

**“ . . Neither Do They
Spin . . ”**

by

BRYAN W. MONAHAN

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I

The psychological damage inflicted on the peoples of Great Britain and other countries by the financial depression of 1929 and the following years probably exceeded even the psychological catastrophe of either of the ‘great’ wars. Senseless and wanton as modern war is, there is yet something in it to which the ordinary man and woman can respond. The purpose of defeating an enemy, regardless of what made him an enemy, is understandable; heroism, sacrifice of one’s life that others may live, are demonstrations of the priority of spirit over matter.

There was nothing understandable about the ‘great’ depression. It was absurd. Even the explanations of economists, like that which attributed the phenomena to unusual sun-spot activity, were absurd. The suicides from sheer despair had nothing whatever in common with heroism or sacrifice. They were the index of unbearable suffering.

The result of this frightful experience—only terminated by the employment generated by provision for renewed war—was to create in the minds of almost everybody a virtually obsessional belief in the necessity for ‘employment.’ If the only access to food, clothing and shelter is through money, the only access to money is through employment, then unemployment means starvation. This sequence is not logic; it is what the Russian psychologist Pavlov called “conditioning.” It applies to animals just as effectively as to man, the place of employment being taken, for example, by jumping through a hoop. We can well believe that if some animals think, they think that the chief end in life is jumping through hoops, even a flaming hoop. In the case of man, the hoop is represented by employment, and the flaming hoop by employment no matter how degrading.

The sequence “unemployment means starvation” is a convention, just as the sequence “a ringing bell means salivation” in a dog is a convention. This is easily seen. As remarked above, the depression was terminated by the employment associated with preparation for war. Preparation for war means the construction or conversion of factories, the manufacture of armaments and arms, the stockpiling of materials, and the employment of a proportion of the population in doing these things. Of itself, clearly, it contributes nothing to the standard of living. But it does distribute money, allowing access to whatever standard of living is available through the efforts of those not diverted to the production of munitions.

When a maniac in charge of the world’s most powerful military organisation is threatening to make war, production of munitions to meet the threat is a necessity. But insofar as war, under modern conditions, involving the mass slaughter of non-combatants, is an incarnation of evil, employment in the production of the means of this slaughter is degrading employment. But it still distributes incomes, virtually the only access to the means of life.

The production and distribution of pornography also distributes incomes; so does the production of essentially useless gadgets. Employment of any kind, useful, neutral, useless or vicious, is paid for in the same way, by means of money. What enhances the standard and quality of life is remunerated indifferently with what degrades life and despoils the earth. We pay, of course, for this indifference. Wasted effort dilutes the value of useful effort; this is the reality underlying the financial phenomenon of inflation.

II

In a matter of some two hundred years, the main burden of maintaining life has been transferred from men to machines. That this is so is not immediately obvious, because so much else is done besides the maintenance of life. Appearances, notoriously deceptive, suggest that the maintenance of life is a hard and continuous struggle. Jungle struggle has become the class war.

The appearance, however, has to be assessed in relation to the activity involved in the struggle, and this, as we have seen, is a very mixed activity. Only part of it, and a minor part at that, is concerned with the real burden of maintaining existence—the production of food, clothing and shelter, and of the essential amenities which modern technology makes possible.

Suppose that the whole resources of modern harnessed power and applied technology were devoted *primarily* to the production of a sufficient supply of basic requirements. Since even at present an *almost* sufficient supply is forthcoming from the employment of a small fractional part of the total resources of men and machines, it is evident that a policy directed to ensuring a full sufficiency by the most suitable methods would leave surplus immense resources of power, material and men. That is to say, that without a further policy to utilise those resources, they would be unemployed.

The potentially unemployed resources *are* immense. Their magnitude may perhaps most easily be grasped by considering the state of affairs during the war. Then, virtually the whole population of the belligerent countries were maintained in a state at least of adequate sufficiency by the efforts of a fraction of the population and resources of those countries, while millions of men were under arms producing nothing (the ‘unemployed’ in another guise) and millions more were engaged in the production of almost unimaginable quantities of complex, precision-built equipment destined for rapid destruction.

That is a measure of the magnitude of the potential ‘unemployment’ problem. There is, of course, a further policy to deal with it: Full Employment.

At this point it is essential to observe that Full Employment is a fundamental *policy*, not an economic theory. Financial and economic policies derive from the pursuit of the objective of full employment of all persons physically and mentally capable of employment. It would be perfectly possible to set as the objective the minimum of human employment, in which case economic and financial policy would follow a quite different set of maxims. Except for the decreasing few, in modern industrial nations, who can support themselves by their own efforts on the land, money is a licence to live; and again, except for the decreasing few in receipt of independent incomes, the price of that licence is employment—and employment, let it once more be emphasised, in the main without regard to its inherent value. Employment in the mass-slaughter and physical devastation of war was accepted as entitling the individual to the licence to live, so long as he could evade the physical hazards of his employment. Leaving aside what justification or necessity there may be for war, the physical effort is equivalent to any form of waste, one of which is the scramble for export markets.

Here it should be noted that it is impossible in any realistic physical sense for a country to prosper by an excess of exports over imports. It appears to do so, just as there is a monetary prosperity in war: it disposes of production in excess of real internal needs, just as war does. War, in fact, is an unlimited export market, and the logical and ultimate extension of the idea of trade ‘war.’

III

It is so much a commonplace to say that the majority of modern occupations are soul-destroying that the reality underlying the observation is hardly ever examined. But is it not a fair part of the explanation of contemporary materialism?

Paintings and other relics of prehistoric peoples bear witness still to the fact that in some way, appropriate to the understanding of their age, they pursued their lives “to the greater glory of God.” Throughout recorded history the evidence is far greater and plainer. Whole civilisations were developed and inspired by some one or other application of that idea. But not our present civilisation.

Yet if we subtract from our present power-mechanical civilisation its mass amusements and its gadgets how much higher is the standard of living than it was in civilised communities in pre-mechanical times? Is the life of the contemporary wage-slave, with his repetitive part in a mass production process which he does not comprehend in its entirety, with his beers, his gambling (this, surely, in the hope of escaping his lot in life?); with his fear that the fecundity of his wife will outstrip his economic resources; with his only idea of Heaven derived from the synthetic standards of the movies—is his life *in any sense* superior to the life of a

native in living communion with an undespoiled Nature, living in symbiosis with his environment, and participating in the mystic rites of his tribe? Again: one can only ask *how much worse* is his life than that of a craftsman of the Middle Ages? And where now are our Socrates, our Chaucers, our Shakespeares, our Beethovens, our Rembrandts? Are there now as many *craftsmen* in the world as there were three hundred and more years ago? Technicians, yes. But a craftsman is concerned with the whole of a thing, a technician with a process only. The life of a craftsman is creative, that of a technician repetitive.

The apparatus of modern civilisation is highly impressive. Yet—how much of it is to enable us “to have life more abundantly,” and how much to enable us to do more business? Full employment, in fact? How many women overload the transport system going to work to help pay for the labour-saving devices to enable them to go to work, and thereby create employment for thousands in enlarging the transport facilities? And what employment do they give in the chemical industry, by their demand for contraceptives so that their unwelcome fecundity shall not inhibit this ‘expanding economy?’ “Work,” as described, is Moloch.

IV

Work, the curse of Adam.

Is there any point in labour-saving machinery, and if so, what is the point?

In the most fundamental sense, work may be defined as the activity necessary to support life. This definition at once raises the question, why live? And this question points to a beyond to life as such.

Even the most cursory acquaintance with history shows the striving of man to rise above “life as such.” It is what a man can do after he has satisfied his personal necessity for food, clothes and shelter that, in the last resort, counts with him. It is what he can make of himself and do with himself which matters. It is in the extent to which he must devote himself to the mere provision of necessities that work is the curse of Adam; the more closely he is bound to this necessity, the less he is free to fulfil that destiny, the evidence of which lies in the art treasures of history.

This, then, is the point of labour-saving machinery: to set men free to find and achieve their individual destinies.

It has often been calculated that in a modern industrialised community the basic needs for an adequate material standard of living could be satisfied by the employment of a few man-hours per head *per week*. In fact, these basic needs *are* met by the employment of a few man-hours per head per week, but the fact is almost completely obscured because those few hours are entangled with a far greater volume of employment in other industrial activity. It may assist in clarifying the situation to classify economic activity in general.

1. Primary production.
2. Processing of primary production.
3. Distribution of raw and processed materials.

These three items comprise the production and distribution of ‘food’ and ‘clothing.’

4. Production of raw materials of building.
5. Processing of building materials.
6. Building units of domestic housing.

Items 4, 5 and 6 comprise ‘shelter.’

7. Building of factories for production of consumer goods.
8. Building of factories for production of capital equipment.
9. Public works
 - (a) of immediate utility;
 - (b) of potential utility;
 - (c) of remote utility.
10. Production for a surplus of exports over imports ('favourable' balance of trade).
11. Production of munitions.
12. Services—armed forces, *etc.*
13. Administration.
14. Advertising.

It is obvious at once that such a classification as the above is inexact and not comprehensive. There is overlap between one category and another, and doubtless there are omissions. But it may also be noticed that the lack of precision becomes more marked as the classification moves from the earlier items, which represent the interests of individuals, to the later. The production, in some form, of food, clothing and shelter is an immediate and comprehensible necessity. But the further we move from that sort of production, the more a case has to be made out to justify further activities.

By and large, some sort of a case can be made out for everything included in the classification. But what of the enormous activity represented by administration, advertising, and deliberate artificial obsolescence—*i.e.*, of manufacturing articles to have a deliberately limited 'life,' so as to ensure the necessity for their continuous replacement?

The omnibus answer is Full Employment.

V

The fundamental idea of Full Employment is that everybody *ought* to be constrained by necessity, and remote control, to be occupied fully in the pursuit of food, clothes and shelter. The necessity for remote control arises, of course, from the introduction of labour-saving machinery. To the extent that labour-saving machinery is applied to the provision only of food, clothes and shelter, men must correspondingly be left "at a loose end." Hence the need for gadgets, obsolescence and advertising. The question is, is the possession of a household full of gadgets a better thing than the pursuit of a vocation?

It is very probable that under modern economic conditions the construction of, for example, the old beautiful cathedrals would be a financial (or economic?) impossibility. Yet how were they ever built?

Yet this problem of being "at a loose end" is a very real one. The cathedrals *were* built *because* even before the introduction of modern labour-saving machinery, and the harnessing of power many times greater than the total manpower of a given community, men were free of the necessity of devoting themselves entirely to the provision of food, clothes and shelter. Out of this freedom arose the sense of vocation.

The contemporary problem should be stated, not as one of Full Employment, but of Full Vocation.

VI

There is abroad a great fear of idleness. Not for oneself, but for the other fellow. The man who wins a lottery or football pool is not worried by the prospect of idleness. He thinks that now he will be able to do all the things he has always wanted to do. Others, it is true, may disapprove of what he does; but still they envy him his good fortune.

It is doubtless the case that vast numbers of people, educated but little above illiteracy, dulled by years in narrow routine employment, misinformed and conditioned by propaganda and advertising, entertained by commercialised sport and lowest common denominator films, canned jazz and nationalised broadcasting, would be at a loss if faced with much leisure. But is this any reason for persistence in a policy which produces such caricatures of human beings? Charles Curran (*Spectator*, January 20, 1956) describes them thus:

“From September to May one or more members of the household will devote an evening every week to filling in football coupons with forecasts of match results. The private daydream of winning a large sum of money in this way is all but universal. You can start a conversation on any doorstep by asking, “What would you do if you won the pools?” It is a question that almost every adult has pondered in detail.

“But even more than the football coupon, it is the reading matter of the New Estate that gives me the key to its state of mind. It buys newspapers and weekly periodicals in large numbers; and nearly all of them (the main exception is the *News of the World*) displays one characteristic in common. They exploit the tabloid method of presentation that has become more and more popular with the British public since the war—and nowhere more than on the New Estate. . . .

“The skilled technicians of the tabloid press are giving the New Estate something that it wants urgently and desperately: a refuge from nuclear nightmares and threatening chaos and a world of baffling problems for which nobody can provide slogan solutions. The tabloids are not pornographic, as some inexact critics suppose. They offer a simple, cheerful, manageable universe, a warm cosy place of sex, excitement, triviality, and fantasy. They supply the New Estate with an art form of its own in the comic strip—a psychologically accurate device for providing selected strata of readers with wish-fulfilment picture patterns in which they can see themselves as potent young men or sexually irresistible young women.

“The psychological hunger of the New Estate is exhibited also in its preoccupation with the shadow personalities of radio, television, the cinema and the gramophone record—and in the large amount of space which the tabloids devote to them. Some of these personalities have now acquired a three-dimensional existence in the minds of their devotees. (Last month, for example, large numbers of people sent postal orders to Mr. Dan Archer, an imaginary character in a B.B.C. serial story about a farm, asking him to supply them with Christmas poultry.) These figures, some of them real, some mythical, are the gods and goddesses of the New Estate. They inhabit the daydream heaven of wealth, luxury and sexual attraction to which the football coupons will one day provide a ticket of admission.

“An interior life of this kind, and on this scale, is something that has not previously existed in England. . . .”

To see what alternative policy is possible, it is necessary to be clear as to the fundamental facts. The chief of these is that it is possible now, and has been for very many years, for a small and decreasing fraction of the population of an industrialised country to produce all that is required for a high physical standard of living for the whole community. The second is that the *apparent* complexity and difficulty of obtaining and maintaining a ‘standard of living’ is due to the persistence at all costs in the policy of “if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

The alternative policy, then, is that men, having discharged their small obligations for their basic standard of living, should be free to decide for themselves how they shall spend the rest of their time.

Suppose, for example, that one-fifth of a country’s resources of men, utilising machinery and power, is sufficient to supply the basic needs of the population for a satisfactory standard of food, clothing and shelter. Then a man is under a natural obligation to make available for this purpose one-fifth of his time. This does

not mean that working hours should be reduced to a fifth of what they are; a fifth of a man's working life might be given to this necessity, working normal hours, or some other combination, or variations to suit particular cases, might be suitable.

Nor does this mean that all production other than that entailed in providing a basic standard of living should cease. But it does mean, as the late C. H. Douglas enunciated it, that "every individual can avail himself of the benefits of science and mechanism; that by their aid he is placed in such a position of advantage, that in common with his fellows he can choose, with increasing freedom and complete independence, *whether he will or will not assist in any project which may be placed before him.*" (*Economic Democracy*, 1919; my italics).

If a man is glad (or thankful) to 'get a job,' (or 'any sort of job') he is not likely to be too particular as to what that job is, and even less likely to be concerned with the ultimate consequences of his, with others, taking that job. But if he has obtained an adequate standard of living by the expenditure of only a part of his available working-time, and thus is free to decide for himself whether he will undertake a further 'job,' he will approach the matter from quite another angle.

This aspect, though, is probably of less practical importance than the fact that men like doing things. Practically every child quite early in life starts to make things. Some drop this practical activity in favour of intellectual pursuits; but in principle the activity is the same. When, however, the grim necessity of 'working for a living' becomes paramount, it absorbs the energy which previously displayed itself in spontaneous creative activity.

With a feeling of leisure, as opposed to Full Employment, this creative activity could well find one expression, amongst others, in furnishing the home with articles built from the point of view of a craftsman, instead of with the shoddy products of mass production. And as a corollary to this, it is desirable to consider the aims and effect of modern education.

VII

I had occasion not long ago to write a letter of protest to the Headmaster of the Church school where one of my children is being educated. The boy, aged twelve, had brought home a questionnaire form seeking detailed and intimate information on the lad based on my private domestic observations of him. The form came from a State Vocation Guidance organisation, and was to be used to assist vocational guidance officers in quizzing the child.

My protest was that I had deliberately sent the boy to a Church school in the belief that its concern would be in assisting him in unfolding his personality, as opposed to the increasing concern of State schools in 'fitting boys for employment.' The Headmaster, after explaining that his school was not responsible for the form or the quizzing, admitted the validity of the protest, and thanked me for bringing to his attention an aspect of the matter which he had not considered.

This incident illustrates how modern education is becoming more and more simply a process of conditioning. The present policy of education is to provide the right 'types' in the right proportions to increase 'production' for export to earn the foreign exchange to buy the raw material of production for export.... So far from education's seeking to bring a child's personality to fruition, it is becoming more and more a matter of arranging curricula in accordance with the economic needs of the moment, aided by the efforts of vocational guidance experts in selecting likely candidates for specialised training in a narrowly functional activity.

But a child is someone of infinite potentialities, and to select one of the more obvious of these and develop it to the atrophy of the others, is a crime against the spirit in man. This is particularly so in the case of technical education, which is precisely where the emphasis in current education lies. Technique, the mechanical, is fundamentally simple, as is shown by the rapidity with which young children grasp the principles of "how things work"; and an education almost exclusively technical leads to simple-mindedness—not in the sense of simplicity of mind, but of shallowness. The consequence is that more and

more adults are becoming carburettor or equivalent 'experts,' and for the rest devotees of the films and the tabloids.

Science too seems to have a stultifying effect on the development of a whole and wholesome personality, as is evidenced by the pronouncements of Famous Scientists on matters outside their specialities.

There are excellent reasons for believing that before the days of universal 'education' there were more men with more practical wisdom and with a more balanced outlook on life than ever there have been since.

But an educational policy of assisting the natural unfolding of a child's and adult's unknown potentialities as far as possible in each case might produce a very different position. The objective would be not to fit the young man for employment, but to assist every personality to find its best possible expression. To me, the most fruitful conception of what one's life is is that it is, or could be, a work of art; and this leads to a conception of education as subserving the artist's non-material needs.

The 'medium' of the work of art is the vocation— vocation in the devotional sense, not that of the industrial psychologist.

VIII

Particularly since the end of the war, with the enthronement of Full Employment and the Welfare State, the fundamental relationship of the inhabitant to his country has become that of an employee. The Government has become increasingly little else but a gigantic Works Office. The 'market' for this sprawling factory is, of course, the international market, and 'profit' is international exchange (but mainly dollars or gold).

If this conception is grasped, it is fairly easy to see why the money cost of living is steadily increasing. The basic physical requirements of the population in food, clothing and shelter, and basic amenities, are, broadly, fixed, and are provided by a diminishing proportion of the population. But the total output of the Work State is constantly increasing, because of constantly expanding industrial power, and technological improvement. Now, as was observed earlier, all 'employment' is remunerated indifferently; but 'costs'—*i.e.*, wages and salaries—are recovered through the prices of consumer goods, and taxation. A rising cost-of-living, therefore, in financial terms, is a correct reflection of the fact that the population gets delivery, or possession, or control, of a decreasing *proportion* of its total production.

That of an employee is not, however, the only possible relationship of an inhabitant to his country; it is, in fact, only the penultimate consequence of the theory that men ought to be made to work. (The ultimate consequence is disaster.)

Fundamentally, a community is an association of members for their mutual benefit. There is an unearned increment in association; a profit. To whom does it belong? It is impossible that it could belong to anyone but the people forming the association. But as things are, the people get only a fraction of it.

If, however, we look on a country as a company, with the people as shareholders, and the Government as a Board of Directors, we have a true conception of the situation as it ought to be. It then becomes evident that the proper function of Government is to guide the affairs of the country so as to achieve the best possible 'profit' consistent with prudent management. And it should recommend and arrange for the distribution of a periodic cash dividend.

This is not the place to discuss the technical details of such a procedure; it is beyond question that it could be done, and equally beyond question, in my opinion, that it is not done because of the determined pursuit of the policy of employment at any cost, because it is 'good' for people.

IX

It is, perhaps, not very generally recognised even in responsible quarters how very costly this policy of

employment for its own sake really is, or what the further consequences are likely to be. In the first place, it is highly wasteful, and has a low efficiency. A tremendous effort goes into the production of goods, a demand for which would not exist in the absence of skilled advertising to create it. Then there is sabotage of all descriptions, from a deliberate policy on the part of workers to go slow to make the job last, to the equally deliberate policy of manufacturing articles to wear out so that they must be replaced, again with the same end in view, even if on a different plane.

Yet, even so, fully industrialised countries like the U.S.A., where the physical standard of living for practically everybody is very high, are faced with an immense surplus of production, both primary and secondary, which can be disposed of only by, in effect, giving it away, even if the process is disguised as “aid to underdeveloped countries,” and insurance against Communism.

To other countries some of this aid and insurance is ‘dumping,’ or unfair trade practice.

In any case, the more power is harnessed and applied to the processes of production, the more technology advances—and it is advancing at an accelerating rate—the greater becomes the difficulty of disposing of the output; and the greater the absolute waste of mineral and biological resources. Except that human life is merely wasted instead of destroyed, the effect is the same as war; and, of course, trade competition leads to war.

X

Finally, let us look at the possibilities of a more fruitful policy and more wholesome and abundant life.

First of all, there is a need as never before for the proclamation on the highest levels of what life is—*religion*, a binding back to Reality. The end of man, and the means to the end, need re-stating in terms of this new and unprecedented Technological Age.

And in the light of this, educational policy needs to be re-orientated. But since the State has become the great exponent of the policy we are challenging, and since its schools are more and more adapted to buttress that policy and produce the human raw material of ever-mounting ‘production,’ it is to the Church schools we must first look for this re-orientation. It seems to me impossible that our present wrong condition can be changed; but it can gradually be replaced. For our present condition is the outcome of a false philosophy, from which it has grown; and the new condition also must grow.

To this end, it seems essential that these schools should consider primarily what their pupils are to become “in the sight of God.” If these schools believe that every individual has a supernatural destiny, then it must be their task to provide the right guidance to that end in the formative years.

The possible world into which these children might grow up is, as we have seen, one where a relatively small part of their time need be devoted to the maintenance of life, so that the problem is to help them to develop into independent personalities able to employ a predominant leisure to perfecting their lives. Thus they need to be shown how to develop towards a vocation through which they can express themselves—not to earn a living, since power and technology can provide the greater part of that, but because destiny is achieved through, in its broadest sense, vocation.

Once the need to provide ‘employment’ was gone, technology would be free to devote itself to the greatest possible elimination of dreary, routine, and soul-destroying ‘work’—a development, indeed, already in train (to the alarm of ‘employees’) in the extension of automation.

Particularly when men are free to choose, individually, whether they will, or will not, assist in any project which may be placed before them, technology and craftsmanship will provide ample opportunity for self-development through vocation. But perhaps, as time goes on, more and more will feel drawn to the arts and humanities.

The basis of this freedom to choose is, of course, an independent income sufficient to support life adequately, although not, perhaps, at first, luxuriously.

XI

There is no doubt that large numbers of people find the idea of universal independent incomes startling. Yet the only reason why independent incomes are not almost universal by now is the existence of a policy against them and the mechanism of this policy is taxation (including high prices) and death duties.

In any given accounting period, almost the whole of the money paid out for production of *every* description is withdrawn through the medium of prices of consumer goods, and taxation. But if only so much money were withdrawn as represented the actual cost of consumer goods—that is, if the public as a whole were allowed to retain the money paid out for all that which it had produced, but not received—it would acquire over a period of time enormous savings. The progressive investment of these savings then would produce ‘independent’ incomes; and this situation would correctly reflect the actual technological situation.

But this has not been done; and it has not been done, let me emphasise, as a matter of *policy*. And equally, a new policy could restore the situation to what it might have been.

What has happened over the period of time represented by the industrial era has been the involuntary reinvestment of income, without the individual recipients of that income receiving in exchange ‘shares’ to represent the investment. The physical reality achieved by that investment however exists, in the form of the whole of the capital development of the country. That capital development could, and should, pay a dividend to all individuals, *representing each one’s share of the labour-saving that has been achieved*.

There is available a large technical literature on the practical application of this policy. There is not the slightest doubt of its practicability; but its practicability is of no consequence until a clear decision on policy is arrived at.

As a result of distorted education, continuous propaganda, and the effect of a debased daily Press, and other factors, the contemporary electorate is almost certainly incapable of judging this issue. In any case, however, the issue is primarily a moral one, and should be considered and pronounced upon by the Church, and by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal. The times we live in derive, in large part, from the pronouncements of earlier men of science, who, ‘priests’ of a new order, destroyed the foundations of the old.

To see what is needed now, consider the following from the Introduction to *Fathers of the Western Church*, by Robert Payne (Wm. Heinemann, London, 1952):

“... We forget that there were great philosophers, great psychologists, even great poets among the Church Fathers, and that they sometimes understood better than we do the complexities of the human soul. We forget they are a part, perhaps the greater part, of all we mean by Western civilisation, for they laid the foundations. They were the mediators between the Renaissance and the civilisations of Greece and Rome, and they were perfectly conscious of their high role in history as they called upon people to live dangerously. . . .

“As we see them now, through dark mists, they are larger than life, superbly assured of themselves as they thunder against the barbarians or set in order the conflicting loves of men.... As we see the Fathers in Italian paintings of the Renaissance, we see their dignity, their immeasurable wisdom, their solemnity even, but their stature is absent. Against a Tuscan sunset Jerome with his lion or Francis amid his circling larks looks almost human, almost ordinary. El Greco painted them better, with the smoke and the mist and the air quivering from the lightning-stroke, in darkness and battering thunder. In such a landscape, they looked like what they were, heroes who drew strength from danger. . . .

“We tend to believe that the life of mediaeval man was hard and brutish. It is doubtful whether it was as hard and brutish as the life of our own time. His faith was real: he knew he could move mountains: and the Church, which ruled his inmost faith, consecrated his family, prohibited him from usury, set aside by inviolable law weeks when no man could lift his voice or his knife against another, and saw that no man starved. In the dark plague-ridden cities light came blazing from the soul of man, and by this light men saw

themselves among the elect, for every man by virtue of God's grace contained within himself a part of the living God. To-day science is power. In mediaeval times power came from God and the simple offering of the bread and the wine.

“If the test of a civilisation lies in its arts, then mediaeval civilisation remains among the greatest there have ever been, comparable with that of the T'ang Dynasty in China or with Periclean Athens. . . .

“In the high Renaissance men began to believe that they shone with their own independent light, but by that time the work of the Fathers was already done. They had no successors. . . .

“Compared with the mechanical perfection of the twentieth century, the perfection of the Middle Ages belongs to another order. They strove for perfection of man, not for perfection of machines, or rather, since man was an indescribably divine machine operating according to heavenly laws, he needed only a little more of the oil of grace to proceed smoothly along the heavenly way. . . .

“One of the advantages of living in an age of disbelief is that the necessity for belief is more clearly demonstrated. . . .

“We have learned by hard experience that all Caesars (by which we mean all politicians) go to Hell. It would seem more profitable to believe in a merciful God who loves human justice, and then to go quietly about our tasks.

“In all this the Church Fathers have an appointed place. . . .

“At a time when faith is weak and survival of itself is hardly worth fighting for, it would be well if we remembered the Church Fathers who shored up the ruins, and ‘in a time of awakening fed honeycombs to our mouths.’ . . .”

It does seem that our materialist hell with its brutish policy of work for employment's sake, and its degradation of man into a mere functionary, is the triumph of anti- Christ. But beyond it lies the promise of a renewed spirituality, the promise, in one sense at least, of a second coming of Christ, the Age of the Holy Ghost; an Age of Devotion, when “ they toil not”

Canberra, 1956.