

Peter Allen

CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM AND THE BROAD CHURCH CIRCLE

THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT of 1848-54 presents an interesting problem of interpretation for modern critics of the Victorian period, and estimations of its nature and importance have differed widely. Labour historians such as John Saville have tended to dismiss the movement as essentially a political rearguard action by the Victorian ruling classes. Other historians, such as Torben Christensen and Philip Backstrom have seen the movement as containing a practical and significant radical element frustrated by a politically conservative theological element. Church historians such as C. E. Raven and Maurice Reckitt, on the other hand, have emphasized the importance of the theological element in the history of Anglican social thought and have found Christian Socialism primarily significant in a religious rather than a political context.¹

Despite these differences of interpretation, the critics have united in focussing attention on the leaders of the movement rather than on the bulk of its membership. The theology of F. D. Maurice, the writings of Charles Kingsley, the reformist aspirations and work of J. M. Ludlow and the other prominent radicals in the group—all these subjects have received close attention, but little is known of the many minor figures who accepted the leadership of these men and helped them in their work. These minor figures, however, are highly significant in appraising Christian Socialism, for they reveal that the movement drew its main support from a single source. Nearly all the Christian Socialists, including the leaders, were members of the Broad Church circle, a distinct religious and social group within what has been called the Victorian intellectual aristocracy.² The characteristic response of this group to the social problems of the working class was not that of political radicalism; the radical inclinations of some of the Christian Socialists are an exception to a general belief in moral or educational reform. To ignore this exception, however, and hence to judge the movement in terms of majority opinion alone, would be as much a misconception of Christian Socialism as to exaggerate the importance of the radical element and to see it as central to the movement.

The Christian Socialist movement is usually thought to have begun on

April 10, 1848, when Charles Kingsley, in great excitement over the Chartist demonstration, dashed up to London to enlist as a special constable. Through F. D. Maurice, Kingsley met J. M. Ludlow, who by that time had convinced Maurice that socialism was a significant moral power which must be Christianized before it overwhelmed society. Among the three men a plan for an active campaign to educate socialism was born. Kingsley wrote up a placard, notifying the working men of the intentions of their group; it was posted in London on April 12, and on the same day the three men met with several friends to found *Politics for the People*, a weekly journal which, under the co-editorship of Maurice and Ludlow, ran for seventeen numbers during May, June, and July of 1848. Both the placard and the journal are important, for they suggest that whatever the new movement may be called, it was not a socialist or a Christian Socialist movement in any accepted sense of those terms.

Addressed to the "Workmen of England", Kingsley's placard³ begins by admitting that the workers have legitimate grievances but claims that others, and especially the clergy, are aware of this fact; these upper-class people understand the workers' problems better than they do, and know that their goal of political reform is mistaken. Kingsley then proceeds to question the workers' political beliefs, their moral character, and their leaders. What they need, and what the upper classes want them to gain, is moral reform, which must precede political change. The placard's language is typically Kingsleyan, but its sentiments were shared by his friends: the placard was written "under Maurice's auspices",⁴ and Ludlow approved of it not only then but long after, for his unpublished autobiography, written in the 1890s, speaks of "Kingsley's noble 'poster'" as "the first blow" of the movement.⁵ The first declaration of the so-called Christian Socialists, in short, shows them to have had a complete lack of faith in the working-class answer to its own problems and in its capability to find the right answer. As Torben Christensen remarks,⁶ there is not a word of socialism in it.

The contents of *Politics for the People* suggest that Kingsley's emphasis on moral reform was typical of the group as a whole. There is absolutely nothing in the journal to justify our calling these men Christian Socialists. In fact, the term was as yet unknown to them; socialism is mentioned occasionally throughout the journal, in the final number and in a series of lectures by A. J. Scott, but it is only mentioned to be grouped with Chartism and, like Chartism, explained away. Despite Christensen's assertion that "*Politics for the People* had no common policy",⁷ a single dominant theme runs through the journal: the social evils suffered by the working classes can only be abolished if they

abjure violence and political agitation, work through the proper channels, and with the Church's assistance raise their moral level to a point where they can be accepted in equal partnership with the industrial and landed interests now in power.

The distinctly non-socialist message of *Politics for the People* is not surprising if we realize that the group which supported it was essentially an alliance of Broad Churchmen under the leadership of F. D. Maurice. As C. R. Sanders has shown,⁸ the Broad Church movement contained two groups—the Oxford or Liberal wing represented by the Oriel Noetics, by the students of Thomas Arnold and by Jowett and Pattison, and the Cambridge or Coleridgean wing represented by J. C. Hare, Connop Thirlwall, Maurice, and other members of the Apostles Club. The two groups, however, often acted as one in religious controversies and in schemes of ecclesiastical and social reform. For many practical issues the theological differences among Broad Churchmen were less significant than their substantial agreement on basic principles, and the two groups were further united by a complex network of intellectual and social relationships which justifies their being regarded as two parts of a single movement. The significance of this network for the Christian Socialist movement is well illustrated by the men who founded and contributed to *Politics for the People*.⁹

Among the contributors, the Oxford wing of the Broad Church movement is represented by a leading member of the Noetics, Richard Whately, by the most famous of Thomas Arnold's disciples, A. P. Stanley, and by a lesser-known Rugbeian, John Conington, all of whom had many previous points of contact with Maurice and his friends. The Cambridge wing to which Maurice and his disciple Kingsley properly belong is further represented by R. C. Trench, Daniel Macmillan, and Arthur Helps. J. C. Hare also helped to plan the journal,¹⁰ and the contributors include James Spedding, who like Maurice and Trench had been a member of the Apostles Club when Hare taught at Cambridge. Five of the contributors (Trench, Kingsley, Helps, A. J. Scott, and Edward Strachey) were members of the Broad Church group who had helped Maurice found and staff an earlier venture in educational reform, Queen's College, London. Two contributors (Trench and Dr. William Guy) were Maurice's colleagues at King's College, London. Four (Ludlow, Spedding, C. H. Bellenden Ker, and M. I. Brickdale) were members of Maurice's congregation at Lincoln's Inn, although the latter two were probably brought into the group through Ludlow's influence, since he and Brickdale were both law students under Bellenden Ker. Three other members of the group (S. G.

Osborne, C. B. Mansfield, and J. W. Parker, Jr.) may be attributed to Kingsley's influence, since Osborne was his brother-in-law and the other two were old school friends of his. The group makes a most unlikely beginning for a socialist movement—eight Broad Church clergymen, four scholars and writers, three lawyers, two scientists, and two publishers—and the previous connections of most of them had been in ventures of a distinctly Broad Church character, for example the defence of Hampden and the affair of the Jerusalem Bishopic.

This evidence that Christian Socialism began as an outgrowth of the Broad Church movement has perhaps been obscured by the leading role played by J. M. Ludlow, who, almost alone among the supporters of *Politics for the People*, had no earlier social connections with members of the Broad Church circle. His unusual background and his later tendency to political radicalism have led most critics to over-emphasize Ludlow's independence and originality and hence to see the Christian Socialist movement largely in terms of the clashes of opinion which occurred between its two leading personalities, Ludlow and Maurice. This view ignores the importance of the Broad Church group, both to the movement and to Ludlow himself. Intellectually, if not socially, Ludlow was a Broad Churchman, having passed through earlier phases of laissez-faire radicalism and Evangelism to a liberal position which served to combine his reformist and religious aspirations and which was primarily inspired by the examples of Thomas Arnold and a French liberal Protestant, Louis Meyer. Under the influence of both men he had become convinced that the attainment of democracy could only come about through the moral education of the people, and that the essential reform the times demanded was the Christianizing of society. As a law student in Lincoln's Inn he had introduced himself to Maurice and had tried to interest him in educational work with the poor of the area, and while he was in France in 1848 he had planned to set up a journal, *La Fraternité Chrétienne*, which would express the ideas of Christians interested in social reform. Although prevented from carrying out this scheme, he found the Christian reforming brotherhood he had searched for in the alliance of Broad Churchmen which formed around Maurice at the time of *Politics for the People*. "At the beginning of March 1848," he writes in his autobiography (ch. xix), "I had not one intimate friend in England; at the close of July I was one of a group, bound together by their common veneration for one of their number, & most of them by their ardent yearnings for social development." The leader of this group, Maurice, took the place of Arnold and Meyer as Ludlow's religious mentor. Although he frequently disagreed with him in theological and political matters, Ludlow was dominated

by Maurice's personality and teaching; most critics have centred on Ludlow's quarrels with Maurice, but his veneration for Maurice, and his debt to him, were equally essential to his character. *Politics for the People*, moreover, shows little sign of the later divergence of opinion between the two men. Ludlow, in fact, often writes under the inspiration of Maurice's ideas, and most of his articles illustrate the conservative side of the Mauricean group—their warnings against revolution, their distrust of independent working-class agitation, their faith that the ruling classes can be convinced that they must treat the workers as brothers.

The similarity of *Politics for the People* and Ludlow's proposed French journal should not make us exaggerate his contribution to the movement. Ludlow was only one of the group behind the plan, and it was J. C. Hare who actually suggested it.¹¹ The idea of such a journal, moreover, had been in the air for many years. In 1842 and 1844 Hare, Maurice, and Daniel Macmillan had discussed the possibility of a journal or series of tracts designed to bring Christian views on social issues to the attention of the working classes.¹² In 1845-46, Kingsley had had similar ideas of organizing "an Arnoldite party of young men" which would establish a journal to carry on Thomas Arnold's work of teaching society its Christian basis.¹³ Both of these earlier schemes, Ludlow's idea of a French journal and *Politics for the People*, probably have a common inspiration—Thomas Arnold's *Englishman's Register* of 1831, the purpose of which, as explained by Arnold, corresponds exactly to the purpose of the Mauricean group. "[M]y object," Arnold wrote, "is moral and intellectual reform, which will be sure enough to work out political reform in the best way, and my writing on politics would have for its end, not the forwarding any political measure, but the so purifying, enlightening, sobering, and, in one word, *Christianizing* men's notions and feelings on political matters, that from the improved tree may come hereafter a better fruit."¹⁴ *Politics for the People*, in short, was the outcome of a Broad Church tradition of social reform through Christian education and was not the product of any single member of its founding group.

We have seen that the Christian Socialist movement began as an attempt on the part of a liberal Christian element in the politically dominant classes to meet the threat of working-class agitation through moral reform rather than through repression or secular reform. The later emergence of a radical wing within the group, and the group's involvement in a scheme for establishing working men's co-operatives, may suggest, however, that Christian Socialism forsook its origins and became a different kind of movement. The best evi-

dence that this is not so is the fact that the Christian Socialists continued to draw their support from the same source. While the Mauricean group lost the support of a few early members who objected to what they considered the movement's radical tendencies, and while the specifically Broad Church character of the group somewhat lessened, it remained firmly within the social and intellectual milieu in which it began.

Trinity College, Cambridge, had remained from the days of Hare and Thirlwall a centre of Coleridgean Broad Church thought, and the Cambridge bookstore run by Daniel and Alexander Macmillan (and originally financed by Hare) was a constant source of Broad Church propaganda, including *Politics for the People*. The Macmillans were enthusiastic supporters of Maurice's work and, through their bookstore and personal influence, brought into his group a number of Cambridge undergraduates, of whom the most notable was F. J. A. Hort, one of the main representatives of the Coleridgean Broad Church tradition after Maurice's death. Four of Christian Socialism's new recruits came from among Hort's associates at Trinity College.

By 1848, Maurice's presence in London at King's College, Queen's College, and Lincoln's Inn had made them almost as important as Trinity College, Cambridge, as centres of Broad Church influence. The supporters recruited from these places, however, often had other points of contact with the group. For example, E. V. Neale, a prominent member of the radical wing, was not only a barrister in Lincoln's Inn but an old acquaintance of Maurice from Oxford, a brother-in-law of another Christian Socialist (Rev. A. B. Strettell, who in turn was a friend of Kingsley and taught at Queen's College) and a cousin of yet another (A. A. Vansittart, who in turn was one of Hort's associates at Trinity).

Another recruit from Lincoln's Inn, Tom Hughes, affords an even better example of the way Christian Socialism grew from the network of social and other connections which made up the Broad Church circle. He and his brother George, who for a short time also supported the work of Maurice's group, received their early education at a school at Twyford, where another future Christian Socialist, C. B. Mansfield, was a fellow student. Their father had been at Oriel College (his tutors were the Noetics Copleston and Whately), where he had become a friend of Thomas Arnold; his sons were accordingly sent to Rugby, where they became acquainted with students who were to help carry on the Broad Church tradition at Oxford after the Noetics—Matthew Arnold, John Conington, A. P. Stanley, and A. H. Clough. The brothers then went to Oriel where Clough was Tom's tutor. At Oxford, under the influence

of Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, both became strongly religious and concerned with social problems, although George tended to conservative opinions and Tom to radical. Both entered law: Tom Hughes enrolled at Lincoln's Inn in 1845 and was called to the bar in 1847; from 1846 he was a devotee of Maurice's sermons at Lincoln's Inn Chapel, and after *Politics for the People*, he became a key figure in the Mauricean group, in which he helped to form a radical wing.

As well as his brother, Tom Hughes brought into the circle a friend, Septimus Hansard, who was another old Rugbeian, curate of St. Marylebone, and later a popular preacher in the slums of East London; according to Ludlow's autobiography (ch. xx) he "formed with Hughes the main link between the Arnold school & the pure Mauricean one." Hansard, in turn, brought in a member of his congregation, George Grove, then a civil engineer, later Sir George Grove and a famous musicologist. Either Grove or Hughes brought in G. G. Bradley, another Rugby graduate, who was a friend of A. P. Stanley and later succeeded him as Dean of Westminster. George Grove was not only an old schoolfellow of Bradley, but his brother-in-law and another of Stanley's close friends. The Mauricean group also received the support of two other members of the Rugby-Oxford group, F. T. Palgrave and A. H. Clough, and included F. C. Penrose, who was Thomas Arnold's nephew, the cousin of both Tom Hughes and C. B. Mansfield, and an undergraduate friend of Kingsley and Mansfield at Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Some supporters of Christian Socialism had no previous connection with members of the Broad Church circle but nonetheless came from similar social backgrounds. Viscount Goderich, for one example, seems to have enrolled himself in the group after reading *Politics for the People*. Mrs. Gaskell, for another, seems to have supported the movement because of her admiration for the writings of Kingsley and Maurice (although her husband was an associate of A. J. Scott at Owens College, Manchester). Only a few Christian Socialists—principally the five working-class and two French socialist members—came from sources quite outside the usual ones.

Not all the Christian Socialists were of equal importance; the central figures were Maurice, Ludlow, Hughes, Neale, Kingsley, and Mansfield, and many of the new recruits were relatively insignificant. Nonetheless it is important to realize what sort of person was associated with the group and through what sort of channels they came. It is apparent that Maurice continued to draw his main support from substantially the same source as he had for previous ventures, including *Politics for the People*. The vast majority of

his followers were not radicals or socialists of any kind, but simply members in good standing of the Victorian intellectual aristocracy and especially of that part of it associated with the Broad Church movement. Of the thirty or more new members gained after *Politics for the People*, nearly half may be found in the *DNB* as particularly prominent and honoured members of Victorian society. It should be plain that whatever Christian Socialism may have been, it is not very likely that it was really a socialist movement in any modern sense of the word.

Without denying the significance of the radical wing of Christian Socialism and its contribution to the history of the co-operative movement, I would suggest that Christian Socialism is best seen as the most notable of what Maurice's son accurately described as Maurice's attempts "to bridge the gulph between the working men and the 'clerisy', as, following Coleridge, he habitually called the body of university men, artists, scientific men, and others who are capable of teaching."¹⁵ This conclusion is further supported by the history of the movement. With the exception of their scheme for establishing working men's co-operatives, the reform attempted by the Christian Socialists was primarily educational.

The group's first venture after the demise of *Politics for the People* was a "ragged school" which they established in Little Ormond Yard. Through Ludlow, they then began a series of discussions with some Chartist working men, from whom they recruited several of the workers who later helped them in their co-operative scheme. This scheme, though the most noteworthy of their activities, was thus only one of the group's several ventures; it was not undertaken until early 1850, after an abortive attempt at establishing an organization to further sanitary reform, and it was not until this time that the term "Christian Socialist" was suggested (by Maurice) and adopted for the movement as a whole and for the journal and series of tracts which were established at the same time. As the *Christian Socialist*, the journal came to an end in December, 1851, although it survived until June, 1852, as the *Journal of Association*. The series of tracts ended in the same year, at which time most of the co-operatives had failed, although the group and especially the radical wing continued to give valuable assistance to the co-operative movement as a whole. The Mauricean group, then, were "Christian Socialists" for less than three years; their main source of cohesion was in fact not so much the co-operative scheme which is usually thought of as central to the group, but the personality of Maurice as expressed through the weekly Bible readings and

discussions which began after *Politics for the People* and which all commentators agree were for some time the core of the movement.

Maurice himself consistently regarded Christian Socialism as a religious movement, a Christian answer to the misguided aspiration of working-class reformers. His primary concern was the provision of Christian education for what he called "the outlying sheep" of society; for him the co-operatives were not a kind of secular reform but "practical schools for learning obedience and government".¹⁶ The reason for their failure, in his opinion, was the insufficient preparation of the working class for social responsibility; his answer to the problem was yet another educational scheme, the Working Men's College, which he founded in 1854. Political economy was a major subject taught at the College; like *Politics for the People*, the "ragged school", the discussions with the Chartists, and the co-operatives themselves, the College was another of Maurice's attempts to bridge the gulf between the workers and the "clerisy" through education.

That Maurice's attitude to social reform was representative of the group as a whole, and even to some extent of the radical wing within it, is evident from the support he gained for this new venture. While the more radical members might not have shared Maurice's attitude to the co-operatives, there was general agreement within the movement as to the importance of educational reform. According to Ludlow, the Christian Socialists had intended to set up (in addition to the co-operatives) a school, a library, and a museum, and in fact they established a library and gave a series of lectures.¹⁷ As a scheme of reform, the Working Men's College was thus sufficiently concrete to interest, if not wholly satisfy, the more radical Christian Socialists; at the same time it met the more conservative Broad Churchmen's desire for a non-controversial, unobjectionable way of bringing their morality to the lower orders. Nearly all the prominent Christian Socialists, including the members of the radical wing, were involved in the creation and early teaching of the College. Most of the new supporters were drawn, as before, from the Broad Church "clerisy", the three most important in the affairs of the College being associates of Hort's at Trinity College, Cambridge.¹⁸ Although critics have represented the Working Men's College as the death-blow of Christian Socialism, it was in fact the culmination of a long series of Broad Church ventures in social reform, a tradition in which Christian Socialism is only one phase.

The evidence accumulated tends above all to suggest that we cannot understand Christian Socialism and its leaders if we look only to the history of political radicalism, but that the movement might appear in a new and valu-

able light through a thorough study of the Broad Church circle. Rather than seeing Christian Socialism as primarily a political movement diverted from its true aims, we should, I think, see it as an outgrowth of a school of religious thought and of a certain intellectual and social group in Victorian society. At the same time we must recognize that the movement contained a radical element, drawn from the same background but desiring to move beyond the kind of reform sanctioned by the group as a whole. If we see Ludlow and the other radical Christian Socialists as partially deviating from the norm of the movement, we shall not only better understand Christian Socialism as a whole but be better able to appreciate the real originality of the radical wing and to estimate its significance in the history of socialism.

NOTES

1. Saville, "The Christian Socialists of 1848", *Democracy and the Labour Movement: Essays in Honour of Dona Torr*, ed. John Saville (London, 1954), pp. 135-159; Christensen, *Origin and History of Christian Socialism, 1848-54* (Aarhus, 1962); Backstrom, "The Practical Side of Christian Socialism in Victorian England", *VS*, VI (1963), 305-324; Raven, *Christian Socialism, 1848-1854* (London, 1920); Reckitt, *Maurice to Temple: A Century of the Social Movement in the Church of England* (London, 1947).
2. See Noel Annan, "The Intellectual Aristocracy", *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G. M. Trevelyan*, ed. J. H. Plumb (London, 1955), pp. 243-287.
3. Frances Eliza Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of his Life* (London, 1877), I, 156-157.
4. *Ibid.*, I, 155 (Kingsley to his wife, Apr 11, 1848).
5. Cambridge University Library, Add. MS. 7348, ch. xix.
6. *Origin and History of Christian Socialism*, p. 72, n. 12.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
8. *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement: Studies in S. T. Coleridge, Dr. Arnold of Rugby, J. C. Hare, Thomas Carlyle and F. D. Maurice* (Durham, N. C., 1942), pp. 14-15.
9. The group which planned *Politics for the People* consisted of Maurice, Ludlow, Kingsley, J. C. Hare, A. J. Scott, C. I. Mansfield, and J. W. Parker, Jr. All articles in the journal, except for A. J. Scott's lectures, are unsigned or signed with pseudonyms, but a complete list of attributions can be found in C. E. Raven, *Christian Socialism, 1848-1854* pp. 371-375. It should be noted that most of the contributors are more significant for who they were than for what they wrote; over half the journal's contents and nearly all the important articles were written by Maurice and Ludlow.

10. Although Hare soon lost sympathy with Maurice's younger associates and protested against the direction taken by *Politics for the People*, his presence at the occasion of its founding is as important as his later defection from the group.
11. Frederick Maurice, *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, Chiefly Told in his Own Letters*, 3rd ed. (London, 1884), I, 461 (Maurice to Ludlow, April 13, 1848).
12. *Ibid.*, I, 288, 328-332, 368-370.
13. See *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of his Life*, I, 136-144.
14. A. P. Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, 3rd ed. (London, 1844), I, 295 (Arnold to John Ward, April 27, 1831).
15. *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, II, 304.
16. *Reasons for Co-operation: A Lecture, Delivered at the Office for Promoting Working Men's Associations, 76, Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, on Wednesday, December 11th, 1850* (London, 1851), p. 18.
17. "Origin of the Working Men's College", *The Working Men's College, 1854-1904: Records of its History and its Work for Fifty Years, by Members of the College*, ed. J. Ll. Davies (London, 1904), pp. 13-21.
18. For an excellent account of the role played by the intellectual aristocracy in the creation and maintenance of the College, see J. F. C. Harrison, *A History of the Working Men's College, 1854-1954* (London, 1954), pp. 31-48. Harrison tells us, for example, that between 1854 and 1873 thirty-nine Cambridge graduates taught at the College, of whom twenty-two were from Trinity College (pp. 46-47).

OMENS AND PORTENTS

David A. Giffin

It was a day of omens and portents
 In the country of wonders, city of dreams:
 The sun showered raindrops; at evening
 The phoenix was seen in the sky;
 The priestesses danced with abandon.
 A miracle seemed to be almost at hand.
 Night fell, and every tired prophet slept.
 The dawn, perhaps, would bring the glory,
 Line on bannered line, waving, piping in.