LIBERTY IN THE MODERN WORLD

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BEING THE THIRD LECTURES ON THE CHANCELLOR DUNNING TRUST, DELIVERED AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, KINGSTON, ONTARIO, 1952

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THE RYERSON PRESS
TORONTO - CANADA

PREFACE

THE THREE LECTURES here published were delivered at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, under the auspices of the Chancellor Dunning Trust, in January, 1952. I owe a great debt of thanks to the Trustees for the honour they have done me and the pleasure they have given me by their invitation. The Dunning Lecturer has the opportunity to live for a little while in the closest touch with the staff and the students of a university which is remarkable for its human relationships and its fine spirit. For the happiness and the exhilaration of that experience I feel a gratitude which it is difficult to express. From its distinguished Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr. W. A. Mackintosh, from his predecessor, Dr. R. C. Wallace, and from other members of the staff, I have received kindnesses and a stimulus which I cannot leave unmentioned.

The purpose of the Dunning Lectures is "to promote understanding and appreciation of the supreme importance of the dignity, freedom and responsibility of the individual person in human society." An historian may hope to fulfil this function best, perhaps, not by recounting ordinary political narrative, but by reflecting on some of the long-term issues which the problem of individualism involves. One of our main criticisms of the modern dictatorships and the world behind the Iron Curtain—one of the things which comes as the greatest shock to us when we contemplate the modern pagan systems—is the way they seem to have lost that respect for human personality which we have come to regard as an essential of civilized life. Yet we

ourselves sometimes take that respect for personality, that western principle of individualism, too much for granted. The present lectures attempt to discover what were its roots and what are the conditions for its continuance.

Owing to the conventions of abridged history and owing to the techniques by which the past is usually recovered and reconstructed, there is a danger of our forgetting the vast importance of the part played in the human story by "imponderable" factors, and by ideas which are so much second nature to us that we leave them for the most part unexamined. When we deal with the history of the Church it is easy to turn this into a politico-ecclesiastical narrative, and to forget the spiritual life of man throughout the ages, and the profound effect that Christianity has had on the human outlook. In a similar way, when men once studied economic history they would focus their attention on the actions of government, or they would see the story through the eyes of the superintending state, forgetting that in the uneventful ages—and even when the government would be leaving people to themselves—men would be living their lives, and economic affairs would be developing on all sides, because economic life springs from the activity of all men, and government only acts on the margin of this. In political history similar principles hold good and a similar range of fallacies is open to the unthinking. It is easy for the narrator to show what the world owes to an act of violence, an insurrection, a military victory or a legislative act; but the historian hardly has ways to tell of the good things that grow up in a country merely because there is peace and uneventfulness, release of tension and that so-called "normal" state of things which allows men to grow in reasonableness and wisdom. When these things are brought into view and when we dig into the ideas which are at the roots of men's minds, we uncover a different story—one which may affect us in both our practice and

our intentions. We, who have been too accustomed to thinking that faith and tradition have been the enemies of liberty, may discover that freedom has no better ally than a sense of spiritual values on the one hand and "the continuity of history" on the other. Even we of the western world must consider again whether we have placed revolution, for one thing, and materialism, for another thing, in their proper place in history.

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PETERHOUSE,
CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND,
January, 1952.

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I

RELIGION AND THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALISM

I

IF WE STAND WELL away from this globe and watch the whole succession of centuries unroll before our eyes, we shall perhaps be able to picture human history as a play which mankind is performing on the stage of the earth, with nature providing the scenic background. Observing the performance from such an altitude, we shall quickly realize that it matters greatly how human beings envisage that human drama in which they play out their little lives—whether, for example, they take it like a play by Shakespeare or by Strindberg, by Christopher Fry or by Noel Coward. It matters greatly how they formulate the issue to themselves and how they set about to decide what it is that they are going to do with the world. There are two radically different ways in which we can envisage the whole texture of life on this earth, and construe the role of human beings in the mundane story.

At one extreme are the people who believe that human beings should be herded together like cattle so that they can be harnessed and organized to serve some general purpose—one which, by definition, must be the same for all men. The object of this slave-system may be the construction of pyramids for a Pharaoh, the exploitation of the resources of nature, or the building-up of a great system of military

power. Such a conception of man's end and destiny is the logical conclusion of a materialistic view of the universe, as we shall see; and great masses of people may be persuaded to consent to it because of the material profit which the system always promises. Those who, at any moment of history, are ready to sacrifice a present generation in this way will argue that at least some future race of men will inherit all the benefits of the policy. Both history and our contemporary experience suggest, however, that many mischances are liable to intercept the hypothetical advantages of this hypothetical future, while the miseries of the slave-system are miseries here and now, real and inescapable. In any case, those who direct the vast organization of human endeavour will never relax the despotism willingly.

At the opposite extreme are the individualists and lovers of liberty who envisage a different form of life for human beings on this earth. They do not reject organization in respect of certain utilitarian purposes, but they insist on a freedom which allows personalities to blossom out—allows them to spread themselves in their own particular way. On this view the world is felt to be a richer place because men show such remarkable variety and move to such a diversity of ends. And the future holds more possibilities and surprises; it is more flexible and less precarious than the future envisaged by the despotic organizer—a future which is liable to go wrong altogether if the organizer makes a single mistake. The individualists consider that the world is progressing when human beings themselves are adding to their stature and the inner man is being enriched—they do not measure progress by mere success in the exploitation of material resources. I propose to show that this view of the human drama—this ideal of individualism and liberty—is only feasible in a high civilization and when associated with a spiritual interpretation of life.

It is necessary to note first of all what is perhaps the

greatest of all the dangers that threaten civilization today—civilization as we of the West conceive it, at any rate. I mean the apparent unanswerability of the argument that society should control the individual and even prescribe to him his end, even prescribe to him his purpose in life. I am not clear that in a pagan world there is any secure or enduring answer to the argument that the group should determine what men shall live for, society should decide the moral end for all. In primitive society the dominance of the herd-spirit seems to leave no great scope for the individual in this respect. But in an advanced civilization, also, some of the scientists seem anxious to bring about what they call a higher degree of organization in the world; and it is clear that they mean by this a tighter regimentation of human beings. Speaking of ancient Greece and Rome, Lord Acton deplored the fact that in the classical form of state "the passengers existed for the sake of the ship." He showed how illiberal even the most illustrious ancient philosopher could be; for even Aristotle regarded government as being at its worst when it left men "free to live as they please." Both in the ancient world and in the last two hundred years it has been made clear how easily men can come to think of the state as the real super-personality, as having a more authentic existence than the individuals who compose it. In the twentieth century when it has become fashionable to regard human beings as merely ephemeral combinations of matter, chancy bundles of wilfulness and caprice, it becomes still more easy to say that each man must submerge himself in the group, and that we find our salvation by sinking our purposes in the "general will."

It might be deduced from all this that the question of the very role which the individual has to play in the world is closely associated with the history of religion. In fact, if we of the western world have our own conception of the

kind of human drama which is being enacted on the stage of this earth, that conception was really shaped for us by religion, and it lingers with us, as the outer framework of all our ideas, even after so great a part of our world has forsaken Christianity. If the Nazis, the Fascists and the Communists have produced such vastly different conceptions of the whole role of man on the earth that is because they have separated themselves much more radically than we have done from a western tradition that had been shaped by Christianity. It may be useful for us, therefore, if we take note of the significant points at which religion has played its part in the history of individualism.

If we go back to the Old Testament, nothing could be firmer than the assertion that in the first place it was the Hebrew people as a group, as a corporate body, which was regarded as having a direct relationship with Jehovah. And though it might be true that, even under such conditions, religion could be brought home in a particular way to single people when they took their duties fervently, it still remains the fact that only at a later stage in the story did religion come to be more particularly associated with the inner man. It is precisely when that point has been reached that we find sections of the Old Testament which are of great significance in the history of individualism. They come at the moment when the ancient Hebrews were making some of their most original contributions to man's religious development, and they represent one of the most important stages of that development—they are the product of that great chapter of human experience, the Jewish Exile. They come at a time when tremendous new issues were raised because the people of God were dispersed, so that they no longer existed as an organized political body. It might have been a question whether the religion could continue at all when the seat of it at Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the land was forsaken, and the group was

scattered in alien lands. It came to be felt, however, that God was with His children wherever they might go; He was with them even after they no longer existed as an organized nation. He would be with them as separate individuals and, though He had condemned the nation, He would save individuals who repented or remained faithful, He would judge men according to their individual righteousness and would no longer punish children for the sins of their fathers, for example. He would be their God even though the Temple no longer existed; for He could not be confined in a Temple—He was to be found in the hearts of individuals. He was even the God of those foreign people who had never belonged to His chosen nation, and amongst whom the ancient Jews were now scattered. The thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah, and the eighteenth and thirty-third chapters of the book of Ezekiel provide interesting evidence of the significant development that was taking place. There emerged a new type of thought in which religion itself became more individualistic, more a matter for the inner man, less an issue of national welfare and material prosperity. Each human being came to be seen as having his own separate wire connecting him with eternity, his own direct relations with God. And in this whole process of development we can see religion becoming a more spiritual thing.

In spite of the set-backs which this view was to suffer in later periods—in spite of the lapses into legalism and national exclusiveness, or the dreams of a Messiah who should bring mundane glory to the Chosen People—this new side of Jewish religious thought was to receive a remarkable development in the subsequent centuries. The result was that the six hundred or so years before Christ present us with one of the greatest phases in the history of human experience. They led to a formulation of the whole human drama, which the European continent was to

inherit and which the West has never entirely lost. There emerges a new way of looking at life, based initially on the realization of God's direct relationship with the individual, on the view that only love could rescue human affairs or straighten out man's relations with eternity, on the rise of the belief in personal immortality, and on the more definite realization of the spiritual nature of human beings. All this gave a different place to the individual in the scheme of human life—in the whole drama that is being enacted on the earth. And now it was no longer the nation as such, it was each individual personality, that was being related to the whole Cosmos. It seems that in the earliest centuries of the Christian era, the men of the Roman Empire were yearning for something like this, and were even seeking a bogus satisfaction for their desires in the mystery-religions, before they turned to Christianity. All these developments, which were taking place before the time of Christ, are important and I think that they have a special significance for the present day. It seems to me that, apart from any question as to whether men are to be Christian or not, we must wonder whether the twentieth century—unlike the eighteenth or the nineteenth—is not turning its back on a great human achievement and a great advance in human experience, which is associated with the whole wide history of religion in the six centuries or so before Christ.

II

A further stage in the story is reached when we come to Christianity itself—a religion which can only become effective as it is internally appropriated by the individual, appropriated in an intimately personal way. Religions have not always been like this, and all religions do not depend in this way on man's capacity (or his willingness) to bring the issue home to himself. The effect of Chris-

tianity is always in this direction, however, so that, as it operates year after year, and then through century after century, driving men to self-analysis and self-questioning, it brings out new depths in human beings, so producing a heightened form of personality. Even where nations have been Christianized wholesale, and in a somewhat pagan fashion, or where people have grown up into Christianity as a matter of mere convention and routine—even here, all the influences of the religion work to induce men to take the matter more genuinely to heart, so that some will push forward to higher grades of religious experience. The religion that was the mere custom or ritual of the group, moves to something higher precisely as it lays hold on the individual.

In the early Christian centuries and under the pagan Roman Empire the Gospel was bound to come in any case as a call to individuals to forsake the group. It might mean a breach with one's previous religious associations, or a separation from one's family or a challenge to the claims of the state itself. Even today fewer and fewer people can become Christian out of mere regard for the group into which they happen to have been born. Rather, as somebody has said, you become Christian by virtue of the discovery that one thing or another in the Bible is directly aimed at you, is addressed to you. It is the Christian who, even if he lives in the pagan Roman Empire or in the midst of Hinduism or in the depths of modern China, claims the right to follow an internal summons—the word of God in his own heart. In the terms of modern theory this means that the Christian insists on the right to choose the God whom he will serve and the moral end for which he will live. This is a doctrine which must be regarded as fundamental in any Christian attempt to produce a political science.

The only sanction that this basic individualism possesses

is still the ancient one, the weapon that Christianity always holds in reserve, namely the willingness to accept martyrdom. In the last resort the Christian has had one thing to say to society in every age of history—and sometimes he has had to say it to other Christians when they were untrue to their principles and were trying to force his conscience. He has said: "I will worship my God, even if you kill me;" and in the last resort it is only for something supremely momentous to him that a man will stand out in this way against all the engines of society. We have still to discover whether the mere devotion to an abstract liberty would command that degree of loyalty in an age that was without religion. And because Christianity cannot forgo the basic principle of freedom—the right to worship the true God even against the requirements of the majority of a given society—it is possible, in view of the way in which the world is developing, that all the props of freedom and individualism will fail except the religious one. Furthermore, this insistence on the right to follow conscience involves a very high claim for personality, indeed a very high conception of personality. It implies a high concession to men's private insights and to the promptings of a secret voice inside them. If the case is made for individualism in respect of religion, this carries the case for individualism in many subordinate matters.

It is perhaps the tendency of ecclesiastical organizations to run to tyranny, especially when religion makes a high claim to exclusiveness. This tendency had already begun to be apparent before the ancient Roman Empire had come to its downfall in the west. Amongst the comparatively barbarian peoples of a later period, the spirit of the herd was strong, mass-conversions occurred, and religion itself was somewhat transmuted. The Church could not escape becoming more authoritarian, for it guarded the ritual and the beliefs and the outlook which held the whole society

together. Christianity became the communal bond, the affair of the people as a whole, just as the ancient Hebrew faith had been in ancient days. It performed the functions which other religions, even pagan ones, have performed in other regions and other times—that is to say, it became the cement of society and the bond of the tribe. In such circumstances a man's religion was not a matter of personal choice and deliberate decision. You were born a Christian just as today you might be born a British citizen.

The individualism that lies at the roots of Christianity even asserted itself in a world that seemed so unfriendly to it, however. In the course of time there happened within Christianity the very thing which we have seen happening in Old Testament days within the bosom of ancient Judaism. The personal element in our religion is always liable to make itself apparent where faith is sincere; and it reacted against the tendency of the group to lapse into routine, or the tendency of institutional Christianity to harden into dry formalisms. The reaction was to become still more violent when the essential truths of the faith came to be too thickly overlaid with scholastic commentary. As our civilization advanced, the Middle Ages proved to be an admirable soil for the blossoming of personality and religion often acted as the sunshine that coaxes out the bloom. The fact that the Church had to fight kings and emperors, that the spiritual arm was so often in conflict with the secular arm, that rival authorities competed for the allegiance of human beings—all this meant that there was play for the individual. It provided a freer world than the totalitarianism of the modern pagan monolithic state and it produced a lively interaction in society. In the cities and the economic life of western Europe the development was towards individualism again, and it would seem that behind the whole civilization there was a principle which was working in this direction. We cannot say that

economic development as such can always be guaranteed to foster individualism. We know now that this is not true. But it was true in the Christian civilization of the Middle Ages, and in some respects that civilization has been unique.

It must be admitted that the first great fights for modern liberty had to be waged against the authority of the Church. Even so, we must not blind ourselves to the fact that they were waged in the name of religion, waged by men who felt provoked to fight for the sake of Christianity itself. This is important, for there is a sense in which all our modern liberties are founded on an initial religious liberty. And since they were fighting not merely the state but the ecclesiastical system, the men concerned had to challenge an external form of authority, and were in the position of vindicating a spiritual certainty, an assurance of truth, that lay within themselves. They had to fight on behalf of freedom of conscience, and this too was to be a matter of permanent importance to our western civilization. If ever freedom of conscience should be overthrown it would be found in fact that the other liberties which we prize would have nothing left to rest upon.

So the Church resumed contact with a principle which is essential to its nature—a principle upon which it had been compelled to take its stand at the very beginning of its history. Both Protestants and Catholics tended to be untrue to that principle, when they managed to hold the predominant position in a given society—for both claimed that their religion should be that of the people as a whole. It was a deeper tide in the affairs of men which turned these religious zealots into the agents of a modern kind of freedom. Precisely because their differences were so important to them they made life intolerable in Europe and made it necessary that a principle of liberty should emerge. Both Catholics and Protestants would cry out for

freedom of conscience whenever they were reduced to a minority position in any kingdom or principality. In spite of themselves, they helped to create a situation in which freedom of conscience became first a necessity and then an ideal.

When he was fighting against the Papacy Martin Luther asserted the right of every individual to interpret Scripture for himself. He seems to have done this without foreseeing the consequences of the principle. When he realized the consequences he rejected them; he could not agree that the individual had the right to interpret Scripture wrongly. Similarly, he could announce at one time "the priesthood of all believers," as though he meant to rescue the individual from the power of the clergy. He could promulgate ideas which emphasized the directness of the relations between God and the individual, as though it were his intention to disentangle religion from ecclesiastical systems. He showed later that this had never really been his intention, but the principles he had proclaimed acted like seeds thrown on to the ground, developing independent of the hand that had sown them, and living henceforward with a life of their own. Luther became the father of modern individualism in religion, even though he did not mean to be—even though he had never imagined that other people should be able to decide on matters of belief in the way that he had done. Within a short period the sects in Germany were proclaiming religious individualism in an even sharper form—in a form which showed more clearly the danger of pure subjectivism and indiscipline. Some of them put forward the doctrine of the Inner Light, the doctrine that the Holy Spirit still worked in individual men, as in Biblical times, revealing new truths by direct inspiration.

It would seem to be true to say that for a time the Reformation conflicts intensified the national principle in religion. Government would decide the form of Chris-

tianity for its citizens, and would set out to suppress the minority who dissented from the religion of the state. It was a matter of tremendous significance that minority sects persisted and multiplied and stood as opposition bodies within the state. Their position made them inclined not merely to fight the prevailing ecclesiastical authority but to criticize the government and the whole political order which had established and supported it. The state itself was confronted by an opposition, which was formidable and enduring because it was grounded on religious passion. It was easy for those who disliked bishops to turn their hostility against the kings who had chosen to adopt the episcopal system. Roman Catholicism, when it was in a minority position, or was offended by a ruler, would emphasize the anti-monarchical character of some of its principles. Those who had learned Calvinism from Geneva would lean to a less monarchical form of government in the state as well as in the Church. Those who gave the congregation great authority in ecclesiastical affairs would be drawn by a sympathetic attraction into a more democratic attitude in respect of secular government also. In fact, the more radical the religious sect in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the more radical tended to be also the political ideas and even the social programme of that sect. Lord Acton has emphasized the tremendous importance of the religious sects in the history of modern liberty.

Under these conditions a further tendency began to be significant. The spiritual truths of Christianity were gradually transposed into modern secular ideals. We can actually trace the points of junction between the two, and see how religion began to shape the mundane outlook that endured until the twentieth century. Men had long been aware of a spiritual liberty—"the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." For a thousand years it had been

sufficient for most people to rejoice in this liberty, which altered the very colour of life, even for Roman slaves or medieval serfs. From the sixteenth century it becomes more common to meet the argument that because Christ has made men free there must be no more serfdom amongst Christians. No longer is it sufficient, in the case of many people, to think that all men—kings, lords and serfs—are equal in the sight of God. It comes to be claimed that God sees all men as equal, therefore all should have a part in the government, or a fairer share in the distribution of property. The first large-scale communist experiments in modern times are to be found amongst certain sixteenth-century sects.

In these and in other ways the secular ideals of western civilization come to be conditioned by the high valuation which Christianity places upon every human soul. And in one respect the modern world came to differ sharply from ancient classical times: it has refused to regard a system as worthy of the name of democracy if, like ancient Athens, that system rests on a basis of slavery. The ancient Greeks seem to have believed that slavery was justified in the case of those backward peoples who were presumed to be below the use of reason. The Spanish conquerors of North America tried to use that argument in the early sixteenth century to justify the enslavement of the native population there. They were met with the traditional Christian reply: namely, that all peoples must be presumed to be endowed with the light of reason and the power to grasp the Christian gospel when it was placed before them. The Christian view of the spiritual nature of human beings as creatures meant for eternity gives the individual man a value out of all relation to that of anything else in the created universe. Those who held this view could not be deceived into regarding the state as the real person, or into imagining that society has a more authentic identity and

existence than the human beings who are comprised in it. Nor could they entertain the idea that it is the state, or the nation, or the French Revolution, or a country like Germany, which has a "soul." When the eighteenth century had thrown overboard theology it still retained at least the shell of the Christian view that each individual human being has his value in the eyes of God.

In any case, Christianity insists that there is a higher law to which men and states—kings, lords and serfs—are equally subject. The Catholic Church of the Middle Ages repeatedly resisted the secular authority in the name of this higher law. It asserted that the State can be judged by moral principles which are independent of all human caprice. At a later date the nonconformists were to be in a particular sense the heirs and representatives of this whole tradition and the point of view on which it rests. They were vindicating a spiritual authority and a moral principle which were independent of the decrees of a government or the arbitrary will of an organized society. Even this view came to be secularized later, when men who rejected Churches had not yet rejected the idea of a higher law. The ultimate legatee of this entire tradition—the final beneficiary when society had come to be regarded as a purely secular affair—was the individual, who had the witness to morality within him and who still was subject to a law that was written in his heart. He was held to be able to judge society by a standard for which he had an internal sanction. Only later did the claim emerge that society created its own morality, that law itself was the creature of the state, and that human will was its own end.

The idea of freedom in modern history is closely associated with the assertion of the authenticity of conscience. As Acton repeated so insistently in his sketches for a history of liberty, the notion of freedom involves the existence of a higher law, a law that is superior to the mere

will of society. By a curious paradox, freedom itself can only endure so long as such a law is recognized. The individual is in danger if ever the will of the state is accepted as the supreme law; for then the passengers come to be regarded as existing merely for the sake of the ship. Furthermore, liberty does not flourish in the world by virtue of each man's assertion of his own individual rights. It can only flourish as people recognize that they are under an obligation—namely, to respect the other man's personality.

III

There came a time, however, when the mundane ideals which had been growing under the shelter of the Christian system began to break away from religion and became transformed into purely secular policies. After developing for over a thousand years under the presidency of Christianity, western Europe began to shake itself free from the leadership of the Church, and moved into that essentially secular civilization with which we have become so familiar. From the time of the Great Secularization, that is to say from about the end of the seventeenth century, our western ideals of freedom and democracy began to develop almost as substitutes for religion. It must be confessed that henceforward these ideals gained a footing in the world and came to actualization in a manner that the west had never known before.

We may say that many reasons—some of them connected with the general advance of civilization—help to account for that improvement in human welfare which has taken place since the year 1700. From this time the advance in science, technique and organization did actually enable men in western Europe to achieve a greater control than ever before over their environment. Only from this time does the idea of progress begin to come into general

currency, enabling men to envisage life in terms of an expanding future and a gradually-improving society. Till now the comparative helplessness of human beings on the earth had led them to submit to many constricting circumstances, and they had accepted these as part of the decree of Providence. Henceforward, in one realm after another, they were to try to play Providence for themselves. It is even true that religious inhibitions had checked the aspiration for mundane reform on occasion, or had obstructed the execution of reforms, just as religious conventions sometimes hampered the operation of Christian charity itself. Perhaps it is a serious commentary on the history of modern Churches, that the movement for democracy, for socialism and for the class-less society should have been to so great a degree a secularist and anti-Christian movement, especially on the European continent. Perhaps it is a tragedy that such programmes should have tended to be accompanied by a materialistic view of the universe which in the long run has proved unfortunate for the very ideals which so many benevolent people had at heart. There are many communists who began by being Christians and thought that the adoption of a radical social programme was almost a corollary of their religion. They ended, however, by being more attached to the mundane by-product of Christianity than to the spiritual life itself. As communists they came to regard the conservatism of the Churches as one of the principal enemies that they had to face.

Let us admit the great work that has been achieved in recent centuries by secular reformers, and even by militant unbelievers who fought ecclesiastical authority itself. Let us recognize, as eighteenth-century writers insisted we should recognize, the impressive virtues that the atheists and agnostics have so often displayed. Let us insist at the same time that the secular liberals, the Marxists and the

noble pagans, are leaving an important factor out of the reckoning. These people would not have had their mundane idealism at all, and would never have arrived at their reforming programme, if they had not inherited a western civilization that is soaked in Christianity. The framework of their thinking would have been different if Europe had been presided over by a philosophy of materialism all the time—that is to say, during a period of nearly two thousand years. In such circumstances we should have come even more quickly than we have done to the conflict of naked cupidities, the herding of people into slave-gangs and the accumulation of great systems of power. If we consider Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia, where tradition has been more completely overthrown and materialism has revealed itself in more unmitigated form, we can hardly fail to realize what Christianity has contributed to the development of the western outlook. Religions have great part in the making of civilizations; and even when religious belief has melted away it leaves a rich deposit behind it for a long period.

So, what we really have to note at the close of our story is the remarkable part which has been played by the men who once were Christian, or who embodied much of the legacy of the Christian tradition. The lapsed Christian has been possibly the most powerful agency in the work of mundane reform in recent centuries; and if in his ideals he owed more than he realized to the legacy of a Christian tradition, it would seem that his efficacy in the world was increased by virtue of the break that he made with the Church, as though some energies were liberated by the very fact that he had thrown off religious inhibitions. Some students have noted the part played in the history of thought by a particular class amongst the lapsed Christians—namely, those who had actually been brought up in the manse. The Frenchman, Pierre Bayle, who had so

important a role in the transition to the age of Voltaire, was one of these; and he never quite threw off the influences that had surrounded him in his youth. The romantic movement supplies many similar examples. A recent study of Leslie Stephen has reminded us of the important part played in nineteenth-century thought by lapsed Christians who had been brought up in the evangelical tradition.

The eighteenth century ran through unitarianism and deism to agnosticism and atheism, casting out one layer after another of the beliefs which it regarded as superstitions, yet retaining more than it ever realized of the framework of a Christian tradition. While attacking the Church men would claim that it was the Christians who were betraying Christ, that it was the Old Testament which offended against morality, or that it was the Church which stressed the power instead of the compassion of God. Those who had broken with the Church could still speak of the law of love, though they chose now to describe it as a "law of nature." They could say that "he who divides his bread with the poor is better than those who compare the Hebrew text of Scripture with the Greek." They could imitate the attitude and repeat the words of Christ in their attacks upon the Pharisaism of their own contemporaries. They could offer up a hymn to Morality and declare that it was good to meet periodically in order to listen to an exhortation to virtue. Even in its secular thought, the eighteenth century, like Julian the Apostate, could parody the Christian religion without being quite conscious of what it was doing. It is astonishing to what a degree it represents, not what we should call modern paganism, but rather a typical instance of the lapsed Christian. Very often it made out a plausible case for the thesis that it was the Christians who were not Christian enough.

At the same time the lapsed Christian has been one of the most dangerous factors in modern history, so that if he

is partly an example to us, he stands still more clearly as a warning. In his violent reaction against the Church he has often failed to realize what he owed to Christianity in the first place; and his respectable figure has masked the way in which the lapses were to be carried further in every generation, the atheism sliding into materialism, while the materialism itself, at the next stage of the story, was bound to slide into despotism and atrocity. Even the fine, clean worldly-mindedness which might seem to distinguish the modern pagan owes more than men often realize to the effects of a certain kind of Christian influence throughout the centuries. When the Christian tradition is more completely overthrown seven devils worse than the first come to plague the human mind, as when a Germany or a Russia come under the sway of daemonic forces. It does not appear that good, clean worldly-mindedness, when left to develop quite by itself, is able to stay clean very long.

No age could have believed more ardently in the rights of man than that eighteenth-century Age of Reason which gloried most of all in the doctrine of individualism. When it discussed the problem of man on the earth it began by assuming a world of autonomous individuals, so that these were the things given or the things assumed—the things which everybody began by taking for granted. It greatly mattered in the course of political and social discussion that men picked up this end of the stick, and, for example, did not stress the priority of society over the individual—did not make this latter view the corner-stone of their thinking. What the eighteenth century forgot to insure against, however, was the collapse of the ground underneath this, the first and the most important of its presuppositions. And ever since that time it has been just this ground which has been falling away: for the individualism which the eighteenth century prized had rested on the religious view of what a human being is and what the whole human

drama means. In the course of time, western Europe came to forget why men had wanted liberty in the first place, just as modern Russia has come to forget why men wanted egalitarianism a hundred years ago. The drift to materialism carries with it a completely different way of envisaging the whole life of man on the earth; and in this new version of the human drama it comes to seem natural and inevitable that men should be herded and organized and harnessed for the exploitation of nature or the erection of systems of power. The ideal of liberty can never be maintained in the world if we allow ourselves to forget that it springs from a certain conception of the nature of man. In the last resort it is not clear that there exists any purely secular argument for individualism that can endure in the world or hope to prevail.

II

LIBERTY AND TRADITION IN ENGLAND

I

One of the paradoxes of history has been the way in which the name of England has come to be so closely associated with liberty on the one hand and tradition on the other hand. It seems that freedom amongst Englishmen is not a frisky thing which romps and capers in the spirit of April. Rather it sits into the landscape and broods there like the trees of autumn, streaked with red dyes, and mellow with the stain of setting suns. If in some countries liberty is valued as a recent acquisition—treasured as the reward of a battle which was won only yesterday—the British seem to hold it rather as an ancient possession, itself a legacy from the past, almost even the product of tradition. The word liberty is packed with meanings and implications for us—it comes with all kinds of subtle overtones—precisely because it is so ancient a thing and has gathered into itself so much history. Even when the British people have left their home-land and established new nations in other parts of the globe, something of all this history has travelled with them, so that the same principles have come to prevail in countries that are comparatively young. In Canada and the United States there reigns a liberty which can be traced back to the Bill of Rights, John Hampden, the Marian martyrs, and *Magna Carta* itself.

Because of the specific history that lies behind the idea, or has come to be rolled up in it—because of the vivid

historical memories with which the idea is charged—modern freedom, for the Englishman, is not a mere vague abstract concept, but carries with it a picture of concrete franchises and tangible liberties. It became part of our tradition not to glorify the abstract rights of man, in the way that other countries have done, not to be content with a merely generalized doctrine of "natural rights," but rather to take a peculiarly patriotic pride in "the historic rights of Englishmen." These presented themselves as definite claims and specific privileges, and they took concrete shape in our minds because we remembered how each of them had had to be fought for, and we could see how momentous the issue had been for the people engaged in the conflict. Edmund Burke had very little use for doctrinaire theorizing on the subject of abstract rights in general; but in almost the first criticism of the French Revolution that he has left us he showed that he had a precise way of visualizing what things are due to human beings living in civil society. Before he would approve the French Revolution, he said, he must see every citizen "in a perfect state of legal security with regard to his life,—to his property,—to the uncontrolled use of his person,—to the free use of his industry and his faculties." He must be assured that "a simple citizen may decently express his sentiments upon public affairs, without hazard to his life or safety, even though against a predominant and fashionable opinion." He must know that "the great public assemblies, the natural securities for individual freedom, are perfectly free themselves"—in other words, that the parliamentary organs of the country were not acting under the threat of coercion from outside. He repudiated also any system under which the judicial courts might be "called upon to put any man to his trial upon undefined crimes of state, not ascertained by any previous rule, statute, or course of precedent."

The unusual success of the parliamentary system in modern Britain, the comparative mellowness of political experience in that country, and the distinctive character of the British idea of freedom, are clearly due to the working of certain subtle and imponderable factors in history. If historians have failed the modern world, they have been defective most of all in that they have concentrated (at least in their more general teaching) too largely on the skeleton-outline and the surface narrative. They have neglected that deeper kind of analysis and exposition which would have enabled them to give these more imponderable factors their proper place in the story. One of these factors concerns us here, and it requires a delicate sense or a lively awareness to detect its existence, though it is of the greatest importance to anyone who may wish to understand the secret of political happiness. It is of particular importance to us if we are concerned—as we are in the present lecture—with the question: How is liberty to be fostered and maintained? What I have in mind is the peculiar relationship which Englishmen have established with history, with tradition, and with their own past—the peculiar care which they have so often taken for the links which hold the past and the present together.

The countries of continental Europe, when they think of their past, do not seem to regard themselves as married to it in the same intimate way, and do not seem so happy in their memories. "Historic rights" amongst the Poles were not the same thing as amongst the English; they stood rather for the anachronistic privileges of a proud and oppressive feudal class. The institutions and the groups which resisted the French monarchy in the reign of Louis XIV were able to insist that they were making a stand on behalf of tradition and ancient custom; but they represented something really archaic—the prerogatives of aristocracy and the private rights of privileged bodies. If England

had a crucial constitutional conflict in the seventeenth century, so did many other European countries. For these countries also, the issue was to have a momentous effect in future ages. Here, too, there were bodies comparable with the English parliament, and they resisted the monarchy over questions similar to those which distracted England under the Stuarts—such things as parliamentary consent to taxation, or the upkeep of a standing army. In Europe, however, these parliamentary bodies represented a powerful privileged class, and it was this class which was asserting its "historic rights." When historians narrate this story they tend to speak of the monarch as the representative of progress, and as the instrument of public welfare; for, (even perhaps in some respects in Holland,) it was the Diets or Estates or Parlements which were reactionary. It seems to have needed something like a French Revolution to overthrow in Europe those "historic rights" which meant the special liberties of a dominant class, liberties which appeared to survive without rational sanction—merely by virtue of ancient usage. Since England had had her oppressive nobility and her feudal class, how was it that she came to fall in love with tradition, to glorify her Middle Ages, and to dote upon her own past? How did she come to take her stand on "historic rights," which in so many other countries signified archaic privileges?

At the opening of modern times we see a great assertion of the principle of monarchy in the various European states. The king seemed to emerge as the new Messiah, rescuing his people from a violent baronage, or checking those over-mighty subjects who, in many countries, had produced internal upheaval similar to our Wars of the Roses. The Tudor monarchy of sixteenth-century England was an aspect of a general European movement in the age of what we call Renaissance despotism; and it has surprising analogies with the systems that existed on the continent at

this time—astonishing parallelisms even in regard to the techniques and the machinery of government. At this stage in the story, however, the various European monarchs differed very greatly in the degree to which they were able to establish or develop their power. They differed especially in the degree to which they were able to carry out what was one of the main functions of the institution of monarchy in European history—namely the curbing of an ascendant nobility which refused to be incorporated in the state and resisted the very functioning of government. In France the repeated accession of minors to the throne led to the resurgence of this over-powerful nobility. In Poland the breaches in dynastic continuity caused the constant resort to elective kingship, which reduced the power of the monarchy to a shadow. In Spain a despotic system, working through the machinery of royal councils, led to the elaboration of what became a cumbrous and specialized bureaucracy. At a later time, in Prussia and in Russia, the monarch was to make an alliance with the nobility and was to confirm them in their privileges—the two oppressors making common cause and forming a powerful combine against the rest of the population.

In Tudor England, the monarchy appears to have succeeded in carrying out its historic function—in curbing that nobility which was so often the more dangerous to the liberty of the masses in that it represented a tyranny close at hand. Whereas in France the nobility remained a power in the land until 1789—evading the royal attempt to turn them into the regular subjects of a modern kind of state—the Tudors managed to uproot many of those quasi-feudal evils which on the continent only the French Revolution succeeded in destroying. In England we did not need to be frightened of "historic rights" because now, for a time, we even forgot that they had ever existed. It is clear that for a considerable period even our historical writers were

incapable of really facing the fact that there ever had been a feudal system in England. When we came to remember the idea of "historic rights" again, we had to recover it by historical inquiry and antiquarian research.

II

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries Englishmen came to be very interested in their medieval history. And the Tudor monarchs had done their work so well that these students and antiquarians forgot that there had ever been a feudal system. They read the documents of former ages and construed them as though they had been contemporary documents, applicable to their own seventeenth-century type of world. What had been the liberties of a proud nobility were interpreted in modern terms and in reality they were now transposed, so that they bore the appearance of having been the liberties of Englishmen in general. It was more easy to put this construction upon them because some of the documents of distant centuries had spoken of the people as partners in the work of government, though the term "people" had been intended to describe only the great men of the land. Also, it had sometimes been the case in the Middle Ages that the nobility and the high ecclesiastics, when they had fought the king for the sake of their own special privileges, had pretended to broaden the issue—had talked as though they were fighting for a more general kind of liberty. The historians and antiquarian writers of the early seventeenth century even imagined that their existing constitution, their parliament, their law-courts, their trial by jury, had existed from time immemorial. For generations and even for centuries, in fact, Englishmen deluded themselves with the story of a primitive Teutonic freedom—a freedom born in German forests amongst the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons.

It was easy to hold this view in days when the idea of progress had not yet come into currency, and men believed that things were subject rather to a natural process of decline. For many reasons it was customary in those days to think of the Golden Age as something which had existed in the past. When it came to be held that no evidence could really be found to support the idea of the antiquity of English constitutionalism, the argument was put forward that the Anglo-Saxons, at the time of their invasion of England, had not yet learned to conduct their affairs in writing. It came to be alleged, furthermore, that the evidence had once existed, but some would-be despots had destroyed the documents. As late as 1780 the Society for Constitutional Information was founded for the purpose of "supplying, as far as may be, the want of those destroyed records." For Englishmen, therefore, the object of political endeavour was not to achieve a liberty that should be new and modern but to restore a liberty that had existed from time immemorial. It was not to create fresh machinery of government, but to revive the original principles of a constitution that was as old as the hills.

At this point we may note the significant part which may be played in a nation's development by the particular interpretation which that country places upon its own history. At a certain stage in the growth of a given people, or at a certain stage in the rise of historical study, history itself seems to become a factor in the general trend of things, as though it were one of the means by which a nation comes to self-consciousness. When such a stage is reached there is a sense in which the historian tells a nation what it should adopt as its essential tradition, and he helps to create the future because he decides what it is that men shall regard as their national mission. Perhaps it was unfortunate that Germany's nineteenth-century historians built up their version of the German national tradition too greatly

upon recent centuries and particularly Prussian history. They pointed to Bismarck and Frederick the Great, and they said to modern Germany, "See, here is your tradition, here is the line which history has marked out for you to follow." One German historian, Gervinus, showed during Bismarck's lifetime that there were longer and more generous traditions which modern Germany could have chosen to continue and develop—traditions of easy-going federalism and sturdy independence, of autonomous local groups, self-governing cities, religious freedom and variegated cultural life.

It was important for England, therefore, at the first stage of the argument, that as her national historians came to self-consciousness they endowed her with an historical reconstruction which interpreted the past as a history of freedom. They fortified their constitutional rights in the seventeenth century by giving them an absolute existence from time immemorial. They turned the feudal centuries themselves not into a symbol of oppression but into an argument for general liberty. This may not have been the most accurate kind of history, though at the time it was no doubt a step towards the deeper understanding of the past, and in any case it represented a powerful way of using the past to help in the manufacture of the present. Indeed one of the effects of this way of looking at England's past, and particularly at the medieval story, was that the belief in such an interpretation helped that interpretation itself to come true. In England the rights of a nobility and the prerogatives of privileged bodies did in fact become the basis for the development of a general liberty; and in modern times they proved to be conductors, mediating the transition to popular freedom, precisely because thinking made them so. A country is perhaps happy if, instead of hating and destroying the liberties that the aristocracy

enjoyed in the past, it regards them rather as a promise for the future—a stage on the road to a more general liberty.

The truth was that in the early part of the seventeenth century the common lawyers in England helped to produce a more scientific history than had been provided by the older chroniclers, writing of battles, plagues and kings. These common lawyers, tracing precedent back to precedent, and then pursuing it to remoter precedent still, until the chain was lost in the blur and the mist of antiquity, decided the character of English historical interpretation at the strategic moment. They played an important part, therefore, in the shaping of the English mentality. These were the men who established the idea that the common law, the constitution and the liberty of Englishmen went back to time immemorial, so that all these things existed independent of the king, co-eval and co-equal with the monarchy itself. It was necessary at a later time to revise this whole thesis, and to rescue English historical interpretation from the common lawyers, whose prejudices in this particular field made them incompetent in the long run even to write the history of their own law. And it was by discovering that the past represented a different social order—it was by facing the fact that the feudal system represented a world entirely different from the world of modern liberty—that the common lawyers' history came to be undermined. It came to be realized indeed that the Law and the House of Commons were themselves the creatures of time, the products of history, and that *Magna Carta* itself was basically a feudal document which required to be interpreted in relation to a particular type of society. If the early seventeenth-century interpretation of English history had to be revised, however, it had fixed the basic theme of English history as the story of liberty.

The interpretation of the past matters a great deal, therefore, in the formation of a nation's mentality and

tradition. At the same time, there is another factor in the story which is bound to be of great moment. And that is the kind of reflection which a nation makes upon its own more immediate experiences. Some of us are anxiously waiting to see, for example, what will be the effect in Germany of long-term reflection on two world-wars, which in certain respects provide material for a criticism of the Bismarckian tradition in that country. In regard to England we must note that although this country has so greatly disliked revolution in recent centuries—indeed dislike of revolution has even seemed to be one of the constituent parts of our political tradition—we were not actually saved from revolution by that particular interpretation of history which came into currency in the first half of the seventeenth century. On the contrary, that interpretation of history became itself a weapon capable of use against the king, and it was used against James I and Charles I—indeed it provided the ideological background for the resistance to the Stuart monarchy. The debate which resulted in the famous Petition of Right was in reality an historical debate on the question of the interpretation of *Magna Carta*. In any case it is wrong to imagine that England has been saved from revolution because she is a sheltered island, exempt from the turmoils of continental history and out of reach of foreign conquerors. On the contrary, it was once we who shocked the world by having revolutions, civil wars and republicanism. Long before the French we beheaded our king. Long before 1789 we seemed determined to tear up all our traditions.

The English dislike of the revolutionary mode of procedure is not a native or natural feature of our life, then, but is a product of experience. We can see it emerging during the Civil War and the Cromwellian Protectorate when some of the parliamentarians come to realize that an aggressive House of Commons may be as dangerous to the

constitution as an aggressive king. We can see it at the Restoration when many people recognize that hereditary monarchy is indispensable even for the normal functioning of parliamentary government. In a still more remarkable way we see it in the period of the Exclusion Bill in the reign of Charles II, when even men who were hostile to the idea of arbitrary kingship were obsessed with the danger of further civil war unless political passion could be kept within moderate bounds. From that time there develops even amongst the enemies of the king a feeling that resistance to the monarchy should stop short of any resort to force, any total over-turn in society. Our so-called Revolution of 1688 owed its glory and its success to the fact that it was carried out by men desperately afraid of any resort to revolutionary violence, men who deserted James II because they regarded him as the revolutionary. Their intention was to restore the constitution to its original principles. They took action because they wished to preserve England as she had been in the past.

It was precisely because England had once had a revolutionary overthrow that she came to be consciously and deliberately the enemy of the revolutionary idea. Actual reflection upon an historical experience proved to be a factor in history at the next stage of the story. The British political tradition did not grow of itself, like a wild thing in nature, but was cultivated by deliberate thought and decision. In the eighteenth century, the civil war of Charles I's reign was in the background of men's political thinking, and it was understood that such an upheaval was a thing which should never be allowed to happen again. We did not idealize our seventeenth-century revolution, therefore, in the way that the French were to idealize theirs. It came to be seen how in politics if one side could go too far, the other also could run to excess; and that if king and parliament went to war with one another neither of them

might be in a position to control the consequences, since a third force—possibly the army itself—might interpose itself and secure the predominance. The enemies of absolute government came to recognize that the resort to violence and the upheaval of revolution were calculated to bring about a predicament which would work to the advantage of a despot.

Time was to show that perhaps it was a good thing to have had a revolution in the past, and then to have recovered one's balance. In the reign of George III the Whigs found it useful that there should be a revolution at the other side of the Atlantic—for here was a spectre which they could use for the purpose of blackmailing the king. Even in the reign of George III, however, the Gordon Riots of 1780 provided perhaps the most sensational example, until the Paris Commune (nearly a century later), of the terrors that can hang over a capital city when a government loses command of a situation. The memory of this—the reflection on recent experience—contributed to that dread of upheaval which so affected our attitude to the French Revolution just over ten years afterwards.

III

Here, then, is the intellectual background for the development of still a further factor in the history of British liberty—namely, the British political tradition, the British way of conducting policy. From the time of the Exclusion Bill in particular there emerges the feeling that the primary object of policy ought to be the avoidance of the resort to force. The revolutionary method throws everything to the mercy of violence or chance, and prevents the possibility of politics as a transaction between reasonable men. So strongly is this felt that one does not merely avoid the resort to such methods oneself, but in reality one feels a certain

degree of responsibility if one's conduct even provokes the opposite party to revolt—even makes them think themselves uninterested in the preservation of the ordered system of things. In other words victories of force are to be deprecated and some degree of authentic consent is necessary for the conduct of a healthy society. One ought not to drive one's antagonists to the point at which they feel it preferable to overturn the whole body politic. Not only the dangers of fanaticism and the virtues of compromise are stressed in this code of political conduct, but also the possibility of co-operating with the historical process and turning time itself into an ally. Even when reform is in question, it may be virtue to wait until the passage of years has altered a mood or removed an obstacle or healed a sore or produced a special opportunity. The conduct of politics thus becomes a responsibility and a matter for sober judgment—not ever a mere case of pushing one's rights and one's interests to the limits of possibility—not a case of carrying everything that can be carried by the sheer exertion of power. A higher morality, a higher conception of liberty is involved in all this; because under this system you do greater justice to the other man's personality, you admit his right to a point of view—you do not merely seek to wipe him out altogether as a rogue or a fool or a vested interest. The practice of politics becomes a matter for patience and self-discipline, therefore; and instead of insisting on the immediate installation of an ideal order, one sets out to secure the highest practicable good, without provoking the hostile party too violently, or producing too dangerous a degree of resentment, or creating a permanent cleavage in the country. Under this system the earlier interpretation of English history comes to be inverted with the passage of time and the Golden Age ceases to be in the past. The story of a thousand years comes to be seen rather as a gradual progress towards modern liberty.

Early in the eighteenth century it was noted that the Whig party had forsaken the politics of the *coup d'état* for a system of compromise and moderation. Having secured the Revolution of 1688 and the Hanoverian succession, they did not move to more republican extremes, but set out to gain stability for the new system. Of course it was true that the serious challenge to the monarchy in the eighteenth century came from nobles and men of property who had reason to fear disorder and excess even more than the king himself feared them. The political maxims which had been developed were not entirely novel; what was significant was their communication to a governing class, so that they became part of the education and the tradition of an aristocracy. As time goes on one can see how a strong central body of opinion will curb the impatience of the radicals as well as the impetuosity of the king. One party may sponsor a moderate reform but the legislation will not be reversed when the other party comes into power—there is no revolution, and so there is no counter-revolution. And if in England other classes only rise slowly to a partnership in the work of government, they have time to be educated into the political tradition—they are richer because once they bore their ills with patience. Democracy comes gradually in England, with many mitigations and intervening stages. It does not leap into the saddle without preparation and without experience. In history the pace at which things are happening may be a matter of great importance, and sometimes the pace may be too quick—not giving men time to assimilate experience or to accommodate themselves to a changing world. Liberty came in England by the process of filtering down an aristocratic tradition to broader classes—not by the process of proletarianizing everybody. And this has meant that certain subtle civilized values have been saved from destruction. More

of the legacy of the aristocratic past has been preserved for democracy.

When breaches have actually occurred in English history, extraordinary attempts have been made to knit up the continuities again. It is as though it were intolerable for the English people to leave loose threads hanging in their history, or to abandon any ingredient of the past which had been a good thing in its day. Even the Tudors masked what was new in their system of monarchy by using traditional institutions as the instruments of despotism; and since they carried out the Reformation with the help of parliament they gave that body an added prestige, a wider competence, and a fuller consciousness of power, at the very time when parliaments on the European continent were coming to their undoing. In the Reformation itself the Tudors preserved what they could of the Christian tradition, while in after-years the Church of England sought to tie up the continuities again—to root itself in the past and be independent of the monarchy which had established it. Similarly in 1660 we decided to go back to the principle of hereditary kingship. And since 1660 we have set out to rob the monarchy of its power to do evil, while taking care not to lose the subtle and imponderable advantages which that institution possesses for us.

It is questionable whether our historical science has ever sufficiently stressed the significance of historical continuity as such, or sufficiently shown how it can be a fertile and germinal thing. In a similar way the mere existence of political stability and general security provides a soil in which good things begin to sprout of themselves; men feel free to exert their personalities, or they feel more able to work for long-term purposes, and they grow in reasonableness. It is not merely that King and Parliament have existed through so many centuries of English history, but that each of them has played one part in a certain

period, and quite different parts in other periods, developing an elasticity of tradition. They can meet the unpredictable needs of a new age with greater flexibility than institutions which have been constructed in accordance with a blue-print and for a rigidly specified purpose. Britain's position as an island-state did not prevent her from enduring all the torments of revolution in the seventeenth century; but it has had something to do with the internal stability of the country, its freedom from cataclysm, and its historical continuity. Also it has enabled her to concentrate her chief attention upon her own internal development.

Most remarkable of all, however, in relation to the continuity of English history, has been the part played by the common lawyers once again. Under the New Monarchy of the despotic Tudors the persistence of the common law was one of the strongest guarantees of the continuity of tradition. Professor Maitland once showed how the training in our Inns of Court so shaped the minds of the lawyers in England that they prevented the introduction of Roman Law at a time when it was being received in many other countries (including Scotland), and was doing important service on behalf of monarchical absolutism. Not only did the common law drive men to a more analytical study of history, as we have seen—not only did it help to shape the national interpretation of our history—but it tied up our historical continuity where it had been severed in the past, taking up the broken threads and joining them by retrospective action. In the time of Coke, that is to say, in the reign of James I, it asserted itself above all other kinds of law, and secured the victory of the view that the common law was, and always has been, the law of England *par excellence*. It made itself the heir of feudal principles and of the very notion of fundamental law—the heir of *Magna Carta* and of the system that made such a charter possible. It secured that whenever a concession in favour of liberty

had been gained from the king, such a concession should be permanent and unrepealable, while precedents in favour of royal absolutism should be dismissed as usurpations. Covering the whole country, and embracing all the institutions in the country, was a fundamental law more solemn than any edict of man, and even the monarch was compelled to admit the supremacy of this body of law. This notion that the country was under law, and that there were things which neither the king nor the parliament could do, even for some immediately utilitarian purpose, went on existing in England after the common law had diminished its exclusive claims, and after statute-law had achieved its technical supremacy. The insistent view of Lord Acton, mentioned in the previous lecture, to the effect that liberty can exist only where the reign of law is recognized, gains by this fact a further significance in English history.

III

LIBERTY AND REVOLUTION IN THE WORLD TODAY

I

THERE EXISTED IN THE ANCIENT world a cyclic theory of history which saw the course of ages as merely the eternal repetition of the same patterns. Some men have thought that the whole process of things was an aimless revolving, a perpetual re-shuffling and re-combination of atoms, until the point is reached where the whole sequence must start over at the beginning again. Through endless time the wheel of history merely turns upon its axle, therefore, without ever going anywhere. Such a system, combining eternal sameness with eternal change, was inconsistent with the notion that God had become man on a unique occasion, or that the Crucifixion had altered the cosmic situation for ever. It was inconsistent with the belief that Christ in due course would come back again to the world and wind up the entire enterprise of mundane history. If the story of the universe were to go on merely duplicating itself throughout the deserts of unending time, this would mean that in the infinity of ages Christ would repeatedly be coming back to be born in a manger again for the salvation of mankind. It was early recognized that in such a case the whole divine drama would be reduced to a piece of puppetry.

Ancient Judaism, on the other hand, believed that things had had a beginning, and that there was meaning in the time-succession. From the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament, Christianity took over the notion that history was going somewhere and was pointing to something. History on this view follows a one-way track—it is irreversible and unrepeatable—and there is some great event to which all creation moves. It has been suggested that this particular attitude to time and history has given our civilization its feeling that life is worth while—given it the consciousness of moving forward into the future with a fine wind at its back. Some people argue further that this whole way of looking at the universe secularized itself and became transposed into the modern idea of progress. Although this cannot be the whole truth, the Christian attitude to the course of things in time may have provided the substratum that was necessary before the idea of progress could be developed. Early Christian writers had shown how other religions had led up to Christianity—how the ancient Jews and Greeks had been preparing the world for the fuller revelation that was to come in the fulness of time. Furthermore, the notion of an ascending series—the reign of the Father in the Old Testament, leading to the reign of the Son and then to the reign of the Holy Spirit, for example—seems to have had some applicability to the spiritual life of man in days when, so far as mundane things were concerned, the peaks of civilization only too clearly lay in the past. When the Christian outlook comes to be transposed into secular doctrine, however, it is liable to take a fallacious turn or to acquire misleading implications. Some of the dangers have been apparent in the case of the modern idea of progress itself.

The possible fallacies and the dangers in this kind of transposition become still more clear when the world makes the significant passage from the idea of gradual progress to

the modern doctrine of revolution. We may say with greater assurance this time that the doctrine in question represents a secularized version of what had once been a familiar feature of religious history. There is a profound relationship between modern revolutionary fervour and the apocalyptic hopes, the Messianic expectations and the millenarian dreams of some of the more radical religious sects. It seems to be the case that one of the sources of tragedy in Jewish history in the centuries before the opening of the Christian era was the reliance on Messianic expectations which were interpreted in a worldly spirit—in terms of national welfare and success. Apocalyptic fervour at its start was often associated with religious aberration and was liable to be sinister in its results precisely because it was so mundane in its actual implications. It came to transpose itself into the modern revolutionary idea. It ends in the apotheosis of materialism itself.

Even before the days of Martin Luther, the dreams of hungry or discontented peasants would be shaped by doctrines of religious egalitarianism or would be stimulated by expectations of the Second Coming of Christ. After the Reformation we see religious sects establishing their experimental communist systems, and if they managed to capture the government of a city like Münster they would inaugurate their Biblical Commonwealth, their New Jerusalem, with such accompaniments as polygamy and the common ownership of property. The victory of the Puritans in the Civil Wars of seventeenth-century England was not unconnected with the desire to establish the Rule of the Saints or to set up a Kingdom of God on earth. We have already noticed the momentous part played by the Protestant sects in the history of modern liberty, and we have seen that, in seventeenth-century England, for example, their endeavours did not stop short of revolutionary overthrow. At the same time, when England developed

her anti-revolutionary political tradition from the closing decades of the seventeenth century, it was recognized that the fanaticism of the sectaries was precisely the thing against which it was necessary to create a safeguard. The sectaries seemed prepared to overthrow the whole system of society and plunge the country into chaos rather than forgo the establishment of their entire utopia.

In the development of the modern secular theory of revolution, however, John Calvin holds a peculiar intermediate place. Like Martin Luther he believed that individual rebellion against the king was wrong; in other words, he believed that there was an ordered system of society which required to be safeguarded, and which might be overturned by the eruption of mere anarchical private wills. At the same time Calvin is responsible for a theory of resistance to monarchy which was often quoted in succeeding generations and which had a considerable effect upon the development of constitutional government in modern times. Individuals had no right to resist a king, he said, but the representative organs of the people (the Parliament in England, for example, or the States-General in France) did possess such a right. They even had the right to rebel against the king, he claimed; and if necessary they might go to war with him. The passage on this question in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was quoted in regard to the deposition of the Queen Regent in Scotland in the time of Mary, Queen of Scots. It was quoted by the Puritans in the seventeenth-century constitutional struggle in England. It was quoted by William the Silent when he led the inhabitants of the Low Countries against Philip II of Spain. It was used by the Huguenots of sixteenth-century France in respect of the rights of the States-General in that country. It inaugurates the modern theory—the modern paradox—of what we call "constitutional revolution." Calvin may not actually have

invented the idea in its modern form, and the doctrine has its obvious parallels in the Middle Ages; but there is no doubt that Calvin gave the idea its modern currency, since his *Institutes* formed something like the best-seller of the sixteenth century. When the American colonists revolted against George III, they carried out their revolt through their constituted authorities, their legitimate parliamentary assemblies. Even the French Revolution began as a constitutional revolution operating through the States-General, the traditional mouthpiece of the various classes in France. Here, then, we have one of the most important and fertile ideas of modern times—a moderate and mitigated theory of rebellion—though it was subject to certain dangers, as English history in the seventeenth century was to show.

The origin of the modern religion of revolution, however, is to be found in the history of France from 1789. It is here that we meet with the secular counterpart to the apocalyptic visions of those men who had dreamed of the Reign of the Saints—the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth. Henceforward we do not have mere rebellions or outbursts of revolution or overturns of government, taking place now in one country and now in another on the European continent at various moments down to the present day. Henceforward it is "the Revolution" which has now installed itself in the world as a new thing, and which, while erupting here and there as occasion offers, is spreading like a growth in nature, developing its implications as the generations pass. It is like a spirit that has been conjured up in some fabulous story out of the *Arabian Nights*—a spirit that cannot be pushed back into the bottle again, but is to remain as a standing presence, a perpetual haunting, a permanent new agency in history. Since 1789 there are not even various kinds of revolution, such as the liberal or the socialist or the Marxian. There is just "the Revolu-

tion," manifesting itself now in one way and now in another, but also evolving in its entirety as time marches on—quite a child in 1820, quite an adult in 1920. From 1789 to 1951, in fact, our civilization is confronted with *la Révolution en permanence.*

Yet in a sense all the developments which "the Revolution" has taken in the last one hundred and fifty years are discoverable in the original French Revolution, as its implications are unfolded over the period of a decade. Edmund Burke already discerned the emergence of those features in the story which were to carry "the Revolution" to proletarian destructiveness, to modern dictatorship and to military aggression. When we today find ourselves confronted with the threat of communism, it is a question whether we see anything which was not obvious to Burke while England was watching the apparently irresistible course of French aggrandizement in Europe in 1792. Like many prophets, Edmund Burke was wrong in that he telescoped the revolutionary process and saw consequences proceeding too immediately out of causes. He did not take sufficient account of the cross-currents and the complicating factors which so often in history postpone the *dénouement* and check the pace at which a principle develops to its logical conclusion. A world that has never been too far-sighted now stands where Burke thought it stood in 1792, when he realized revolution to be not merely a spasmodic eruption or an interim affair but a general landslide in the history of a civilization. It remains to be seen whether our generation, when faced with this problem, will be wiser than Burke and more successful than Metternich.

A significant feature of the French Revolution is the unleashing of a new power—a power which had had even London at its mercy for a moment during the Gordon Riots—namely, the democracy of the streets, the direct action of the mob. This power came now to be idealized

by men who imagined that they could control it and who hoped to use it—hoped to direct it, for example, against the king in the first place. Unlike Englishmen in the days of the Gordon Riots, some of the French were prepared to attribute divinity to the demon that had emerged, and to regard it as the genuine voice of democracy. There came into operation at the same time, however, a conspiratorial type of politics—the manœuvring of those leaders who knew how to conjure up this demon and thought they could use it to further their ideals or to open for themselves the way to power. They were always victims as well as masters of the terrible monster, however, liable to be sacrificed themselves, especially if new leaders emerged, prepared to go further than they had done in flattering or bribing or alarming the mob.

From this came the familiar pattern of modern revolution—the tendency to go on drifting more and more to the left. It seemed that the dice which one had begun to play with were always loaded in favour of the extremists. Involved in the same course of development is the similar process by which an initial ideal of liberty is changed into an egalitarian ideal. And this itself (though constantly moving from a more moderate to a more extremist form) can never be egalitarian enough to satisfy everybody. "The Revolution," as its logic unfolds, tends to become more nakedly materialistic in order to satisfy the cupidity of those people who hunger now not after freedom but after other people's property. And all these same factors in revolutionary procedure help to give the affair its frenzied character. It comes to appear as though daemonic forces have been released.

Here, then, we are faced with a new way of conducting politics; and the consequences of this essentially revolutionary method require further examination.

II

It is sometimes claimed that the kind of revolution which is here in question is necessary at a certain stage in human development in order to help the historical process over an obstruction. The assumption is made that nothing less than the direct operation of force will serve to dispose of a privileged class, or at least to dislodge it from the positions which it regards as strategic. England, however, made the transition from eighteenth-century oligarchy to the modern democratic system without any catastrophic upheaval. And if it is argued that even the countries which themselves escaped violent cataclysm must have benefited from other people's revolutions, if it is argued that England needed at least the memory of a great rebellion to stand as a warning to all political parties and interests—this means that both reformers and anti-reformers, when they are wise, may learn from indirect experience. If they have only read about revolution elsewhere, even an aristocracy may make concessions they think suicidal rather than consign everything to the play of force and chance. On this view one revolution happening at any place or any time, and worked out to its remoter consequences, might be a sufficient lesson for a whole civilization, and might lift the obstruction which was clogging the historical process. Clearly, therefore, a thing which is almost more important than the revolution itself is the way in which people reason and reflect upon the affair once they look back upon it as a piece of history.

No one can deny that a foreign despot or an entrenched aristocracy may create such a barrier to liberty or to social amelioration that only conspiracy and insurrection may hold any promise of relief to an oppressed people. The struggle for freedom and justice has been a moving story, and on countless occasions it has been the wilfulness of a

tyrant, the oppressiveness of a system, or the unimaginativeness of a privileged class that has been responsible for the resort to irregular and underground politics. If the old-time insurrectionists had their faults, they were often noble and generous ones, and in any case we are not concerned with these as such. We are concerned rather with the way in which other people tend to come along afterwards and to think retrospectively on revolution, and refine upon it, until they have turned it into a new thing and given it a different role altogether in history. We are dealing with a nineteenth-century development—the rise of a new science and the establishment on a permanent footing of *la Révolution par excellence.*

Amongst those who conduct government and those who oppose it, the exceptional device, to which one had made resort on a desperate occasion, too easily tends to generalize itself and to turn into the normal method of procedure. If this is one of the ways in which governments have increased their powers, it is also one of the ways in which "the Revolution" strengthened its hold on western societies in the nineteenth century. It was the weakness of nineteenth-century liberalism that from 1789 to 1848 it idealized the insurrectionary method and the politics of the *coup d'état*, and showed a pathetic faith in this particular way of transacting business. Governments in that period were so vulnerable and states were so badly policed, that a mere mob getting out of hand, a student-demonstration running amok, a crowd surrounding a royal palace or a conspiracy amongst army-officers could bring about the overthrow of a regime. These things came to be romanticized in our historiography, and amongst many people Revolution became an ideal—Revolution as such, almost irrespective of the objects it set out to secure. Merely to be a revolutionary of any sort seemed noble quixotism and had the flavour of fine poetry. So "the Revolution" develops.

There have been agitators who have feared to see conditions in society improved, lest this should diminish the possibilities of revolution. There have been others who have said that they must wait and lie by until a famine occurs or a war breaks out, because they can do nothing with the people until a time of hardship comes, bringing with it a discontent that will be genuinely felt. Even these policies may have their justification, for if there were no agitators people might be oppressed without actually realizing their grievances—they might be unaware of a possible remedy for the hardness of their life. But at a further stage than this the professional engineers of revolutions, acting as an international brotherhood, will lie in wait for discontent and generate it by all possible means; and the idea of remedying present distress is superseded by the determination to be the administrators of a whole new order, a whole new plan of society. Victor Hugo's novel, *Ninety-Three*, moreover, gives an epic picture of the way in which "the Revolution"—even the first French Revolution—could demand from mere human beings the same surrender and self-immolation which the deified State has sometimes seemed to expect.

Concerning the conspiratorial and the insurrectionary mode of procedure in politics, then, let us say that it may on occasion have produced good in the world, though in this respect it was less fruitful in the nineteenth century than many people have imagined. Granted this, however, let us do what our English forefathers did when they were considering the problem of rebellion in the later decades of the seventeenth century. Let us carry the analysis a stage further, and meditate upon the long-term effects of these methods themselves, assuming that other people can adopt them, that anybody can adopt them, so that they come to be generalized, come to be a standing feature in political life. Apart from the fact that they must call out tremendous

new powers of government to meet new dangers, the methods which we are discussing can be used to overthrow all forms of society, even relatively good ones, even the democratic system itself, as we are now only too well able to see. It is questionable indeed whether they are not of the type which in the long run will serve evil-minded men more efficiently than they can ever serve anybody else. In any case, it is important to note how the very devices of "the Revolution" can be adapted to unexpected purposes.

In the generation after 1848—in the age of Napoleon III, Cavour and Bismarck—the situation had changed, because governments had acquired greater strength, and many liberals had drawn riper wisdom from the experiences of their predecessors. In this generation one of the paradoxes of the story begins to emerge into clearer light: governments themselves now discover that they can use "the Revolution" for their own purposes. Napoleon III was prepared to employ the weapons of plebiscite and universal suffrage in order to achieve his personal ends. Cavour made use of Mazzini and his insurrectionaries, but took care as a ruler to control the consequences of such activity. Bismarck threatened the middle-class liberals of Prussia with universal suffrage at a time when he knew that the masses would be on his side. Various reactionary states were made to conform more closely to the principles of the French Revolution because, after military defeat, this policy was seen to be a means of strengthening the power of government.

The insurrectionary method, coupled with assassination and incendiarism, continued to be a feature of politics in regions which had not benefited from the higher organization recently attained by the governments of the west. The pro-Serbian agitation, which resulted in the killing of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and thereby precipitated the war of 1914, was steeped in the kind of romanticism

which so often sanctifies political violence. Here again, conspirators, assassins, agitators and insurrectionists, promoting the aggrandizement of the kingdom of Serbia, were sometimes in dubious relations with an actual government. That whole technique, adopted for the purpose of robbing the Austrian Habsburgs of their Slavonic provinces, ceased to be quite so romantic to us when we saw it copied with remarkable parallelisms—and on the same nationalistic pretexts—by the supporters of Hitler, who used it against Austria in the days when Dollfuss was assassinated. The insurrectionary and conspiratorial methods of the Nazis and Fascists, as well as those of the Marxists, have been developed out of the heresies and romanticisms of the nineteenth-century liberals. And we know that in a number of countries and continents today this romanticized violence is a symptom of backwardness and sub-civilization and political immaturity.

The most critical problem in the whole field that we are considering, however, is presented by the question: How is a revolution to be brought to an end? We have already seen that, though it may be repressed for a moment, there is a sense in which "the Revolution" has never ended. The Swiss historian, Jakob Burckhardt, noted that the outbreak of 1830 was more significant than its merely political consequences would suggest. To many people it brought the realization that the monster had reared up its head again, and that it was a thing which had come to stay. The French Revolutions of 1789 and 1848 were not nipped in the bud, and we can follow the unfolding of their implications until they merge into Bonapartist dictatorships. Twice over in France the process leads to something much more formidable than the traditional monarchy; it brings the dictatorship based on the plebiscite. One of the most portentous facts in modern history is the way in which the principle of autocracy itself has come to its renewing in

recent generations. It confronts us with new terrors precisely because it makes use of the instruments and techniques of "the Revolution."

One of the things which it is important for us to realize is the possibility and the grave danger and the formidable nature of a type of tyranny which is post-democratic. Under the conditions of "the Revolution" it is the very principles of democracy which come to be used in order to bring about an unparalleled enslavement of the human race. The Nazi and Fascist systems themselves were post-democratic forms of tyranny of exactly this type, borrowing much of their technique and many of their ideals from the democratic revolution of the nineteenth century and the communist revolution in the twentieth. Like the Bonapartist dictatorship they represent at the same time the counter-revolution, the attempt to rule off the whole affair; and they make it their *raison d'être* that they alone are able to check the disorder and stop the landslide. It is unfortunate that the partisanship in so much of our historical writing has led to the burying of many significant facts which were well known to the world a few decades ago. Amongst them is the fact that the repeated attempts of the communists to call the mob out into the streets created a desperate problem for the early Weimar republic; indeed they help to explain the development of those armed counter-revolutionary bands which at the next stage in the story so assisted the purposes of Hitler. Similarly, the extravagances and outrages of communism in Italy in the years after the First World War helped to provoke a counter-movement so serious that it almost blotted out the memory of them—there emerged the violent bands that followed the leadership of Mussolini. Some of us have wondered sometimes whether amongst the followers of General De Gaulle a similar response to Marxist provocation was not at one time producing the symptoms of a similar

tendency. The war that opened in 1939, like the "cold war" of more recent years, was in this sense really a war against "the Revolution."

III

Communism has brought to a climax just those particular aspects of the problem of revolution which we have been subjecting to analysis. In doing so it has only developed implications which were already discernible as the First French Revolution was running its course—implications which Edmund Burke himself had realized. Now, however, all these aspects of "the Revolution" have been brought to a higher state of organization; and the conspiratorial method in politics was erected into a science by the Marxists before it received its fuller development at the hands of men who were accustomed to working underground in Tsarist Russia. Machiavelli, Richelieu and Napoleon drew maxims of statecraft from their study of the past, and Machiavelli once examined the various conspiracies of history in order to discover the methods to adopt and the pitfalls to avoid when one was seeking to overthrow a king. No person or system, however, has ever made such a use of history as the Marxists have done in their analysis of revolutions and their attempt to reduce the procedure of the *coup d'état* to a science. Insurrection and assassination have been refined by the development of new techniques in subversive and underground activity. Even the underground movements during the Second World War have been of such assistance to that cause that until we can be sure of their net effect on the course of the war we must wonder whether they have not served rather to undermine than to maintain our civilization.

What is most important of all is the fact that the Marxists have solved the crucial problem and have brought

the main argument to its logical conclusion. They—and perhaps only they—have discovered the weapon that will end "the Revolution." The country in which we should think rebellion and insurrection the least feasible at the present day—less feasible even than it must have been in Nazi Germany—is precisely Soviet Russia. The communists have recognized—and have taken advantage of the fact—that "the Revolution" creates the very conditions under which dictatorship becomes not only possible but inescapable. In the long run "the Revolution" cannot establish liberty or equality, and its only consummation is the policy of dictatorship. Hitler was mistaken in one respect. He was willing to borrow some things from liberalism and some from communism, but he did not go far enough in that direction. The perfect way in which to build up a colossal military state and a relentless despotism is not the National-Socialist way; it is the way of modern communism. And such is the force and dynamism of the revolutionary process that possibly a Stalin must have been driven to these developments, however sincere his original idealism, however determined his desire not to move in this direction. Even in Spain there is one thing that would have been more efficient and more dangerous to western democracy than the regime of a Franco could ever be; and that is the establishment of the communist system in that country.

We can assume that both Lenin and Stalin were sincere in the ideals which they struggled to secure, and we can admit the fervent sincerity of many Marxists even in the western world at the present day. All this cannot prevent the development of "the Revolution" to the final stage at which, according to all the rules of the game, it is almost bound to become the instrument of unscrupulous men in one place or another. Amongst those who realize the nature of its underlying processes there will be the Machia-

vellis who will recognize it as not merely a possible path but actually the royal road to the establishment of a dictatorship. Since some men will always have their discontents (and all States have their desperate moments when they must demand great sacrifices from their citizens), it will always be possible for enemies of society, as well as genuine idealists, to bribe or flatter or alarm the masses. The Bolsheviks appealed to the land-hunger of the Russian peasants in 1917, though the programme of their revolution—and their achievement since—can hardly have been calculated to satisfy that hunger. If Lenin and his followers had a profound sincerity behind all their ruses, we must not imagine that sincerity of this kind is a necessary condition for either political agitation or revolutionary leadership. Those who climb to dictatorship by means of promises addressed to man's cupidity will not need to pay compliments to that cupidity—and will hardly be in a condition to do so—once they have established their authority. A scoundrel who had no object in politics save a social overturn that should bring him to the summit of power, can achieve his ambition at the present day only by out-bidding honest men in the enticements which he offers to human cupidity. And the end of "the Revolution" is still identically the same kind of dictatorship, even if (as possibly in Russia) its leaders are the most earnest men in the world. Whether we look at the French Revolution or at the later development of the revolutionary idea, or at the drift and tendency of politics in general in the world today, one further result is clear—the transition to more undiluted forms of materialism. If those who wish to enslave mankind ever achieve their purposes, it will be because too many people have succumbed to the bribe which the would-be tyrant always holds in his hands.

Liberty and egalitarianism are the ideals which have developed in western civilization, but they can only be

promoted by action within the framework of society. If there was a period when they could have been assisted by the revolutionary method, that time is past; and if the Russian worker now toils for new task-masters it is not clear that these will be kinder than an hereditary aristocracy which had its mitigating routines and genteel traditions. If some people hope that a more genuine freedom and equality will ultimately emerge in Russia, still they can only expect to see them arise on the same terms and according to the same rules—that is to say, by the establishment of a settled order, the healing effects of time, and the growth of tolerance and reasonableness. One of the things that the present generation has to discover is whether (while the Marxist revolution goes on threatening the western democratic states) the Soviet system of government is the only one which is strong enough to establish a settled order, secure against the constant menace of general overturn. Perhaps it is the chief justification of the Bolsheviks that they alone had the power and the ability to establish such an order in Russia when the system had already broken down as a result of war. It is in states where such an order has been smeared out by war, and where traditions have already been uprooted, that Marxism finds its greatest justification and its greatest opportunity.

The simplified rationalism of much of our modern political thinking has paid too little attention to a matter upon which the communists have reflected to such cruel purpose—namely, the science by which a society and a civilization are to be preserved. If our ancestors took care not to overlook this problem we imagine too often that they were merely class-conscious aristocrats intent on the perpetuation of their own ascendancy. In fact, they had in mind also the maintenance of a civilized order, which in those days was felt to be bound up with the fate of the hierarchical system itself. When the uninitiated see a

cathedral all the parts of it may seem to be at ease and at rest; but for an architect or an engineer the very stones are at strain, everything is thrust and counter-thrust, and silent invisible forces are at work all the time. Something parallel to this can be seen to be true also in the world of international relations. If a country like Norway so long felt safe and saw herself in no desperate need to take frantic measures for her defence—if it did not occur to us even to ask ourselves why such a country could feel so secure—that was because the existence of minor states was guarded and guaranteed by certain subtle and imponderable factors which an international order releases and keeps in operation. Once such an order breaks down, all governments must be at strain, all nations must arm, and the elastic must be stretched all the time, because everything is now reduced to the more direct play of force. The breakdown of the international order after two world-wars is one of the factors which favour "the Revolution" at the present day.

In the interior of society similar principles are applicable, and the existence of a stable order operates with the subtlety and all-pervasiveness which a situation of "confidence" will have in the world of finance. Outline-histories can hardly do justice to the importance of the "imponderables" which accompany such an order—the significance of the mere establishment of normality, and the almost magical influence of a general "credit system." These things release men from many of the anxieties of the struggle for existence, enable them to work for long-term purposes, and produce an atmosphere of reasonableness, so that the urbanities and the civilizing influences can develop. If we have overlooked this essential issue, the revolutionaries take care never to allow it to escape their minds; for, as we have seen, they know that this is the matter which is most crucial to them—they know that their chief problem is that of ending the landslide and

re-establishing stability. Precisely because of the revolution, however, they can secure their object only by brute compulsion; and here they may not always be so criminal as we sometimes imagine them to be, for they are themselves the victims of the revolutionary process. "The Revolution" cannot itself restore a genuine normality in any case—it can only produce the peace which is dread stillness, the quietness that is charged with deathly fear. When a society and a civilization possess that stability and that normal system of relations which give play to the life of reason and which keep themselves in existence without too direct an exercise of force, those people who would destroy the whole order, and sacrifice all the "imponderables" which arise from it, little foresee the evil that they do. Even if the Marxists were correct in some of their analyses, so that the western states themselves must come in the long run to a set of social arrangements not unlike those of Soviet Russia, it still remains true that to do this gradually and in peaceful ways is to save the legacy of a liberal culture and to preserve the subtle values which are necessary to civilization itself.

It is characteristic of the modern world that men are beginning to lose sight of the reasons why liberty and equality came to be regarded as political ideals in the first place. And "the Revolution" which was supposed to achieve those ideals not only fails to keep its promise, but is the instrument for the liquidation of the ideals themselves, superseding the very conception of the human drama upon which they were based. By the widespread transformations of the nineteenth century, politics became more materialistic, sliding ever more clearly into a mere conflict of classes and interests. "The Revolution" cannot eliminate this, for absolute egalitarianism seems impossible; and if it were procured for a moment there would soon be new conflict between those who had been improvident for a year and those who had been prudent. If all horizontal divisions

into classes were removed the coal-miners and the dockers, the railway-men and the builders, would still be competing for more than their due share of the wealth of society. Soviet Russia has not eliminated the need for compulsions and inducements, and once man has destroyed the more subtle ones which have operated in the western world, a stronger autocracy than ever must be established to see that the work of society gets done, and to keep the rival groups in order.

One of the features of "the Revolution" is that cruder form of materialism which invites men to sacrifice liberty for equality and sets them chasing an absolute egalitarianism which is a will-o'-the-wisp. In the new outlook which this implies it becomes difficult to make them see that a leader who offers us egalitarianism in the place of freedom is making too good a bargain at our expense; for when we have lost our freedom we shall have no weapon left with which to defend equality. In any case, liberty is the primary ideal historically, and it must remain the primary ideal for men who believe in the spiritual life or the imponderable values of our western civilization. Behind it is a fundamental desire to create a field for the enlargement and the freer play of personality, indeed for the autonomy of the individual. The egalitarian ideal—the view that there should be a fairer distribution of the world's goods—comes at the next stage of the argument, when it is realized that without this social justice many people can possess nothing more than the empty shell of a purely formal liberty. Not only these ideals but the fundamental outlook which brought them into existence, are turned topsy-turvy as soon as men decide to surrender liberty and "the good life" and the values of civilization for the sake of a redistribution of material goods. A whole civilization is being menaced if egalitarianism is turned into the absolute end.

One of the reasons why Marxist Russia seems so strange to us is the fact that it is built on a different conception of the whole human drama and it postulates an entirely different picture of the purpose of man on the earth. Not because they are egalitarian but because they are materialistic, the Marxists have become dominated by the idea that the purpose of man and society is the capture and exploitation of the resources of nature. So far as this is assumed to be the objective it becomes reasonable and natural, and perhaps even inevitable, that men should be herded and harnessed and organized for the achievement of the desired end. The original purposes of "the Revolution" itself become submerged—the very things which men had had in mind when they first set out to secure a fairer distribution of goods. In this new version of the human drama the larger life for the individual, the blossoming of personality, the rights of conscience, are liable to count for nothing. Once upon a time it was assumed that the final purpose of diplomacy in a civilized world—the ultimate basis of reference—was the maintenance of an international order. Such a term comes to have no meaning in a world which has no feeling for all the "imponderables" which are here in question. The same is true in regard to the maintenance of stability and normality, together with all the subtle advantages of a "credit system," within the boundaries of a single society. People are offered the bribe of a vast utilization of the resources of nature and no doubt they will be thrilled by the sight of bigger dams, bigger foundries, bigger factories, bigger bombers. But until men abandon "the Revolution" and return to the long slow processes by which a civilization can truly be developed, they are being deluded into the acceptance of what is not so very unlike the system that produced the pyramids of a Pharaoh. It is possible for man himself to be sacrificed to the exploitation of the resources of nature or the building-

up of a great system of military power. The advance of the human race lies in a different direction—in the heightening and enrichment of personality itself—not in the tightening of human organization but in its development to something more subtle and delicate than before.

Ultimately, then, the real conflict is between the values which have arisen from the spiritual view of life and the claims of a purely materialistic system. And those of us who enjoy freedom owe it less to revolution than to those gentler virtues that grow out of peace and the continuity of history.