PRODUCTION *and* POLITICS

Walton Newbold, in this series of articles, is doing the same kind of work, and using the same method, as in those studies of contemporary problems by which he is better known ; that is, he is interpreting the facts of history from the Marxian point of view. Certain of our readers, referring to these articles, have quoted L. B. Boudin's advice to us—" Don't get academic," and asked whether such studies as these are not thereby condemned. We think not. And we would refer such critics to another remark of Comrade Boudin's—" History—that's our groundwork ! "

IX.—The Holy Catholic Church

NO study such as that we are making would be complete if we were to pass from the economy of ox and plough to that of commodity production, founded on sheep rearing and the fabrication of wool, without devoting some consideration to the most powerful institution in the West of Europe throughout the Middle Ages, viz., the Holy Catholic Church.

In dealing with a state of society wherein all men, of whatever rank or occupation, were at least professedly communicants of a single universal religious organisation, which claimed and exercised over them an authority extending over their whole lives from the cradle to the grave, we must of necessity seek to understand what such an organisation signified. When we remember that this body, laying solemn claim to have received in due apostolic succession from the first Bishop of Rome, St. Peter, reversion of his power to bind or loose all things in earth and heaven, asserted its right to regulate and, in certain circumstances, to supersede the authority of kings and emperors, we realise how tremendous an institution it was. When, furthermore, we find that, in the decline and after the fall of the Roman Empire, it assumed many of the duties of that government and everywhere modelled its dominion on its municipal and provincial organisation, so that it became heir to its prestige, and repository of its culture and law, we see that we have to do with a political system of the most formidable character.

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[1] Townsend Warner, *Landmarks in English Industrial History*, p. 250.

The Holy Catholic Church, as it had developed through the early centuries after the death of its more or less historically authentic founder, and in accord with creeds ennunciated and approved by successive councils of its elders, had become the Church of Rome, and as such the Church Universal. It taught and it administered the civil law of Imperial Rome. It carried down through the centuries of barbarism and of societies developing from kindred to agrarian feudalism and the commercial state the legal formulæ arising out of a highly-evolved system of private property.

When one stands in some great church of the Catholic Faith there comes over one, sometimes, the thought—and it is a true one—that one is looking up the long aisles of history, across the centuries of Mediævalism, to the glory and the power of the Eternal City, Rome of the Cæsars, Rome of the Pontifex Maximus, to Rome of Latium and of Alba growing dim amid the legends of the heroic age. But in such a church, or in one of the churches of the Anglican or Nonconformist communions, one is face to face with something still more venerable. One is contemplating the ghost of the patriarchate, the wraith in the Catholic communion of the matriarchate, and a memorial to the common life of the consaguine society.

Let us get away from these symbols, so appropriate to the commencement of a study of any of the systems of imagination institutionalised in the form of a church, and examine a parish church dating back before the Reformation and remaining substantially unaltered from that time.

We notice that, unlike the cathedrals and most abbey churches, it is not built in the form of a cross but consists of two distinct parts—chancel and nave. We shall discover that the chancel belonged to and was used by the owner of the advowson or living, whether secular or ecclesiastical. We shall, probably, find one or more local families of position with graves in this portion of the church, or in chapels attached. In the east end of the chancel we shall find the communion table, formerly the high altar.

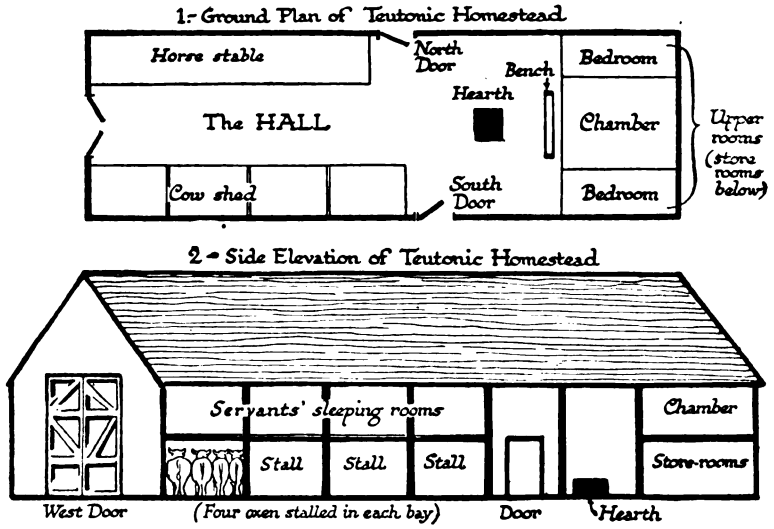
Then, to the west of the chancel and, generally, one or more steps down was the nave, reserved to the use of, and often the property of, the parish, i.e., of all freeholders in the parish, with whose *messuage* went a pew. This part of the church was the common hall of the parish and was cared for by the vestry, which seems to have been, at one time, identical with the manor court. It was used as meeting place, market hall, store-house, etc. The nave is divided into sections by arches which, in old churches, were of uniform width and known as "bays." This "bay" was the standard measurement of land. On either side of the nave we generally find aisles. Sometimes there are, or were, over these upper stories called *triforia*.

Next note the situation of the great west door and of the north and south doors, at the transepts between the nave and chancel. Note, finally, the tower or belfry, normally at the west end of the church, sometimes detached and at a distance.

Now, this typical structure of the parish church is in all essentials identical with the great manor house, the old Teutonic farm house, the patriarchal homestead, substantially the same in plan as the patriarchal homestead out of which evolved the *basilica* or municipal building of Rome. The nave conformed to the common hall, where dwelt and worked the members of the patriarchal family; the chancel or "shut off" to the chamber of the lord and his lady. Hall and chamber—these were the two apartments "The Gothic cathedral," says Mr. Seebohm, "simplified and reduced in style and materials to a rough and rapidly erected structure of

green lumber and wattle, would give no bad idea of the tribal house of Wales or Ireland" (*Village Community*, p. 241).

The plan and elevations below depicted should make even plainer the enormously significant conclusion that the parish churches of Christendom have evolved from the patriarchal farmsteads of the Celts, the Germans and the Latins.



We know that many of the earlier churches were, in Great Britain and Ireland, barns and halls given to the missionaries of the Celtic and the Roman Churches. We know, also, in Ireland and everywhere within the Communion of Iona, that "a great monastery was a centre of family relation, and served as a school or asylum for all who were of the founder's kin."

In Ireland—that bridge between Pre-Christianity and the Church of Rome—we have a people to whom came naturally the conception of a Holy Family, under the patriarchal absolutism of the Father, revealed in the Son and its justice tempered by the prayers of a lower member, the Mother. Such a household, assuredly, would have its officers and its troop of retainers —Gabriel, Michael and All Angels. Our ancestors, convinced of a spirit world, imagining agents to explain the phenomena they could not understand, naturally thought of a church in terms of their experience, actual or believed.

All that architecture, ceremonial and music could contribute to enhance the majesty and infinite power of the Father in Heaven was brought to erect and beautify the edifices which, through successive centuries, the Church built to house its family. Symbolic art and priestly concept made of the Holy Family something withdrawn from the world of matter, raised above reality to the realms of an ever more esoteric mysticism.

Yet this Church was something much more carnal in its origin, much more human in its teaching. It was the reconstruction in intangible ideas of a social system which no longer conformed to economic conditions and the interests of the governing class. Rome, relying on the legionaries, had fallen. Rome, relying on the soldiers of the Church, might endure. Authority, depending on terrestrial executive functions, had broken down. Authority, depending on control of men's minds, might prevail.

The Catholic Church had an extraordinary genius for knowing when to compromise and what and how to absorb. It recognised, however, what all who have the will to power must recognise, viz., the folly of compromise in fundamentals. Above all, it would permit no calling in question of its authority. It insisted upon the authority of a hierarchy, claiming to be inspired and appointed by a divine master. It functioned in such a way as to extirpate the influence of kinship and to enthrone in men's minds the conception of obedience to a supreme over-lord. It was at once the rival and the counter-part of feudalism. Both were forms of social organisation seeking to stabilise an agrarian economy and to render absolute the sovereignty of the lords of the soil.

The Church profited by the system of primogeniture to enrol the disinherited in its monastic orders where, vowed to celibacy, they advanced its interests. The monks helped to make the Church in every locality an independent institution and to increase its control of territorial administration and of the courts. They became the counsellors of kings and the ministers of State. Seeking to avail themselves of their influence over men's minds and of their administrative opportunities, the monastic orders supplemented their political power by the acquisition of economic power, i.e., ownership of landed estates. In doing this, they prepared the way for their own downfall and with it the overthrow of the authority of the Holy Catholic Church in England and in Scotland.

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(To be continued.)