exact nature of the mistakes into which Carlyle fell, still consents to speak of him as 'a great historian,' and as one who, when he erred, erred 'not wilfully but from the scantiness of the information at his disposal!'"³

1 "Thomas Carlyle", Harpers, vol. 23 (May, 1881), p.888.

2 Rise and Fall, p.147.

3 "Carlyle as an Historian", Nineteenth Century, vol. 66 (1899), p.493.

At the same time, however, Trevelyan has to admit that ". . . there are historians who consider him no historian."¹ C.F. Harrold, though perhaps himself no historian, is among those who would bar Carlyle from the brotherhood, his view being that, "Instead of considering Carlyle as a scientific historian we may more properly regard him as an artist."²

By "scientific historian" I take it Harrold means one of two things -- either an historian who accepts the cause-and-effect philosophy of Newtonian physics and applies it to his study of history, or an historian who does his research in a scientifically thorough manner and who presents his facts with scientific objectivity. Since "historian" in the latter sense is more nearly the opposite of "artist", I suppose Harrold's objection to calling Carlyle a "scientific historian" is based on the belief that Carlyle did not carry out proper research or present his facts objectively. But with regard to the research, Harrold himself has admitted that "every paragraph [in the French Revolution] containing an historical fact is the product of a number of mutually confirming sources."³ John Nichol, too, speaks of the "admirable conscientiousness" with which Carlyle undertook ". . . the accumulation of details, the wearisome compilation of facts, weighing of previous

¹ Nineteenth Century, vol. 66 (1899), p. 493.

² "Carlyle's General Method in the French Revolution," PMLA, vol. 63 (1928), p.1150.

³ Ibid., p.1152.

criticism, the sifting of grains of wheat from the bushels of chaff."¹ Carlyle himself did much to propagate this belief, for he spoke often of the drudgery of his historical labours. But Norwood Young scoffs at such protestations, saying:

The complaints [of tedious research] are extravagant and the statements erroneous. Carlyle's claim to be the first actual reader of Cromwell's speeches is ridiculous unless, indeed, there is some magic in the word 'actual.'²

If we turn to the great and final question: What was Carlyle trying to say? we find the same uncertainty. After Carlyle's death overall assessments of him appeared with every eulogy. It is interesting to see how far apart some of these assessments are. To the obituary-writer in the Annual Register the kernel of his philosophy was ". . . that legislation, Reform or Ballot Bills, statutory measures of social improvement of any kind would do of themselves next to no good"³

True, Carlyle laid about often and with heavy sword against the futility of parliamentary reform as a cure for all our ills, but it is going too far -- and neglecting too many other lines of his thought -- to call this belief the kernel of his philosophy. And beyond this assessment there still lies unanswered the question as to why he distrusted ballot boxes and elections.

¹ Thomas Carlyle, in The English Men of Letters Series, London, Macmillan, 1909, p.166.

² Rise and Fall, pp.207-208.

³ Annual Register, 1881, London, Rivington, p.101.

Dean Stanley, the Canon of Westminster Abbey who had proposed that Carlyle be buried in the Abbey and who now had to be satisfied with a funeral oration instead of a funeral, delivered his interpretation of the whole purpose of Carlyle's life from his pulpit on Sunday, February 6, 1888:

The whole framework and fabric of his mind was built up on the belief that there are not many wise, not many noble minds, not many destined by the Supreme Ruler of the universe to rule their fellows This was his doctrine of the work of heroes; this, right or wrong, was the mission of his life.¹

Once again, as in the opinion just given above, there is some truth in this assessment. The doctrine of Heroes is indeed basic to Carlyle's thought. But it is not the whole framework and fabric of his mind nor the mission of his life. If it were, where should we find place for the other Carlyle "doctrines", those of Silence, of Work, of Might and Right? And Dean Stanley's mention of a "Supreme Ruler" hints that there is in Carlyle something or some one beyond the hero, some one more ultimate.

Julian Symons takes quite a different approach. According to him, Carlyle's work was ". . . a life-long struggle to expel with the magic of dogma the hydra-headed monster of doubt."² This sort of interpretation, an attempt to explain the man in terms of a psychological conflict, has been very common with respect to Carlyle. It begins with an examination of the stern religion of Carlyle's childhood and goes on to a

¹ Quoted in Henry J. Nicoll, Thomas Carlyle, London, Ward and Lock, n.d., p.249.

² Thomas Carlyle, p.31.

catalogue of the doubts and torments that beset a one-time believer who is exposed to the cold logic of agnosticism. Here Symons stops. To him, all that Carlyle did throughout his life was done in an attempt to resolve these doubts and torments. Apparently Julian Symons does not take the Everlasting Yea of Sartor Resartus to be final. If this is his view he cannot of course find anything positive in Carlyle at all, and he must regard all that came after Sartor either as valiant attempts at self-conversion or as out-and-out hypocrisy. In such a view there is little of worth to be found in Carlyle, unless the reader himself be troubled by the "hydra-headed monster of doubt" and seek here personal solace.

All three of these evaluations have some truth in them, but none contains the whole truth -- nor do all of them taken together. We must have some broader basis for judgment, one that takes into account more than only the political ideas, or the doctrine of heroes, or Carlyle's personal religious problems. H.J.C. Grierson comes nearer to the whole meaning of Carlyle when he says:

Whatever one may think of Carlyle's conclusions, the aberrations of his last angry pamphlets, his passion for order at the expense of liberty, his vindication of might by some ultimate belief in right in the long run, one will do him an injustice if one ignores the fact that this, justice, was his goal.¹

¹ "Thomas Carlyle", Proceedings of the British Academy, 1940, p. 312.

Justice was indeed Carlyle's goal throughout his life and in all he wrote. Yet how much is here unsaid! What sort of justice is it that the negroes of America should be enslaved? That Governor Eyre should be rewarded for executing the blacks who opposed him? These are things Carlyle approved of. What is then justice? It would seem to be a thing of a thousand shapes, and Grierson offers us no help in finding the Carlylean form of it. Here, too, there are questions left unanswered. How can we recognize justice? Why should we seek justice? Or is it the ultimate thing for which there is no why?

Taken all in all, then, we can find only confusion in the criticism of Carlyle. What one man has to say about his religion is flatly contradicted by another. One authority would call him a misanthrope, another a philanthropist. To some historians he is an historian, to others, an artist. If we read in one place that he is a prophet our age cannot afford to neglect, we read in another that the value of his message has vanished utterly. As for his social and political ideas -- here we have wide choice. He is either a Labourite or an aristocrat, a humanist or a Nazi, depending upon the personal prejudice or partiality of the critic.

Carlyle's friends, in attempting to invalidate the accusations of his foes, usually make the charge that the foes have not read Carlyle. To some extent this is probably true, and the reasons for the neglect are not hard to find. The size of the Carlyle canon is itself frightening and much in it deals with matters no longer of current interest. Carlyle's unusual style probably plays a part as well in the reluctance

of present-day readers to tackle him. But a more important reason stems from the Froude controversy. From the time that Froude hinted at Carlyle's irascibility and impotence the study of the man became more important than the works. David Gascoyne has this to say with regard to both Carlyle and Ruskin: "What interests modern critics seems to be far less what they had to say than the unsuccessful nature of their marriages."¹

Along with the charge of not having read Carlyle goes the charge of not having understood him. Thus, John MacCunn, defending Carlyle against those who scoff that he preached a gospel of work and did nothing himself, advises that ". . . his critics should learn to interpret that gospel aright."² Good advice, too, if understanding can be achieved by one who is not intellectually or psychologically in the Carlylean camp. But is it possible for one who is completely out of tune with the semi-mystical morality and religious earnestness of Carlyle to interpret any Carlylean gospel aright? Surely there is some neutral ground where an observer can stand and take an objective look at Carlyle. Surely it is possible for even a hostile critic to comprehend intellectually what he does not emotionally accept. But the corollary must also stand. The ardent follower must be equally willing to make concessions, to recognize in his hero both weaknesses and errors of judgment whenever an impartial logic detects them. What is needed then is an unbiased, objective

¹ Gascoyne, op. cit., p. 8.

² Six Radical Thinkers, p. 161,

approach to Carlyle. As yet, no one has provided this.

One thing more is needed -- an approach which treats Carlyle as a whole, not as a number of unrelated theories or doctrines. Too much of Carlylean criticism has been focussed only on one aspect of the man -- the hero theory has been a favourite topic for this type of approach.¹ It is not fair to Carlyle to consider, say, his theory of the hero apart from his theory of might and right. Nor is it fair to consider either of them apart from his doctrine of work or of silence, nor to consider any other aspect of his work apart from his total philosophy. Small wonder that critics who look at Carlyle in this piecemeal fashion come to as little agreement as the six blind men who investigated the elephant. Carlyle, cut up in this manner, bears as little resemblance to the true Carlyle as the quartered beef does to the beast from which it came. The blood and sinews of the parts may be the same as those of the whole, but the form, and consequently the meaning, are entirely different.

We can only come to a true understanding of Carlyle through an objective view of his total philosophy. In this thesis I propose to attempt just such an approach. In the interests of objectivity I will disregard as much as possible the

¹ Among the books which deal specifically with this aspect of Carlyle's philosophy may be listed:

Eric Bentley, A Century of Hero-Worship

, The Cult of the Superman

H.J.C. Grierson, Carlyle and Hitler

B.H. Lehman, Carlyle's Theory of the Hero

man himself and concentrate upon his writings, drawing from them with as much logic and as little partiality as the mysticism and the emotionalism of his work will allow an outline of the cosmic plan which is the basis for all Carlyle's other philosophical tenets and for all his judgments and opinions.

It will be the full purpose and scope of this thesis to go on from an outline of Carlyle's cosmic view to an examination of the various theories that grow out of it -- the theory of might and right, the theory of love and worship, the theory of work and silence. I will then turn to the histories and examine them in the light of Carlyle's philosophy, showing how their content and tone are governed by the application of the Carlylean scheme of the universe. Finally I will consider the weakness of the whole system, attempting to explain in terms of the system and of its weaknesses those judgments and opinions which his friends consider to be aberrations and which to his enemies are examples of his sourness and misanthropy.

Chapter II

Carlyle's Cosmic View

In dealing with Carlyle we must realize from the outset that he had, in his own mind at least, a complete and harmonious view of the universe. He was a man of considerable intellect and extreme earnestness, and it is therefore idle to imagine that he made his judgments lightly and spontaneously or that he uttered opinions in a hasty, ill-considered manner. There is one standard against which he measures all problems and makes all judgments, one unifying idea which ties together all that he wrote. Unfortunately this unifying idea was never fully and explicitly set out, but was scattered in pieces throughout his work. Sartor Resartus is particularly useful in helping us grasp Carlyle's philosophy since it is both an account of the evolution of Carlyle's thinking and a delineation of the broad outline of his thought. Carlyle himself remarked of this book:

It contains more of my opinions on Art, Politics, Religion, Heaven, Earth, and Air, than all the things I have yet written.¹

And the opinions expressed in Sartor in 1830 were substantially the opinions of the weary sage of Chelsea in 1870. Only in detail or in application does the philosophy of the mature Carlyle differ from that of Sartor Resartus.

¹ In a letter to Mr. Fraser quoted in C.E. Norton, ed., Letters of Thomas Carlyle, London, Macmillan, 1888, vol. 2nd, p. 105.

Without an awareness of Carlyle's cosmic view and without an understanding of it no true interpretation of him or of anything he wrote is possible. The reader must always bear in mind that all judgments he utters have been arrived at, not through pragmatic consideration of the immediate facts of the case, but through consideration of these facts in relation to Carlyle's idea of the ultimate destiny and purpose of mankind and of the universe. One of Carlyle's schoolmasters once said of him that he loved earnestness more than truth and to some extent this is true. So earnest is he that he looks at a matter as small as the renting of a farm or as large as the making of a constitution with the same ponderous reference to his idea of universal good and justice. Thus when he supports Governor Eyre it is not sufficient that we examine the facts of the Jamaica case and condemn or condone Carlyle in the light of these facts alone. We must consider that he was thinking in terms that far outreached the shores of the colony of Jamaica. He was thinking of the effect of the Governor's actions on the physical well-being of the natives, but he was thinking too of the effect on the spiritual well-being of the whole universe. It was not that Carlyle had no sympathy for the blacks of Jamaica, but that this sympathy was subordinated to a vision of mankind as a noble and heroic creature of God rather than as the pitiable ward of a sweetly benign government. An explanation of this vision must begin with an examination of Carlyle's concept of God.

Critics have often tried to find the roots of

Carlyle's thought in Fichte, in Kant, in Novalis, in Richter. Undoubtedly each of these has done something to bring to the surface an understanding and a sympathy that was latent in Carlyle, but there is a certain futility in this game of seeking sources. Carlyle himself wrote in 1830: ✓

I have now almost done with the Germans. Having seized their opinions, I must now turn me to inquire how true are they? That truth is in them, no lover of Truth will doubt; but how much? And after all, one needs an intellectual Scheme (or ground plan of the Universe) drawn with one's own instruments.¹

On the basis of this statement I dare to overlook influences and sources. At best, opinions reached in this matter are mere speculation. And what does it matter whether Carlyle's moral bent comes from his reading in Kant, from reading about Kant, or from his Calvinistic home-background, as long as we realize that it is there? For an understanding of Carlyle it is not important that we trace his philosophy to its sources, but it is important that we know what his philosophy was.

Carlyle himself proposed (through Teufelsdröckh) a "high Platonic mysticism" as "perhaps the fundamental element of his nature."² The mysticism is perhaps questionable, but the platonism is not. Carlyle's philosophy begins with the concept of some Supreme Being to whom all mankind, all worlds, owe their being. Sometimes Carlyle borrows Fichte's term "Divine Idea" to name this concept; more often he prefers the term

¹Quoted from Carlyle's Two Notebooks in Hill Shine, Carlyle and the Saint Simonians, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1941, p.7.

²Sartor, p. 52 ✓

he learned at the Ecclefechan fireside, God. In this latter case, however, it is the name only that he prefers. Carlyle's God has neither the savagely retributive justice of the Old Testament God, the forgiving benevolence of the New Testament one, nor the anthropomorphism of either. Carlyle's God is true spirit and true idea. As spirit he cannot be fully grasped by a finite mind, but only dimly perceived through finite manifestations.

In Carlyle's speculative system this God or Divine Idea is the ultimate reality which lies behind all appearances. Our Here and Now are only small circumscribed fractions of an infinitude of space and an eternity of time, and are therefore of no great importance in the total scheme of things. The entire physical world is merely an imperfect manifestation at the human level of the ultimate reality, that is, of God. "Where now," asks Carlyle, dismissing our centuries with a magnificent sweep of his hand,

is Alexander of Macedon: does the steel Host that yelled in fierce battle-shouts at Issus and Arbela, remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly even as perturbed Goblins must? Napoleon too, and his Moscow Retreats and Austerlitz Campaigns! Was it all other than the veriest Spectre-hunt; which has now, with its howling tumult that made night hideous, flitted away?

We must recognize that our minds, incapable of comprehending Infinity or Eternity, much less God, the creator of Time and Space, come to look upon the limits of a few thousand square

¹ Sartor, p. 211.

miles of space and a few thousand years of time as reality. To Carlyle, our Here and Now are merely "superficial terrexial adhesions to thought.... the Canvas ... whereon all our Dreams and Life-Visions are painted."¹ God, however, exists in a universal Here, and everlasting Now.

There is little that can be said in words about a spirit and therefore Carlyle can tell us very little about the nature of his God. God is, of course, perfect, and

. . . throughout the whole world of man, in all manifestations and performances of his nature, outward and inward, personal and social, the Perfect, the Great, is a mystery to itself, knows not itself.²

Despite this mystery, however, Carlyle is sure of one thing -- God is aware of his universe and takes an active interest in its welfare: " The ALMIGHTY MAKER is not like a clockmaker that once, in the old immemorial ages, having made his Horologue of a Universe, sits ever since and sees it go."³

Moreover, God's interest in his universe is marked by an extreme morality. In "Characteristics", Carlyle identifies morality with the Divine Idea, saying, ". . . the name of the Infinite is GOOD, is GOD!"⁴

As far as we and our world are concerned, the moral

¹Sartor, pp. 42-43.

²"Chartism", Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, vol. 4, p. 16.

³Past and Present, p. 147.

⁴"Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 43.

nature of the Infinite is set out in what Carlyle is pleased to call the "Laws of Nature".¹ When Carlyle finds something to be condemned, it is because it is contrary to the Laws of Nature, and conversely, whatever he commends is commended because it agrees with the Laws of Nature. These laws are therefore central to his theory, the touchstone for all his judgments. Yet he cannot tell us what they are, for they are contained in "... a Volume written in celestial hieroglyphs, in the true Sacred-writing; Prophets are happy that they can read here a line and there a line."²

Since the Laws of Nature are so difficult to discover it is only natural that from century to century a different interpretation of the Laws will be common among men. Even the ablest prophet will inadvertently allow his own experience and tradition to colour his reading of the sacred rules. And this is as it should be; that small portion of God's infinite truth which roughly satisfied the Arab tribesman and enabled him to live would not suffice for a polished European city-dweller. But the truth that is discovered by one generation is passed on to the next, and the truth that is discovered in one culture spreads to another so that slowly and

¹For a full study of Carlyle's use of the "Laws of Nature" see Wm. Taggart, Carlyle's Handling of the 'Laws of Nature' Concept, unpublished thesis, Montreal, McGill University, 1952.

²Sartor, p. 204-205.

imperfectly man comes to know his allotment of eternal truth. But never can he know it perfectly, for "Truth" in the words of Schiller, "Immer wird, nie ist, never is, is always a-being."¹ That is, truth as man knows it is always a-being. In God, truth and the Laws of Nature are unalterable and permanent.

One hint Carlyle does give us about the Laws of Nature, and that is that they are at bottom moral precepts of the highest order. In Past and Present he states that "Justice and Reverence are the everlasting central Law of this Universe."² In other places he often equates justice to goodness, but he is still faced with the task, if he will do it, of telling us what justice is. Reverence is a rather different matter, for it requires someone to do the revering as well as someone to be revered. Discussion of this relationship must be postponed until we come to examine the place of man in the Carlylean scheme.

A fundamental part of Carlyle's cosmic view is the theory that these Laws of Nature cannot be contravened with impunity. Everywhere throughout his works Carlyle repeatedly asserts that "The Laws of Nature will have themselves fulfilled. That is a thing certain to me."³ The fact that this

¹ "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 38
Throughout this thesis italics within quotations from Carlyle are Carlyle's and not mine.

² Past and Present, p. 110.

³ Ibid., p. 274.

aspect of Carlyle's total theory is repeated and stressed indicates its importance. Here is the pivotal point of Carlyle's speculation -- on this earth, justice must be done, will have itself done. That it will be done at once, we cannot expect; that it will be done eventually, we cannot doubt. It is possible to contravene the Laws of Nature -- Carlyle is continually warning about forged notes and false kings -- but for the offender and for his schemes there is eventual doom and oblivion: "This Universe has its Laws. If we walk according to the Law, the Law-maker will befriend us, if not, not."¹ It is as simple as that. The Laws of Nature are the will of God, not only with respect to the behaviour of a man, but also with respect to the behaviour of a society. Just as the individual person who acts contrary to the Laws will eventually be forced to return to the right way or to disappear, so a society must also conduct itself in accordance with the Laws, or it too will disappear;

Nature's Laws, I must repeat, are eternal; her still small voice speaking from the innermost heart of us, shall not, under terrible penalties be disregarded. No man can depart from the truth without danger to himself; no one million of men; no twenty-seven Millions of men.

Carlyle does not generally emphasize the "terrible penalties" mentioned in this passage. Usually when he speaks of the purging of a man or a society of those elements which offend the Laws of Nature he indicates that God is not interested in

¹ Past and Present, p. 25.

² Ibid., p. 142.

punishing the transgressor, but only in putting his universe back in order. He sets about doing this in exalted indifference. In the process the violator will certainly disappear; perhaps society as a whole may suffer, perhaps some innocents may be hurt -- Carlyle's usual symbol for the purging element is fire and fire is notoriously insensible to guilt and innocence -- but society as a whole benefits.

In terms of a universal scheme this belief in an inexorable purging and corrective agent leads to a sense of melioration and optimism that few have previously connected with Carlyle. Justice must prevail because the Carlylean God is in his Carlylean heaven. "How indestructibly the Good grows and propagates itself," writes Carlyle in Sartor, "even among the weedy entanglements of Evil."¹ And, of course, there is accompanying the growth and propagation of good the destruction and disappearance of evil. Since what is unjust does not meet the requirements of the Laws of Nature, it will have to go. A lie is doomed from the day of its birth. A false act will show itself to be false and will eventually perish. A sham ruler or a hollow system of government will one day reveal its emptiness and will fade from the earth.

Not only are whole systems doomed if they do not conform to the just laws of the universe, but every system is continuously subject to a gradual sifting and sorting whereby all that is dead, evil, or unjust in it is culled out. In this manner a system which grew up to fit one situation is adapted

¹ Sartor, p. 79.

to fit a different situation, and thus it is kept alive as long as it conforms to the Laws of Nature. Carlyle repeatedly cites Christianity as a system which, because of the truth in it, has persisted for two thousand years, all the while shedding those accidents of its being which proved false. "Truth and Justice alone are capable of being 'conserved' and preserved," wrote Carlyle, meaning that only those philosophies, customs, traditions, and institutions which held truth and justice in them could carry on from age to age.

This gradual and continual purging is a slow and quiet business. It goes on mystically, almost automatically, as long as Truth and Justice have the upper hand in the running of universal affairs. If, however, sham, hypocrisy, unverity, injustice should seriously threaten to gain control and to break through Nature's laws at every point, then swift and violent measures are necessary, and "Nature burst up in flames, French-revolutions and such-like, proclaiming with terrible veracity that forged notes are forged."¹ It should be noted that in the Carlylean system injustice and unverity cannot possibly gain control of anything for more than limited periods of time. Their attempts to do so have all the futility of Satan's was against God. In both cases the protagonist is, by definition, almighty.

And so it is that however gloomily Carlyle painted

¹ Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, ed. A. MacMechan, Boston, Ginn, 1901, p. 58. All future references to Heroes are to this edition.

Victorian England and its plight, he could nevertheless see a light of hope burning at the end of the dark corridor. He believed that men were slowly learning to read the volume of nature and were therefore slowly improving their lot. Moreover, since only the institutions and ideas survived which were in harmony with the Laws of Nature, there was in the very passing of time a process tending to betterment and improvement. It is on this note of optimism that the otherwise dismal book, Past and Present, ends:

As dark misery settles down on us, and our refuges of lies fall in pieces one after one, the hearts of men, now at last grown serious, will turn to refuges of truth. The eternal stars shine out again, so soon as it is dark enough.¹

"Characteristics" too -- in the main a gloomy essay wherein is painted a thoroughly depressing picture of Victorian England and its future -- contains a similar note of hope:

Deep and sad as is our feeling that we stand yet in the bodeful Night; equally deep, indestructable is our assurance that Morning will not fail. Nay, already, as we look round, streaks of a day spring are in the east; it is dawning; when the time shall be fulfilled, it will be day.²

It was on the basis of these confident and sanguine prophecies that Mill once wrote to a friend about Carlyle:

. . . he differs from most men, who see as much as he does into the defects of the age,

¹ Past and Present, p. 294.

² Essays, vol. 3, p. 37.

by a circumstance greatly to his advantage in my estimation, that he looks for a safe landing before and not behind; he sees that if we could only replace things as they once were, we should only retard the final issue, as we should in all probability go on just as we then did, and arrive at the very place where we now stand.¹

Two objections to Carlyle's theory of melioration come immediately to mind. First, if this is God's universe and if God is Good, why is evil allowed? Second, if the evil that is abroad among us is doomed no matter what is done or not done against it, why should we worry about it? Why should a dyspeptic Scot write thousands of words about a world tottering on the brink of Niagara if he is convinced that the world cannot in any event plunge into the whirlpool below? We can turn at once to consideration of the first objection, deferring consideration of the second till the time when we are ready to look at the place of man in the universe.

The first question above came from the assumption that this is God's world and that it should therefore be perfect. Carlyle's answer to this objection is that while this is God's world, it is not God. God is spirit and idea; the physical world is merely a tactile manifestation of this spirit, a complex of spiritual forces at work in a material medium. It should be noted here that while Carlyle uses the term "physical universe" to denote tactile and visible objects of

¹ Quoted in Roe, Carlyle and Ruskin, p. 45n.

² Sartor, pp. 43, 150.

the world about us, he includes within the term such non-physical phenomena as traditions, institutions, philosophies, and religions, since they are also human attempts at expression of the Divine Idea.

Because the world is physical it is imperfect, chaotic, and, in part, evil. There is nothing pantheistic in Carlyle's view. The world is not God, but merely a phenomenon in time and space which at once reveals to us and veils from us the nature of the Divine Idea it bodies forth. More than once Carlyle quotes the Earth-Spirit of Goethe's Faust: this earth is the living visible garment of God.¹ Through the magnificence and beauty of our world, God's goodness is revealed. The superficialities, practicalities, and shows of our world conceal -- from common eyes particularly -- the reality that lies beneath them. Man must himself be worshipful and loving in order to see that:

. . . through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every Living Soul, the glory of a present God still beams. But Nature, which is the Time-vesture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish.²

Such a view as this leads naturally to a scorn of material things. "The world is not REAL," says Carlyle, "is at bottom Nothing."³ Similarly, to Teufelsdröckh a drawing room with its Brussels carpets and pier glasses is only a section of infinite space, and the star of a lord has for him

¹ Sartor, pp. 43, 150.

² Ibid., p. 210.

³ Heroes, p. 79.

no greater intrinsic worth than the buttons on a clown's frock, for he has ". . . the humour of looking at all material things as spirit."¹ The highest duchess is to be honoured, not for her Malines laces, but for the goodness that is within her. The lord's star, the duchess's laces -- these things Carlyle consigns to his Sham world. They are part of the "Show of Things" but are no real things, just as the papal procession is a form of worship but is no true worship. Carlyle considers it the besetting sin of his generation that it is turning from spiritual to material values and that a consequent falsity is pervading all life. Cant, "speech for the purpose of concealing thought," has replaced the rude, true language of one heart talking to another; diletantism has replaced devotion; cash-wages have replaced personal loyalties.

Yet much as Carlyle despises the physical world because it obscures man's recognition of reality, he must also honour it for what it reveals. Much as he scorns the physical world for its shams, he must yet revere it for the divinity it contains. The world about us is the only book wherein we poor finite creatures can read what God is and what he would have us do. It behoves us, therefore, to look carefully to this world, to study it, and to learn from it God's lesson. By looking at the past and comparing it with the present we can distinguish good and evil, justice and injustice, for good and justice are perpetuated in the systems that survive, while evil and in-

¹ Sartor, p. 23.

justice are in those things that have passed away. It is from this part of his theory that Carlyle got his deep respect for history and the study of history.

One more point must be brought out in considering God's relation to the universe. According to Carlyle, our world is chaotic -- a Phantasmagoria is his usual word for it. In this world, forces seem to be acting at cross-purposes, lightness and darkness are inextricably intertwined so that it seems impossible to separate them. Good and evil, the sham and the real, justice and injustice -- all are jumbled together into a rolling swelling mass, a wild and desolate waste-land of semi-darkness. Yet God's plan is one of order, says Carlyle. Remember that the enlightened administration of the University of Weissnichtwo had appointed Teufelsdröckh Professor of Things in General in the hope that ". . . the task of bodying somewhat forth again from such Chaos might be, even slightly, facilitated."¹ His own age and his own country were particularly chaotic, thought Carlyle, and he felt it his duty as a prophet and as one that saw the Divine Plan to steer his people back to the path of God and order.

The chaos comes only from the imperfection of the material medium in which the spirit makes itself known to the senses. To prove that God's will towards order is making itself felt, Carlyle points first to the cities, bridges, and roads that men have brought to the desolate land; then he

¹ Sartor, p. 13.

points to the laws and parliaments which have taken over from the club and strong-right-arm rule of the cave-man day; finally he points to the worship of good that has grown stronger and more recognizable from the days of Odin to the time of Christ. The tendency, says Carlyle, has been, from the beginning of the universe, toward order, away from chaos. But we must be ever wary to see these buildings, institutions, and faiths as signs and symbols fit for our day, though in no way fit for eternity. They are not to be considered permanent -- only the Divine Idea is permanent. We must be willing to discard any plan or arrangement if the spirit goes out of it. There is ever the danger that man will set up a parliament and then lie idly back expecting his machinery to take from his shoulders all the responsibility for living.

In the physical world we have continual change -- the result of the efforts of the ideal to manifest itself in the actual. It need not bother us, however, that the things about us are all transient and mutable; the true spirit that is in them is immutable and has an existence apart from the physical object that, at this moment and in this place, bodies it forth:

. . . Where does your accumulated Agricultural, Metallurgic, and other Manufacturing SKILL lie warehoused? It transmits itself on the atmospheric air, on the sun's rays (by Hearing and Vision); it is a thing aeriform, impalpable, of quite spiritual sort. In like manner, ask me not, Where are the LAWS; where is the GOVERNMENT? In vain wilt thou go to Schonbrunn, to Downing Street, to the Palais Bourbon: thou

findest there nothing but brick or stone houses, and some bundles of Paper tied with tape. Where, then, is that same cunningly-devised almighty GOVERNMENT of theirs to be lain hands on? Everywhere, yet nowhere: seen only in its works, this too is a thing aeriform, invisible; or, if you will, mystic and miraculous. So spiritual (geistig) is our whole daily Life.¹

So spiritual indeed is our whole daily life that Carlyle can find no cause to mourn the passing of any of the visible things in our world. They are merely emblems of the spirit and force of the Diving Idea. What though Greek civilization and Roman culture have disappeared? It is merely their external glories that have gone; their true glory lives on forever:

The true Past departs not, nothing that was worthy in the Past departs; no Truth or Goodness realized by man ever dies, or can die; but is all still here, and recognized or not, lives and works through endless change.²

In Carlyle's scheme the physical world is important only because it is the medium through which the spirit strives to manifest itself in a sensory manner. Matter in itself is unimportant, for it ". . . exists only spiritually, and to represent some Idea and to body it forth."³ Often enough Carlyle disregards entirely those things which we see about us and considers the universe to be ". . . but an infinite Complex of Forces; thousandfold, from Gravitation up to Thought and Will."⁴ It is a curious use of the term "force", this one.

¹ Sartor, p. 137.

² "Characteristics," Essays, vol. 3, p. 38.

³ Sartor, p. 57.

⁴ French Revolution, vol. 2, p. 102. See also "Diamond Necklace", Essays, vol. 3, p. 338.

Force, according to Carlyle, pervades every object of the physical universe. If a drop of water falls to the ground, it does not lie there, but is whisked mysteriously away to a tropic ocean or the North Pole. The withered leaf is not dead, but has a force in it, ". . . else how could it rot?"¹ Tradition and memory each have a force that causes us to act in a certain way and it is through the activity of these forces that the goodness and justice of the past continue to exert their influences. Disregarding the external accidents in which these activities are clothed we have a view of the universe as a

Shoreless Fountain-ocean of Force, of power to do; wherein Force rolls and circles, billowing, many-streamed, harmonious; wide as Immensity, deep as Eternity; beautiful and terrible, not to be comprehended: this is what man names Existence and Universe; this thousand-tinted Flame-image, at once veil and revelation, reflex such as he, in his poor brain and heart, can paint of One Unnameable, dwelling in inaccessible light! From beyond the Star-galaxies, from before the Beginning of Days, it billows and rolls.²

Even as the physical world is a complex of forces working out an eternal design, so man is an apparition made by God and through which God's plan will be furthered. Each of us is a spirit in a corporeal form, a soul rendered visible. Each of us can say: "I have the miraculous breath of Life in me, breathed into me by Almighty God. I have affections, thoughts, a god-given capability to be and to do."³ The first proof of

¹ Sartor, p. 56.

² French Revolution, vol. 2, p. 102.

³ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 163.

the divine origin of man Carlyle finds in the affection that one man holds for another. He discovers among all men a shared or universal anthropomorphism, a love that binds one human to his fellows. "Ye have compassion on one another. . . . This is a great direct thought, a glance at first hand into the very fact of things."¹ It is from our common parentage in God that this affection springs; we are indeed all brothers.

It will be appreciated that this aspect of Carlyle's philosophy moulded his view of biography. Because he thought that the compassion that one man showed for another was proof of the divine origin of mankind, Carlyle looked upon small acts of compassion and affection as revelatory of the man himself, or rather, and this is in the end the same thing, as revelatory of the amount of godhead in the man. As a result, in all his biographies, he tends to give unusual stress to such small and seemingly unimportant incidents as reveal in his subject an open and a loving heart. He is much impressed with Boswell's chronicle of Johnson's daily activities and it is therefore relevant to look for a moment at the incident from Boswell's Life of Johnson that he chooses to quote in his essay on biography:

Boswell relates this in itself smallest and poorest of occurrences: 'As we walked along the Strand tonight, arm in arm, a woman of the town accosted us in the usual enticing manner. "No, no, my girl," said Johnson, "it won't do." He, however, did not treat her with harshness; and we talked of the wretched life of

¹ Heroes, p. 79.

such women.' Strange power of Reality!
 Not even this poorest of occurrences, but
 now, after seventy years are come and gone,
 has a meaning for us.¹

It may be charged that Carlyle in his own biographies laid undue emphasis on just such incidents as this, but it must also be admitted that his theory of biography led him to be one of the first to recognize the worth of Boswell as a biographer.

A second and a stronger demonstration of the divinity that is within us Carlyle finds in the fact that we worship. In Heroes Carlyle makes much of the fact that men have from the beginning of time felt and unconsciously known that there is something above and beyond themselves, a something mysteriously connected with themselves. And, just as mysteriously, they have felt moved to worship this something. God made himself known to the rude pagans of the north as to the wild Arabs of the south. True he was known to each in a different way, but he was at bottom the same God. An elevated and exalted version of that universal anthropomorphism which enables one man to recognize another as his brother, enables man to perceive his God and to worship him. X

Man is properly, then, a spirit whose home is in God and who, for the brief period of his sojourn upon earth, is connected by invisible bonds to all other men. But just as the spirit contained in the physical world is obscured by the matter enclosing it, so man finds his spirit trammelled and

¹ "Biography", Essays, vol. 3, p. 56✓

confined by the needs and desires of his physical self. Most distracting -- and therefore most distasteful since it leads the spirit away from the worship of its maker -- is the human yearning for happiness on this earth. Happiness is not possible because true happiness can be found only in the perfection and completeness of God. Searching for happiness is futile and leads only to greater unhappiness, since the search must end in failure. Moreover, searching for happiness in this earth is immoral since it interferes with the search for God. Here is the basis for Carlyle's great contempt for the Benthamites and their doctrines. The emphasis that Bentham put upon the attainment of happiness was anathema to Carlyle. He felt that the whole Benthamite theory was aimed only at securing through material comfort and well-being the greatest possible measure of happiness and contentment on this earth. Repeatedly Carlyle explodes against this view:

Will the whole Finance Minsters and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoeblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two; for the Shoeblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: God's infinite Universe altogether to himself, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose.¹

This is merely a restatement of the age-old precept that man does not live by bread alone, but with Carlyle it takes on greater than usual significance because of the earnestness of

¹ Sartor, p. 152.

his view. It is not enough that man should be aware of his soul; Carlyle would have him continually filled with reverence and awe before this divinity that is within him, with torment and fear that he is not treating it as it would be treated, with love and gladness that it is there at all.

Worse to Carlyle than the unhappiness of searching for satisfaction is the stagnation of imagining that we have found it. Nothing is more despicable than the smugness and complacency of self-satisfaction. "To me," says Carlyle, through the mouth of Teufelsdröckh,

nothing seems more natural than that the Son of Man, when such God-given mandate first prophetically stirs within him, and the Clay must now be vanquished or vanquish, -- should be carried of the spirit into grim Solitudes, and there fronting the Tempter to grimdest battle with him; defiantly setting him at naught, till he yield and fly. Name it as we choose: with or without visible Devil, whether in the natural Desert of rocks and sands, or in the populous moral Desert of selfishness and baseness, -- to such Temptation are we all called. Unhappy if we are not! Unhappy if we are but Half-men, in whom that divine handwriting has never blazed forth, all-subduing, in true sun-splendour; but quivers dubiously amid meaner lights; or smoulders in dull pain, in darkness, under earthly vapours!¹

If, in a surfeit of worldly goods, we lie back and imagine that we have everything we want and need, we are no longer men, but half-men, stomachs bereft of souls. (For Carlyle the stomach is the usual symbol for human desires which can be fulfilled by the physical world, just as cookery is his symbol for all

¹ Sartor, p. 147.

the life-processes which contribute to the satisfaction of these desires.) God only is perfect and complete. It is man's lot to seek ever the perfection of God though he knows full well that he can never find it. To Carlyle it is immoral for any man to stop searching for God and struggling to do his will.

Are we then to conclude that Carlyle would allow no happiness in this world? He once exclaimed that man had more right to a gallows-noose about his neck than to happiness. Yet Carlyle does allow a degree of happiness. Since discontent and dissatisfaction come from looking to this world for happiness, satisfaction and contentment will come from looking away from this world. For this "looking away" Carlyle has a term -- borrowed in this instance from Goethe and Novalis -- Selbsttödtung or self-annihilation. Selbsttödtung Carlyle calls the first preliminary moral act, the act from which all morality springs. Thus, for example, does Teufelsdröckh, tortured and tormented by that foolish precept "Know thyself", forget himself, annihilate his Self, and with ". . . mind's eye now unsealed, and its hands ungyved,"¹ rise from the Everlasting No to the Everlasting Yea. He throws off the egoism of concern with self, of inquiring as to his own existence, of seeking his own happiness, and finds thereby a measure of comfort and assurance, and at the same time, that great moral truth, that this is God's world:

Sweeter than Dayspring to the Shipwrecked in Nova Zembla; ah, like the mother's voice to her little child that strays, bewildered, weeping, in unknown tumults; like soft strainings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart, came that

¹ Sartor, p. 149.

Evangel. The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnelhouse of spectres, but godlike, and my Father's!¹

All that is self-regarding and selfishly personal in our lives must be put away so that the spirit can soar free above the circulations of every-day life that have hitherto bound it. With the annihilation of self we are freed from envy, anger, hatred, jealousy -- all those personal emotions which throttle the soul of man. We are freed too from the useless, self-conscious scrutiny of ourselves and can turn our attentions to the world and to God. The soul can then penetrate, to the extent which it is freed, beyond the phantasmagoria and gloom that surround it and can perceive, though still dimly, the Laws of Nature. Proportional to the penetration and perception -- and to the subsequent right activity -- is the happiness that results from the denial of self. It can, of course, at best be only a partial happiness, for the Selbst-tödtung can be only partial. Perfect denial of self, though it would mean full realization of the spirit within, would also mean the end of life for the body without. Thus it follows logically that:

. . . the Dead are all holy, even they that were base and wicked while alive. Their baseness and wickedness was not They, was but the heavy and unmanageable Environment that lay round them, with which they fought unprevailingly: they (the ethereal god-given force that was in them, and was their Self) have now shuffled off that heavy Environment and are now free and pure.²

¹ Sartor, p. 150.

² "Biography", Essays, vol. 3, p. 56..

More important than the degree of happiness obtained through Selbsttödtung is the degree of perception it gives into the Laws of Nature. The more completely the work and purpose of our lives are turned from the selfish and the petty, the more fully we come intuitively to an awareness of God and his plan. This awareness is dependent upon not only the degree to which the spirit has been freed from physical entanglement, but also to the amount of intuition with which the person has been endowed. Carlyle uses the word "intuition" to designate a mystical ability to recognize what one should do. It is the spiritual communication system between God and man and as such it is a human faculty far more important to Carlyle than the faculty of reason:

. . . Often by some winged word, winged as the thunderbolt, of a Luther, a Napoleon, a Goethe, shall we see the difficulty split asunder and its secret laid bare; while the Irrefragable, with all his logical tools, hews at it, and hovers round it, and finds it on all hands too hard for him.¹

Briefly, succinctly, Carlyle's motto in this matter is:

". . . it is the heart always that sees, before the head can see" ² If we accept that God is spirit and that man is a physical manifestation of this spirit, we must of course accept that there will be some mysterious and unseen agency linking the two. Since God is ultimate and all-knowing, intuition sent by him is superior to reason which is only the

¹ "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 6.

² "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 148.

product of a finite mind dealing with finite experiences.

Just as Carlyle believed that the objects of the visible world had their real existence only in the spirit and force which they harboured, so he considered man to have his true being only in the spark of divinity which was his soul. We would expect, then, that Carlyle would lay little worth upon human beings, just as he put little store by the treasures of the physical world. To some extent this is indeed the case. Once, commenting on Dr. Johnson searching among coffins for a ghost, Carlyle remarked: "The good Doctor was a ghost, as actual and authentic as heart could wish."¹ To Carlyle we are all ghosts and spectres who appear for an instant in body form, then fade again into air and invisibility. And though there be a thousand million of us ". . . walking the Earth openly at noontide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once."² Thus, to Carlyle, thinking in terms of eternity and infinity, it meant little that Governor Eyre should murder a few blacks or that ten thousand or a hundred thousand should perish in the French Revolution as long as the Universe was brought somewhat back to order in the process.

However, Carlyle does not always hold this light opinion of the value of the individual. Just as he revered the physical world as a revelation of the divine will, so he reveres

¹ Sartor, p. 211.

² Loc. cit.

the human body as the receptacle of the spirit of God. Speaking of the worship and awe with which Abbot Samson uncovered the body of St. Edmund, Carlyle asks:

Who knows how to reverence the Body of Man?
It is the most reverend phenomenon under this
Sun. For the highest God dwells visible in
that mystic unfathomable Visibility, which calls
itself 'I' on the Earth.

He then goes on to quote Novalis:

Bending over men . . . is a reverence done to
this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch Heaven
when we lay our hand on a human Body.¹

Greatly as Carlyle reveres the human body, note that the reason always is that it is a "Revelation in the Flesh" and that the highest God dwells visible in it; never does he worship or honour the human body or the human life for itself and as a thing apart from the godhead it contains.

So far we have considered Selbsttödtung only as the process by which a man who is tormenting himself with questions as to the purpose of his own existence is turned from this useless introversion through recognition of his insignificance and unimportance relative to the universe and to God. But consider how the Promethean or Faustian man, the man who will recognize no bounds or limits to his freedom. He will not acknowledge that he is subservient to any God or Divine Idea, and therefore he denies the spiritual part of

¹ Past and Present, p. 124,

himself, what to Carlyle is the only real and living part of himself. Here there must be a pruning back of this self that is growing anarchically in all directions. There must be recognition that man cannot measure himself with the gods. And if our Prometheus ask "Why not? What distinguishes men from gods?" we can find the answer where Carlyle found it, in Goethe:

Was unterscheidet
Götter von Menschen?
Dass viele Wellen
Von jenen wandeln,
Ein ewiger Strom:
Uns hebt die Welle,
Verschlingt die Welle,
Und wir versinken.

Ein kleiner Ring
Begrenzt unser Leben,
Und viele Geschlechter
Reinen sich dauernd
An ihres Daseins
Unendliche Kette.

(Die Grenzen der Menschheit.)

With Goethe Carlyle insists repeatedly that there are bounds to human existence, and with Goethe he sees as the first proof of this the fact that upon all humans is laid the necessity to die. Here is the most unavoidable and undeniable proof that man is not a free agent.

Having forced acceptance of this limit upon the Promethean man, Carlyle then goes on to outline other limits of mankind. Foremost among these is the limit set by man's God-given sense of duty. Carlyle postulates that each man has, as a basic component of the divinity which he inherits, a sense

of right and wrong, together with a compelling urge to do what is right and to avoid what is wrong. Each man does not, of course, see his duty with the same clarity, but each, whether he be enmeshed in introverted contemplation or blown up with a Faustian sense of his own importance, feels that mysterious power urging him to look to what he should do. Thus, Teufelsdröckh, caught in the scepticism and denial of the Everlasting No, writes that:

. . . in spite of all Motive-grinders, and Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies, with the sick ophthalmia and hallucination they had brought on, was the Infinite Nature of Duty still dimly present to me: living without God in the world, of God's light I was not utterly bereft; if my as yet sealed eyes, with their unspeakable longing, could nowhere see Him, nevertheless in my heart He was present, and His heaven-written Law still stood legible and sacred there.¹

Later, in Past and Present, Carlyle picks up the very words of Teufelsdröckh to declare that "this same 'sense of the Infinite Nature of Duty' is the central part of all with us; a ray as of Eternity and Immortality, immured in dusky many-coloured Time."² It is because we are connected spiritually to the Divine and the Infinite that we recognize unconsciously what we should do and feel compelled to do it. And insofar as we obey our sense of duty our freedom is again limited.

A further limitation of mankind lies in the imperfection of human intellect. To understand why Carlyle

¹Sartor, p. 131.

²Past and Present, p. 109.

felt as violently as he did on this point we must first look a bit at the philosophical background of his time. Carlyle's generation and the one preceding it had pushed the boundaries of human understanding a long way. Laplace in his Mécanique Céleste had charted the stars and was able to predict their courses with unerring accuracy. Moreover, in his Exposition du Systeme du Monde he had attempted an explanation of the origins of our planetary system. Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and their disciples had put forward theories of political economy which explained with irrefutable logic why the peasants of Ireland were starving and the poor of England in revolt. Lamarck, with his theory that life may have originated spontaneously from the interaction of heat and electricity, had dealt a sore blow to the religious view of creation; while at the same time, Erasmus Darwin was preparing the minds of thinkers for the even more heretical ideas of his brilliant grandson.

In consequence of these apparent victories of the human intellect, and bolstered in its optimism by the sight of factories and railways -- symbolic of man's conquest of his environment -- the nineteenth century was well on the way to overthrowing its spiritual gods and accepting physical ones. The question of whether a thing was good or bad, true or false in an absolute sense, was becoming one of whether, in a practical sense it worked or not. It was this switch in point of view which caused Albert Schweitzer to condemn the nineteenth-

century completely:

Responsibility for the decay of civilization lies at the door of nineteenth century philosophy. It did not understand how to keep alive the concern for civilization which existed in the period of the Enlightenment. It should have recognized its task as being the continuation of the work in elemental thinking about ethics and attitude toward life, which was left incomplete by the eighteenth century. Instead of that, it lost itself during the nineteenth century more and more deeply in the unelemental. It renounced its connection with man's natural search for a view of life, and became merely a science of the history of philosophy. It provided itself with a point of view out of a combination of history and natural science. This, however, turned out to be quite lifeless, and failed to preserve any concern for civilization.¹

It is not true, of course, that everyone in the nineteenth century failed in this concern. Carlyle, for one, concerned himself almost solely with this trend. He exploded violently against science and the mechanistic view of the world. He was not at all impressed that Laplace had plotted every star. What does it profit us, he cried, ". . . that we can now prate of their Whereabout; their How, their Why, their What being hid from us in the signless Inane?"² Political economy he named a dismal, gloomy science which tries to explain the deep affection by which one heart feeds on another through dry statistics. Bentham's theories he called a profit-and-loss philosophy which attempted to reduce living to bookkeeping. "There is no longer any God for us!" cried Carlyle,

God's Laws are become a Greatest-Happiness
Principle, a Parliamentary Expedience: the

¹ Albert Schweitzer, The Decay and Restoration of Civilization, quoted in Out of My Life and Thought, New York, Mentor, 1953, p. 154-155.

² Sartor, p. 205.

Heavens overarch us only as an Astronomical Time-Keeper; a butt for Herschel-telescopes to shoot science at, to shoot sentimentalities at; -- in our old and old Jonson's dialect, man has lost the soul out of him; and now, after the due period, -- begins to find the want of it!¹

For Carlyle, no human explanation of the universe was possible, nor should any be attempted. "Doth not thy cow calve, doth not thy bull gender?" he asked, "Thou, thyself, wert thou not born, wilt thou not die? Explain me all this" ²

Carlyle was sure that, while man's reason could not unravel all the last secrets of the universe, his faith could accept them all. Faith and believing are therefore more important to Carlyle than knowledge and reason. On this point he is most emphatic. In Heroes he wrote:

A man lives by believing something, not by debating and arguing about many things. A sad case for him when all he can manage to believe is something he can button in his pocket, and with one or the other organ eat and digest! Lower than that he will not get.³

Believing is intended by Carlyle to be the supreme act of Faith, the Everlasting Yea. It is in fact the ethical acceptance of the world and affirmation of the creed that a divine and moral will is at work within it -- indeed, rules it wholly.

According to the Carlyle way of thinking, life without this faith is impossible. A man who trusts his reason alone and seeks through it logical explanations for the mysteries

¹ Sartor, p. 136-137.

² Ibid., p. 55.

³ Heroes, p. 201.

of life and death, good and evil, freedom and necessity, falls at once into doubt, and from there into scepticism, and eventually into denial. At this point, denying what for Carlyle is the purpose of life, he has no motive to live and will no longer live -- that is, will no longer work at what he should work at. A later discussion of Carlyle's theory of work will justify our equating working with living.

Carlyle's fear of scepticism is at the back of many of his prejudices and opinions. Thus he hated Methodism because he considered it to be ". . . a diseased introspection and horrible restless doubt . . . with its eyes turned forever on its own navel."¹ Methodism could not offer the guidance a religion should because it was too busy with its agonizing inquiries about itself. Similarly Carlyle disliked Voltaire because the latter's free-thinking philosophy denied God. Voltaire's anti-Christian rationalism was ". . . only a torch for burning, no hammer for building."² Metaphysical theorizing, since it is an attempt to find explanations for what Carlyle considers to be inexplicable, is also on his list of suspicious activities. All speculative thinking which does not start from the premise "This is God's world" is useless and negative.

To be fair to Carlyle, we must recognize that he does not completely deny the power of the human mind. Even in considering metaphysics he admits that ". . . if they have produced no Affirmation, they have destroyed much Negation."³

¹ Past and Present, p. 117.

² Sartor, p. 154-155.

³ "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 40.

Statistical inquiries into the state of labourers in England ". . . wisely gone into . . . will yield results worth something, not nothing."¹ He even makes a show of approving Laplace's astronomical studies by claiming that the Mecanique Celeste ". . . is as precious to me as to another."² But we are ever counselled to remember one thing: "Logic is good, but it is not the best."³ Carlyle the idealist is always part realist. He does not suggest that all scientific inquiry and metaphysical speculation should be stopped, but only that their limits be recognized, and that there be no effort to have them supplant faith in the Divine Idea.

While the man of no faith is limited and confined always to dealing with petty things in the physical world, the man of faith gains by his acceptance of God a power almost unlimited. Secure in the knowledge that there is an absolute right and wrong and that he intuitively knows them, he can work freely and with fervour at what he recognizes as his duty. He cannot read the ultimate secrets of the universe, but he can accomplish much, for none of his energy is wasted in useless argument or cringing doubt; all of it is working with the power of God in accordance with the Laws of Nature. More than that, he acquires through his acceptance of God a power beyond logical comprehension. "Faith is the one thing needful," says Carlyle,

. . . with it martyrs, otherwise weak, can cheerfully endure the shame and the cross;

¹ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 126.

² Sartor, p. 205.

³ "Characteristics" p. 6.

and without it Worldlings puke-up their sick existence, by suicide, in the midst of luxury.¹

Once we have made a confession of faith and accepted the limits of mankind we immediately face the question of freewill. Surely freedom lies with the man who has not, in effect, taken an oath of subservience to a Divine Idea, but who will rather remain a law unto himself; and to say that necessity is laid upon a man to do thus and so is surely to deny his freewill? Carlyle recognized the problem and brought it up himself. In Sartor, Teufelsdröckh, soliloquizing on his childhood, humorously notes that ". . . Freewill came often in painful collision with Necessity, so that my tears flowed."² A few chapters later Carlyle himself succinctly sets out the problem:

Our life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life no other than Freedom, than Voluntary Force: thus we have a warfare.³

The problem is a perennial one, and one which has probably been at the root of more theological disputes than any other. The Christian church has solved it with the formula "In Thy service perfect freedom, God." Carlyle solves it in a very similar way. "Love not pleasure; love God," says he. "This is the Everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved; wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."⁴

¹ Sartor, p. 129.

² Ibid., p. 78.

³ Ibid., p. 153.

⁴ Ibid., p. 153.

For Carlyle it is no paradox that freedom comes with the acceptance of divine authority. He who insists upon being a free-thinker, who denies that there is any force or power set above him, is actually the slave of a thousand gods -- his own whims and desires -- and above all of an agonizing doubt and a continual unsatisfying striving which will not let him rest. On the other hand, he who believes and recognizes the limits of mankind has freedom within those limits. And, since as a mortal man he cannot escape those limits whatever his beliefs, he has what amounts to perfect and absolute freedom.

A further aspect of the divinity in man is reflected in the fact that he wonders about the world around him. Wonder, as Carlyle uses the term, is not mere curiosity, but is rather the awe one feels when one sees a beautiful sunset and realizes that some force ordered it to be -- and to repeat itself nightly with glorious variety. Wonder, like faith, opposes a mechanistic view of the world or any theory which does not allow for mystery. With Carlyle, as with Teufelsdröckh, ". . . that progress of Science which is to destroy Wonder, and in its place substitute Mensuration and Numeration, finds small favour."¹ Wonder in this sense, far from being a limiting factor in the existence and development of man, is rather the beginning of a delimiting process. It plays an important role in establishing the relationship of God to man, for it enables man to perceive the divine idea a work in the physical world.

¹ Sartor, p. 53.

Without wonder man is no better than a machine. "The man who cannot wonder", says Carlyle,

who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole Mécanique Céleste and Hegel's Philosophy, and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories with their results in his single head -- is but a pair of spectacles behind which there is no Eye.¹

Wonder is, of course, no end in itself, nor does the process it begins stop here. From the wonder and awe aroused by the sight of all that is beautiful and awful in heaven and earth we are moved first to fear from whence we come to a humble reverence, not of the phenomenon itself, but of the power that caused it; and so wonder becomes "the basis of worship".² Wonder is the soul's mysterious recognition of its affinity with the divine force lying behind natural phenomena. Worship is the sensible utterance of this non-sensible recognition.

To primitive man worship came easily and naturally. The shining forth of a star was to him a great and un-understandable thing and he fell in supplication before Canopus. To modern man, worship is more difficult for the shining forth of a star has become a matter of scientific investigation and is no longer a bold miracle. Our eyes no longer look directly upon the universe, but look rather for explanation in theories

¹ Sartor, p. 54.

² Ibid., p. 53.

of light propagation and evolution, while "To the wild deep-hearted man all was yet new, not veiled under names and formulas; it stood flashing in on him there, beautiful, awful, unspeakable."¹

Religion is to Carlyle a formalized, dogmatized variety of worship. It begins because man, striving to align himself with the divine, yet limited by his finite nature, found himself forced to choose a part as representative of a whole and to worship a symbol in place of the greatness which he could not name. The choice of a symbol is not so important as the act of worshipping:

The rudest heathen that worshipped Canopus, or the Caabah Black-stone, he . . . was superior to the horse that worshipped nothing.²

Yet symbols are important too, for they, being more idea than object, are the highest attempt of man to express the infinite through the finite. The truest symbol of a man is his life and works, for here is ". . . a symbolic Representation, and making visible, of the Celestial invisible Force that is in him."³

In the beginning, says Carlyle, "Religion was everywhere".⁴ Pagan religions worshipped spirits in every wind and tree and saw the will of God in the flight of birds. Although to us Paganism is ". . . a bewildering, inextricable

¹ Heroes, p. 7.

² Ibid, p. 139.

³ French Revolution, vol. 2, p. 47.

⁴ "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 15.

jungle of delusions, confusions, falsehood, and absurdities, covering the whole field of Life,"¹ it did have this superiority, that it looked with wonder, reverence, and worship on the world. Carlyle believes that all religions in their beginnings have this sincerity of belief. Gradually the form of worship becomes more complex -- a sure sign that the religion has begun to think about itself and not about God -- and herein are the symptoms of decay. While Carlyle holds that the Christian religion is nobler than Paganism because it has substituted holiness and morality for force, he nevertheless feels that the Christianity of his day was showing signs of decay. Philosophy had set to work upon religion, splitting it into sects, setting up channels of worship, and eventually obscuring the primitive faith with such terms as Puseyism and Thirty-nine Articles, till the spirit originally worshipped was quite forgotten. Ritual and symbols came to be venerated for themselves and the animus which they once represented was neglected.

In tracing Carlyle's system of philosophy we have now brought ourselves to the point of understanding Carlyle's view of the relationship of his own generation to God. God, who is the maker of the universe and of us, has implanted in each human a soul that for its proper nourishment and growth requires that its host acknowledge and worship God and strive to act according to his will. But two things come between man and the fulfillment of the needs of his soul -- his bodily desire, which

¹ Heroes, p. 4.

he must renounce, and the vain strivings of his intellect, which he must acknowledge to be imperfect.

With respect to his own generation Carlyle felt that humanity had never been so far from God. A certain doctrine of "enlightened selfishness" was coaxing man to seek satisfaction of his physical desires while the progress of science was offering him more and more opportunity for luxurious gratification of those desires. At the same time, scientists were suggesting electricity as the progenitor of the world, and Chartists were offering the ballot box as its saviour. Man was on the very point of grasping these material luxuries, these rational explanations, and these universal panaceas, and of turning his back on God. To Carlyle, man was on the brink of Niagara, and Carlyle made it his life's work to try to prevent humanity from going over the edge.

Chapter III

Man in the World and among his Fellows

What Carlyle could do in a general way to try to avert the danger that he saw, he did. That is, he preached incessantly for the recognition of spiritual values. But he tried as well to offer more practical help. He applied the philosophy outlined in the preceding chapter to life and came up with certain dicta which he intended should help guide those who did not see as clearly as he did what was required of them. Critics and commentators since Carlyle have given these dicta names -- the doctrine of silence, the doctrine of work, for example -- and have spoken of them as though Carlyle had developed them fully and set them out formally, something which he never did. It will be the purpose of this chapter to outline the two most important of these theories, the theory of heroes and the theory of work, and to show how they derive from the basic Carlyle philosophy. But before this is begun, it will be necessary for us to look briefly at Carlyle's concept of the place of the individual in society.

Carlyle's view of the relationship of man to other men goes back to his concept of man as a spirit bound by invisible spiritual bonds to all other men. Because of this, the practical arrangement by which one man binds another to him is not very important to Carlyle. Only in recognition of how unimportant he considered these practical arrangements can

Carlyle's attitude towards slavery, reflected in the following commentary on the American Civil War, be understood:

Peter of the North (to Paul of the South)
 "Paul, you unaccountable scoundrel, I find you hire your servants for life, not by the month or year as I do! You are going straight to Hell, you _____!"

Paul. "Good words, Peter! the risk is my own; I am willing to take the risk. Hire you your servants by the month or day, and get straight to Heaven; leave me to my own method."

Peter. "No, I won't. I will beat your brains out first!" (And is trying dreadfully ever since, but cannot yet manage it.)¹

It is the spiritual relationship of man to man, the interaction of souls, that counts for Carlyle. If the heart of the slave-owner is properly disposed toward his slaves, then it matters little that their physical freedom is curtailed. Carlyle felt that Gurth's leather collar represented no slavery, for it in no way imprisoned his spirit. Just as Carlyle objected that his generation looked at the physical world only as a machine to be investigated scientifically, so he felt that it was putting all its faith in science in its approach to personal relationships. He considered the view that ". . . all goes by self-interest and the checking and balancing of greedy knaveries, and that there is nothing divine whatever in the association of men"² a modern error more despicable than that of ascribing divine right to people called kings.

¹ "The American Iliad in a Nutshell", Macmillan's Magazine, vol. 8 (August, 1863), p. 301.

² Heroes, p. 228.

The emotional tone of the relationship of man to man is, when the spirit is allowed to express itself truly, one of affection and sympathy, since ". . . a certain orthodox Anthropomorphism connects my Me with all Thees in bonds of Love".¹ It is understood, of course, that in our imperfect world, baser impulses interfere and other emotional tones result, but in Past and Present Carlyle set out his ideal view of the bond between man and man:

. . . men's hearts ought not to be set against one another; but set with one another; and all against the Evil thing only. Men's souls ought to be left to see clearly; not jaundiced, blinded, twisted all awry, by revenge, mutual abhorrence, and the like.²

Carlyle does not greatly stress his idea of love, nor does he expand it or explain it. It is obvious, however, from what we can see in his writings and from what we have already seen in his philosophy, that it is an impersonal form of love that he means -- and there is a certain hardness in it. Moreover, love is not the only emotion involved in the relationship of man to man. There are other facets of the relationship, particularly duty and obedience, to be considered, so that Carlyle does not advocate pure humanitarianism or philanthropy. Thus while he repeatedly pleads the cause of the starving peasants of Ireland and the unemployed labourers of England, he does not show the same sympathy for the slaves of the West Indies. The Irish peasants and the English labourers are will-

¹ Sartor, p. 107.

² Past and Present, p. 17.

ing to do their duty if only their leaders will allow it, while the black slaves refuse to do the work that is provided for them.

Although love as an emotion is not greatly emphasized in the Carlylean system, as an attitude which colours man's view of the world around him it is very important. Since love is the outward recognition of the spiritual bond which binds man to man, it determines how he will act toward his fellow man. In this sense, then, it is the beginning of morality. We do good, not because we are trying to provide happiness for ourselves (as Bentham would have it), but because the man with whom we are dealing is our brother, a part of ourselves. Morality thus understood is a personal thing, yet it is the beginning of all morality for it leads us to act in a spirit of love for the good of all mankind, and the good man is ". . . he who works continually in well-doing".¹

Thus does faith, the positive acceptance of a world divinely directed, move through fear and reverence to worship and love, and emerge eventually as morality. The process is logical, rational once we have taken the initial step, that of believing in the Divine Idea and the Laws of Nature. For Carlyle there is no achievement possible except through this process:

I say this is yet the only true morality known. A man is right and invincible, virtuous and on the road towards conquest, precisely while he joins himself to the great deep Law of the World, in spite of all superficial laws, temporary appearances, profit-and-loss calculations; he is

¹ "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 7.

victorious while he co-operates with that great central Law, not victorious otherwise.¹

In the Carlylean scheme it is not only activity -- of which we shall have more to say later -- that derives from man's faith and love. In his essay on "Biography" he wrote: "A loving heart is the beginning of all knowledge",² and later, in Heroes, he expanded this idea:

. . . without morality, intellect were impossible for [man]; a thoroughly immoral man could not know anything at all. To know a thing, what we can call knowing, a man must first love the thing, sympathize with it: that is, be virtuously related to it. If he have not justice to put down his own selfishness at every turn . . . how shall he know? . . . Nature, with her truth, remains to the bad, to the selfish and the pusillanimous forever a sealed book. What such can know of Nature is mean, superficial, small; for the uses of the day merely³

We can see here more clearly what Carlyle means when he says knowledge without love is impossible. Remembering that he has called his philosophy a "Platonic mysticism", we will realize that Carlyle's concept of knowing means the recognition in the material and actual world of the ideal world that lies behind it. Without this recognition there can be no cognition. And the recognition can come only as a consequence of the entire faith-love process, so that the knower is in moral sympathy with whatever he would know.

Any attempt at knowledge which does not begin with

¹ Heroes, p. 65.

² Essays, vol. 3, p. 57.

³ Heroes, p. 122,

acceptance of the Divine Idea and the Laws of Nature is doomed to failure. The great doubter, Descartes, who started from himself with the first premise "Cogito ergo sum", was complete anathema to Carlyle, for "thought without reverence is barren, perhaps poisonous".¹ Thus, for example, Hitler, beginning with the dictum "I am God", went on to devise a philosophy completely lacking in morality;² and the poison that his egotistical, irreverent thought generated we all know.

The influence of love and of the knowledge that it brings is not, however, limited to the intellectual activities of man. All that a man does or thinks, all that he hopes to do, is dependent upon his sympathetic awareness of the reality that lies hidden within actuality. The poet or artist, attempting to portray in a particular experience something of universal significance must be able to see through to reality, must have ". . . an open loving heart . . . that opens the whole mind, quickens every faculty of the intellect to do its fit work, that of knowing; and therefrom, by sure consequence, of vividly uttering forth."³ When the artist feels inspired in this manner, when he feels in harmonious and sympathetic union with

¹ Sartor, p. 54.

² See Herman Rauschnig, Hitler Speaks, London, Thornton Butterworth, 1939. "Where should we be if we had formal scruples. I simply disregard these things." (p. 107) "I have no scruples." (p. 15) "There is no such thing as Truth, either in the moral or the scientific sense Conscience is a Jewish invention. It is a blemish, like circumcision." (p. 220)

³ "Biography", Essays, vol. 3, p. 57.

his subject, then his work becomes a symbol in which we "discern Eternity looking through Time".¹ An artist lacking this affinity with nature can do nothing worthy of the name of art. "How can we sing and paint," cries Carlyle, "when we do not yet see and believe?"²

Because Carlyle often expressed extravagant admiration for the artist, particularly the poet, it is worthwhile to digress here for a moment to examine his attitude towards the poet. To Carlyle the duty of the poet is to present the ideal in terms of the actual, that is, to reveal to the common man the divine mystery which lies at the bottom of appearances. It was a poet, says Carlyle, who first looked in awe at the beauty of the stars, divined their secret, and passed it on to his weak-eyed fellow. In this view, ". . . literature is but a branch of religion",³ and the poet is a prophet. This latter identification Carlyle delights to reinforce with the observation that "in some old languages . . . the titles are synonymous; Vates means both Prophet and Poet."⁴ He has recourse again to this doubtful procedure of arguing etymologically when he points

¹ Sartor, p. 178.

² Froude, Life, vol. 2, p. 299. Quoted in Roe, op. cit., p. 61. Roe uses the quotation to support his statement that "Poetry, literary criticism, art, and philosophy must give way to more pressing issues" -- the more pressing issues being the problems of society. Here is a good example of an author completely misinterpreting Carlyle because he does not understand Carlyle's philosophical system. Seeing and believing are the prerequisites for singing and painting, not demands for practical activity.

³ "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 23.

⁴ Heroes, p. 91.

out the Scots word for poet is "maker" and the Anglo-saxon scop (from scyppan - to create) -- both words which prove to Carlyle that the rude shapers of our language recognized the poet's close connection with the creator.¹

If all poets were as aware of the ~~enormousness~~ of their responsibilities as Carlyle is, how little of our poetry would have been written! For, despite the fact that Carlyle quotes Goethe: "The Beautiful is higher than the Good; the Beautiful includes the Good",² it is obvious that Carlyle would never approve of a work of art, however beautiful it might in itself be, unless he considered it to be to some extent a bodying forth of the divine idea. Carlyle's monumental and moral idea of beauty partakes of little of the grace and delicacy of a Goethe lyric.

Since the poet or artist puts into his work all of reality that he can grasp and express, so his work reveals to the observer how deeply the poet or artist has penetrated beyond the external appearance of things. But this is true, not only

¹ Carlyle frequently uses etymological argument to support his case, but often in a manner more sentimental than scientific, as when he relates König (king) to können (to be able) to prove that royalty was originally identified with ability. The two words have, in fact, no etymological connection. Upon another occasion, Carlyle derives "lord" from "law-ward" to show that nobility was originally bestowed upon those who were protectors of the spiritual good of the community. Actually, this reasoning proves the lord to be the guardian of the most basic of material objects, for the term is derived from the Anglo-saxon hlaford, guardian of the loaf.

² Heroes, p. 93.

of the poet or the artist, but of every man. Everything that a man does, every thought he utters, reveals something of himself and of his vital relation to the universe.

You may see how a man would fight, by the way in which he sings; his courage or his want of courage, is visible in the word he utters, in the opinion he has formed, no less than in the stroke he strikes. He is one; and preaches the same Self abroad in all these ways.¹

Note the harmony that is here. The love that a man shows when he sings will also be evident when he cooks a meal or tends his garden. The man who looks with open loving heart on the world about him and penetrates its secrets can develop his full self in all its aspects. Love and knowledge have, in some mysterious way, tempered all his habits, making it possible for him to grow harmoniously and to expand his being fully into all corners.

But there is a limit, and a rather narrow one, to the development of man alone. Man was not meant to live alone, nor can he express himself fully unless he have the fraternity of his fellows to spark his efforts. The duties of man are not to himself alone. That says Carlyle, makes but the first table of the laws, and

to the first Table is now superadded a Second, with the duties of man to Neighbour; whereby also the significance of the First now assumes its true importance.²

It is in society, not in the solitary state of man, that morality has its full play. Only when a man's actions exert their force

¹ Heroes, p. 122.

² "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 11.

on another man can the good or bad of them be judged.

The hermit, be he ever so devout, cannot complete himself. His actions, be they good or bad, have little meaning. His thoughts and meditation, be they ever so pious, rattle empty in his hut, and in the end evaporate into the air. But in society a man's thoughts find acceptance in other minds.

"The lightning-spark of Thought", say Carlyle,

generated, or say rather heaven-kindled, in the solitary mind, awakens its express likeness in another mind, in a thousand other minds, and all blaze-up together in a combined fire; reverberated from mind to mind, fed also with fresh fuel in each, it acquires incalculable new light as Thought, incalculable new heat as converted into Action. By and by a common store of thought can accumulate, and be transmitted as an everlasting possession: Literature . . . Politie . . . Religion.¹

What one man has thought, whatever good he has done, what small piece of God's truth he has been able to divine -- this all is preserved, in degree as it merits preservation, in the minds and hearts of his neighbours and of the generations that follow. Thus is society a receptacle for truth, a storehouse and guardian of good. Whatsoever of untruth it meets it will soon discard.

The individual not only contributes to society, but he receives from it as well. When man joins himself to man, soul reacts with soul to provide inspiration for thought, and guidance for activity. In some mysterious way the good that has

¹ "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 11-

issued from one soul is taken up by the next so that:

. . . the light spreads; all human souls, never so bedarkened, love light; light once kindled spreads till all is luminous.¹

Darkness may, of course, spread in like manner, but we have seen earlier that it cannot last, for the soul of man intuitively recognizes good and prefers it.

Because society in its literature, politics, and religions preserves and perpetuates whatever its members have contributed to it, it soon takes on a character and spirit of its own, wherein is reflected all the truth it has accumulated, as well as whatever of untruth it for the moment holds. Thus,

every Society, every Polity, has a spiritual principle, is the embodiment, tentative and more or less complete of an Idea This Idea . . . is properly the Soul of the State, its Life; mysterious, as other forms of Life, and like these working secretly, and in depth beyond that of consciousness.²

Society has become a new, a collective individual. Each member of society shares the corporate soul of the state to which he belongs and enters into the larger, all-embracing life of society. In so doing he enlarges his individual soul, gives meaning to his activities, and doubles and trebles the scope and value of his life.

So far in this chapter we have concerned ourselves with the place of the individual in society and with his personal development within its bounds. Let us turn now to consideration

¹ Past and Present, p. 36.

² "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, pp. 13-14,

of the relationship of man to man. Here Carlyle puts one rule above all others:

Nakedness, hunger, distress of all kinds, death itself, have been cheerfully suffered when the heart is right. It is the feeling of injustice that is insupportable to all men. The brutalest black African cannot bear that he should be used unjustly. No man can bear it, or ought to bear it. A deeper law than any parchment law whatsoever, a law written direct by the hand of God in the inmost being of man, incessantly protests against it.¹

To the question "What is this insupportable injustice?" he answers merely that it is another name for disorder, for the untruth that veracious nature rejects and disowns. This is not much help. A better clue to Carlyle's meaning lies in the phrase "when the heart was right". Physical pain, unhappiness, sorrow we can bear. These are not injustices, but merely the sorrows that go to make up life, for, as Carlyle once wrote to his brother Alex:

. . . there is a root of bitterness in the bottom of our cup which all the honey in the Earth cannot hide from an experienced palate. Happy he who can learn to drink it without wincing! Happier and wiser who can see that in this very bitterness there is a medicine for his Soul, far better than the bitterness of gentian or bark or any of Jack's many bitters for his body.²

Man is formed for sorrow. Unhappiness is the sign of greatness in him. The drooling idiot is happy. The purblind, smug, complacent fool is happy. But the intelligent and alert man who feels the spirit within him hampered and hindered strives

¹ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, pp. 144-145.

² Quoted in Letters of Thomas Carlyle, ed. C.E. Norton, London, Macmillan, 1888, vol. 1, p. 22. Letter dated January 11, 1827.

ever to bring his own bit of divinity to perfection, knowing full well from the outset that perfection is not possible in this world. There can be no satisfaction or happiness for him on this earth. He will bear his unhappiness with stoic resignation and with what comfort he can draw from the thought that it is nobler and better to be unhappy with a soul than to be happy without one. But the pain of the soul, the smart and stigma of the moral self cannot and ought not to be borne quietly. The honest man accused of dishonesty, the loving heart accused of misanthropy, the wise man forced to obey the fool, the willing labourer denied the right to work -- these are injustices to bring angry tears to the eyes. For these the sufferer must have his revenge; the entire world grants him that, for it is a vindication of his own worth and of all human dignity.

Justice to Carlyle does not include the idea that all men are equal, or even born equal. In fact, quite the opposite is, in the Carlylean view, a just arrangement. Carlyle postulates that there is a complete hierarchy in mankind with the most godlike of men on top and leading down to the primitive, uncultured men of native tribes -- 'black Quashee' is Carlyle's symbol for this class -- on the bottom. "Recognized or not", says Carlyle, "a man has his superiors, a regular hierarchy above him; extending up, degree above degree, to Heaven itself and God the Maker" ¹

The principle upon which arrangement of men within

¹ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 189.

the hierarchy is dependent will become clear if we examine the hierarchy and comment on the classes occupying the various levels of it. At the bottom of the ladder we have a class whom we can call "slaves". By slaves, Carlyle does not mean slaves to men, but rather slaves to the devil. He who does not believe that there is a moral will at work in the universe and who does not act accordingly is a slave. Within this category fall all the felons and criminals imprisoned in the country's gaols. They have demonstrated that they cannot walk according to the Laws of Nature. Their souls are enslaved, are not free to join in harmony with the souls of other men, or to enter the light-giving communion of society, far less to penetrate the mysteries of the Divine Idea. When Carlyle considers criminal offenders his Calvinistic upbringing comes to the fore and he shows no sympathy or understanding for them. In "Model Prisons" he wrote:

Does the Christian or any other religion prescribe a love of scoundrels then? I hope it prescribes a healthy hatred of scoundrels Just hatred of scoundrels, I say; fixed, irreconcilable, inexorable enmity to the enemies of God: this, and not love for them, and incessant whitewashing, and dressing and cockering of them must, if you look into it, be the backbone of any human religion whatsoever.¹

Despite the harshness of this passage, it still holds that Carlyle consigns these felons to the dungeon of his tower to God, not because they have offended his Calvinistic conscience, but because they of all men are farthest from God.

¹ Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 70.

We have already hinted that Carlyle had a new definition of slave and slavery. In "Parliaments", number VI of the Latter-Day Pamphlets, he wrote: "Slave or free is settled in Heaven for a man."¹ Some of Carlyle's attackers took this literally and understood Carlyle to mean that the blacks of Jamaica were predestined to wear chains and the labourers of England denied by heaven the right to vote. That no interpretation could be farther from the mark we can see by reading the rest of the sentence: "Slave or free is settled in Heaven for a man; acts of parliament attempting to settle it on earth for him, sometimes make a sad work of it." We have already seen that the term 'slave' as used by Carlyle must be understood as a form of spiritual, not physical slavery. Parliaments, attempting to label this man slave or that man free, look to a man's pocket-book or his parentage and declare him free if he has property to the extent of so many thousand pounds, slave if his parents were black and indentured. But heaven, looking to a man's soul, gives knowledge to the loving heart and freedom to the man who believes. From the man who does not believe these gifts are withheld. His thought is narrow and his attainments petty. Thus does heaven settle the matter of slave or free. Carlyle could well imagine a man worth a million pounds as the lowest slave of all and the negro, bound for life, as a free man.

In the discussion of hierarchy we have used the term 'class' and spoken of these classes as occupying the various

¹ Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 248.

rungs of a ladder or levels of a tower leading up to God. Actually the hierarchy concept ought to be understood as a continuum wherein slave merges into free with a continuous gradation upward without distinct brackets to accommodate classes. Thus among the free souls there are those who are freer than others, their rank in the hierarchy depending in each case upon the knowledge they have, the ability they possess, the morality of their actions -- in short, upon the degree in which they revere God and follow the Laws of Nature.

At the top of the hierarchy Carlyle places an aristocracy. In this class he includes those who most clearly see God's plan for the universe and work most effectively to carry it out. Just as some critics interpreted Carlyle's use of the term 'slavery' literally, so they have understood him to mean by 'aristocracy' the peerage of England, or, what is little better, those who have been successful in the acquisition of material wealth or of temporal power. Noble titles Carlyle respects only if the bearers of the titles prove themselves to be noble. Mere possession of the title means little to Carlyle. In the pamphlet 'Downing Street' he wrote: "Lord Tommy and the Honourable Jack are not a whit better qualified for Parliamentary duties, to say nothing of Secretary duties, than plain Tom and Jack."¹ Nobility did, of course, at one time coincide with ability, so that the feudal lords of England ". . . were 'a Virtuality perfected into an Actuality' really to an astonishing extent".² In feudal days a rough lawlessness pervaded the

¹ Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 117.

² Past and Present, p. 245.

land, and a chivalrous soul coupled with a strong right arm was needed to fashion order from the chaos. The man who judiciously exercised his strong right arm was the true aristocrat of his day and he justly earned his title. But in the mid-nineteenth century a new ill beset the nation and a new form of chaos was threatening God's ordered universe. Whereas the symptoms of disorder had once been plundering and pillaging, now they were rick-burnings, Manchester insurrections, and Peterloos. To combat these disorders a different kind of aristocracy will have to be found. In Past and Present, Carlyle suggests where it should be sought:

The main substance of this immense Problem of Organizing Labour, and first of all of Managing the Working Classes, will, it is very clear, have to be solved by those who stand practically in the middle of it, by those who themselves work and preside over work.¹

In this new era the leaders of industry must replace the leaders of armies. But first the captains of industry, as Carlyle dubs them, must look into their souls and discover there something other than ". . . vulturous hunger, for fine wines, valet reputation and gilt carriages".² They must become imbued with the chivalry of work, far nobler, says Carlyle, than the older chivalry of fighting. They must bind their workers to them, not with six-penny contracts which are broken as soon as a seven-penny one is offered, but with a feudal loyalty which connects heart with heart. If they do all this, they are true members of

¹ Past and Present, p. 271.

² Ibid., p. 272.

the aristocracy.

But the new aristocracy is not limited to captains of industry -- they are to be responsible in the main for ensuring that the thousands now unjustly enslaved in workhouses are given work to do and food to eat. There is as well a general aristocracy whose responsibility is to lead all men and in turn to be led by God. This Carlyle names the 'Aristocracy of Talent', a collection of the wisest and noblest men in all the land, ". . . a corporation of the Best, of the Bravest".¹

The problem of finding the members of this aristocracy, indeed of finding one's own place in the hierarchy, is a difficult one. Yet it is a problem that must be solved; otherwise a man does not recognize who is better than he is and cannot know what example he ought to follow or whom he ought to lead. Fortunately, just as the soul of man naturally worships God, so it naturally worships the godlike in man. "It is of the nature of men, in every time", Carlyle holds, "to honour and love their Best; to know no limits in honouring them".² We recognize the godlike in other men in strict proportion to the godlike that we have in ourselves. Jane Welsh Carlyle, in a letter written to Carlyle in one of the uncertain moments of their courtship, expressed this idea more clearly than her husband ever did:

One loves you, as Madame de Stael said of Necker, in proportion to the ideas and sentiments which

¹ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 160.

² Loc. cit.

are in oneself; according as my mind enlarges and my heart improves, I become capable of comprehending the goodness and greatness which are in you, and my affection for you increases.¹

Since the heroes a man chooses are a direct expression of his own ambitions and ideals, we can tell a good deal about a man by looking at the things he honours. "Show me the man you honour", says Carlyle to the population of England. "I know by that symptom, better than by any other, what kind of a man you are yourself."² Just as a man's choice of the symbols he will worship reveals his relationship to God, so his choice of the men he will worship reveals his relationship to society. And thus is his place in the hierarchy set. Those who reverence true greatness above all else are themselves just short of true greatness, whereas ". . . people capable of being carried away by quacks are themselves of partially untrue spirit".³ Coming down the ladder from God, a man finds his niche exactly at that point where he ceases to give honour.

It is the responsibility of all men sometimes to lead and at other times to be led. "Man is forever the 'born thrall' of certain men, born master of certain other men, born equal of certain others"⁴ Just how it is that a man recognizes that this certain man is his leader or what it is

¹ Quoted in D.A. Wilson, Carlyle till Marriage, London, Kegan Paul, p. 374.

² "Hudson's Statue", Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 255.

³ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 151.

⁴ Past and Present, p. 251.

that makes him give honour to his leader Carlyle cannot say, for ". . . all authority is mystic in its condition, and comes 'by the grace of God.' "¹ Yet we do ~~not~~ recognize our leader and follow him.

Carlyle sees his hierarchy as a chain of command, each member of it obeying the man above him and demanding obedience from the man below him. On the matter of obedience Carlyle is emphatic. In 'Chartism' he stated: "No man but is bound indefeasibly with all forces of obligation, to obey,"² and again in Past and Present: "Man, little as he may suppose it, is necessitated to obey his superiors."³ This rule of obedience applies throughout the hierarchy. The lowest man on earth must obey, or be made to obey, all above him, and the highest man on earth must bow down, ". . . with awe unspeakable, before a Higher one in Heaven."⁴ The lowest man can be forced by chains and gaols to obey, and since his is an inferior soul, no great harm is done. But it is most important that the highest man in the hierarchy reverence and obey his superior, that is, God, for ". . . whoso cannot obey, cannot be free, still less bear rule; he that is the inferior of nothing, can be the superior of nothing, the equal of nothing."⁵ It is by making his will subservient to the will of God that our noble leader receives direction, and

¹ French Revolution, vol. 2, p. 2.

² Essays, vol. 3, p. 189.

³ Past and Present, p. 241.

⁴ Sartor, p. 79.

⁵ Ibid., p. 200.

it is through his faith in a divine morality that he receives his freedom and his mystic ability to command.

There is in all that has been said a certain flavour of predestination -- man is the born thrall of certain man, man must obey others. Carlyle recognizes this in his system but he does not see it as a fault. Each of us in his niche in the hierarchy is doing God's will to the best of his ability; each, having recognized his general limitations, that is, those common to all mankind, as well as his own particular limitations, will strive to do the work given him to do. Such is the order God has ordained for the world;

If precisely the Wisest Man were at the top of society and the next-wisest next, and so on till we reached the Demerara Nigger (from whom downwards, through the horse, etc., there is no question hitherto), then were this a perfect world, the extreme maximum of wisdom produced in it.¹

In such a perfect world it is no hardship for a man to obey. Indeed, since he loves and honours his betters, then it follows that he will obey them, not only willingly, but joyfully, with heart-felt loyalty. Carlyle holds that "It is not by Mechanism, but by Religion; not by Self-interest, but by Loyalty, that men are governed or governable."²

Herein lies Carlyle's great antipathy for what he has named the "cash-nexus." Industrialization has brought to Carlyle's England a new kind of employer, a new kind of employee, and an entirely new kind of employer-employee relationship.

¹ "Nigger Question", Essays, vol. 4, p. 361.

² "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 41.

Once the swineherd had loyally tended his master's pigs, grateful for the food, clothing, and shelter provided for him. The stonecarver willingly worked overtime, indeed, did not know the word overtime, to fashion another gleeful gargoyle for a Gothic cathedral. But now, says Carlyle:

. . .all human dues and reciprocities have been fully changed into one great due of cash payment; and man's duty to man reduces itself to handing over to him certain metal coins or covenanted money-wages, and then shoving him out of doors; and man's duty to God becomes a cant, a doubt, a dim inanity, a 'pleasure of virtue' or suchlike; and the thing a man does infinitely fear (the real Hell of a man) is, 'that he do not make enough money and advance himself'"¹

The workers of England are no longer happy to serve their masters. And Carlyle is sure that no increase in wages can make them happy, for "love of man cannot be bought by cash-payments; and without love men cannot endure together."² As a solution to the problem of unrest among the workers Carlyle insists that employers must act justly toward their employees so that the employees' loyalties are to their employers and their sympathies with the work that is given them to do. Then their hearts will work with their hands in a joyful performance of duty.

The way in which a man performs his work, or refuses to perform it, marks a further distinction between the free man and the slave. The free man Carlyle defines as:

he who is loyal to the Laws of this Universe; who in his heart sees and knows across all contradictions, that injustice cannot befall

¹ Past and Present, p. 67,

² Ibid., p. 272,

him here; that except by sloth and cowardly falsity evil is not possible here. The first symptom of such a man is not that he resists and rebels, but that he obeys.¹

When a man desires to do what he has to do, he is a free man. But the slave resists and rebels. Because he lacks manful worship he is denied wisdom and understanding. He is condemned never to understand the Laws of Nature; he is appointed "not to command, but to obey in this world."² And since he will not obey cheerfully, he must be forced to obey, that is, he must be enslaved.

It happens, of course, in this imperfect world of ours, that power falls into the hands of men who are not fit to command. This state of affairs is one of the saddest that man can know. In "Jesuitism", the last of the Latter-Day Pamphlets, he wrote: "Obedience is good and indispensable; but if it be obedience to what is wrong and false, -- good Heavens, there is no name for such a depth of human cowardice and calamity"³ Or again, in Heroes, we find the same idea: "There is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience. Woe to him that claims obedience when it is not due"⁴ Neither God nor man will suffer a sham leader to hold office for long.

¹ "Parliaments", Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 251.

² Ibid., p. 249.

³ "Jesuitism", Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 308.

⁴ Heroes, p. 228,

The false aristocrat or the forged king offends God because he brings not order but disorder, and he offends man because he puts an unjust claim upon his allegiance. In such cases, resistance to the leader becomes a deeper law of order than obedience, and French Revolutions result.

The men at the very top of the hierarchy, those who sit at the feet of God, Carlyle calls heroes. The hero is the greatest of great men. In all aspects of his being he approaches perfection. He is:

the wise man, the man with the gift of method, of faithfulness and valour, all of which are the basis of wisdom; who has insight into what is what, into what will follow out of what, the eye to see and the hand to do; who is fit to administer, to direct, and guidingly command: he is the strong man. His muscles and bones are no stronger than ours; but his soul is stronger, his soul is wiser, clearer, -- is better and nobler, for that is, has been and ever will be, the root of all clearness worthy of the name.¹

First among the attributes of the hero is intellect or insight -- they are the same thing to Carlyle. This quality he defines as ". . . the discernment of order in disorder the discovery of the will of Nature, of God's will; the beginning of the capability to walk according to that."² In other words, intellect is the faculty of the hero that puts him in vita rapport with the Divine Idea and reveals to him God's plan for the Universe. The hero is not misled by false theories, nor do formulas, names, or customs

¹ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 147,

² Ibid., p. 194.

hide reality from him. Always he looks through appearances and sees what is true. Any man may, at odd moments, have clear insight into God's plan, may perform here and there certain acts with the burning conviction that he is doing right (which conviction does not necessarily make them right though it will excuse many errors), but to the great man this conviction is always present, pushing itself in upon him with an earnestness that will not be denied.

With this vivid consciousness of what has to be done in this world, the hero is not merely a man who can lead, he is one who must lead. Necessity is laid upon a lesser man to recognize his duty; necessity is laid upon the hero to do his duty. And he does it justly, commanding without favour, showing no partiality, rewarding acts which are good, but swift to punish when punishment is required.

The true hero cannot willingly do wrong, for ". . . all talent, all intellect, is in the first place moral. . ." ¹ But since the truly heroic is in God alone, we can expect our human heroes to make some mistakes. This is not too important, however. "On the whole", says Carlyle, "we tend to make too much of faults." ² If remorse and repentance follow the hero's sins, the hero is then greater for having fallen. And it is a further mark

¹ "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 147.

² Heroes, p. 53.

of the hero that he is always sincere, that he always acts in good faith, even when he errs. Speaking of Mohammed, Carlyle says:

We will not praise [his] moral precepts as always of the superfinest sort; yet it can be said there is always a tendency to good in them; that they are the true dictates of a heart aiming toward what is just and true.¹

Only love and you can do as you please, said St. Augustine, and Carlyle's heroes are heroic precisely because they do love.

A further quality of the hero is that he is humble with respect to his own desires: "... your true hero, your true Roland, is ever unconscious that he is a hero; this is a condition of all greatness."² Humility is what we should expect of the hero, for he realizes more clearly than any other that his strength is not truly his, but God's. Moreover he is humble because he has given over his self, and consecrated himself to the service of God. His greatness began with his Selbsttödtung. As Carlyle once wrote to his mother: "There never was a wiser doctrine than that of Christian humility, considered as a corrective for the coarse unruly selfishness of men's natures."³ The man who is motivated by selfish ambition is not great, but small. He lives in misery because he is not everywhere acknowledged and adored. He is anxious, insecure, and jealous. Eagerly he tries to push his works forward, but because they were done to further, not the Divine Plan, but their wretched author, they are petty and

¹ Heroes, p. 84.

² "Diamond Necklace", Essays, vols 3, p. 327.

³ Quoted in D.A. Wilson, Carlyle till Marriage, London, Kegan Paul, 1924. p. 275

of no use.

There is, however, another kind of ambition, one that Carlyle has called laudable and indispensable. It arises in great men from their recognition of the fact that they can do certain things that other men cannot do. The hero is, after all, God's most honoured emissary, and he has the right to be proud, though without haughtiness, of his worth. Such ambition is an integral part of the great man, for it forces him to move forward and take up the work he can do. To decide about ambition, says Carlyle,

. . . whether it is bad or not, you have two things to take into view. Not the coveting of place alone, but the fitness of the man for the place withal; that is the question. Perhaps the place was his; perhaps he had a natural right, and even obligation, to seek the place!¹

This rightful ambition in great men is another aspect of the sense of duty that all men have. It is moreover the source of the dignity which lends weight to his commands, and the confidence which assures of their being obeyed. It enables him to take up his responsibilities secure in the humble confidence that, with God's help, he will discharge them well.

When in 1840 Carlyle delivered his series of lectures on Heroes and Heroworship he put a pagan divinity, a non-Christian prophet, two poets, two reforming priests, three literary men, and two revolutionaries into one bag and labelled them 'Heroes'! He saw nothing outrageous in bringing so diverse a collection of men into one category because he saw them all as being essentially the same man. In the lecture "Hero as Poet" he

¹ Heroes, p. 258.

stated:

The Hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest, or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into. I confess I have no notion of a truly great man who could not be all sorts of men.¹

Carlyle means this to be taken quite literally. He firmly believes that Wolfe could have written Gray's Elegy, that Burns might have been as successful a politician as Mirabeau, that Napoleon would have been a deep-striking poet. And as for Shakespeare, "one knows not what he could not have made, in the supreme degree."²

It seems to be a fact that there is no true greatness which does not somewhere ally itself mysteriously with the Divine. In the Carlylean scheme this alliance with the Divine means that the great man looks with open loving heart upon the world around him and finds the secret plan of Divine Nature revealed to him. From this revelation he draws strength and acquires knowledge which are then turned to the doing of whatever duty lies next to hand. Thus it is not the great man's particular talents that determine his future, but the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Carlyle does admit that there are aptitudes, and that all great men are not made in the same mould. But he argues that although there are varieties of aptitudes, there are infinitely more of circumstances, and it is usually the circumstances that decide how a great man's, or any man's,

¹ Heroes, p. 90.

² Loc. cit.

talents will be used. In support of this argument he gives a neat analogy:

. . . if, as Addison complain, you sometimes see a street porter staggering under his load on spindle-shanks, and near at hand a tailor with the frame of Samson handling a bit of cloth and a small Whitechapel needle, -- it cannot be considered that aptitude of Nature alone has been consulted here either!¹

So far we have had a good deal to say about the hero, but what of the worship of heroes? We have already seen that Carlyle holds worship to be an attitude natural to man, and one that distinguishes him from beasts. Whether a man is struck silent by the beauty of a flower or awed by the ferocity of a stormy sea, it is the same thing -- he is reverent before some revelation of God. When to the power and beauty of God as revealed in nature we add the morality, humility, sincerity, and wisdom of the hero we have truly the object on this earth most worthy of our worship. Here is divinity articulate and active, as nearly finite as our finite senses can ever know. Therefore the true hero is to be worshipped with a fervour almost equal to that demanded in the worship of God himself.

Nor can this worship be denied. For Carlyle it is the very essence of heroworship that it "... endures forever while men endure."² Heroworship, because it is everlasting, is the foundation of society. However decadent or dissipated

¹ Heroes, p. 91.

² Ibid., p. 16.

a state may become, however mean and base its faith may in sick times be, yet it is eventually saved and brought to health again by this one fact, the common man will seek out and worship the man of superior talents. "In no time whatsoever", says Carlyle, "can they entirely eradicate out of living men's hearts a certain altogether peculiar reverence for Great Men; genuine admiration, loyalty, adoration, however dim and perverted it may be."¹

Man has not only the inborn, indestructible desire to worship great men and to be led by them, but also the undeniable right to heroic leadership. Because the leadership of the hero means not only good government, but also the way to God, Carlyle feels that:

Surely, of all 'rights of man', this right of the ignorant man to be guided by the wiser, to be, gently or forcibly, held in the true course by him, is the indisputablest If Freedom have any meaning, it means enjoyment of this right, wherein all other rights are enjoyed.²

In positing the 'right' of the ignorant to be guided 'forcibly' by the hero and in giving even qualified praise to 'perverted' heroworship. Carlyle played into the hands of those who would make him an apostle of fascism. Total dictatorship in the Hitler fashion is a danger Carlyle could not have foreseen; yet even if he had, it is unlikely that he would have revised his opinions. For the heroic and heroworship, properly understood, have in them a strong core of morality and justice

¹ Heroes, p. 16.

² "Chartism", Essays, vol. 4, p. 157-158.

which would exclude the Nazi movement wholly.

It is not given to every man to know how rightly to reverence a hero. The ordinary man who has never felt himself tortured with doubts can never understand how much of himself Luther had to put down, had to annihilate, before he found the courage to stand sweating before the Diet at Worms and say: "I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."¹ Nor can the industrialist who counts his worth in factories and dollars of profit understand properly the reverence for life which enabled, nay, forced Albert Schweitzer to give up a successful musical and academic career in order to serve in the loneliness of Africa. We have seen previously that Carlyle feels that "Only the man of worth can recognize worth in men."² But to the man whose soul is not completely blind and dark, in whom some small idea of worth still glows, there will come, perhaps slowly, the realization that:

Great men are the Fire-pillars in this dark pilgrimage of mankind [who] stand as heavenly Signs, everliving witnesses of what has been, prophetic tokens of what may still be, the revealed, embodied Possibilities of human nature.³

In consequence of recognizing the greatness of the hero, the lower man is himself elevated. "Does not every true man", asks Carlyle, "feel that he is himself made higher by doing reverence

¹ Roland H. Bainton, Here I stand, New York, Mentor, 1955 (Copyright 1950) p. 144.

² "New Downing Street", Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 141.

³ "Schiller", Essays, vol. 2, p. 166-167.

to what is really above him?¹ The common man takes inspiration and example from the hero and, though he is not himself capable of greatness, he is joined in religious loyalty to the great man, and thus is made greater himself. In giving homage to a hero he becomes himself to some degree heroic.

All goodness, all greatness that is in the hero, or in any other man for that matter, is traceable to the fact that he believes. But merely to believe, or to make a declaration of belief, is not enough. The test and measurement of belief lies in the willingness to act; or, as Carlyle puts it, ". . . Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct."² A man's tongue can lay claim to all noble beliefs, but it is his deeds that reveal his true convictions. Even Christian doctrine with its creed of justification by faith insists upon the overt act to give meaning to the inner belief:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food,

And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.

(James, II, 14 -17)

¹ Heroes, p. 17.

² Sartor, p. 156.

Similarly Goethe's Faust, attempting a translation of the Bible, discards in turn 'word', 'thought', and 'power', as translation for the Greek logos, and settles finally and firmly upon 'deed':

In the beginning was the deed.¹

We have come, of course, to Carlyle's doctrine of work~~work~~. Man must work, says Carlyle, to show what kind of man he is. He cannot by introspection or by anguished searching of his soul come to know himself. But his works ". . . are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments",² and by working, doing what he is best able to do, a man comes to know himself and to show himself to others. Moreover, it is only in acting out what is in him that a man develops himself fully:

¹ J.W. Goethe, Faust, ed. Calvin Thomas, New York, Heath, 1892, pp. 56-57.

Geschrieben steht: „im Anfang was das Wort!“
 Hier stock' ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort?
 Ich kam das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen,
 Ich muss es anders übersetzen,
 Wenn ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin.
 Geschrieben steht: im Anfang war der Sinn.
 Bedenke wohl die erste Zeile,
 Dass deine Feder sich nicht überreile!
 Ist es der Sinn, der alles wirkt und schafft?
 Es sollte stehen: im Anfang war die Kraft!
 Doch, auch indem ich dieses niederschreibe,
 Schon warnt mich was, dass ich dabei nicht bleibe.
 Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh' ich Rath
 Und schreibe getrost: im Anfang war die That!

² Sartor, p. 132.

A man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself ceases to be a jungle and a foul unwholesome desert thereby.¹

In the Carlylean scheme, however, the doctrine of work includes implications and responsibilities much broader than merely the development of the individual. Earlier we raised -- and did not answer -- the question as to why man should fret himself with the fight against evil if, as Carlyle believed, good was, in the very nature of things, bound to triumph. We get a hint of the answer to this question in the colloquy from Rushworth which Carlyle set on the title-page of the Latter-Day Pamphlets:

Then said his Lordship, 'Well, God mend all!' --
'Nay, by God, Donald, we must help him to mend it!' said the other.

To expand this hint into a full explanation of Carlyle's theory of work we must go back to his concept of the universe as a chaos wherein divinity lies hidden. It is God's plan that the chaos be ordered so that the divinity be revealed. And the ordering is done, not through the direct intervention of God, but by man, his missionary of order.

The creation of order out of chaos is important work, is, in fact, the only work a man has to do. It is urgent work and perennial. Therefore Carlyle exhorts his fellowmen with impassioned earnestness to take up their tools:

¹ Past and Present, p. 196.

Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even World-kin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever they hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work.¹

Wheresoever thou findest Disorder, there is they eternal enemy; attack him swiftly, subdue him; make Order of him, the subject not of Chaos, but of Intelligence, Divinity and Thee! . . . But above all, where thou findest Ignorance, Stupidity, Brute-mindedness . . . smite it wisely, unweariedly, and rest not while thou livest and it lives.²

As to what terms 'disorder' and 'order' mean in a practical sense, Carlyle is for once quite definite. On the lowest level disorder can be symbolized by a weed. In clearing it to make way for a blade of grass, order has been created. Disorder gives way to order when a jungle is cleared and a city erected. On a much higher level there is the fight against spiritual disorder. In this realm, doubt, scepticism, and egoism are chaotic. He who shows the way to belief in God and to loyal devotion to the godlike in men is bringing divine light to the chaotic darkness. Teufelsdröckh gives recognition to the two categories of work, and indicates which is the more worthy, when he says:

Two men do I honour and no third. First the toil-worn Craftsman that with earth-made Implement laboriously conquers the Earth, and makes her man's A second man I honour, and still more highly: Him who is seen toiling for the

¹ Sartor, p. 157.

² Past and Present, p. 200.

spiritually indispensable; not daily bread, but the bread of Life; . . . not earthly Craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made Implement conquers Heaven for us! . . . These two, in all their degrees, I honour.¹

In the scheme of things that this view of the world proposes evil plays an important part. It is only in the wide field of evil that the good of man gets a chance to show itself. In a world of imperfection doubt and disorder are necessary as the raw materials with which a man works to show his worth. Carlyle, far from casting doubt out of the world, cries that it is the sine qua non of human existence:

. . . properly, Doubt is the indispensable, inexhaustible material whereon Action works, which Action has to fashion into Certainty and Reality; only on a canvas of Darkness, such is man's way of being, could the many-coloured picture of our Life paint itself and shine.²

More than that, evil and chaos provide scope for man to exercise his freewill:

. . . Evil, what we call Evil, must exist while man exists: Evil, in the widest sense we can give it, is precisely the dark, disordered material out of which man's Freewill has to create an edifice of order and Good.³

Man can choose for himself whether he disregard the stern voice of duty that is in him and wallow in useless pleasure, or whether he elect to seek the good which is hidden in the universe. If he chooses the first way of life, he has no free-

¹ Sartor, pp. 181-182.

² "Characteristics", Essays, vol. 3, p. 26.

³ Ibid., p. 28,

dom more. His life, as we have seen earlier, will be bound by vagrant whims or wasted in useless doubt. If he chooses the second, he can work freely at whatever he is able to do. As a ditcher and delver he can ". . . extinguish many a thistle and puddle; and so leave a little order where he found the opposite;"¹ or he can, if his capabilities lie there, work in the spiritual realm and do things of unspeakable greatness. In either case, the man who has laboured to bring order out of chaos has done true work.

It is one of the attributes of true work that it can never perish or be destroyed. On the other hand, false work, like all false things, will live out its appointed hour then vanish utterly from this earth. It follows, then, that the universe is slowly being changed from a chaos to a kingdom of order. Carlyle believes that such a change has actually been taking place throughout the course of history. Let him describe himself the progress that man's labours have thus far wrought -- it cannot be said better:

Sovereigns die and Sovereignties: all dies and is for a time only And yet withal has there not been realized somewhat? Consider (to go no further) these strong Stone-edifices, and what they hold! . . . Stone towers frown aloft; long-lasting, grim with a thousand years. Cathedrals are there, and a Creed (or a memory of a Creed) in them; Palaces and a State and Law. Thou seest the Smoke-vapour; unextinguished Breath as of a living thing. Labour's thousand hammers ring on anvils: also a more miraculous Labour works noiselessly, not with the Hand, but with the Thought. How have cunning workmen in

¹ Sartor, p. 95.

all crafts, with their cunning head and right-hand, tamed the four elements to be their ministers; yoking the Winds to their Sea-chariot, making the very stars their nautical Timepiece; -- and written and collected a Bibliothèque du Roi; among whose books is the Hebrew Book! A wondrous race of creatures: these have been realized, and what a skill is in these. Call not the Past Time, with all its confused wretchedness, a lost one.¹

And looking into the future, Carlyle sees that the continued increase of order, together with the concomitant falling away of disorder, can eventually bring about a minor millennium:

Sooty Hell of mutiny and savagery and despair can, by man's energy, be made a kind of Heaven; cleared of its soot, of its mutiny, of its need to mutiny.²

One last thought on Carlyle's philosophy of work.

Carlyle considers the work a man does to be the most sincere expression of his belief. The worker who acts to bring about fulfillment of the Divine Plan, insofar as that is possible in this imperfect material world, is looking up to God and following his will. Therefore, "True work is worship,"³ and every worker becomes, in part, a poet and a priest. In Carlyle's solemn view the right of every man to worship through working is a sacred one and cannot be denied him. It grieved Carlyle that thousands of workers are idle in England, deprived of their right to work and so to worship. He seldom refers to a workhouse without calling it a bastille to indicate that those within are imprisoned, actually enslaved, because they are not given

¹ French Revolution, vol. 1, pp. 7-8.

² Past and Present, p. 298.

³ Ibid., p. 205.

work to do. Work in the Carlylean system is not merely what a man does for eight hours a day in order to earn his daily bread; it is his religion.

Chapter IV

Carlyle's View of History

In considering the worth of work, Carlyle makes a distinction between spiritual work and material work, always setting the former above the latter. But though there is a difference in value or degree, there is no difference in kind. Energy expended in either the spiritual or the material realm is dedicated to one cause, the attempt to mould the actual world according to the ideal one; and true work, whatever its nature, is concerned with two things, man and God, that is, the needs of practicality and the necessity of ideality.

The philosophy of Hinduism focuses all its attention upon a spiritual world. So vehemently and with such conviction does the Hindu mystic deny the existence of the actual world that he eventually becomes oblivious of it. When he sits upon his spiked bed he is conscious neither of spikes nor of his body. On the other hand, rationalism, utilitarianism, and pragmatism ignore or deny the existence of the spiritual world. These philosophies have no time for heaven-sent dicta. To them, function is the test of worth, and whatever works, in a strictly practical sense, is

right. Carlyle's philosophy denies neither the spiritual nor the material world. Despite the fact that he insists that the real 'Ich' is the spiritual 'ich', he never denies the existence of the actual one, and never begrudges it the bread and milk needed to keep it alive. The physical self is necessary, not only as a receptacle for the spiritual self, but also as the protagonist which keeps the spiritual self alive. The physical world is an equally indispensable part of the Carlylean system. Carlyle, like Teufelsdröckh, "...though a Sansculottist, is no Adamite...."¹ He sees all too clearly the necessity of clothes.

A summary of the Carlylean system might well be that it postulates the existence of an ideal world, recognizes the existence of the actual world, and has as its entire purpose consideration of how these two can co-exist -- with the all-important rider that the actual world must always be giving way to the ideal.

All in all, Carlyle shows a remarkable tolerance for the imperfections of the actual. He holds the ideal to be "...an impossible state of being, yet ever the goal towards which our actual state of being

¹ Sartor, p. 47.

strives."¹ Matter is not a medium conducive to the growth of spirit, yet "...the Ideal always has to grow in the Real, and to seek its bed and board there, often in a very sorry way."² The ideal, independent of bed and board, is found only on the stage or in fiction, and he who expects to find pure, unconfined spirit in this world is bound to be disappointed.

To avoid disappointment we must realize that the actual and the ideal rub along together in an uncertain, ever-changing way. Much as Carlyle esteems the spiritual side of life, he is practical enough to realize that:

Ideas must ever lie a long way off; and we will right thankfully content ourselves with any not intolerable approximation thereto!³

This world is not God's infinite world. Here we must limp along, suffering the shortcomings inherent in flesh and matter, yet struggling ever to rid the world of imperfections and approximations. Above all, man must not be disheartened when he discovers that the ideal he is striving for is unattainable. The struggle must continue, for "...imperfect Human Society holds itself together, and finds its place under the Sun, in virtue

¹ "Characteristics," Essays, vol. 3, p. 8.

² Past and Present, p. 57.

³ Heroes, p. 226.

simply of some approximation to perfection being actually made and put into practice."¹

Carlyle is generally thought of as a man of violent opinion, one whose likes and dislikes were seldom tempered with patience or tolerance. The truth is that his realistic view of the relationship between the ideal and the actual often led him to express a moderate opinion with regard to institutions and traditions of which he did not wholeheartedly approve. Thus, for example, as violently as he attacked the social conditions of nineteenth-century England, he did not go to the extreme of a French Revolution as the best way of putting things right. The situation was not so bad that all must be done away with:

Social anomalies are things to be defended, things to be amended; and in all places and things, short of the Pit itself, there is some admixture of worth and good. Room for extenuation, for pity, for patience.²

He is willing to give man-made institutions their due. He admits that "Parliaments and the Courts of Westminster are venerable...."³ Carlyle is willing to put up with some approximations as the best compromise between ideal and actual possible at this time, but he lives almost

¹ Past and Present, p. 20.

² "Chartism," Essays, vol. 4, pp. 136-137.

³ Past and Present, p. 9.

in terror of man forgetting that as time moves on his compromises must be revised.

In considering the actual world, Carlyle takes into account its temporal as well as its spatial imperfections. The problems of one generation are not the problems of the next, and the solutions of one generation will not do for the next. Thus each generation must fashion its own approximation to the ideal. Moreover, the ideals recognized by each generation will change for:

By the Laws of Nature... all manner of Ideals have their fatal limits and lot; their appointed periods of youth, of maturity or perfection, of decline, degradation, and final death and disappearance.¹
The very Truth has to change its vesture from time to time; and be born again.²

Note that it is not truth that changes, but the vesture of truth. God's truth is immutable, but "...in every new generation it will manifest itself in a new dialect"³ conformable to the understanding of that generation.

The struggle of truth to get itself recognized in spite of the machinations of its arch-enemies time and space results in a world of constant change and adjustment. "All things are in revolution," says Carlyle,

¹ Past and Present, p. 57.

² French Revolution, vol. 1, p. 228.

³ Heroes, p. 180.

"in change from moment to moment, which becomes sensible from epoch to epoch."¹ From the moment of its first inception a work of art, a system of polity, or a doctrine of religion grows towards its death. This change, far from being a sorry matter, is actually the sign of progress, for it is "...the product simply of increased resources which the old methods can no longer administer."² In its youth a system is spreading its truth and dispelling darkness. When the truth that is in it has been accepted by all who have come in contact with it the system is at its full power. Yet at that very instant it begins to lose potency, for it can no longer make a positive contribution to that society. The state now has a portion of God's truth equal to that in the system; it is in consequence a more perfect age than the one which produced the system, and it must now evolve a system conformable to its more enlightened ideas.

An epoch, when it no longer answers to the ideas of an age, gradually gives way to the next. But the death of an epoch may also come, not because the system no longer measures up to the truth of its

¹ French Revolution, vol. 1, p. 211

² "Characteristics," Essays, vol. 3, p. 39.

generation, but because it no longer measures up to God's truth, to the Laws of Nature. Consider a system wherein the right to rule has somehow fallen, not to the wisest and noblest, but to the false and insincere. The leaders become egotistical and rule for the greater glory of themselves rather than for the furtherance of God's plan. The relationship of man to master, instead of being marked by loyal obedience, is marred by feelings of injustice. At some point here the God in man rebels, will tolerate injustice no longer, and in one convulsive move, with force and bloodshed if necessary, makes an end of one system and installs a new.

Carlyle sees the transition from one epoch to the next, whether it be abrupt or gradual, as a palingenesis or 'Phoenix Death-Birth.' The death of one system is simultaneously the birth of the next. But when we speak of the 'death' of an epoch or system, we must not understand thereby its complete obliteration. "Little knowest thou of the burning of a World - Phoenix," says Carlyle, "who fanciest that she must first burn-out, and lie as dead as a cinereous heap; and therefrom the young one start-up as by a miracle, and fly heaven-ward."¹ Palingenesia is the rejuvenation of the old system, a metempsychosis whereby the soul of the old

¹ Sartor, pp. 194-195.

system is taken over by the new and is re-incarnated as a fairer revelation of the truth.

Thus do the epochs of history follow one another. When gunpowder rendered the feudal lord and his castle obsolete, feudalism as a system had to go. But that part of it that accorded with the Laws of Nature did not go. Feudalism left behind ideals of bravery, loyalty, nobility, honour, chivalry, and courtesy. These things, because they were the God-approved part of feudalism, did not die. Christianity superseded paganism because it offered a morality more attune to the needs of the world. It substituted worship of holiness for worship of force, but it absorbed and perpetuated the true part of paganism; that is, the concepts of reverence and worship. If, in the realm of politics, monarchy prove itself unfit to govern, then it too will have to go -- perhaps in the fire of a French Revolution. But once again, what is just and true will survive, for "Sansculotism will burn much; but what is incombustible it cannot burn."¹

These unburnable elements of a system are designated by Carlyle as "select adoptabilities" or "organic filaments." The terms are meant to express those tenuous, invisible connections which link man

¹ French Revolution, vol. 1, p. 213.

to man and generation to generation. From the time when prehistoric man grunted his first syllable a thin thread has run unbroken through all the fires and cataclysms of history, gathering and guarding each improvement in the art of communication up to the moment when a wireless apparatus sent a voice around the world. Without that first grunt, preserved and improved, radio would be impossible. Had not some savage made a hammer, Wren could never have built St. Paul's. Or consider the development of our laws. From the first crude code of the tribe, through Mosaic law to Roman law to the common law of today, what a history is there! Each generation selects from its legal heritage whatever it can adopt, refines and improves upon this nucleus, then passes it on. Thus is our store of statutory good slowly increased.

It is as impossible for these organic filaments to be broken as it is for one man to cut himself off from his fellows. The English men who came to the New World put two thousands miles of water between themselves and their compatriots. They called themselves Americans and tried to cut with a sword every tie that bound them to the English. Despite all this, they still lived in houses instead of caves, and ate with a knife and fork instead of with their fingers. Some little memory of another time and place remained.

And how much more of the spiritual memory remained, of Magna Carta, Habeas Corpus, and freedom of every sort, of justice and God-filled worship?

Following out his theory of select adoptabilities and organic filaments Carlyle comes to the belief that "...the true Past departs not."¹ By 'true past' Carlyle means all that is good, good in the moral as well as in the practical sense. It is easy enough to believe that man preserves and passes on any knowledge that serves him in the practical manner. There are very few lost arts in the history of the world. That the same is true of moral good is a rather more doubtful claim. Yet this is Carlyle's stand: "No Truth or Goodness realized by man ever dies, or can die; but is all still here, and, recognized or not, lives and works through endless changes."² In the course of history the accidents and trivialities which attended upon the discovery of a certain portion of truth drop away, but the truth itself, distilled, refined, edited, continues in all its essential being into all future generations. At the same time, the bad, having proved itself to be useless and unadoptable, is discarded by the next generation. In consequence of this evolutionary

¹ "Characteristics," Essays, vol. 3, p. 38.

² Loc. cit.

process, present-day England can be considered "... the summary of what has been found of wise, and noble, and accordant with God's Truth, in all the generations of English Men."¹

Not only is the positivistic theory of history outlined above overtly expressed both in Past and Present and in "Characteristics," but it is the covert theme of each of Carlyle's historical writings. Nevertheless, Norwood Young quotes Wickstead: "To the medieval thinker ... there was really no progressive development of the world as we conceive it. History was rather a history of corruption and a falling away than a history of progress," and remarks that "These were the doctrines of Carlyle who remained a child of the Middle Ages."² To anyone who has read Carlyle, even without the 'loving heart' that he insists is necessary for understanding, there is no hope of comprehending this opinion. Carlyle sees history as an evolution and progress, a constant melioration. One wonders if Young ever read the concluding thought of the "Inaugural Address:" "Work, and despair not: Wir heissen euch hoffen, 'We bid you be of hope!' -- let that be my last word."³ And these are, apart

¹ Past and Present, p. 133.

² Rise and Fall, p. 109.

³ Essays, vol. 4, p. 482.

from two short essays and the Early Kings of Norway fragment, the last words of Carlyle. Moreover, they represent the earnest counsel of a seventy-one-year-old man to a new generation about to take up the responsibilities he is laying down. At such a time, and in such a case, surely Young would not maintain that the pessimist was merely mouthing optimistic sentiments?

Because Carlyle takes historical change to be the result of the ideal attempting to manifest itself in the actual, he must always face the question as to "how far such ideals can be introduced into practice, and at what point our impatience with their non-introduction ought to begin."¹ Although he is generally on the side of change and berates those who mourn the past, at the same time, he counsels against overhasty action in the discarding of any institution or custom. Caught as he always is in the dualism of the ideal and the actual, he warns the world to 'ca' canny:

All great Peoples are conservative; slow to believe in novelties; patient of much error in actualities; deeply and forever certain of the greatness that is in Law, in Custom once solemnly established, and now long recognized as just and final. True, O Radical Reformer, there is no Custom that can, properly speaking, be final; none. And yet thou seest Customs which in all civilized countries, are accounted final; nay, under the Old-Roman name of Mores, are accounted Morality,

¹ Heroes, p. 176.

Virtue, Laws of God Himself. Such, I assure thee, not a few of them are; such almost all of them once were.¹

God-inspired laws have been empirically discovered by past generations and have, for very good reason, become the custom for human behaviour. What a waste it would be if each generation turned its back on all the wisdom the previous generation had painfully collected and began to build up its morality again from the crudest beginnings. It would be as if the Eastcheap clerk spent all his time checking the ready-reckoner provided by the firm and never got around to doing his accounts. It is most important that we go slowly with the immediate past for we are too close to it to see it clearly. It is only with the objectivity and perspective acquired through time that society sorts out the good from the bad, the true from the trivial, and discovers the organic filaments of the past.

In the Carlylean view of history there is a periodicity discernible very similar to that proposed by the Saint-Simonians. Saint-Simon's philosophy of history regards social development as a series of periodic mutations, each marked by two epochs -- an organic epoch, which is characterized by belief in an essentially religious directive principle, and a critical

¹ Past and Present, p. 163.

epoch, characterized by disbelief and attacks upon the directive principle. Transition between epochs is gradual and results in the palengenetic emergence of a new organic epoch which carries forward all the perfection of previous epochs and increases this perfection as it can, till it in turn, being no longer able to contribute positively to society, is attacked, and finally denied.¹

During the years 1830-1834 Gustave d'Eichthal, a Saint-Simon disciple, had supplied Carlyle with copies of the movement's tracts and pamphlets. Carlyle was sufficiently interested in the group to undertake a translation of the Nouveau Christianisme, Saint-Simone's last work, but he asked that the translation not appear under his name. He objected increasingly to the movement's religious bent, and by 1834 he was no longer in touch with the group.

Even though Carlyle approved of the Saint-Simonian concept that periods of firm belief and positive activity alternate with periods of denial and anarchic, negative activity, he does not himself accept more than the superficial framework of this view -- and that only

¹ For a succinct summary of the Saint-Simonian theory of historical periodicity see Hill Shine, Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1941, pp. 39-40.

in a general way. The Saint-Simonians insisted upon an organic epoch being organized about one central idea which is accepted by the entire state. Carlyle pays little attention to the delineation of organic or critical epochs, and consequently does not hold that the lifetime of a belief is confined to a set historical period. Catholicism has lasted two millennia, says Carlyle, and will last another two, or two thousand, so long as there is truth in it. World history, far from being a neat sequence of epochs, is

By very nature ... a labyrinth and chaos; ... an abatis of trees and brushwood, a world-wide jungle, at once growing and dying. Under the green foliage and blossoming fruit-trees of Today, there lie, rotting slower or faster, the forests of all other Years and Days. Some have rotted fast, plants of annual growth, and are long since gone to inorganic mould; others are like the aloe, growths that last a thousand or three thousand years. You will find them in all stages of decay and preservation; down deep to the beginnings of the History of Man.¹

Despite the careful argument of Hill Shine in his book Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians, we must agree with Rene Wellek that to the question "Is there a fundamental affinity between Carlyle's theory of history and that of the Saint-Simonians?" the answer "...must be wholly in the negative."²

¹ "Anti-Dryasdust," Introduction to Cromwell, p. 7.

² "Carlyle and the Philosophy of History," Philological Quarterly, vol. 23, no. 1 (January, 1944), p. 56.

Carlyle does not see history as a process as simply explained or as rigidly bound as the cyclical theory of the Saint-Simonians would have it. For the same reason he does not hold with the narrative or cause-and-effect philosophy of history. Narrative views history as one occurrence following another, while the actual event probably consisted of a group of simultaneous and interacting incidents. Even the attempt to see history as a narrative with one event connected to the next as cause and effect is not enough, for

Actual events are nowise so simply related to each other as parent and offspring are; every single event is the offspring not of one, but of all other events, prior or contemporaneous, and will in its turn combine with all others to give birth to new¹

In Carlyle's philosophy the final explanation of an historical event, as far as explanation is possible, lies not in the event, but in the man. The course of history as he sees it is the result of men acting according to the Laws of Nature. Thus, when the world system departs from the Laws of Nature a man or mob of men acts to correct the aberration because men cannot bear injustice. Continual change takes place because the soul of man is duty-bound to strive continually

¹ "On History," Essays, vol. 2, p. 88.

after truth and the fulfillment of God's plan. The change is evolutionary and marked by a continual increase of good because men's souls love good and abhor evil. An epoch ends because men have absorbed all the truth that the epoch has to offer. In short, man acts and history is made.

Herein lies the basis of Carlyle's view of history as "...the essence of innumerable Biographies."¹ In any historical event a man is concerned, and the event can be understood only in terms of the man or men who engineered it. We ought not to understand from this that everything a man does is historically important. It is not biography but the essence of biography that goes to make up history. Ordinary biography consists of a recital of the external facts of a man's life -- date and place of birth, childhood and early years, and so on, till our subject be laid under a slab of local limestone in the north-west corner of the parish churchyard. The essence of biography concerns itself with none of these facts except as they directly enter into the true biographic question, how did he comport himself in that battle of light against darkness which is life?

¹ "Biography," Essays, vol. 3, p.47.

It is obvious that history in human terms is a complex matter. Carlyle has already told us that we cannot know ourselves. How much more difficult is it to know another person, perhaps a man of another century? The facts that are to be known about him are endless, and the forces that are at work within him are devious and deeply hidden. Yet to understand the event we must understand the man as fully as possible. We must know, not only whether his breakfast egg was cooked to his liking on that day, but also with what reverence or lack of reverence he looked upon his fellowmen, upon the world, and upon God.

In order to understand the man it will be necessary "...not only to see into him, but even to see out of him to view the world altogether as he views it."¹ No less an authority than G. M. Trevelyan attests to the fact that this is actually Carlyle's method of approaching history and to the success with which he does it:

It is indispensable that [the historian] should understand the prime motive force that caused the actions of which he takes account. Now Carlyle has an unrivalled instinct for the detection of men's inmost motives. His peculiar method is to write history from the inside of the actors.²

¹ "Biography," Essays, vol. 3, p. 44.

² "Carlyle as an Historian," Nineteenth Century, vol. 66 (1899), p. 499.

The vividness of Carlyle's histories stems directly from his anthropocentric approach to history. He realizes that in order to make his readers understand the historical event, he must bring the historical man back to life. He realizes, too, how difficult it is to overcome the time and distance that separate even one generation from its fathers. "How pale, thin, ineffectual do the great figures we would fain summon from History rise before us!" he once exclaimed, "Scarcely as palpable men does out utmost effort body them forth...."¹ To revitalize these pale shapes, he slips in revealing anecdote, turns now and again to direct speech, or dwells on personal appearance. Above all, he attempts to overcome time by using the common elements of humanity to link the past to the present. To Carlyle, history is not a dry recital of what happened long ago, but a drama acted out by people who ate and slept and worked much as we do today. It is by emphasizing the human side of the scene that he recreates the monastery life of Bury St. Edmund's:

Dim, as through a long vista of Seven Centuries, dim and very strange looks that monk-life to us; the ever-surprising circumstance this, That it is a fact and no dream, that we see it there, and gaze into the very eyes of it! Smoke rises daily from those culinary chimney-throats; there are living human beings there, who chant,

¹ "Schiller," Essays, vol. 2, p. 166.

loud-braying, their matins, nones, vespers; awakening echoes, not to the bodily ear alone.... Bells clang out: on great occasions, all the bells. We have Processions, Preachings, Festivals, Christmas Plays, Mysteries shown in the Churchyard, at which latter the Townsfolk sometimes quarrel.¹

Again, in the description of the visit of King John to the Abbey, there is the same awe and delight in the realization that history is the story, not of dead things, but of living people:

For King Lackland was there, verily he; and did leave these tredecim sterlingii, if nothing more, and did live and look in one way or the other, and a whole world was living and looking along with him!"²

A king with his entire retinue, cleaning out the larder, emptying the cellar -- and leave thirteen pence sterling to say a mass for him! Jocelin, Carlyle, and reader, all are outraged. However, "We of course said our mass for him, having covenanted to do it, -- but let impartial posterity judge with what degree of fervour."³

Even when we have said that Carlyle's approach to history is anthropocentric, we have not said all. If history were nothing more than the story of the human race, then the course of history could be explained, as

¹ Past and Present, pp. 62-63.

² Ibid., p. 46.

³ Ibid., p. 45.

Toynbee has done it, in terms of economic and sociological pressures. Carlyle is aware of these pressures and of their effect on history. For example, he often states that the economic oppression of the lower classes was one of the main causes of the French Revolution.¹

And certainly in his own day, he recognizes that "... the new omnipotence of the steam-engine is hewing asunder quite other mountains than the physical."²

He is more aware than most of his contemporaries of the depth of the unrest that expanding industrialization has brought to Britain. Yet social unrest is to Carlyle merely symptomatic of a hidden disease and a deeper wrong, and is not in itself the all-important force in the forming of history. To him, England in the mid-nineteenth century stands on the brink of Niagara. If he considered that sociological pressure might be the force that would push her over, would he not welcome any effort to meliorate that force? There were moves afoot to improve the lot of the wage-earner -- chartism, reform-bills, and the New Lanark Mills of Robert Owen. Of all these moves Carlyle was contemptuous. There was for him a deeper principle at work in history than the placating of a mob. His philosophy of history is

¹ "Chartism," Essays, vol. 4, p. 149.
French Revolution, vol. 3, pp. 115, 202.

² "Characteristics," Essays, vol. 3, p. 39.

sociological only insofar as acts which seem to improve the lot of humanity coincide with acts which further the Divine Plan. Sometimes the two do coincide, as in the French Revolution, where the perverseness of the system has been purged by the action of the mob. At other times, for example, in the forcible quelling of the Jamaica uprising by Governor Eyre, it is the mob that is purged.

In the final analysis, Carlyle's concept of history discards both logical cause-and-effect explanation and sociological interpretation -- though it uses both when it sees fit -- in favour of a divinatory theory. While examination of causes and study of the men concerned may throw some light on an event, mystery still remains. Even the simplest incident of history, no matter how thoroughly it has been investigated, has still an element of the unknown about it. And therein lies, for Carlyle, proof that God has been at work, not by direct intervention, but nonetheless mysteriously, through his agent man. The true explanation of history lies with God.

Carlyle realizes that this is really no explanation. Indeed, that is the very point he wishes to make -- that history is an inscrutable book which "... can be fully interpreted by no man."¹ A worthwhile

¹ "On History," Essays, vol. 2, p. 90.

historian will go as far as he can with his story, then he will acknowledge that no human knows the full cause or meaning of the event. Attempts have been made to write histories without taking God into account.

Against these Carlyle warns earnestly:

You may read very ingenious and very clever history books, by men whom it would be the height of insolence in me to do other than express my respect for. But their position is essentially sceptical. God and the Godlike, as our fathers would have said, has fallen asleep for them, and plays no part in their histories....A man unhappily in that condition will make but a temporary explanation of anything: -- in short, you will not be able, I believe, by aid of these men, to understand how this Island came to be what it is.¹

Just as he shook his head at the scientists who would explain the wonder out of the universe, so he rejected those "cause and effect speculators"² who would explain the mystery out of history.

In his own histories Carlyle tended to de-emphasize the most apparent explanations and to emphasize or even exaggerate the inexplicable element in the case. In consequence of this tendency he delights in showing how from some slight cause a dire event can spring, or how a strange concatenation links one action

¹ "Inaugural Address," Essays, vol. 4, pp. 462-463.

² "On History," Essays, vol. 2, p. 90.

to another to produce an unforeseeable result.

"Might it not be," Carlyle once speculated, "that because Father Noah took the liberty of, say, rinsing out his wine-vat, his Ark was floated off and a world drowned?"¹ He sees the flight of the King of France thwarted by an odd series of accidents. A new carriage and a military escort limit the entourage to a flight of only sixty-nine miles after twenty-two hours of continuous travelling; at Sainte-Menehould Postmaster Drouet happens to be on the street, happens to be suffering from cholera so that his faculties are sharpened, happens to recognize the royal party and happens to be the man who will do something about it; and young Bouille, who was to have provided the relief horses at Varennes, happens to have fallen asleep. But for this unexplainable sequence of coincidences, says Carlyle, King Louis would have got away, and the whole course of French history would have been different.²

Or again, after the Tennis Court Oath has been given the King dismisses the States-General. The King and his retinue, the nobles and clergy file out. The Third Estate stands irresolute and uncertain, and they too, "...might very naturally have glided off;

¹ "Diamond Necklace," Essays, vol. 3, p. 363.

² French Revolution, vol. 2, pp. 169-181.

and the whole course of European history have been different" had not Gabrielle Honore Mirabeau been there and lifted up his lion-voice.¹

The role of chance and coincidence in history holds an inordinate fascination for Carlyle. It is generally held that the growth of the parliamentary system received greater impetus from the fact that a man came to the throne of England who did not speak English; and that man came to be king merely by virtue of "... being born under such and such a bedtester."² An Austrian archduke is assassinated in Serbia and the world is plunged into war. Carlyle, before looking further for the cause of it all, would probably shake his head in wonder and muse, "On what Damocles hairs does the judgement-sword hang over this distracted Earth!"³

In the "Diamond Necklace" Carlyle examines an even more mysterious area of historical concatenation, one wherein the connection is not apparent, but devious and hidden. His whole purpose in this short story, essay, or novel -- one hardly knows how to term it -- is to show how a foolish ambassador in Vienna and a foolish

¹ French Revolution, vol. 4, p. 165.

² Sartor, p. 38.

³ "Diamond Necklace," Essays, vol. 3, p. 362.

jeweler in Paris, "... all uncommunicating, wide asunder as the Poles, are hourly forging for each other the wonderfulest hook-and-eye; which will hook them together, one day, -- into artificial Siamese-Twins, for the astonishment of mankind."¹ Harking back to his idea that the world is a chaos of interacting forces, Carlyle maintains that the jeweler Boehmer's work is taken into this chaos, by odd coincidence finds there affinity with the work of two rascally courtiers, two deceitful women, a love-sick cardinal, and a philandering queen, and emerges eventually as a piece of villainy which foreshadows the French Revolution. No amount of logic or cause-and-effect speculation can explain the mystery out of this slight event. How much less chance, then, has the godless historian of getting to the bottom of a greater historical event.

Because Carlyle regards history as divinely directed, the study of history is for him almost as sacred as the study of the Bible to a priest. His ultimate definition of history he set forth rhetorically in Sartor: "Is not Man's History, and Men's History, a perpetual Evangel?"² We can consider this to be his ultimate definition of history because it includes in

¹ "Diamond Necklace" Essays, vol. 3, pp. 338-339.

² Sartor, p. 202.

it his other definitions, the phrase 'man's history' representing the definition of history as the essence of innumerable biographies, and the phrase 'men's history' representing the view that we have yet to examine, that is, that history is the biography of great men. And what is the 'evangel,' the glad tidings, that history brings? It is simply this: this world under God's guidance and by man's efforts is perfectible. Carlyle saw in the study of history corroboration of his complete philosophy.

In his "Inaugural Address" at Edinburgh University, Carlyle enjoins the students to be diligent, above all, to find an area of study which they could make their own. And the only area he specifically recommends to them is history, "... the most profitable of all studies."¹ History is the study of paramount virtue to the young because it is "the Letter of Instructions, which the old generations write and posthumously transmit to the new...."² While other historians turn to the past to draw morals from the mistakes man has made, Carlyle looks to the past to draw guidance from the progress that God has made. In history he sees "Philosophy teaching by experience."³ In the opening

¹ "On History Again," Essays, vol. 3, p. 167.

² Loc. cit.

³ "On History," Essays, vol. 2, p. 85.

pages of his first historical work, Carlyle tells exactly what the reader ought to learn from history:

How ... Ideals do realize themselves;
and grow wondrously, from amid the
incongruous, ever-fluctuating chaos
of the Actual: this is what World-
history, if it teach anything, has to
teach us.¹

In Carlyle's view, the historiographer takes on the formidable task of tracing that wondrous growth of ideals. Actually Carlyle divides historiographers into two categories, the historian-artisan and the historian-artist. The artisan is a pedant and a dryasdust, an historian only in the narrow, vulgar sense. He is a mere chronicler of occurrences, a man who "...labours mechanically in a department without an eye for the Whole, not feeling that there is a Whole."² He will measure up Stonehenge, calculate the total tonnage of stone brought to the plain, and reconstruct for you, in thirty quarto pages with working drawings, the methods by which men without machines managed its erection.

The artist-historian however, a man who "... informs and ennobles the humblest department with an Idea of the Whole, and habitually knows that only in

¹ French Revolution, vol. 1, p. 10.

² "On History," Essays, vol. 2, p. 90.

the Whole is the Partial to be truly discerned,"¹ will see the one fact about Stonehenge that is still meaningful, that is, that men centuries ago worshipped something above themselves with a devotion so strong that they sweated and even died to erect a symbol of their worship. Save this one fact, all else about Stonehenge deserves to be forgotten -- must be forgotten, so that "...the Present is not needlessly trammelled with the Past; [but] only grows out of it, like a Tree, whose roots are not intertangled with its branches, but lie peaceable underground."²

Continuing his image of history being a tree rooted in the past, Carlyle defines the artist-historian as one who has the ability

... to distinguish well what does still reach to the surface, and is alive and frondent for us; and what reaches no longer to the surface, but moulders safe underground, never to send forth leaves or fruit for mankind any more.³

The whole business of the true historian lies in selecting certain things to be forgotten and certain others to be remembered. His is therefore a twofold role. Not only must he ferret out the organic filaments that run throughout society and do his bit to preserve them, but

¹ "On History" Essays, vol. 2, p. 90.

² Sartor, p. 36.

³ Cromwell, p. 7.

also he must decide what is mere accident and dead triviality. And this he must decently bury.

In this view, forgetting as much as remembering is part of the talent of the artist-historian, for forgetting and remembering,

like Day and Night, and indeed like all other Contradictions in this strange dualistic Life of ours, are necessary for each other's existence: Oblivion is the dark page, whereon Memory writes her light-beam characters, and makes them legible; were it all light nothing could be read there, any more than if it were all darkness.¹

It is only by pruning away the unnecessary and unimportant foliage that the historian can reveal the strong main trunk. Working in the immediate past the historian will cut sparingly, for he cannot judge too well whether or not a branch be dead to us. But in the distant past he will prune heavily so that, although the history of George the Fourth will occupy volumes, a few pages will suffice to tell all that is alive to us from the time of Alfred the Great.

Since the criterion Carlyle uses for determining whether an occurrence should be remembered or forgotten is whether it is alive to us, it will be worthwhile to look for a moment to the things Carlyle himself marks for forgetting or remembering to see if a

¹ "On History Again," Essays, vol. 3, p. 173.

clearer understanding of the criterion emerges. The things consigned to oblivion are the things historians once doted on, lists of battles, catalogues of prime ministers and their cabinets, accounts of their debates.

"What good is it to me," cried Carlyle,

...that a man named George the Third was born and bred up, and a man named George the Second died; that Walpole, and the Pelhams, and Chatham, and Rockingham, and Shelburne, and North, with their Coalition or their Separation Ministries, all ousted one another.¹

Battles and war-tumults ... pass away like tavern-brawls....Laws themselves, political Constitutions, are not our Life, but only the house wherein our Life is led.²

These are representative of the dead facts that have no place in a true history. What Carlyle wants to see preserved in history are the accounts of how our life came to be what it is today. To do this, history must tell the story of:

Phoenician mariners, of Italian masons and Saxon metallurgists, of philosophers, alchemists, prophets, and all the long-forgotten train of artists and artisans; who from the first have been jointly teaching us how to think and how to act, how to rule over spiritual and over physical Nature.³

We recognize these things as Carlyle's organic filaments. The historian, in showing how our present has grown out

¹ "Boswell's Life of Johnson," Essays, vol. 3, p. 80. See also "On History," Essays, vol. 2, pp. 91-92.

² "On History," Essays, vol. 2, p. 86.

³ Ibid., pp. 86-87.

of the past, has traced the gradual growth of ideals in the actual; and he teaches, by showing us the experiences of the past, how the Carlylean philosophy has been fulfilling itself and how it can continue to do so.

Carlyle's biographical approach to history coupled with his theory of history as the tracing of the growth of ideas leads him to define history as being "... but the Biography of Great Men."¹ It is unfortunate that critics who understand neither Carlyle's theory of heroes nor his philosophy of history have made a good deal of this definition. These people have understood Carlyle to mean that a collection of biographies -- and by this they do not mean a collection of biographies in the Carlyle manner -- should supplant all history texts. Actually, Carlyle, still intent upon tracing the growth of ideals, is interested in great men because they have been the guardians of ideas and the sources of ideals for their generation. In Sartor Carlyle stated:

Great Men are the inspired (speaking and acting) Texts of that divine Book of Revelations, whereof a Chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named History.²

The great man has been more important than his fellows

¹ Heroes, p. 33.

² Sartor, p. 142.

in the moulding of his times. His thoughts have formed its philosophy and his actions have guided its course. He is the spirit of his age in microcosm. In him the essence of the times is most available, clustered about one central core and relatively uncluttered with extraneous activity. It is in consideration of this that Carlyle claims that "... the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here;"¹ and this view is an extension, not a contradiction, of Carlyle's larger view of history as the story of the development of ideals.

A very brief glance at Carlyle's French Revolution and Cromwell will show how his philosophy directly affected his efforts as an historian. He saw the French Revolution as a God-inspired re-routing of an aberrant world. To justify this view Carlyle had to show the Ancien Regime as being wicked, hollow, specious, and false,² and the lower classes as being naked, hungry, and oppressed.³ In Carlyle's interpretation, the revolution arose entirely from this single cause -- the system of France had strayed from the Divine Plan and was

¹ Heroes, p. 1.

² French Revolution, vol. 1, pp. 10-11; vol. 3, p. 202.

³ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 115, passim. Cf. "Chartism," Essays, vol. 4, p. 149.

now being purged and set right. Because the revolutionaries were God's missionaries of order, Carlyle has to show them as honest, just, and sincere, "... a genuine outburst of nature."¹ He therefore glosses over the brutality of the mob, and emphasizes its morality. He makes no comment when the revolutionaries, having promised DeLaunay, commandant of the Bastille, immunity, butcher him; he shakes his head sadly over the guillotining, but claims that it was necessary. On the other hand, he takes considerable time to tell how the mob returns three sacks of money taken from the Hotel-de-Ville during a mob raid, and how the patriots, having rescued eleven gardes française imprisoned for not firing on the crowd, and finding they have inadvertently brought out a twelfth imprisoned for a civil offence, return him to prison.

There is some justification, then, for calling the French Revolution Carlyle's didactic novel. It is didactic because it frankly sets out to show that hypocrisy and injustice will be set down by sincerity and justice; it is a novel because it adjusts history to make it fit this moral. Carlyle has to write his novel as a history because "fiction ... partakes of the nature of lying"² and Carlyle could not lie.

¹ French Revolution, vol. 1, p. 251.

² "Biography," Essays, vol. 3, p. 49.

A similar philosophical flavouring is detectable in Cromwell's Letters and Speeches. The Puritan Revolt Carlyle sees as "... the armed Appeal of Puritanism to the Invisible God of Heaven against many very visible Devils,"¹ and an attempt "... to bring the Divine Law of the Bible into actual practice in men's affairs on the Earth...."² Like the French Revolution, it has divine sanction, and thus can do no wrong -- or, at least, whatever wrong it does is excusable on the double count of being necessary to rid the world of a greater wrong, and of being done in a spirit of justice and right. Thus Carlyle's editing of the letters and his commentary must show that, if Cromwell's conduct in Ireland is brutal, it is nevertheless necessary and just. Cromwell himself was persuaded that the violent action he took to quiet Ireland was:

... a righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much blood; and that it would tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future.³

To which persuasion Carlyle gives approving emphasis:

Terrible Surgery this: but is it Surgery and Judgement, or atrocious murder merely? That is a question which should be asked

¹ Cromwell, vol. 1, p. 41.

² Ibid., vol. 2, p. 169.

³ Cromwell, vol. 2, p. 60.

and answered. Oliver Cromwell did believe in God's Judgements; and did not believe in the rose-water plan of Surgery; -- which, in fact, is this Editor's case too.¹

And just as he shows the mob in the French Revolution to be fit agents of the divine will, so he shows Cromwell to be a true hero. First we must be shown that Cromwell has the humility required of a hero. "I called not myself to this place," says Cromwell; whereupon Carlyle interjects, "Do you mark that, and the air and nammer of it, my honourable friends!"² And upon one of the numerous occasions when Cromwell gives all credit for his success to God, Carlyle pointedly remarks: "There is a Selbsttödtung, a killing of Self, as my friend Novalis calls it...."³

Cromwell, like all true heroes, though humble before God, is capable of decisive action among men. To demonstrate this Carlyle must make much of Cromwell's vigorous administrative reforms, his ability to make difficult decisions and to carry them out with celerity and determination. When Carlyle is finished describing the financial reforms of Cromwell, the stern dismissal of the Rump Parliament, not to mention

¹ Cromwell, vol. 2, p. 51.

² Cromwell, vol. 3, p. 132.

³ Ibid., p. 121.

the martial successes in Ireland, we are thoroughly convinced that in the Lord Protector we have a hero that knows his work and does it.

Carlyle's Cromwell has as well the high moral sense of a true hero. In the name of God he has stormed the garrison at Tredah and killed almost every defender. Then, with a sense of justice almost ironic, he hangs two of his own men for plundering against his orders. Or again, as busy as the Lord Protector is, he still has time to ensure that the amnesty granted Humphrey Hooke is honoured,¹ or to remonstrate against the harsh judgement passed on one James Nayler, whose only crime was that he imagined himself to be the re-incarnation of Christ.² It is just by relating such little incidents as these that Carlyle puts his readers inside the man, looking out with the eyes of the man, so that in the end the reader is convinced by the sum of all the incidents that the man was as Carlyle has portrayed him.

To prove that Cromwell, though he could use force when it was necessary, was in truth a moderate man who disliked violence, Carlyle never omits a letter which offers quarter or treaty to a besieged town.

¹ Cromwell, vol. 2, p. 175.

² Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 17ff.

Indeed, in telling of the siege of Wexford, Carlyle prints, one after the other, six letters from Cromwell offering terms to the beleaguered garrison.¹

From beginning to end, Carlyle is intent upon making his reader see Cromwell as Carlyle sees him. And though none of his historical heroes were perfect, it seems to be Cromwell who is nearest perfect. "I have asked myself," says Carlyle,

if anywhere in Modern European History, or even in Ancient Asiatic, there was found a man practising this mean World's affairs with a heart more filled by the Idea of the Highest?²

Carlyle holds that during the Protectorate England came close to setting up the rule of God on earth, for "... nothing that was contrary to the laws of Heaven was allowed to live by Oliver."³ Holding also that an artist-historian has the right to select his facts according to his philosophy, he feels himself justified in arranging Cromwell's experiences to preach the Carlylean scheme.

¹ Cromwell, vol. 2, pp. 66ff.

² Ibid., vol. 2, p. 175.

³ "Inaugural Address," Essays, vol. 4, p. 460.

Chapter V

The Question of the Two Carlyles

In 1919 G. M. Trevelyan published his Recreations of an Historian, in one chapter of which, entitled "The Two Carlyles," he wrote:

We who truly loved him have long ago cloven our Carlyle in twain and thrown away the worser half of his doctrine, have strongly differentiated Sartor, the French Revolution, and Past and Present from those most entertaining but immoral works of his old age, Frederick and Latter-Day Pamphlets.¹

From 1919 on the idea that the successful and admired Sage of Chelsea was, as thinker and as man, completely apart from the rude but sincere Ecclefechan peasant gained favour with many Carlyle scholars.² Though the

¹ London, Nelson, 1919, pp. 192-193.

² Norwood Young in 1927: "The mystic had become an exponent of Realpolitik. The Craigenputtock spiritualist was transformed into a Cheyne Row materialist. Love was thrown aside for Power." (Rise and Fall, p. 367.)

Eric Bentley in 1944: "It is natural that Carlyle should at first be at home with men like Cromwell who combined worldly power with spiritual faith, but increasingly we have seen, Carlyle's heroes were of another kidney: Governor Eyre, Bismarck, and Frederick the Great." (Cult of the Superman, p. 53.)

David Gascoyne in 1952: "There are two Carlyles almost as indubitably as there are two Hegels, two Wordsworths." (Thomas Carlyle, p. 9.)

Julian Symons in 1952: "Carlyle's views changed from ...a generous view of human potentialities into the vicarious, sadistic lust for power of a disappointed

date for the supposed metamorphosis is set by some as 1845, others imagine it to have occurred when he left Scotland (1834), and still others put it around the date of the Latter-Day Pamphlets (1850). The exact date does not matter; there is sufficient general agreement that we may settle on the period between Past and Present (1843) and the Latter-Day Pamphlets as marking the death of one Carlyle and the birth of the other. The explanations for the complete change are given variously as Carlyle's success,³ his disappointment and failure,⁴ or merely that he left Scotland.⁵

But the disagreement with regard to dates and causes is unimportant, if there is agreement on the more important part of the matter, that is, on the distinctions of character that mark the new Carlyle from the old. And there is, generally speaking, such agreement.

The first charge is that Carlyle after 1843-1850 is politically illiberal in that he opposes all legislation that would improve the lot of the labourer

man." (Thomas Carlyle, London, Gollancz, p. 295.)

Times Literary Supplement in 1956: "It is of course true that after 1845 ... Carlyle...became an apologist for the mailed fist." (London, 3 February, 1956, p. 61.)

³ Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 195.

⁴ Symons, op. cit., p. 295.

⁵ Young, op. cit., p. 367.

and the wage-earner. The second charge is that he has become a champion of the aristocracy and an admirer of physical force. The final charge is that he has exchanged a generous and loving view of mankind for a sour and misanthropic hatred of every human face.

Bisecting a man so that you can explain opinions or actions that are not accounted for by your understanding of the man as a whole is a very neat solution to the problem. All the good things are the work of Dr. Jekyll, 'the very pink of proprieties,' and all the bad things the work of the 'really damnable' Mr. Hyde. It is, as I say, a very neat solution, but it is most unnatural. So few men are truly schizophrenic. In Carlyle's case the affair is complicated by the fact that the simple and loving Carlyle of Ecclefechan, having been killed off to make way for the embittered author of the Latter-Day Pamphlets, must be revived to write the Life of Sterling, put away again while the second Carlyle produces Frederick, then exhumed to give his 'Inaugural Address' at Edinburgh. Really, it remains a problem to know which Carlyle died on February 5, 1881.

There is nevertheless sufficient evidence in support of a moderate version of the Trevelyan dichotomy to warrant its being examined. Since most followers of the two-Carlyles school take Latter-Day Pamphlets as

representative of the new Carlyle, it were well to start the examination there.

Latter-Day Pamphlets is a series of discourses upon topical and occasional matters. The pamphlets appeared in 1850 when Carlyle was fifty-five years old. Thus it cannot be considered that these are the peevish opinions of an old man, although it is well to remember that Carlyle, not knowing that he had thirty-one years of life ahead of him, probably had in mind that he was entering upon his own latter days. It is far more likely that he saw his pamphlets as exhortations of the prophet of doom. They must have been written immediately after the year of revolutions, at a time when it seemed, to Carlyle at least, that mob rule, if not complete anarchy, was on the march in Europe. What better time to cry with Job:

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that
he shall stand at the latter day upon
the earth?

The day of judgement was drawing ever nearer. Throughout the seventeen years since Sartor Carlyle had been pleading with the people of England to follow God and godlike men. Thus far his words seemed to have had no effect. Latter-Day Pamphlets is going to be one last plea. To be heard now in this desperate hour it must be louder and more startling than all the other exhortations. It must say something that will make even the dullest-witted sit

up and listen. And it did. Even Carlyle, who ordinarily delighted in his own hyperbole and chuckled at the extravagance of his own opinions, was sufficiently distressed about this plea to call it "...an alarming set of pamphlets."¹ The tone of the Latter-Day Pamphlets is earnest and anxious with a violence born of despair.

But what of their content and their relation to the new Carlyle? The first charge, that of political illiberality, arises from the denunciation of democracy found scattered throughout the pamphlets, particularly in "Present Time" and "Parliaments." In opposing the reform bills and other liberal and radical movements, Carlyle was being true to the philosophy of life outlined in the preceding chapters. Since the end of government is "... to guide men in such a way, and ourselves in such a way, as the Maker of men, whose eye is upon us, will sanction at the Great Day,"² therefore the selection of leaders is "... the most important social feat a body of men can do...."³ But Carlyle has no faith in the ballot-box as a method of selecting our leaders. Since a

¹ "Jesuitism," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 295.

² Past and Present, p. 167.

³ Ibid., p. 82.

man gives honour to others only as he has honour in himself, each man will tend to choose as his leader the one next above him in Carlyle's hierarchy. In a democratic election where each man's vote has equal worth regardless of the worth of the man, the majority of the votes will fall upon that man who stands at the point just above fifty percent of his fellowmen. But since the bulk of humanity is on the lower levels of the hierarchy with proportionally fewer men in the upper degrees, the leader chosen by democratic ballot will be, measured against the absolute scale of the hierarchy, less than mediocre. "If of ten men nine are recognizable as fools," cries Carlyle, "... how, in the name of wonder, will you ever get a ballot-box to grind you out a wisdom from the votes of these ten men?"¹ Often enough the weakness of the democratic system has been demonstrated by the victory at the polls of a dog, a horse, or a non-existent human, but Carlyle adds the clinching example when he tells of a certain people who, asked to elect which of two condemned prisoners should be set free, "... clamorously voted by overwhelming majority, 'Not he; Barabbas, not he! 111 To the gallows and the cross with him! Barabbas is our man!"²

Distrust of the vox populi and of government

¹ "Parliaments," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 238.

² "Present Time," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 33.

by the mob is not unique to the new Carlyle. Said Sir Thomas Browne in 1642, "If there be any among those common objects of hatred I do contemn and laugh at, it is that great enemy of Reason, Virtue, and Religion, the Multitude...."¹ More recently, and in our own country we have heard the opinion:

Democracy, as Aristotle knew, is a dangerous kind of government. The society that supports it lives always on the brink of dictatorship from which it is saved only by cultivating a kind of fluid and voluntary aristocracy; an admission that freedom and equality are best maintained by the fullest recognition of natural differences and the most complete utilization of natural gifts.²

Well, Sir Thomas, Dr. Neatby, and the new Carlyle are entitled to their opinions, and we are not trying to discover how much right there is in them. Rather we are interested to know whether the denunciation of democracy in the Latter-Day Pamphlets is a characteristic which distinguishes the new Carlyle from the old. To that end, let us listen to one more voice on the subject: "Democracy, take it where you will in our Europe, is found but as a regulated method of rebellion and abrogation"³ Since this is the voice of Carlyle in 1839 we can

¹ "Religio Medici," in Works of Sir Thomas Browne, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, London, Faber and Gwyer, 1928, vol. 1, p. 73.

² Hilda Neatby, So Little for the Mind, Toronto, Clarke and Unwin, 1953, pp. 48-49.

³ "Chartism," Essays, vol. 4, p. 159.

hardly accept that political illiberality is a trait unique to Carlyle after the 1843-1850 period. Nor is it based on a philosophy essentially different from the philosophy of the earlier Carlyle.

The second differentia which marks the new Carlyle from the old arises in part from the claim that the later Carlyle forsook his own class in favour of the aristocrats with whom he was now on intimate terms. The thinking behind this claim goes something like this: as a young and unknown scholar suffering from an empty purse and a common ancestry, Carlyle is envious of the wealthy and titled, and allows his envy to show as contempt; but once he has gained fame and has become intimate with the aristocratic he switches his allegiance from his peasant peers to his new and titled friends. As evidence to back this claim some critics make much of the fact that in his train of heroes from Burns through Cromwell and on to Frederick a gradual ascent in power, social influence, and birth is to be seen. "His circumstances," says Osbert Burdett, "... had altered, and so his heroes, being projections of himself, were similarly transformed."¹

It is true that in the "Inaugural Address" and in "Hudson's Statue" Carlyle puts forward the idea

¹ The Two Carlyles, London, Faber and Faber, 1930, p. 287.

that the nobility of England had a right to their exalted position, but he bases this claim on the theory that "... real heroic merit more or less was actually the origin of peerages,"¹ and that heroic breeding through the centuries has to some extent preserved the valiant wisdom of the first baron.² But at the same time, and in that same essay on Hudson's statue, his cry is that England needs "... a new real Aristocracy of fact, instead of the extinct imaginary one of title."³ The one point of the Chartist programme that Carlyle supports is the abolition of the property qualification for members of parliament, and his reason for this stand is that he feels that "In the lowest broad strata of the population, equally as in the highest and narrowest, are produced men of every kind of genius."⁴ The Carlyle of Chelsea is choosing his heroes just as he did in Ecclefechan, purely by reference to their heroic qualities, to their powers of intellect, their degree of understanding of the Laws of Nature, and without regard to their social position or rank.

The second charge against Carlyle includes

¹ "Hudson's Statue," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 283.

² "Inaugural Address," Essays, vol. 4, p. 463.

³ "Hudson's Statue," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 263.

⁴ "Downing Street," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 119.

also the accusation that, after deserting the cause of the common man, he has turned to a worship of successful power. The evidence offered in support of this charge lies in the claim that increasingly Carlyle's heroes -- Cromwell, Governor Eyre, Frederick, Bismarck -- had become men of successful force and that his writings had become a panegyric of power. If this be true, then here is indeed an aberration from the philosophy we have outlined.

As for the charge that Carlyle's heroes become increasingly successful, the answer can only be that this is what we should expect. It is foolish to think that Carlyle should write a six-volume history of an heroic but unknown butter-merchant. For one thing, no one would be interested; what Aristotle had to say about the tragic hero applies to the Carlylean hero too. The hero must have sufficient stature and position to warrant the attention that is being paid him. Moreover, no butter-merchant could be a true hero, for possession of heroic qualities is not enough. The possessor must do something with his gifts. And if the heroic butter-merchant acted heroically -- well, he would not die a butter-merchant. It was thus unavoidable that Carlyle's heroes should be successful men.

But it cannot be truthfully said that Carlyle honoured these men because they were successful exponents

of Realpolitik. Carlyle supported Governor Eyre because he felt the Governor was "... a just, humane and valiant man, faithful to his trust everywhere, and with no ordinary faculty for executing them."¹ Rightly or wrongly, he thought Governor Eyre's position to be analogous to that of a ship's captain who, discovering a fire in his powder-room, puts in one or two buckets of water too many to quench it. The extra water may have damaged some of the cargo, but it has saved the ship.² Carlyle saw Eyre as a second Warren Hastings, and his work on the Eyre Committee was undertaken, not in defence of a brutal colonial policy, although he would not in some instances shrink from that, but to prevent the Government from persecuting one of its faithful servants.

Just as Carlyle saw Cromwell and the French revolutionaries as emissaries of God sweeping an accumulation of chaos from the world, so he saw Frederick the Great in the same way. Let one quotation from that massive work testify to this fact:

Readers ask rather: 'And had Friedrich no feeling about Poland itself, then, and this atrocious partitioning of the poor country?' Apparently none whatever; -- unless it might be that Deliverance from Anarchy, Pestilence, Famine, and Pigs eating your dead bodies, would be a

¹ Henry J. Nicoll, Thomas Carlyle, p. 204.

² J. A. Froude, Thomas Carlyle, A History of his Life in London, London, Longmans Green, vol. 2, p. 328.

manifest advantage to Poland, while it is the one way of saving Europe from War.¹

It is probable that the historical Frederick and the heroic Frederick of Carlyle are not identical. Carlyle himself seems to have eventually come to the conclusion that "... he had been mistaken about Frederick the Great."² Whether he was mistaken or not, the fact remains that in his history he is glossing over rather than glorifying Frederick's show of physical force, and presenting the King as an agent of Divine Will rather than as a practitioner of Machiavellian power. On this point the stand of Frederick Roe is moderate and wholly tenable:

... it is to be remembered in the first place that he never claimed perfection for any of his historical heroes, whose strength suffered, he thought, by just in so much as it was an ignoble strength.³

Carlyle may be emphasizing more than previously the ability of his heroes to do the work that lies at hand, but his frame of reference is still the Divine Plan and the Laws of Nature.

The final characteristic which marks the new Carlyle from the old is that whereas the Carlyle of

¹ Frederick, vol. 8, p. 115.

² quoted from Moncure Conway in Young, Rise and Fall, p. 311.

³ Carlyle and Ruskin, p. 98.

Sartor and Past and Present has a sincere sympathy for the common man, the Carlyle of Latter-Day Pamphlets has not. The charges under this heading are that he defended slavery, that he was contemptuous of the negroes of Jamaica, and that he was utterly without sympathy for the imprisoned criminals of England. We have already seen that the concept of slavery that he defends is wholly a spiritual one. With regard to physical slavery his attitude is:

If buying Black war-captives in Africa and bringing them over to the Sugar Islands for sale again be, as I think it is, a contradiction to the Laws of this Universe, let us heartily pray Heaven to end the practice; let us ourselves help Heaven to end it, wherever the opportunity is given.¹

Fully understood in terms of his hierarchy theory and his concept of spiritual freedom, Carlyle's views on slavery are not nearly as harsh as they would at first seem.

A similar understanding of his attitude towards Jamaican negroes and English prisoners would go far to vitiate the claim that Latter-Day Pamphlets is a heartless attack on humanity. However, it is not our purpose here to defend the ideas of the pamphlets, but only to show that these ideas have their roots in the same philosophical

¹ "Nigger Question," Essays, vol. 4, p. 381.

system as the ideas of the earlier Carlyle. Although Carlyle has often held out for a community of men held together by ties of love and loyalty, he denies this view when he considers the criminal:

To guide scoundrels by 'love'; that is a false woof, I take it, a method that will not hold together; hardly for the flower of men will love alone do; and for the sediment and scoundrelism of men it has not even a chance to do.¹

These prisoners have had a chance to choose what role they will play in the world. Because they have chosen to work, not for God and order, but for the Devil and chaos, they have put themselves outside the community of love. In his essay "Model Prisons" Carlyle objects that John Howard's 'rose-water philanthropy' is being wasted on rotten material while thirty-thousand honest needlewomen go hungry and idle. He advises prevention rather than cure: "Let us to the well-heads, I say; to the chief fountains of these waters of bitterness; and there strike home and dig."² In advising that the energy and money spent to make life pleasanter for agents of the devil be used instead to provide work for workers who are idle because no work is given them to do, the new Carlyle cannot be said to be deviating

¹ "Model Prisons," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 56

² Ibid., p. 86.

from the philosophy of the old Carlyle.

His contempt for the negroes turns out to be really no contempt at all. To the question whether he hates Quashee, the black slave of Jamaica, he answers, "No; except when the soul is killed out of him, I decidedly like poor Quashee."¹ The criminal of England, who has already denied himself the sacred right to work, Carlyle did actively hate. But for Quashee there is still hope. The devil is at his elbow, and the negro is very tempted to join the idlers and watch "... the fruitfulest region of the earth going back to jungle round him."² To rescue these blacks from the devil, and Jamaica from chaos there is only one hope now: "... the divine right of being compelled (if 'permitted' will not answer) to do the work they are appointed for..."³ Once again, Carlyle's justification for his opinions lies in his theory of work and his philosophy of a Divine Plan.

But although the decisions made by Carlyle in his later years are still made with reference to his one philosophical system, it may well be that the judgements turn out to be somewhat sterner because of

¹ "Nigger Question," Essays, vol. 4, p. 357.

² Ibid., p. 356.

³ Ibid., p. 357.

a different emphasis in applying the system. When he was younger Carlyle dwelt longer on the gentler side of his beliefs. The world was far from perfect, but, with love, God and man would eventually improve it. And yet, within his lifetime he had seen dishearteningly little progress, so that he began to emphasize more the privilege force has of taking over till love be strong enough. Old age, poor health, and the earnest feeling that things were closing in, combined to make him more crotchety and more bitter in the application of his theories.

The chief fault of Carlyle's system, as of any idealistic system, is that it presupposes the ideal arbiter. Carlyle realized this, of course, and that is why he sets Teufelsdröckh apart from the actual world. There is symbolic significance in the fact that young Diogenes does not know his parents or where he came from, in the fact that the everlasting yea comes to him high on a mountain with Blumina and Towgood (symbolic of Teufelsdröckh's one personal collection with mankind) and all the farm houses of the district spread out like toys below him, and in the fact that the old professor finally settles in a garret in the tallest building of that Everyman-town of Weissnichtwo, from whence he looks down aloof on all the world. All this is well and good in the ideality of literature, but in life

the world is always with us, and Carlyle cannot be expected to be as aloof and objective as Teufelsdröckh. The personal and subjective are bound to creep in.

Thus, while the goal Carlyle had in view was always marked by the highest morality, as Ernst Cassirer realized when he said that, "Heroworship always meant to him the worship of a moral force,"¹ we are nevertheless left with the question as to what is a 'moral force.' Carlyle would answer that he knows intuitively whether a force is moral or immoral. And if we are suspicious of intuition, he gives us his theodicy as guide: a moral force is one that prevails if we 'await the issue.' And how long must one wait? Certainly longer than Carlyle waits before he decides that Bismark

... is not a person of 'Napoleonic ideas' but of ideas quite superior to Napoleonic, shows no invincible 'lust for territory' nor is tormented with vulgar ambition, etc., but has aims very far beyond that sphere; in fact seems to be striving with strong faculty, by patient, grand and successful steps, towards an object beneficial to Germans and to all other men.²

He finds some time later that his 'intuitive' recognition of Bismark as a moral force has been quite in error.³

Carlyle's philosophy is all the more prone to

¹ Myth of State, p. 278.

² In a letter to the Times, London, 18 November, 1870, cited in Young, Rise and Fall, p. 309.

³ Young, Rise and Fall, p. 312.

error because it is a personal subjective one, the product of his feelings rather than of his intellect. His system banned polemics and logic and insisted upon the acceptance on faith of certain basic premises: God and the Divine Idea, the Laws of Nature and their concomitant absolutes of morality and justice, and in each man a soul or spirit characterized by the ability to distinguish right from wrong, intuitive preference for right, and a sense of duty which leads man to work and develop himself. Pressed for a definition of his terms or explanation of his concepts, Carlyle shrugs his shoulders. "I have no pocket definition of justice,"¹ he says blandly. And in his old age he adds, "If the truth is in my books it will be found out in due time."²

Carlyle did not set out his philosophy as a formal system because he conceived it poetically rather than scientifically or logically. It is interesting to note that all his 'technical' philosophical terms are borrowed: palingenesia from Herder³ or from the Saint-Simonians,⁴ Divine Idea from Fichte, Entsagung

¹ "Model Prisons," Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 73.

² C. E. Norton, "Recollections of Carlyle," The New Princeton Review, July, 1886, Quoted in D. A. Wilson, Carlyle till Marriage, p. 315.

³ Wellek, Philological Quarterly, vol. 23, no. 1 (January, 1944), p. 59.

⁴ Shine, Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians, p. 75, n. 24.

from Goethe, Selbattödtung from Novalis; while his own terms are non-technical -- symbolic, not exact: Hero, Dryasdust, Sansculotism, Rose-water philanthropy. His genius lay, not in accurate and exact analysis of a situation, but in dramatic generalization. Carlyle's lively description of life in Bury St. Edmund's, for example, so engages the reader that he soon swallows Carlyle's idea that Abbot Samson is an ideal administrator, and, what is more, that the entire past has a sincerity of spirit that the present has lost.

While it cannot be denied that Carlyle sometimes erred in his judgements, it should be noted that the errors can never be imputed to a base or selfish desire in the man himself. His faults are chargeable, not to the petty failings of ordinary humanity, but to an over-earnest zeal in the cause of God. Torquemada, too, was over-zealous in the cause of God, but for him God was the Catholic Church, and perhaps, Torquemada too. For Carlyle, God is pure spirit bound by no mortal doctrine, and the cause of God, which Carlyle has made his cause, is always good in the highest and broadest sense.

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