

CLASSICS TO GO



**THE PROFITS
OF RELIGION**

UPTON SINCLAIR

The Profits of Religion

Upton Sinclair

INTRODUCTORY

Bootstrap-lifting

Bootstrap-lifting? says the reader.

It is a vision I have seen: upon a vast plain, men and women are gathered in dense throngs, crouched in uncomfortable and distressing positions, their fingers hooked in the straps of their boots. They are engaged in lifting themselves; tugging and straining until they grow red in the face, exhausted. The perspiration streams from their foreheads, they show every symptom of distress; the eyes of all are fixed, not upon each other, nor upon their boot-straps, but upon the sky above. There is a look of rapture upon their faces, and now and then, amid grunts and groans, they cry out with excitement and triumph.

I approach one and say to him, "Friend, what is this you are doing?"

He answers, without pausing to glance at me, "I am performing spiritual exercises. See how I rise?"

"But," I say, "you are not rising at all!"

Whereat he becomes instantly angry. "You are one of the scoffers!"

"But, friend," I protest, "don't you feel the earth under your feet?"

"You are a materialist!"

"But, friend, I can see—"

"You are without spiritual vision!"

And so I move on among the sweating and groaning hordes. Being of a sympathetic turn of mind, I cannot help being distressed by the prevalence of this singular practice among so large a portion of the human race. How is it possible that none of them should suspect the futility of their procedure? Or can it really be that I am uncomprehending? That in some way they are actually getting off the ground, or about to get off the ground?

Then I observe a new phenomenon: a man gliding here and there among the bootstrap-lifters, approaching from the rear and slipping his hands into their pockets. The position of the spiritual exercisers greatly facilitates his work; their eyes being cast up to heaven, they do not see him, their thoughts being occupied, they do not heed him; he goes through their pockets at leisure, and transfers the contents to a bag he carries, and then moves on to the next victim. I watch him for a while, and finally approach and ask, "What are you doing, sir?"

He answers, "I am picking pockets."

"Oh," I say, puzzled by his matter-of-course tone. "But—I beg pardon—are you a thief?"

"Oh, no," he answers, smilingly, "I am the agent of the Wholesale Pickpockets' Association. This is Prosperity."

"I see," I reply. "And these people let you—"

"It is the law," he says. "It is also the gospel."

I turn, following his glance, and observe another person approaching—a stately figure, clad in scarlet and purple robes, moving with slow dignity. He gazes about at the sweating and grunting hordes; now and then he stops and lifts his hands in a gesture of benediction, and proclaims in rolling tones, "Blessed are the Bootstrap-lifters, for theirs is

the kingdom of Heaven." He moves on, and after a bit stops and announces again, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of the prophets and priests of Bootstrap-lifting."

Watching a while longer, I see this majestic one approach the agent of the Wholesale Pickpockets' Association. The agent greets him as a friend, and proceeds to transfer to the pockets of his capacious robes a generous share of the loot which he has collected. The majestic one does not cringe, nor does he make any effort to hide what is going on. On the contrary he cries aloud, "It is more blessed to give than to receive!" And again he cries, "The laborer is worthy of his hire!" And a third time he cries, yet more sternly, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's!" And the Bootstrap-lifters pause long enough to answer: "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law!" Then they renew their straining and tugging.

I step up, and in timid tones begin, "Reverend sir, will you tell me by what right you take this wealth?"

Instantly a frown comes upon his face, and he cries in a voice of thunder, "Blasphemer!" And all the Bootstrap-lifters desist from their lifting, and menace me with furious looks. There is a general call for a policeman of the Wholesale Pickpockets' Association; and so I fall silent, and slink away in the throng, and thereafter keep my thoughts to myself.

Over the vast plain I wander, observing a thousand strange and incredible and terrifying manifestations of the Bootstrap-lifting impulse. There is, I discover, a regular propaganda on foot; a long time ago—no man can recall how far back—the Wholesale Pickpockets made the discovery of the ease with which a man's pockets could be rifled while he was preoccupied with spiritual exercises, and they began offering prizes for the best essays in support of

the practice. Now their propaganda is everywhere triumphant, and year by year we see an increase in the rewards and emoluments of the prophets and priests of the cult. The ground is covered with stately temples of various designs, all of which I am told are consecrated to Bootstrap-lifting. I come to where a group of people are occupied in laying the corner-stone of a new white marble structure; I inquire and am informed it is the First Church of Bootstrap-lifters, Scientist. As I stand watching, a card is handed to me, informing me that a lady will do my Bootstrap-lifting at five dollars per lift.

I go on to another building, which I am told is a library containing volumes in defense of the Bootstrap-lifters, published under the auspices of the Wholesale Pickpockets. I enter, and find endless vistas of shelves, also several thousand current magazines and papers. I consult these—for my legs have given out in the effort to visit and inspect all phases of the Bootstrap-lifting practice. I discover that hardly a week passes that some one does not start a new cult, or revive an old one; if I had a hundred life-times I could not know all the creeds and ceremonies, the services and rituals, the litanies and liturgies, the hymns, anthems and offertories of Bootstrap-lifting. There are the Holy Roman Bootstrap-lifters, whose priests are fed by Transubstantiation; the established Anglican Bootstrap-lifters, whose priests live by "livings"; the Baptist Bootstrap-lifters, whose preachers practice total immersion in Standard Oil. There are Yogi Bootstrap-lifters with flowing robes of yellow silk; Theosophist Bootstrap-lifters with green and purple auras; Mormon Bootstrap-lifters, Mazdaznan Bootstrap-lifters, Spiritualist and Spirit-Fruit, Millerite and Dowieite, Holy Roller and Holy Jumper, Come-to-glory negro, Billy Sunday base-ball and Salvation Army bass-drum Bootstrap-lifters. There are the thousand varieties of "New Thought" Bootstrap-lifters; the mystic and transcendentalist,

Swedenborgian and Jacob Boehme Bootstrap-lifters; the Elbert Hubbard high-art Bootstrap-lifters with half a million magazinelets at two bits apiece; the "uplift" and "optimist," the Ralph Waldo Trine and Orison Swett Marden Bootstrap-lifters with a hundred thousand volumes at one dollar per volume. There are the Platonist and Hegelian and Kantian professors of collegiate metaphysical Bootstrap-lifting at several thousand dollars per year each. There are the Nietzschean Bootstrap-lifters, who lift themselves to the Superman, and the art-for-art's-sake, neo-Pagan Bootstrap-lifters, who lift themselves down to the Ape.

Excepting possibly the last-mentioned group, the priests of all these cults, the singers, shouters, prayers and exhorters of Bootstrap-lifting have as their distinguishing characteristic that they do very little lifting at their own bootstraps, and less at any other man's. Now and then you may see one bend and give a delicate tug, of a purely symbolical character: as when the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Bootstrap-lifters comes once a year to wash the feet of the poor; or when the Sunday-school Superintendent of the Baptist Bootstrap-lifters shakes the hand of one of his Colorado mine-slaves. But for the most part the priests and preachers of Bootstrap-lifting walk haughtily erect, many of them being so swollen with prosperity that they could not reach their bootstraps if they wanted to. Their role in life is to exhort other men to more vigorous efforts at self-elevation, that the agents of the Wholesale Pickpockets' Association may ply their immemorial role with less chance of interference.

Religion

The reader, offended by this raillery, asks if I mean to impugn the sincerity of all who preach the supremacy of the soul. No; I admit the honesty of the heroes and madmen of history. All I ask of the preacher is that he shall make an

effort to practice his doctrine. Let him be tormented like Don Quixote; let him go mad like Nietzsche; let him stand upon a pillar and be devoured by worms like Simeon Stylites—on these terms I grant to any dreamer the right to hold himself above economic science.

Man is an evasive beast, given to cultivating strange notions about himself. He is humiliated by his simian ancestry, and tries to deny his animal nature, to persuade himself that he is not limited by its weaknesses nor concerned in its fate. And this impulse may be harmless, when it is genuine. But what are we to say when we see the formulas of heroic self-deception made use of by unheroic self-indulgence? What are we to say when we see asceticism preached to the poor by fat and comfortable retainers of the rich? What are we to say when we see idealism become hypocrisy, and the moral and spiritual heritage of mankind twisted to the knavish purposes of class-cruelty and greed? What I say is—Bootstrap-lifting!

It is the fate of many abstract words to be used in two senses, one good and the other bad. Morality means the will to righteousness, or it means Anthony Comstock; democracy means the rule of the people, or it means Tammany Hall. And so it is with the word "Religion". In its true sense Religion is the most fundamental of the soul's impulses, the impassioned love of life, the feeling of its preciousness, the desire to foster and further it. In that sense every thinking man must be religious; in that sense Religion is a perpetually self-renewing force, the very nature of our being. In that sense I have no thought of assailing it, I would make clear that I hold it beyond assailment.

But we are denied the pleasure of using the word in that honest sense, because of another which has been given to it. To the ordinary man "Religion" means, not the soul's longing for growth, the "hunger and thirst after

righteousness", but certain forms in which this hunger has manifested itself in history, and prevails today throughout the world; that is to say, institutions having fixed dogmas and "revelations", creeds and rituals, with an administering caste claiming supernatural sanction. By such institutions the moral strivings of the race, the affections of childhood and the aspirations of youth are made the prerogatives and stock in trade of ecclesiastical hierarchies. It is the thesis of this book that "Religion" in this sense is a source of income to parasites, and the natural ally of every form of oppression and exploitation.

If by my jesting at "Bootstrap-lifting" I have wounded some dear prejudice of the reader, let me endeavor to speak in a more persuasive voice. I am a man who has suffered, and has seen the suffering of others; I have devoted my life to analyzing the causes of the suffering, to find out if it be necessary and fore-ordained, or if by any chance there be a way of escape for future generations. I have found that the latter is the case; the suffering is needless, it can with ease and certainty be banished from the earth. I know this with the knowledge of science—in the same way that the navigator of a ship knows his latitude and longitude, and the point of the compass to which he must steer in order to reach the port.

Come, reader, let us put aside prejudice, and the terrors of the cults of the unknown. The power which made us has given us a mind, and the impulse to its use; let us see what can be done with it to rid the earth of its ancient evils. And do not be troubled if at the outset this book seems to be entirely "destructive". I assure you that I am no crude materialist, I am not so shallow as to imagine that our race will be satisfied with a barren rationalism. I know that the old symbols came out of the heart of man because they corresponded to certain needs of the heart of man. I know

that new symbols will be found, corresponding more exactly to the needs of our time. If here I set to work to tear down an old and ramshackle building, it is not from blind destructfulness, but as an architect who means to put a new and sounder structure in its place. Before we part company I shall submit the blue print of that new home of the spirit.

BOOK ONE

The Church of the Conquerors

I saw the Conquerors riding by
 With trampling feet of horse and men:
Empire on empire like the tide
 Flooded the world and ebbed again;

A thousand banners caught the sun,
 And cities smoked along the plain,
And laden down with silk and gold
 And heaped up pillage groaned the wain.

Kemp.

The Priestly Lie

When the first savage saw his hut destroyed by a bolt of lightning, he fell down upon his face in terror. He had no conception of natural forces, of laws of electricity; he saw this event as the act of an individual intelligence. To-day we read about fairies and demons, dryads and fauns and satyrs, Wotan and Thor and Vulcan, Freie and Flora and Ceres, and we think of all these as pretty fancies, play-products of the mind; losing sight of the fact that they were originally meant with entire seriousness—that not merely did ancient man believe in them, but was forced to believe in them, because the mind must have an explanation of things that happen, and an individual intelligence was the only explanation available. The story of the hero who slays the devouring dragon was not merely a symbol of day and

night, of summer and winter; it was a literal explanation of the phenomena, it was the science of early times.

Men imagined supernatural powers such as they could comprehend. If the lightning god destroyed a hut, obviously it must be because the owner of the hut had given offense; so the owner must placate the god, using those means which would be effective in the quarrels of men—presents of roast meats and honey and fresh fruits, of wine and gold and jewels and women, accompanied by friendly words and gestures of submission. And when in spite of all things the natural evil did not cease, when the people continued to die of pestilence, then came the opportunity for hysterical or ambitious persons to discover new ways of penetrating the mind of the god. There would be dreamers of dreams and seers of visions and hearers of voices; readers of the entrails of beasts and interpreters of the flight of birds; there would be burning bushes and stone tablets on mountain-tops, and inspired words dictated to aged disciples on lonely islands. There would arise special castes of men and women, learned in these sacred matters; and these priestly castes would naturally emphasize the importance of their calling, would hold themselves aloof from the common herd, endowed with special powers and entitled to special privileges. They would interpret the oracles in ways favorable to themselves and their order; they would proclaim themselves friends and confidants of the god, walking with him in the night-time, receiving his messengers and angels, acting as his deputies in forgiving offenses, in dealing punishments and in receiving gifts. They would become makers of laws and moral codes. They would wear special costumes to distinguish them, they would go through elaborate ceremonies to impress their followers, employing all sensuous effects, architecture and sculpture and painting, music and poetry and dancing, candles and incense and bells and gongs

And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced choir below,
In service high and anthem clear,
As may with sweetness through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

So builds itself up, in a thousand complex and complicated forms, the Priestly Lie. There are a score of great religions in the world, each with scores or hundreds of sects, each with its priestly orders, its complicated creed and ritual, its heavens and hells. Each has its thousands or millions or hundreds of millions of "true believers"; each damns all the others, with more or less heartiness—and each is a mighty fortress of Graft.

There will be few readers of this book who have not been brought up under the spell of some one of these systems of Supernaturalism; who have not been taught to speak with respect of some particular priestly order, to thrill with awe at some particular sacred rite, to seek respite from earthly woes in some particular ceremonial spell. These things are woven into our very fibre in childhood; they are sanctified by memories of joys and griefs, they are confused with spiritual struggles, they become part of all that is most vital in our lives. The reader who wishes to emancipate himself from their thrall will do well to begin with a study of the beliefs and practices of other sects than his own—a field where he is free to observe and examine without fear of sacrilege. Let him look into Madame Blavatsky's "Secret Doctrine", or her "Isis Unveiled"—encyclopedias of the fantastic inventions which terror and longing have wrung out of the tortured soul of man. Here are mysteries and solemnities, charms and spells, illuminations and

transmigrations, angels and demons, guides, controls and masters—all of which it is permissible to refuse to support with gifts. Let the reader then go to James Freeman Clarke's "Ten Great Religions", and realize how many billions of humans have lived and died in the solemn certainty that their welfare on earth and in heaven depended upon their accepting certain ideas and practicing certain rites, all mutually exclusive and incompatible, each damning the others and the followers of the others. So gradually the realization will come to him that the test of a doctrine about life and its welfare must be something else than the fact that one was born to it.

The Great Fear

It was not the fault of primitive man that he was ignorant, nor that his ignorance made him a prey to dread. The traces of his mental suffering will inspire in us only pity and sympathy; for Nature is a grim school-mistress, and not all her lessons have yet been learned. We have a right to scorn and anger only when we see this dread being diverted from its true function, a stimulus to a search for knowledge, and made into a means of clamping down ignorance upon the mind of the race. That this has been the deliberate policy of institutionalized Religion no candid student can deny.

The first thing brought forth by the study of any religion, ancient or modern, is that it is based upon Fear, born of it, fed by it—and that it cultivates the source from which its nourishment is derived. "The fear of divine anger", says Prof. Jastrow, "runs as an undercurrent through the entire religious literature of Babylonia and Assyria." In the words of Tabi-utul-Enlil, King of ancient Nippur:

Who is there that can grasp the will of the gods in
heaven?

The plan of a god is full of mystery—who can understand it?
He who is still alive at evening is dead the next morning.
In an instant he is cast into grief, in a moment he is crushed.

And that cry might be duplicated from almost any page of the Hebrew scriptures: the only difference being that the Hebrews combined all their fears into one Great Fear. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," we are told by Solomon of the thousand wives; and the Psalmist repeats it. "Dominion and fear are with Him," cries Job. "How then can any man be just before God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold, even the moon hath no brightness, and the stars are not pure in His sight: How much less man, that is a worm? And the son of man, which is a worm?" He goes on, in his lyrical rapture, "Sheol is naked before Him, and Destruction hath no covering.... The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His rebuke. ... The thunder of His power who can understand?" That all this is some of the world's great poetry does not in the least alter the fact that it is an abasement of the soul, an hysterical perversion of the facts of life, and a preparation of the mind for the seeds of Priestcraft.

The Book of Job has been called a "Wisdom-drama": and what is the denouement of this drama, what is ancient Hebrew wisdom's last word about life? "Wherefore I abhor myself," says Job, "and repent in dust and ashes." The poor fellow has done nothing; we have been told at the beginning that he "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." But the Sabeans and the Chaldeans rob him, and "the fire of God" falls from heaven and burns up his sheep and his servants, and "a great wind from the wilderness" kills his sons and daughters; and then his body

becomes covered with boils—a phenomenon caused in part by worry, and the consequent nervous indigestion, but mainly by excess of starch and deficiency of mineral salts in the diet. Job, however, has never heard of the fasting cure for disease, and so he takes him a potsherd to scrape himself withal, and he sits among the ashes—a highly unsanitary procedure enforced by his religious ritual. So naturally he feels like a worm, and abhors himself, and cries out: "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained." By which utter, unreasoning humility he succeeds in appeasing the Great Fear, and his friends make a sacrifice of seven bullocks and seven rams—a feast for a whole templeful of priests—and then "the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.... And after this Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his sons' sons, even four generations."

You do not have to look very deeply into this "Wisdom-drama" to find out whose wisdom it is. Confess your own ignorance and your own impotence, abandon yourself utterly, and then we, the sacred Caste, the Keepers of the Holy Secrets, will secure you pardon and respite—in exchange for fresh meat. Here are verses from a psalm of the ancient Babylonians, which "heathen" chant is identical in spirit and purpose with the utterances of Job:

The Sin that I have wrought, I know not;
The unclean that I have eaten, I know not;
The offense into which I have walked, I know not....
The lord, in the wrath of his heart, hath regarded me;
The god, in the anger of his heart, hath surrounded
me;
A goddess, known or unknown, hath wrought me
sorrow....
I sought for help, but no one took my hand;
I wept, but no one harkened to me....

The feet of my goddess I kiss, I touch them;
To the god, known or unknown, I utter my prayer;
O god, known or unknown, turn thy countenance,
accept my sacrifice;
O goddess, known or unknown, look mercifully on
me, accept my sacrifice!

Salve Regina!

And now let the reader leap three thousand years of human history, of toil and triumph of the intellect of man; and instead of a Hebrew manuscript or a Babylonian brick there confronts him a little publication, printed on a modern rotary press in the capital of the United States of America, bearing the date of October, 1914, and the title "Salve Regina". In it we find "a beautiful prayer", composed by the late cardinal Rampolla; we are told that "Pius X. attached to it an indulgence of 100 days, each time it is piously recited, applicable to the souls in purgatory."

O Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, cast a glance from Heaven, where thou sittest as Queen, upon this poor sinner, your servant. Though conscious of his unworthiness.... he blesses and exalts thee from his whole heart as the purest, the most beautiful and the most holy of creatures. He blesses thy holy name. He blesses thy sublime prerogatives as real Mother of God, ever Virgin, conceived without stain of sin, as co-Redemptrix of the human race. He blesses the Eternal Father who chose you, etc. He blesses the Incarnate Word, etc. He blesses the Divine Spirit, etc. He blesses, exalts and thanks the most august Trinity, etc. O Virgin, holy and merciful.... be pleased to accept this little homage of your servant, and obtain for him also from your divine Son pardon for his sins, Amen.

And then, looking more closely, we discover the purpose of this "beautiful prayer", and of the neat little paper which prints it. "Salve Regina" is raising funds for the "National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception", a home for more priests, and Catholic ladies who desire to collect for it may receive little books which they are requested to return within three months. Pius X writes a letter of warm endorsement, and sets an example by giving four hundred dollars "out of his poverty"—or, to be more precise, out of the poverty of the pitiful peasantry of Italy. There is included in the paper a form of bequest for "devoted clients of Our Blessed Mother", and at the top of the editorial page the most alluring of all baits for the loving hearts of the flock—that the names of deceased relatives and friends may be written in the collection books, and will be transferred to the records of the Shrine, and these persons "will share in all its spiritual benefits". In the days of Job it was with threats of boils and poverty that the Priestly Lie maintained itself; but in the case of this blackest of all Terrors, transplanted to our free Republic from the heart of the Dark Ages, the wretched victims see before their eyes the glare of flames, and hear the shrieks of their loved ones writhing in torment through uncounted ages and eternities.

Fresh Meat

In the days when I was experimenting with vegetarianism, I sought earnestly for evidence of a non-meat-eating race; but candor compelled me to admit that man was like the monkey and the pig and the bear—he was vegetarian when he could not help it. The advocates of the reform insist that meat as a diet causes muddy brains and dulled nerves; but you would certainly never suspect this from a study of history. What you find in history is that all men crave meat, all struggle for it, and the strongest and cleverest get it. Everywhere you find the subject classes living in the midst

of animals which they tend, but whose flesh they rarely taste. Even in modern America, sweet land of liberty, our millions of tenant farmers raise chickens and geese and turkeys, and hardly venture to consume as much as an egg, but save everything for the summer-boarder or the buyer from the city. It would not be too much to say of the cultural records of early man that they all have to do, directly or indirectly, with the reserving of fresh meat to the masters. In J.T. Trowbridge's cheerful tale of the adventures of Captain Seaborn, we are told by the cannibal priest how idol-worship has ameliorated the morals of the tribe—

For though some warriors of renown
Continue anthropophagous,
'Tis rare that human flesh goes down
The low-caste man's aesophagus!

I suspect that we should have to go back to the days of the cave-man to find the first lover of the flesh-pots who put a taboo upon meat, and promised supernatural favors to all who would exercise self-control, and instead of consuming their meat themselves, would bring it and lay it upon the sacred griddle, or altar, where the god might come in the night-time and partake of it. Certainly, at any rate, there are few religions of record in which such devices do not appear. The early laws of the Hebrews are more concerned with delicatessen for the priests than with any other subject whatever. Here, for example, is the way to make a Nazarite:

He shall offer his offering up to the Lord, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings, and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offerings.

And the law goes on to instruct the priests to take certain choice parts and "wave them for a wave offering before the Lord: this is holy for the priest." What was done with the other portions we are not told; but earlier in this same "Book of Numbers" we find the general law that

Every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his. And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth to the priest, it shall be his.

In the same way we are told by Viscount Amberley that the priests of Ceylon first present the gifts to the god, and then eat them. Among the Parsees, when a man dies, the relatives must bring four new robes to the priests; if they do this, the priests wear the robes; if they fail to do it, the dead man appears naked before the judgment-throne. The devotees are instructed that "he who performs this rite succeeds in both worlds, and obtains a firm footing in both worlds." Among the Buddhists, the followers give alms to the monks, and are told specifically what advantages will thereby accrue to them. In the Aitareyo Brahmanam of the Rig-Veda we read

He who, knowing this, sacrifices according to this rite, is born from the womb of Agni and the offerings, participates in the nature of the Rik, Yajus, and Saman, the Veda (sacred knowledge), the Brahma (sacred element) and immortality, and is absorbed into the deity.

Among the Parsees the priest eats the bread and drinks the haoma, or juice of a plant, considered to be both a plant and a god. Among the Episcopalians, a contemporary Christian sect, the sacred juice is that of the grape, and the priest is not allowed to throw away what is left of it, but is ordered "reverently to consume it." In as much as the priest is the sole judge of how much good sherry wine he shall

consecrate previous to the ceremony, it is to be expected that the priests of this cult should be lukewarm towards the prohibition movement, and should piously refuse to administer their sacrament with unfermented and uninteresting grape-juice.

Priestly Empires

In every human society of which we have record there has been one class which has done the hard and exhausting work, the "hewers of wood and drawers of water"; and there has been another, much smaller class which has done the directing. To belong to this latter class is to work also, but with the head instead of the hands; it is also to enjoy the good things of life, to live in the best houses, to eat the best food, to have choice of the most desirable women; it is to have leisure to cultivate the mind and appreciate the arts, to acquire graces and distinctions, to give laws and moral codes, to shape fashions and tastes, to be revered and regarded—in short, to have Power. How to get this Power and to hold it has been the first object of the thoughts of men from the beginning of time.

The most obvious method is by the sword; but this method is uncertain, for any man may take up a sword, and some may succeed with it. It will be found that empires based upon military force alone, however cruel they may be, are not permanent, and therefore not so dangerous to progress; it is only when resistance is paralyzed by the agency of Superstition, that the race can be subjected to systems of exploitation for hundreds and even thousands of years. The ancient empires were all priestly empires; the kings ruled because they obeyed the will of the priests, taught to them from childhood as the word of the gods.

Thus, for instance, Prescott tells us:

Terror, not love, was the spring of education with the Aztecs....Such was the crafty policy of the priests, who, by reserving to themselves the business of instruction, were enabled to mould the young and plastic mind according to their own wills, and to train it early to implicit reverence for religion and its ministers.

The historian goes on to indicate the economic harvest of this teaching:

To each of the principal temples, lands were annexed for the maintenance of the priests. The estates were augmented by the policy or devotion of successive princes, until, under the last Montezuma, they had swollen to an enormous extent, and covered every district of the empire.

And this concerning the frightful system of human sacrifices, whereby the priestly caste maintained the prestige of its divinities:

At the dedication of the temple of Huitzilopochtli, in 1486, the prisoners, who for some years had been reserved for the purpose, were ranged in files, forming a procession nearly two miles long. The ceremony consumed several days, and seventy thousand captives are said to have perished at the shrine of this terrible deity.

The same system appears in Professor Jastrow's account of the priesthood of Babylonia and Assyria:

The ultimate source of all law being the deity himself, the original legal tribunal was the place where the image or symbol of the god stood. A legal decision was an oracle or omen, indicative of the will of the god. The power thus lodged in the priests of Babylonia and Assyria was enormous. They virtually held in their hands the life and death of the people.

And of the business side of this vast religious system:

The temples were the natural depositories of the legal archives, which in the course of centuries grew to veritably enormous proportions. Records were made of all decisions; the facts were set forth, and duly attested by witnesses. Business and marriage contracts, loans and deeds of sale were in like manner drawn up in the presence of official scribes, who were also priests. In this way all commercial transactions received the written sanction of the religious organization. The temples themselves—at least in the large centres—entered into business relations with the populace. In order to maintain the large household represented by such an organization as that of the temple of Enlil of Nippur, that of Ningirsu at Lagash, that of Marduk at Babylon, or that of Shamash at Sippar, large holdings of land were required which, cultivated by agents for the priests, or farmed out with stipulations for a goodly share of the produce, secured an income for the maintenance of the temple officials. The enterprise of the temples was expanded to the furnishing of loans at interest—in later periods, at 20%—to barter in slaves, to dealings in lands, besides engaging labor for work of all kinds directly needed for the temples. A large quantity of the business documents found in the temple archives are concerned with the business affairs of the temple, and we are justified in including the temples in the large centres as among the most important business institutions of the country. In financial or monetary transactions the position of the temples was not unlike that of national banks....

And so on. We may venture the guess that the learned professor said more in that last sentence than he himself intended, for his lectures were delivered in that temple of plutocracy, the University of Pennsylvania, and paid out of

an endowment which specifies that "all polemical subjects shall be positively excluded!"

Prayer-wheels

These priestly empires exist in the world today. If we wish to find them we have only to ask ourselves: What countries are making no contribution to the progress of the race? What countries have nothing to give us, whether in art, science, or industry?

For example, Gervaise tells us of the Talapoins, or priests of Siam, that "they are exempted from all public charges, they salute nobody, while everybody prostrates himself before them. They are maintained at the public expense." In the same way we read of the negroes of the Caribbean islands that "their priests and priestesses exercise an almost unlimited power." Miss Kingsley, in her "West African Studies", tells us that if we desire to understand the institutions of this district, we must study the native's religion.

For his religion has so firm a grasp upon his mind that it influences everything he does. It is not a thing apart, as the religion of the Europeans is at times. The African cannot say, "Oh, that is all right from a religious point of view, but one must be practical." To be practical, to get on in the world, to live the day and night through, he must be right in the religious point of view, namely, must be on working terms with the great world of spirits around him. The knowledge of this spirit world constitutes the religion of the African, and his customs and ceremonies arise from his idea of the best way to influence it.

Or consider Henry Savage Lander's account of Thibet:

In Lhasa and many other sacred places fanatical pilgrims make circumambulations, sometimes for miles and miles,

and for days together, covering the entire distance lying flat upon their bodies.... From the ceiling of the temple hang hundreds of long strips, katas, offered by pilgrims to the temple, and becoming so many flying prayers when hung up—for mechanical praying in every way is prominent in Thibet.... Thus instead of having to learn by heart long and varied prayers, all you have to do is to stuff the entire prayer-book into a prayer-wheel,

and revolve it while repeating as fast as you can four words meaning, "O God, the gem emerging from the lotus-flower." ... The attention of the pilgrims is directed to a large box, or often a big bowl, where they may deposit whatever offerings they can spare, and it must be said that their religious ideas are so strongly developed that they will dispose of a considerable portion of their money in this fashion.... The Lamas are very clever in many ways, and have a great hold over the entire country. They are ninety per cent of them unscrupulous scamps, depraved in every way and given to every sort of vice. So are the women Lamas. They live and sponge on the credulity and ignorance of the crowds; it is to maintain this ignorance, upon which their luxurious life depends, that foreign influence of every kind is strictly kept out of the country.

The Butcher-Gods

In this last sentence we have summed up the fundamental fact about institutionalized religion. Wherever belief and ritual have become the means of livelihood of a class, all innovation will of necessity be taken as an attack upon that class; it will be literally a crime—robbing the priests of their age-long privileges. And of course they will oppose the robber—using every weapon of terrorism, both of this world and the next. They will require the submission, not merely of their own people, but of their neighbors, and their jealousy of rival priestly castes will be a cause of wars. The story of

the early days of mankind is a sickening record of torture and slaughter in the name of ten thousand butcher-gods.

Thus, for example, we read in the Hebrew religious records how the priests were engaged in establishing the prestige of a fetish called "the ark"; and how the people of one tribe violated this fetish and wakened the wrath of Jehovah, the god. And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men; and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?

This terrible old Hebrew divinity said of himself that he was "a jealous god". Throughout the time of his sway he issued through his ministers precise instructions for the most revolting cruelties, the extermination of whole nations of men, women and children, whose sole offense was that they did not pay tribute to Jehovah's priests. Thus, for example, the chief of his prophets, Moses, called the people together, and with all solemnity, and with many warnings, handed down ten commandments graven upon stone tablets; he went on to set forth how the people were to set upon and rob their neighbors, and gave them these blood-thirsty instructions:

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: ... But thus shall ye deal with them;

ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The records of this Jehovah are full of similar horrors. He sent his chosen people out to destroy the Midianites, and they slew all the males, but this was not sufficient, and Moses was wroth, and commanded them to kill all the married women, and to take the single women "for themselves". We are told that sixteen thousand single women were spared, of whom "the Lord's tribute was thirty and two!" In the Book of Joshua we read that he had an interview with a supernatural personage called "the captain of the Lord's host", and how this captain had given to him a magic spell which would destroy the city of Jericho. The city should be accursed, "even it and all that are therein, to the Lord"; every living thing except one traitor-harlot was to be slaughtered, and all the wealth of the city reserved to the priestly caste. This was carried out to the letter, except that "Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing"—that is, he hid some gold and silver in his tent; whereupon the army met with a defeat, and everybody knew that something was wrong, and Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord, and got another message from Jehovah, to the effect that the guilty man should be burned with fire, "he and all that he hath."

And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the Valley of Achor. And Joshua