

SOCIAL ACTION IN THE EARLY CHURCH, 30-180 A.D.

PAUL HANLY FURFEY
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
Washington, D. C.

I. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Historians of social thought have frequently stated that the early Church was little concerned with the problems of social reform. Thus Barnes and Becker write: "Although the Fathers were well aware of the suffering caused by the prevailing social system, and were not willing to adapt themselves to it without some protest, they did not dream of social reform, much less of making any radical social change."¹ Ellwood says of the Fathers: "Social and political thinking became again subservient to religion. To this extent the Christian movement must be considered a retrograde movement." Beach believes that early Christian social thought was "but little concerned with the association of men with each other, their institutions, and their competitive-co-operative efforts to live together."² Bogardus writes: "The Church Fathers directed the attention of the people to the next world and to preparation therefor. . . . The importance of a changing social order was underrated. In fact, the injustices of the current social order were considered as disciplinary measures for the soul in its preparation for the next world."³

At first glance there seems to be much to be said for this view. In those days human slavery was a burning shame; yet the Church was not aggressively abolitionist. At times there was widespread political corruption and bad government; but the Church did not agitate for constitutional reform. There was little protest against repeated wars of conquest. The

¹Barnes, H. E. and Becker, H.: *Social Thought from Lore to Science*. (Boston, Heath, 1938.) 1:236.

²Ellwood, C. A.: *A History of Social Philosophy*. (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1938.) p. 71.

³Beach, W. G.: *The Growth of Social Thought*. (New York, Scribner, 1939.) p. 48.

⁴Bogardus, E. S.: *The Development of Social Thought*. (New York, Longmans, 1940.) p. 169.

Church fostered no labor unions to help protect the nascent proletariat against exploitation.

These are admitted facts; yet before returning a verdict for the plaintiffs, we must note one glaring error made by these critics of early Christian social action. They have tried to evaluate the work of the early Church by the standards of modern social reform. When they found that the early Fathers did not talk and act exactly like modern social reformers, they hastily concluded that the early Christians were callous to the ills of society. Admittedly our modern ways of social reform were absent in the early Church. Therefore, conclude the critics, all social action was absent. In so concluding they betray a badly anachronistic historical sense.

It is, therefore, imperatively necessary to understand what social action means in our own day, what it meant in the first two centuries of our era, and what are the differences between these two meanings. Unless these points become wholly clear in one's mind, it is altogether useless to try to appreciate the influence of the early Church on society.

What then is the ontogeny of a modern reform movement? Usually something like this: Some theoretician has a scheme for rebuilding society. His ideas are not too unrealistic, so others accept them. A group is formed and becomes recognized as a school of social thinking. Sooner or later thought passes into action. This action may take various forms, of which the following are perhaps the three principal. First, action may be entirely voluntary and unofficial, requiring no new legislation. Or, secondly, the action may take the form of social legislation for the passage of which the group agitates by legal means. Finally, in the most extreme cases the reform group may become a revolutionary party and force the acceptance of their ideas by armed revolt.

Take the history of socialism as an illustration. Saint-Simon is usually considered the founder. He was a theoretician. His ideas attracted followers, Bazard, Enfantin, Fourier, Proudhon. Then theory passed into action in all three ways above men-

tioned. There was voluntary and unofficial action such as the idealistic experiments of Cabet, Owen and others. There were efforts to reform by social legislation. Think, for example, of Louis Blanc and his national workshops of 1848. Indeed socialism had a considerable part in promoting the excellent social legislation which European countries began to adopt towards the end of the nineteenth century. Finally, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia represents a successful attempt to impose socialistic ideas by violence.

Such is the modern scheme of social action; it would hardly have been feasible in the early Roman Empire. True enough, there was considerable freedom of thought and theoreticians could plan their Utopias;⁵ but there was very little freedom of action. It was difficult even to band together for voluntary and unofficial activities. The government was very suspicious of *collegia illicita*. Trajan even forbade the younger Pliny to form a volunteer fire brigade in Nicomedia, writing on this occasion, "Whatever name we give them and for whatever reason, men who unite for a common purpose will all the same presently become a political faction."⁶ It would have been even more futile to dream of agitating for social legislation. That sort of thing is not done in a totalitarian state such as Rome was. As in Germany and Russia today, whatever little social legislation was enacted, came into being as a result of the emperor's gracious pleasure and emphatically not as a result of some pressure group organized by social reformers. Finally, armed revolution had little chance. Remember we are discussing the most brilliant period of the empire when the Roman military machine was functioning perfectly. Revolt against Rome was pretty futile. We know at what a fearful cost the Jews learned that lesson.

⁵Yet there was some suspicion of social theorists in official quarters. Cassius Dio represents Maecenas warning the young Augustus against the demoralizing influence of philosophers with their radical ideas. *Rom. Hist.*, 52:36, 4. Lake's edition (London, Heinemann, 1926-1932).

⁶Pliny: *Letters*, 10:34. Hutchinson's edition with a revision of Melmoth's translation (London, Heinemann, 1915).

Under the Roman Empire therefore, social reform had to proceed along different lines. Actually what happened was somewhat as follows: The theory was thought out just as it is today; but there was no attempt to put this theory into practice by organized action. Instead, the followers of the new school tried to practise in their own lives the principles which the school held. If their example was convincing, others might join. As the group grew, their influence still remained unofficial; but there was always the chance that some man powerful in public affairs, even an emperor, might be converted. In this case at last the school's theories began to influence the whole community. This, for example, was the history of Stoicism. It began as a purely personal philosophy of life, but it grew in influence as men of affairs like Seneca and finally even the emperor, Marcus Aurelius, became converts. Through the power of such men Stoicism had a real importance in social reform. The condition of women, children, and slaves was improved. We must also give Stoicism some of the credit for the idea, so fundamental in Roman law, that in a certain restricted legal sense all men are equal.

In considering the social action of the early Church it is only fair to keep the foregoing facts in mind. We must judge the early Christians in the light of their contemporary possibilities. We must not seek in the first century a type of social action impossible then, but possible now. The early Church influenced society profoundly, but it did so only by using the reform techniques which the prevailing conditions allowed, that is, by doing three things: by teaching a consistent doctrine on social relationships, by putting this doctrine into practice in the personal lives of individual Christians, and finally by winning to the Faith persons in authority until finally the emperor and his empire were converted. One must remember these facts, or else fail completely to understand the social thought and social action of the early Church.

With the preceding principles in mind we now turn to the study of Christian social action during the first century and a

half of the Church's existence, that is to say, from 30 to 180 A.D. A few words may be in order in explanation of this choice of dates. The *terminus a quo*, the year 30, calls for little explanation. It is the date when the Church began her independent career.⁷ For the *terminus ad quem* the year 180 is a natural choice. It marked the end of a period of unparalleled prosperity for Rome and the beginning of a century of rapid decline and revolution. The date also marks roughly a change within the Church. Previously Christians had been an insignificant minority. Ecclesiastical organization had been elastic and informal. The writings of the early Fathers were brief and topical and always in Greek. After 180 the Church was growing rapidly. The hierarchy was more formally organized. Men like Tertullian and Irenaeus began to compose longer and more systematic works of theology and Latin became an ecclesiastical language. The years 30-180 A.D., therefore, form a fairly unitary and very interesting period. In those days the Apostles or their first successors were alive. The tradition of the Lord's teaching was still fresh in men's minds. Therefore even the non-inspired writings of the period have a unique value for the student of Christian social thought.

Among the sources available for the study of this period the New Testament⁸ naturally holds first place. All the canonical books are included in this study except the Gospels. They are omitted because, although they were written within our time limits, they are historical works and refer to events previously occurring. The non-Biblical sources embrace the Apostolic Fathers,⁹ the second-century apologists,¹⁰ the Apocrypha,¹¹ the

⁷Biblical scholars generally date Our Lord's death in the year 29 or 30. For a good brief summary of the evidence, see Prat, F.: *Jésus Christ, sa vie, son oeuvre*. 5e ed. (Paris, Beauchesne, 1933.) 1:489-491.

⁸The Greek text of Merk (Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1936) has been used. The English quotations follow the usual Douay Version except where otherwise specified. The abbreviation WV refers to the *Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures* (New York, Longmans, 1927-1935) and *Spem* refers to Father Spencer's translation (New York, Macmillan, 1937).

⁹Read in Kirsopp Lake's edition (London, Heinemann, 1912-1913).

¹⁰Read in Goodspeed's edition (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914) or, for writers omitted by Goodspeed, in Otto's *Corpus* (Jena, Mauke, 1851-1879) or in other editions to be specified.

¹¹The editions used will be mentioned as they occur.

few surviving acts of the early martyrs,¹² and various minor sources. Christian epigraphy and archaeology¹³ furnish a certain amount of evidence. On the other hand the papyri and ostraka¹⁴ give practically no assistance.

To understand the early Christians' view of society in general, we must first understand what they thought about the society which they themselves constituted, the Church, the Kingdom of God, the Mystical Body of Christ. This was the society they most discussed. This was the society they best understood. From their analysis of this society they learned to criticize other societies.

The early Christians did not philosophize much about themselves. That was reserved for a later and more self-conscious age. It is, therefore, vain to look for any systematic presentation of the theory of the Christian social group. What we do find is a series of analogies by which the Christians explained their social unity to themselves. Five of these analogies are of prime importance and merit discussion here, namely, the building, the Kingdom of God, the *ecclesia*, the family, and the Mystical Body.¹⁵

We begin therefore with the analogy of the building. Saint Peter said to his converts, "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house." (I Pet. 2:5)¹⁶ and Saint Paul wrote to the

¹²Read, except as otherwise specified, in Knopf and Krüger's *Ausgewählte Märtyrerakten*³. Aufl. (Tübingen, Mohr, 1929).

¹³Possibly the best practical source is Cabrol and Leclercq's *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1924-), herein abbreviated DAC. See also Vacant and Mangenot's *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1909-), herein abbreviated DTC, Kaufmann's *Handbuch der christlichen Archäologie* (Paderborn, Schöningh, 1922), the same author's *Handbuch der altchristlichen Epigraphik* (Freiburg i. B., Herder, 1917) and Marucchi's *Manuale di archeologia cristiana* (Rome, Desclée, 1933). Of course De Rossi's monumental *Roma sotterranea* (Rome, Cromo-Litografia Pontificia, 1864-1867) remains indispensable.

¹⁴See Leclercq, H.: "Papyrus," DAC, 13:1370-1520, and "Ostraka," DAC, 13:70-112.

¹⁵There are other minor analogies. The Church is symbolized by a ship in a painting in the cemetery of Callixtus (De Rossi: *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, Pl. VX) but this is rare. So also is the analogy of the vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1-6). It is true that Saint Paul's use of the olive tree (Rom. 11:16-24) is somewhat parallel, but not completely so. The vines pictured on the walls of the catacombs in the Vestibolo dei Flavi and in the region of Ampliatius in the Cemetery of Domitilla are probably purely decorative. See Bour, DTC, 5:1192.

¹⁶The analogy was doubtless suggested by Ps. 117:22 and Is. 28:16, which Saint Peter goes on to quote.

Corinthians, "You are God's building." (I Cor. 3:9) If the individual Christians are the building stones, Christ Himself is the foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay but that which is laid which is Christ Jesus." (I Cor. 3:11) Writing to the Ephesians, Saint Paul varies the figure slightly. "You are fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." (Eph. 2:19-20) The analogy is developed at considerable length by Hermas who represents the Church under the figure of a tower.¹⁷

What does the analogy of the building teach us about Christian social thought? It teaches us that the early Christians considered themselves an organized social whole, not merely an unorganized crowd. They were like stones carefully fitted together, not like a pile of loose stones in random arrangement. Just as the stones of a building rest one upon another, so there was mutual dependence among the Christians. To be accepted as a member by the Church one must prove oneself worthy, just as a stone must be a good stone to be accepted by the builder—a point which Hermas emphasizes. Finally the element which gives character to the Church is Christ's presence. He is the cornerstone whose position determines the position of stones laid above it. He is the foundation which gives the whole building permanence and strength.

Again, the Christian group is conceived as forming a kingdom, the Kingdom of God. This figure had a long history. In the Old Testament Messianic prophecy had made familiar the concept of Christ as king. The Kingdom is emphasized in the synoptic Gospels. It formed an important part of the Apostolic teaching. Saint Paul, meeting with the chief Jews in Rome, for example, "expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus" (Acts 28:23).¹⁸ The Christians, in their turn, were conscious of their privileges as subjects of Christ, the King. The aged Polycarp chose death rather than disloyalty to his divine King. "For eighty and six years have I been his servant and he has done me no wrong and

¹⁷In *Vis. 3* and *Sim. 9*.

¹⁸See also Acts 1:3, 8:12, 19:8, 20:25, 28:31.

how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" (*Mart. Pol.* 9:3) Writing to the Colossians Saint Paul thanks God, the Father, who "hath translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love." (*Col.* 1:13)¹⁹ while Saint Justin points out that the kingdom of which the Christians speak is no earthly kingdom but the Kingdom of God. (*Just. Apol.* I, 11:1) The boldness of the martyrs before their judges proves the otherworldliness of their hope. Abercius of Hierapolis, in the epitaph prepared for himself, declared: "He who taught me faithful scriptures was the one who sent me to Rome to observe the kingdom (?)²⁰ and to see the queen with golden robes and golden sandals. There I saw a people having a shining seal." The language is purposely obscure, which is not surprising in the case of a public inscription in penal times. It is still uncertain whether the *kingdom* and the *queen* refer to the Church and the Kingdom of God as personified or whether they designate the Roman Empire and the empress.²¹ There can be no doubt, however, that the people *having a shining seal* were the Christians with their seal of Baptism. The Christians were a *people*, a social unity.

The Kingdom of God is not of this world. It is "not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (*Rom.* 14:17) It is "not in speech, but in power." (*I Cor.* 4:20) To enter this unwordly kingdom one must free oneself of vices. In one place²² Saint Paul lists seventeen vices which disqualify for entrance. The Kingdom of God is for "the poor of this world, rich in faith," (*Jas.* 2:5) who pass through many tribulations, (*Acts* 14:21, *II Thess.* 1:5) practising good works. (*II Pet.* 1:10-11) The kingdom is supernatural; it is unattainable by the merely natural man. "Flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God" (*I Cor.* 15:50).

Contrasting the figure of the building with the figure of the kingdom we may note first of all the dynamic character of the

¹⁹See also *Heb.* 12:28, *Apoc.* 1:6, 1:9, 5:10.

²⁰It is doubtful whether we should read Βασιλείαν, *reginam* or Βασιλείαν *regnum*.

²¹For able presentation of divergent views see Kauffmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175 and Batiffol, *DTC*, 1:61-62.

²²*Gal.* 5:19-21. See also *I Cor.* 6:9-10 and *Eph.* 5:5.

latter. The stones in a building coöperate merely passively, by remaining in position. The subjects of a kingdom coöperate actively under the sovereign guidance of their ruler. In the period we are studying Roman citizenship was a precious privilege. Men strove for it eagerly on account of the many valuable rights it bestowed. So too, citizenship in the Kingdom of God must be earned by personal merit and gives the recipient priceless rights.

A third term for the Christian group was *ecclesia* ἐκκλησία. This soon became the ordinary Latin and Greek word for *church*; yet we must not forget that originally it meant a duly summoned public assembly—a meaning it still bears in Acts 19:39. It was natural to transfer the meaning from a civil to a religious assembly. "In assembly ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ thou shalt confess thy transgressions." (*Did.* 4:14) Then it meant all the Christians of a given locality. "The church (ἐκκλησία) that is in Antioch in Syria," (*Ig. Sm.* 11:1) Finally it came to mean the universal church, the sum-total of all Christians.

The Christians' choice of the word *ecclesia* for their group suggests a comparison with the Greek city-state, the πόλις. Thus Saint Paul tells the Ephesians, "You are fellow-citizens (συμπολίται) with the saints." (*Eph.* 2:19) To the Philippians he says, "Our commonwealth (πολίτευμα) is in heaven." (*Phil.* 3:20)²³ The author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* writes of the Christians, "They pass their time on earth, but have their citizenship (πολιτεύονται) in heaven." (*Diog.* 5:9)

The figure of the Kingdom of God shows that the Christian group was somehow analogous to a state governed by a king. This was a characteristically eastern form of political organization. But the use of words like *ecclesia* and πόλις (*city-state*) suggests a comparison with the usual form of organization in the Greek cities. Christian felt themselves as subjects of a Great King; but they also felt themselves comparable to citizens of a Greek city-state, gathered in assembly (ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ) to

²³This is Spencer's translation. The Douay has, "Our conversation is in heaven." Originally a perfectly good translation, the sense has been spoiled by a shift in the older meaning of the English *conversation*.

transact official business, like citizens of a free city. The analogy of the kingdom brings out the unquestioning obedience, the utter personal loyalty which Christians owe to Christ, the King. The analogy of the *ecclesia* shows that Christians have duties other than passive obedience. There is room for personal initiative in the Church as the lives of the saints abundantly prove.

The family furnishes a fourth analogy. Christians are "the sons of God." (Rom. 8:16). Consequently they stand to each other in the relation of brothers and sisters and all form one family. The Christians showed their vivid consciousness of this fact by calling one another *brother*. In the New Testament this usage is too well known to require quotation. It is common, too, in the Apostolic Fathers,²⁴ and in the apologists,²⁵ as well as in early sepulchral inscriptions. In fact, the term *brother* became a technical term for *Christian*. So that when Saint Paul speaks of "the brother Quartus," (Rom. 16:23) "the brother Sosthenes," (I Cor. 1:1)²⁶ he means practically, "Quartus, the Christian" and "Sosthenes, the Christian." The term denoted not physical, but spiritual relationship.²⁷ Since the whole human race is called to membership in the Church and to salvation, even the enemies of the Church are brothers in a sense, and are so called by Saint Justin. They are "of like nature with ourselves and brothers."²⁸

The analogy of the family brings out the close unity of the Christians and the necessity of common action. These are points already shown in the other analogies; but in addition the analogy of the family adds something new. It calls attention to the intimacy of Christians with one another. Theirs is not

²⁴For example, Clem. 4:7, *Ps-Clem.* 20:2, *Barn.* 2:10, *Ig. Rom.* 6:2.

²⁵For example, Aris. (Gr) 15:7, Just. *Apol.* I, 65:1, 65:3, Just. *Dial.* 106:1, Ath. *Sup.* 32:3, Melito, in Eus. *HE.* 4:26, 13. For Eusebius we follow Lake's edition (London, Heinemann, 1926-1932) which reprints the text of the Berlin *Corpus*.

²⁶Κουάρτος ὁ ἀδελφος, Σωσθένης ὁ ἀδελφος. The translations are those of the Westminster Version. See parallel instances in I Cor.: 16:12 and 2 Cor. 1:1.

²⁷"For we call one another brother not in a biological (οὐ κατὰ σάρκα but in a spiritual sense (κατὰ ψυχὴν)" Aris. (Gr) 15:7.

²⁸Ὁμοιοπαθῶν ὄντων καὶ ἀδελφῶν. Just. *Apol.* II 1:1. See also Just. *Dial.* 58:3, 96:2, 137:1.

the impersonal coöperation of fellow-citizens, but the intimate and loving coöperation of brothers and sisters. Again, the family is a natural and stable group. We are born into our family without our knowledge or consent. If two men are brothers in blood, then it is utterly impossible that they should cease to be so. So too, we are called to membership in the Christian family without our initiative. Many of us were baptized when we were too young to consent. Nothing we can do can erase the mark of Baptism from our souls. Thus the Christian group, like the family, is intimate and inevitable and stable.

Among the various comparisons which the early Christians used to explain the social group they constituted, probably the most important is the figure of the Mystical Body. This was a very common analogy, and one very suggestive to the social thinker. Saint Paul was explicit in his doctrine that the Church was a body, Christ being the head, the individual Christians being the members.²⁹ Saint Ignatius of Antioch talks about "the one body of His Church."³⁰ Saint Clement, speaking of the Church, prays, "Let our whole body be saved in Christ Jesus." (38:1) "The Church of God shall be one body," says Hermas (*Sim.* 9:18, 4) and again, "There shall be one body of those who are purified."³¹ Saint Justin refers to the doctrine. (*Dial.* 42:3) Even the Apocryphal *Odes of Solomon*³² contain a couple of references. "Glory be to thee, our Head, the Lord Messias," (17:16) and "They became to me as my own members and I was their head." (17:15)

From this doctrine it followed that all Christians were very closely united to each other. "You are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28) "We, being many, are one bread, one body." (I Cor. 10:17)³³ The close unity thus established is not disturbed by racial or social differences. "We are all baptized into one

²⁹See, for example, I Cor. 12:13, Eph. 1:22-23, 3:6, 4:12, 4:15-16, 5:30, Col. 1:18, 1:24, 2:17, 2:19, 3:15. Note that the doctrine of the Mystical Body is implicit in the account of Saint Paul's conversion. Acts 9:5, 22:8, 26:15.

³⁰*Ig. Sm.* 1:2. See also *Ig. Trall.* 1:1.

³¹*Sim.* 9:18, 3. See also *Sim.* 9:13, 5, *Sim.* 9:13, 7, and *Sim.* 9:17, 5.

³²Harris, R. and Mingana, A.: *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*. (Manchester, University Press, 1920.)

³³See also I. Cor. 1:13, Eph. 2:15-16, 4:4, Col. 2:19, I Jn. 1:7.

body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free." (I Cor. 12:13) Saint Paul preached the startling mystery that "in Christ Jesus, through the gospel, the Gentiles are coheirs and concorporate (σύσσωμα) and comparticant in the promise." (Eph. 3:6, WV) However, the fundamental equality of the Christians and their intimate unity is not inconsistent with diversity of function. The classical passage illustrating this is the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians. Saint Paul is discussing the charismata. Evidently there had been disorder among the charismatics at Corinth. Some were vain about their spiritual gifts. Others, less well endowed, were jealous and unduly discouraged. The Apostle points out that the necessary inequality of endowment should lead neither to pride nor to discouragement, and he proves his point by the analogy of the body. Here there is inequality of dignity; yet even the humblest members play their necessary part. "The eye cannot say to hand: I need not thy help; nor again, the head to the feet: I have no need of you." (I Cor. 12:21). It is foolish, then, for a member to take a too individualistic attitude. His welfare depends not solely on himself, but also on the healthy functioning of the whole. "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it." (I Cor. 12:26)³⁴ A generation later a factious spirit broke out again at Corinth and Pope Saint Clement used the same arguments: "The great cannot exist without the small; nor the small without the great. There is a certain blending among all and there is an advantage in this. Let us take our body. The head is nothing without the feet; likewise the feet, without the head. The smallest members of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body; but all agree and are united in a common subjection to save the whole body." (*Clem* 37:4-5)

The Mystical Body receives its surpassing dignity from the fact that Christ is its head. "He is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18) God, the Father of glory "hath made him head over all the church which is his body." (Eph. 1:22-

³⁴Diversity of function within the Mystical Body is stressed also in Rom. 12:4-5 and Eph. 4:11-12.

23) The result of this mystical union is sometimes expressed by saying that we are "in Christ."⁸⁵ We are to "walk in him." (Col. 2:6) In Him the Christian attains his fullness. (Col. 2:10) "In Christ all shall be made alive." (I Cor. 15:22)

The early Christians found the doctrine of the Mystical Body a very compelling motive for virtue. We must not sin against our fellow Christians because we are "every one members one of another." (Rom. 12:5) These considerations are a motive for chastity. (I Cor. 6:15) They are motives for telling the truth. (Eph 4:25) Above all, they are motives for practising charity. Because the community at Jerusalem had but "one heart and one soul," (Acts 4:32) they were very ready to share their possessions. Saint Clement was amazed that the Christians at Corinth should so far forget the doctrine of the Mystical Body as to quarrel with one another. "Why do we drag apart and rend the members of Christ and be at odds against our own body and reach such a pitch of madness as to forget that we are members, one of another?" (*Clem.* 46:7) Again, the same writer, after discussing the mutual dependence of the members, goes on to say: "Let each be subject to his neighbor according to the position granted him. Let the strong care for the weak and let the weak respect the strong. Let the rich aid the poor and let the poor man thank God that He gave him one to supply his needs." (*Clem.* 38:1-2)⁸⁶

The analogy of the Mystical Body throws into relief several important facts about the Christian social group. First, it presents the Church as a living thing. The Church has a life of its own, the common life of grace which flows from the Head through the members. Again, this analogy shows more clearly than any of the others the nature of the relationship existing among the members. The members are not equal in dignity; but each plays his necessary part. This doctrine is opposed to the unrealistic egalitarianism of the French Revolution. It is

⁸⁵Saint Paul uses this or equivalent expressions 164 times. See an excellent discussion in Prat, F.: *La théologie de saint Paul*. (Paris, Beauchesne, 1909.) 1:434-436.

⁸⁶Note that the mutual obligations of the Christians persevered beyond the grave. The living pray for the dead; the dead pray for the living. The very interesting epigraphic evidence for this has been excellently assembled by Bour, *DTC*, 3:454-480.

also opposed to any theory which would deprive the humblest citizen of his dignity as a human person. Finally, the figure of the Mystical Body makes it clear how and why the Christian society is supernatural. It is so because Christ, the Head, is Himself part of the body and because as Head, He supplies the body's life. The supernatural life, then, which Christ gives, makes the Church a living organism; and the fact that it is a living organism accounts for the mutual dependence of members characteristic of the Christian social group.

Let us stop at this point to recapitulate briefly. We have considered five analogies by which the early Christians explained their own group to themselves. Putting these together what picture do we get? We may answer that the early Christians conceived of themselves as constituting a unit. They were not a crowd; they were a society. This society was dynamic, not merely static. It performed public common acts like an *ecclesia*. It obeyed Christ, as subjects obey their king. There was a mutual dependence of member on member, so that each played his part toward making the whole a good society. The members were not equal in dignity, but each had his indispensable place and deserved affection and respect from the others, like a member of a family. In a word, the Church was an organic unity and this unity received life and meaning from Christ, the Head of the body which is the Church.

The force which welded the early Christians into a social unity and which governed all their human relations was charity, ἀγάπη. This is evidently a very fundamental concept for understanding the social thought of the New Testament.

The word ἀγάπη has had an interesting history.³⁷ In the Hebrew Old Testament the most common word for *love* was 'abeb. This verb covered a wide range of meaning, love between the sexes, between relatives, between intimate friends. It was also used for love as a duty imposed by the Law. "Thou shalt love (w^oahabta) thy neighbor³⁸ as thyself." (Lev. 19:18)

³⁷See the articles on ἀγαπάω, ἀγάπη, ἀγαπητός by G. Quell and E. Stauffer, in Kittel, G.: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*. Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer, 1933- .) 1:20-55.

³⁸re'aka is best so translated rather than "thy friend" (Douay Version). The Douay Version translates the word *thy neighbor* when the same text is quoted in Mt. 22:39.

The love of the Old Testament was a discriminating love which chose its beloved out of thousands. (CC. 5:10) Therefore when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the word ἀγαπᾶν was generally chosen to render 'abeb, because it means the love of intelligent and discriminating free choice as opposed to the blindly passionate love implied by ἐρᾶν.

When the New Testament writers took over the words, ἀγαπᾶν, *to love*, and ἀγάπη, *charity*, they were already rich with meaning. In the New Testament this meaning was not altered; but it was deepened and intensified. When the Jewish lawyer quoted Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 on love of God and neighbor as a summary of man's duty, Our Lord approved warmly, saying, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." (Lk. 10:28) However, in the Gospels, charity received enormously more emphasis than it had in the Old Testament. Our Lord insisted that His followers must love even their enemies and strangers. He revealed for the first time the true nature of charity. It is a participation by man in the mutual love which exists among the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity (Jn. 17:26). Charity is the queen-virtue.

In our literature charity naturally occupies an extremely important place. Saint Paul's panegyric is familiar. Compared to the charisms, charity is "a far more excellent path." (I Cor. 12:31, *Spen*) Without charity the charisms, faith, and naturalistic philanthropy are nothing. (I Cor. 13:1-3) Fifteen good qualities of charity are enumerated by Saint Paul in I Cor. 13:4-7. Charity, finally, is eternal. (I. Cor. 13) Hardly less eloquent is Saint Clement. "The bond of the charity of God who can explain? The greatness of its beauty who is competent to tell? The height to which charity lifts us is inexpressible," (*Clem.* 49:2-4) and again, "See, beloved, how great and wonderful is charity, and that of its perfection there is no expression." (*Clem.* 50:1) Charity is the "bond of perfection," (Col. 3:14) that is, either the bond which binds the virtues together into a unified whole, or the perfect bond between the Christians. He who has charity has fulfilled the Law, (Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:14) walks in the light, (I Jn. 1:7, 2:9-11)

abides in God, (I Jn. 4:12 and 16) and has passed from death to life. (I Jn. 3:14) Fraternal charity is an echo of God's love. (I Jn. 4:7-8) Faith and charity are respectively the beginning and end of life. (Ig. *Eph.* 14:1) By charity our sins are forgiven and heaven is opened to us.³⁹

Charity being the supremely important virtue, it is not surprising that the Christians were constantly exhorted to practise it. They were to love one another even unto death. (I Jn. 3:16) They were to observe the golden rule,⁴⁰ to seek their neighbor's good rather than their own, (I Cor. 10:24) to love unceasingly. (*Clem.* 33:1) and with an undivided heart. (Ig. *Trall.* 13:2) The duty of charity comes "before all things;" (I Pet. 4:8) for lack of charity injures my brother "for whom Christ died." (Rom. 14:15) Such charity welds the Christians together "in harmony," (Ig. *Trall.* 12:2) and "in love without human partisanship." (*Clem.* 50:2) They are "knit together in charity,"⁴¹ "solicitous to preserve the unity of the Spirit." (Eph. 4:3 *Spen*)⁴²

The result of this mutual charity was to bind the brethren together in a "profound and rich peace." (*Clem.* 2:2) Nothing is better than this; (Ig. *Eph.* 13:2) therefore, if anyone finds that sedition and strife have arisen in the community on his account, he ought to be willing to go away for the sake of peace. (*Clem.* 54:1-3) Not only do Christians strive for peace among

³⁹Heb. 6:10, *Clem.* 50:3 and 5.

⁴⁰This rule is stated negatively in our literature. "Whatsoever thou wouldst not have done to thyself, do not thou to another." (*Did.* 1:2) See also *Arist. (Gr)* 15:5, *Ep. Apost.* (Eth) 18 (29), *Theo.* 2:34. There is a well known variant reading in Acts 15:29 which adds the negative golden rule to the Apostolic decrees. The manuscript authority for this is by no means negligible and includes D, a respectable group of minuscules, Irenaeus, Ephrem, Tertullian and certain Syriac, Coptic, and Old Latin witnesses. The *Epistula Apostolorum* is found in Duensing's edition (Bonn, Marcus und Weber, 1925, *Kl. Texte*, 152).

⁴¹Thus WV translates Col. 2:2. However, the Douay ("instructed in charity") may be correct.

⁴²Exhortations to charity (direct or indirect) are too numerous in our literature to quote. See also Rom. 12:9-10, 15, 13:8, I Cor. 14:12-13, 19, Gal. 6:2, Eph. 5:2, Col. 3:12-13, Heb. 10:24, 13:1, Jas. 5:9, I Pet. 1:22, 3:8-9, 2 Pet. 1:7, I Jn. 4:7, 9-11, 20, 2 Jn. 5, *Did.* 2:6-7, Ig. *Trall.* 8:2, *Ps-Clem.* 4:3, *Just. Apol.* I, 15:9-10, *Theo.* 3:14, *Ep. Apost.* (Eth) 18 (29), (Copt) 24 (35). Note that charity was the motive of Saint Paul's self-discipline (I Cor. 9:24-27).

themselves but they are more ready than anybody else to co-operate with the public authorities for the preservation of peace. (Just. I *Apol.* 12:1) The thought of peace was constant among the early Christians during life and, from the first century on they inscribed on their graves the words *in Pace*.⁴³

Of course this beautiful idea of constant peace and unity within the Mystical Body was not always followed in practice. The early Christians were subject to human weakness, just like ourselves. Saint Paul was forced to rebuke the Corinthians sharply for their party spirit in the opening chapters of First Corinthians. Some forty years later Pope Saint Clement was forced to repeat the same admonitions to the same church. The Corinthians should be "without any human partisanship," (*Clem.* 50:2) for sedition is "abominable and unholy, alien and foreign to the elect of God." (*Clem.* 1:1) Their disunity, he notes, "has turned aside many, has cast many into discouragement, many to doubt, all of us to grief." (*Clem.* 46:9) All this, says the *Pseudo-Clement*, is very disedifying to the pagans who, when they hear the Christian doctrine of loving enemies, "wonder at this extraordinary degree of goodness; but when they see that not only do we not love those that hate us, but even those that love us, they laugh us to scorn and the name is blasphemed." (*Ps-Clem.* 13:4)

However distressing these occasional dissensions were, the Christians could still afford to boast of their "holy and seemly practice of brotherly love." (*Clem.* 48:1) Diognetus is told "what fervent love (φιλοστοργία) for one another" (*Ep. Diog.* 1) The Christians have. The first believers in Jerusalem "had but one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32) Christians love one another (*Arist.* (Syr.) 15:7), love their neighbor (*Arist.* (Gr.) 15:4). Catacomb inscriptions reflect the same tender love.⁴⁴ Saint Justin contrasts the conduct of the Chris-

⁴³For further texts on peace, see Rom. 12:18, Eph. 4:3, I Thess. 5:13, Heb. 12:14, Clem. 15:1, 20:1-11, 62:2.

⁴⁴For example, the epitaph of Palladius in the Cappella Graeca of the Cemetery of Priscilla: "Obrimus to his dearest (ΓΑΥΚΥΤΑΤΟ) cousin and fellow student, Palladius." Or this epitaph from the Cemetery of Commodilla: "Marcus Orbius Helius, his dearest friend, gave this grave as a resting place for Titus Flavius Euty chius, who lived 19 years, 11 months, 2 days. Farewell, dear." Both inscriptions belong to the second century.

tians before and after conversion: "We hated one another. We murdered one another. On account of their different manners we refused to live with men of other tribes. But now, after the coming of Christ, we live the common life. We pray for our enemies and try to win over those who unjustly hate us." (*Just. I Apol.* 14:3)

This sublime charity stands out in many of the individuals who appear in our literature. Saint Ignatius of Antioch calls Onesimus "a man of inexpressible love." (*Ig. Epb.* 1:3). Of himself, Saint Ignatius says to the Philadelphians, "My brethren, I am overflowing with love for you and I am exceedingly joyful in watching over your safety." (*Ig. Phil.* 5:1) Saint Paul, however, is the man whose strong personal love shows up most unmistakably in our literature. The welfare of his converts was his very life. "Now we really live if ye but stand fast in the Lord." (*I Thess.* 3:8 *WV*) The mutual love of the Philip-pians made his joy full. "Fill up my joy by thinking alike, and loving the same things, with one soul and one mind." (*Phil.* 2:2 *WV*) He could not bear to wound the feelings of the Cor-inthians because, if he alienated them there would be no one to whom to turn. "If I make you sorrowful, who is he then that can make me glad, but the same who is made sorrowful by me?" (*II Cor.* 2:2) The twenty-four salutations to individuals in the sixteenth chapter of Romans are an excellent proof of Saint Paul's capacity for warm friendship.

It is worth noting that there was a close relationship between this intense charity of the early Christians and their devotion to the Holy Eucharist. We remember how Saint Paul was shocked that the Corinthians dared approach the Holy Table while there were divisions and factions among them and a lack of concern for the needy. (*I Cor.* 11:18,19,22) The *Didache* warns, "Let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they are reconciled." (*Did.* 14:2) At Mass, says Saint Justin, the Christians take occasion to show their charity by almsgiving (*Just. Apol.* I, 67:1,6). Thus are veri-fied the words of Leo XIII who, after speaking of the exquisite charity of the early Christians, added, "There can be no shadow

of doubt that this immense blessing was due to their frequent meetings at the divine table."⁴⁵

Thus we receive a picture of the early Christian community. It was a social whole, a true society, comparable in many respects to other human societies, to a family, to a kingdom, to an assembly. Yet at the same time it was unique by its supernatural quality, and this supernatural quality was most manifest in the intense mutual charity, nourished by the Holy Eucharist, which welded the Christians into a close unity. Thus men of different ages, races, and socio-economic status became one in Christ.

The social unity formed by the Christians was not unopposed. It met fierce antagonism from another social unity which the writers of this period call *the world*. Christians try to spread the social doctrines of Christ. The world offers organized opposition to this program. The world, one might say, represents evil in its social aspect. It is important, therefore, to know what the early Christians meant by this term. If we understood precisely what the term connoted to them, then we would understand precisely what they found to criticize.

The English word, *world*, used in this sense translates two Greek words, αἰών, *saeculum*, and κόσμος, *mundus*. The former is used to translate the Hebrew 'olam—a word whose meaning has received considerable attention.⁴⁶

In the Hebrew Old Testament 'olam signified an unknown period of time, either the forgotten past or the unpredictable future. In rabbinical Hebrew and Aramaic it came to mean *the world*, the only sense preserved by the cognate 'alam⁴⁷ in

⁴⁵Encyclical, *Mirae caritatis*, May 28, 1902.

⁴⁶Bousset, W.: *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*. 3. Aufl. (Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1926). Pp. 243-249. Dalman, G.: *Die Worte Jesu*. (Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1930). Pp. 120-127 and 132-146. Lagrange, M.-J.: *Le messianisme chez les Juifs*. (Paris, Gabalda, 1909). Pp. 162-175. Messel, N.: *Die Einseitigkeit der jüdischen Eschatologie*. (Giessen, Töpelmann, 1915). Pp. 44-60. Prat, F.: *La théologie de Saint Paul*. (Paris, Beauchesne, 1912). 2:492-493. Sasse, H.: αἰών, αἰώνιος in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1933-), 1:197-209. Schürer, E.: *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*. 3. Aufl. (Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1898). 2:547-551.

⁴⁷World as the totality of created things or world as all humanity.

modern Arabic. This shift of meaning is natural enough; for, as Prat remarks, "Il y a un rapport étroit entre la durée du monde et le monde qui dure." (*loc. cit.*)⁴⁸

Finally, in eschatological writings, the distinction appeared between "this world" (*ha'olam haze*) and "the world to come" (*ha'olam haba*).⁴⁹ In the Greek New Testament these expressions appeared as ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος and ὁ αἰὼν μέλλων respectively. The contrast with the glories of the world to come threw into sharp relief the sins and miseries of this present world. Therefore the expression, "this world" came to mean, not precisely the present condition of things as such, but rather the present order as positively evil or at least naturalistic and forming a social unity actively or passively opposing the reign of Christ.

The word κόσμος underwent a somewhat similar transformation except that the starting point was different. κόσμος is related to the verb κοσμέω, *to put in order, to adorn*. Its original meaning was *order*, then *adornment, decoration*. Then it meant *the ordered universe*, a philosophical use of the word due either to Pythagoras or Parmenides. In the New Testament (rarely in profane Greek) κόσμος was used for the *known or inhabited world*, then, by a natural transition, for the *human race*. Finally, since the contrast with heaven emphasizes the evils of the present order, the world acquired a pejorative sense, and came to mean the totality of men who did not know Christ or who refused to accept Him and the world which such men control. St. John particularly emphasizes this pejorative usage.

It will be seen that both αἰὼν and κόσμος acquired the same special sense. But the two words have different backgrounds.

⁴⁸In other words a spatial meaning supplanted the original temporal meaning. It is a disputed point how far this change of meaning went for 'olam in the present connection. That is to say, when writers talked about the evils of the present 'olam, were they thinking principally of time or space?

⁴⁹If we may trust the Mishna, Hillel (died about 10. A.D.) talked of "the world to come" (Aboth, 2:8) and both terms are mentioned in Bere. Rab. 44, apparently by Johanan b. Zakkai (about 80 A.D.). See also the prayer of Nehunya b. ha-kana (Jer. Ber. 4:2), and the statements of Eleazar b. Zadok (Sifre, ed. Friedmann, 84, b), and Eleazar of Modiim (Mechilta, ed. Hoffmann, 78). The terms were quite freely used in IV Esdras and the *Apocalypse of Baruch* at the end of the first century.

αἰών is temporal; κόσμος is spatial. This difference is still perceptible. All in all, however, there is little loss of meaning if both are translated *world* as in the Douay Bible. Both terms refer to the organized forces of evil or naturalism together with the resources they control, opposing the Kingdom of God.

The Christian viewpoint is succinctly summarized by St. John, "The whole world (κόσμος) lieth in the evil one."⁵⁰ Just as Christians can be said to be "in Christ,"⁵¹ so worldlings are "in the evil one." This establishes a sort of parallelism. As the Church is in Christ, so the world is in Satan. The world (κόσμος) is the antithesis of God.⁵² It is condemned by God. (I Cor. 11:32) The choice between God and the world is a choice between life and death. (Ig. Mag. 5:2) Its wisdom is sterile (I Cor. 3:19, I Jn. 3:11) and characterized by deceit,⁵³ lusts,⁵⁴ fornication, (I Cor. 5:10) and pollutions. (II Pet. 2:20) The world will pass away.⁵⁵ This is fortunate; (Ig. Rom. 2:2) for life in this world is slavery (Tat. 29:2). What the early Christians said of the αἰών was closely parallel to what they said of the κόσμος. The world (αἰών) is a place of vanities,⁵⁶ sterile occupations (Her Mand 10:1,4), lusts,⁵⁷ wickedness (Her Sim 6:1,4), deceits (Her Sim 6:3,3), vain wisdom (I Cor. 2:6, 3:18), and allurements (II Tim. 4:10); it is evil and Christ will deliver us from it (Gal. 1:4).

The writers of the period studied used various synonyms for αἰών and κόσμος. From the above descriptions of the two words these synonyms should be easily recognizable. A very obvious synonym for αἰών is καιρός, *time*. "The present time,"

⁵⁰I Jn. 5:19, Revised Version. The Douay Version mistakes the masculine πονηρῶ (or the equivalent Vulgate *maligno*) for a neuter. In the Westminster Version ("lieth in the power of the evil one") and in Father Spencer's translation ("lies under the power of the Evil One") the words I have italicized correspond to nothing in the Greek and unnecessarily obscure the sense. Cf. also I Jn. 4:4.

⁵¹"The apostles who also were in Christ before me." (Rom. 16:7) "Whoever is in Christ." (II Cor. 5:17, *Spem*) "The dead who are in Christ." (I Thess. 4:15)

⁵²I Cor. 2:12, II Cor. 7:10, I Jn. 4:4-5.

⁵³Just. Dial. 113:6, Ep. Diog. 10:7.

⁵⁴II Pet. 1:4, I Jn. 2:16, Tat. 19:2.

⁵⁵I Cor. 7:31, I Jn. 2:17, Her. Vis. 4:3, 3, Did. 10:6, Ps-Clem. 5:5.

⁵⁶Her. Mand. 9:4, Sim. 5:3, 6.

⁵⁷Her. Mand. 11:8, Sim. 6:2, 3, Sim. 7:2, Sim. 8:11, 3.

ὁ νῦν καιρός (*Barn.* 4:1) corresponds to ὁ νῦν αἰών⁵⁸. The "lawless time"⁵⁹ has obviously the same meaning. The *Didache* speaks of "the way of death"⁶⁰ evidently meaning the "way of the world." The Apocalypse represents Christ and His followers at war with certain mundane forces represented under a varied and complicated symbolism, the Beast of the Sea, the Beast of the Earth, Babylon the Great, and so forth. Under this symbolism we must again recognize the "world." Finally, when writers draw a sharp contrast between the Church and contemporary paganism, emphasizing the malignity and organized evil of the latter, then once more we must accept this evil and systematic paganism as synonymous with the "world."

To the sociologist it is extraordinarily interesting to find that the world is uniformly presented as an organized social entity, not as a random group of evil men. It is "the kingdom of this world." (*Apoc.* 11:15) This kingdom acquires its cohesiveness from the fact that it has an efficient ruler, "the prince of this world,"⁶¹ "the wicked prince,"⁶² "the prince of this time of iniquity"⁶³ or even "god" of this world.⁶⁴ Saint Paul calls him "the prince of the power of the air," (*Eph.* 2:2 *Spem*), that is to say, a prince who holds power in the atmosphere, hovering there, as it were, on the lookout for opportunities to do evil. A somewhat similar picture is presented by Saint Paul's expression, "the rulers of the world of this darkness . . . the spirits of wickedness in high places." (*Eph.* 6:12) These spirits evidently form the court of the ruler of this world. Hermas (*Sim.* 6:2,1) represents the "angel of luxury and deceit" as shepherding a flock of well-fed and frisky sheep whom he intended to destroy. Here the prince of this world is recognizable as a sort

⁵⁸I Tim. 6:17, II Tim. 4:10, Pol. *Phil.* 9:2. ⁵⁹ὁ ἄνομος καιρός (*Barn.* 4:9).

⁶⁰ἡ τοῦ θανάτου ὁδός. Note that the *Pseudo-Clement*, talking of his state as a pagan, says, "Our whole life was nothing other than death." (1:6)

⁶¹ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, *Ig. Eph.* 17:1, 19:1; *Ig. Trall.* 4:2, *Ig. Rom.* 7:1, *Ig. Phil.* 6:2, *Ig. Mag.* 1:2. In the plural, I Cor. 2:6, 8. Cf. *Ascen. Isaías*, 10:12, 29 in Hennecke, E.: *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*. 2. Aufl. (Tübingen. Mohr, 1927) Pp. 307-314.

⁶²ὁ ἄδικος (*Mart. Pol.* 19:2 and the apocryphal *III Cor.* 11) or πονηρός (*Barn.* 4:13) ἄρχων *III Cor.* is found in Harnack's edition (Bonn. Marcus und Weber, 1912, *Kl. Texte*, 12).

⁶³*Barn.* 18:2, cf. *Barn.* 15:5.

⁶⁴2 Cor. 4:4, *Ascen. Isaías*, 9:14.

of malign antithesis to the Good Shepherd. From his position opposed to Christ, and in a sense parallel to Christ, we can easily identify the prince of this world with Satan. He gives unity, organization, and cohesiveness to the world, just as Christ, the King, gives the same qualities to the Kingdom of God.

Long lists of the characteristic sins of the world are quite common in the writers of this period. Saint Paul's long description (Rom. 1:18-32) is well known. It may be interesting to quote one somewhat less familiar. The author of the *Didache* thus describes the Way of Death, "In the first place it is evil and full of cursing; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, witchcrafts, charms, robberies, false witnesses, hypocrisies, double heartedness, guile, pride, malice, self-will, avarice, foul speech, jealousy, impudence, haughtiness, boastfulness. Persecutors of the good, haters of truth, lovers of falsehood, knowing not the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to good, nor to just judgment, lying awake not for good but for evil, from whom meekness and patience are far, loving vain things, seeking reward, unmerciful to the poor, not working for him who is oppressed by toil, without knowledge of Him who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of God's creatures, turning away the needy, oppressing the distressed, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, completely sinful."⁶⁵

It is natural to compare these judgments with the verdict of history on the period. As a matter of fact the years 30-180 A.D. marked the very height of Rome's prosperity. Never was her territory so widespread. Never was her wealth so impressive. Yet signs of decay were not wanting. The old Roman sense of civic duty had disappeared. The political apathy of the citizens had made Augustus' totalitarian state possible. Augustus wished to share at least some of his power with the Senate; yet even the senatorial nobility became apathetic.

⁶⁵*Did.*, 5:1-2. For other more or less parallel passages, see *Her. Mand.* 8:3-5, *Theo.* 1:2, 14, and the list of Pauline texts in *Prat.*, *op. cit.* 2:474. Somewhat similar are the passages in which the apologists satirize the immorality of the Greek gods. See, for example, *Aris.* 8-11, *Just. Apol. I.*, 52, *Theo.* 3:8, *Tat.* 34.

Their power slipped from their grasp under succeeding emperors. In a word, this was a period of external well-being and latent decay. On the death of Marcus Aurelius, the Empire headed rapidly toward anarchy.

Morality was at a low ebb. It is true that there were men and women who took the moral life seriously, Seneca, Pliny, Marcus Aurelius, Arria, Annia Pollitta, but their virtue certainly compares unfavorably with that of the Christian saints. On the other hand, there were public examples of immorality which few civilizations before or since would tolerate. The luxury of the upper classes often went to extraordinary lengths,⁶⁶ and was in stark and bitter contrast to the widespread slavery. It is true that the slave might hope for manumission and after manumission, rise, like Pallas or Narcissus, to great wealth and political power (a privilege which the American Negro does not share seventy-five years after emancipation) but the lot of the average slave could be miserable indeed. The condition of the poor was probably not much better. Sexual immorality was rampant. The most repellant abnormalities were considered fit subjects for light verse, as every reader of Martial's *Epigrams* knows. The same attitude was reflected on the stage. (*Tat.* 22) The widespread enjoyment of gladiatorial combats betrays a surprising popular cruelty. Tatian taunts the pagans for their enjoyment of such spectacles. "He who misses the murderous show is downcast because he was not condemned to be a witness to evil and abominable deeds. You slaughter animals to eat their flesh and you buy men to furnish a cannibal banquet for the soul . . . The robber murders for the sake of plunder; but the rich man buys gladiators for the sake of murder."⁶⁷ War was widespread and very cruel. It was often waged to the point of extermination. Marcus Aurelius was a model emperor yet he did not hesitate to kill off whole tribes of enemies when their resistance was exceptionally stubborn—for example in the Sarmatian War of 175. All in all, it seems true

⁶⁶For a balanced view of Roman luxury, see Friedländer, L.: *Roman life and Manners under the Early Empire*. (London, Routledge, New York, Dutton, 1928-1936.) 2:131-230.

⁶⁷*Tat.* 23:2. For the Christian attitude, see *Atb. Sup.* 35:1-2.

that the gloomiest descriptions of paganism by the early Christians can be confirmed by the sober pages of history.

Such being the character of the world, it is not surprising that Christians were commanded to keep themselves free from it. On them the duty of *non-participation*⁶⁸ was incumbent. Saint Paul bids the Romans (12:2) not to be "conformed to this world" (τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ). There is an irreconcilable enmity between this world and the world to come. Forced to make a choice, we should choose the latter (*Ps-Clem.* 6:3,5). The man with the proper spirit "refrains from all the wickedness and vain desires of this world" (*Her Mand* 11:8). We must "hate the deceit of this world."⁶⁹ The rich must rid themselves of this world (*hoc saeculum*) before they can qualify for the kingdom (*Her Sim* 9:31,2).

The preceding words warn against the world as αἰών (*καιρός saeculum*). Even more numerous are the warnings against the κόσμος. The New Testament passages are well known. We must not love the world, (I Jn. 2:15) but rather deny worldly desires (Tit. 2:12) and remain unspotted from the world. (Jas. 1:27) Saint Paul vigorously asserts that he is "crucified" to it. (Gal. 6:14) For we have "received not the spirit of this world but the spirit that is God." (I Cor. 2:12)⁷⁰ The Apostolic Fathers and the apologists repeat the same message. The Christian must "die to the world." (*Tat.* 11:2) He must regard the things of this world as "alien" and not desire them.⁷¹ We must not "speak of Jesus Christ and yet desire the world." (*Ig. Rom.* 7:1) As a matter of fact the good Christian fulfilled these precepts. "The soul dwells in the body, but is not of the body, and Christians dwell in the world, but are not of this world."⁷²

⁶⁸As the present author has ventured to term it. See his *Fire on the Earth*. (New York, Macmillan, 1936.) Chapter VII.

⁶⁹ τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ *Barn.* 4:1.

⁷⁰It is perhaps appropriate to mention here a logion of Christ from *Oxyrhynchus* "Unless you fast towards the world you shall not find the Kingdom of God." White, H. G. E.: *The Sayings of Jesus from Oxyrhynchus*. (Cambridge, University Press, 1920.) p. 26.

⁷¹*Ps-Clem.* 5:6. See also 5:1.

⁷²*Ep. Diog.* 6:3. See also *Barn.* 10:11.

Martyrdom was a supreme proof of this unworldliness. (Just. *Dial* 119:6)

It must not be supposed that this principle of non-participation forces all Christians to be hermits. We cannot avoid all worldly contacts. Otherwise we would simply have "to leave the world altogether." (I Cor. 5:10 *WV*) The Christian, therefore, must use this world but "as not using it to the full." (I Cor. 7:31, *WV*) In the present order, then, Christians and worldlings are exteriorly barely distinguishable just as in winter dead and live trees look alike, both being bare, (Herm. *Sim.* 3:3). Christians therefore "do not dwell in cities of their own nor do they use some strange dialect nor practice some outlandish manner of life." (*Ep. Diog.* 5:2) On the contrary, they "live in Greek and barbarian cities according as each has obtained his lot, and follow the local customs both in clothing and food and the rest of life." (*Ep. Diog.* 5:4)

The essential opposition between Christians and worldlings results in a mutual aversion. It is not surprising that the world should hate us. (I Jn. 3:13) The world understands us no more than it understood our leader, Christ. (I Jn. 3:1) "The world hates the Christians, though it has suffered no evil, because they are opposed to its pleasures." (*Ep. Diog.* 6:5) In their turn, Christians hate the world. The blessed martyrs did so, (Pol. *Phil.* 9:2) for the world is only a prison to the follower of Christ. (*Ep. Diog.* 6:7) On the other hand, for a Christian to love the world is a sign of unworthiness.⁷³

The world's opposition causes the Christian much suffering and persecution, even martyrdom. He has no reason to be discouraged, however, for the victory is inevitable. There is a frequent theme in the New Testament,⁷⁴ and it is particularly in the Apocalypse that the point is developed. In fact, this is the main thesis of the book and is developed under a rich variety of figures, familiar to every reader of the New Testament. The apocryphal Christian apocalypses carried the same message.

⁷³II Tim. 4:9, Jas. 4:4.

⁷⁴I Cor. 15:25, Heb. 10:13, I Jn. 4:4, 5:4.

The *Ascension of Isaias* represent God, the Father, saying to the Son that He "is to judge and destroy the princes and their angels and their gods of this world and the world which was ruled by them." (10:2). The *Apocalypse of Peter (Akmim Fragment)* predicts that "God shall come unto my faithful ones that hunger and thirst and are afflicted and prove their souls in this life and shall judge the sons of iniquity."⁷⁵

The doctrine of the world is a feature of Christian social thought the importance of which may easily be overlooked. Yet it is very important indeed. Without the doctrine of the world Christian social thought would be very beautiful and idealistic but it would not be in contact with the realities. This doctrine adds the necessary realism to make the Church's social teaching properly balanced. Some have accused the Fathers of being dreamy idealists unfit to understand their contemporary world order. Those who make this charge should study the Christian doctrine of the world. Then they would know that the Fathers realized all the sin, strife, hatred and injustice of their time. They accepted these things as facts and took them into account in their social thinking. The Fathers were both realists and idealists. Therein lies their strength.

⁷⁵*Apoc. Pet.* 1:3. Found in Klostermann's edition (Berlin, DeGruyter, 1933, *Kl. Texte*, 3).

