

The Day of the Lord

G. K. CHESTERTON

IN THE New Year Encyclical which the Editor of the *London Sunday Express* delivered *urbi et orbi* on the first of the year, the faithful might find and reverently read the following paragraph:

If the world in 1933 obeys Jesus there will be no more hunger or want. The world slump will be ended. The wheels of credit, exchange, labour, and trade will go round again.

Infandum renovare dolorem! A mere touch, and those wheels will go round again, those wheels we all, with such childish joy and innocence, loved to see going round. Those wheels that grind the faces of the poor; those wheels that deafened the children in the first factories; those wheels that throw a thousand men out of work; those wheels that stun and stupefy even the men who are in work; those wheels that were the weapons, in an endless civil war, of those lawless lords who "laid upon the toiling millions a yoke little better than slavery itself"; those wheels that have now for a hundred years roared around a blind giant who found himself truly, in Milton's words, "eyeless, in Gaza; at a mill, with slaves". But there are other promises even brighter and more hopeful than that of the slavery of Samson. Credit will return; the cosmopolitan system of credit, by which universal usury was like a giant with a hundred hands on a hundred throats, throttling the honour and liberty of a hundred nations. Exchange will return, and return to its old place, which is of

course the first place in the human hierarchy; the kingdom and the power and the glory shall again belong to men who can only exchange; who cannot do anything else except exchange; who have not the wits or the force or fancy or freedom of mind or even the humour and patience to bring anything into existence; who can only barter and bargain, and generally cheat, with the things that manlier men have made. These shall again be our princes and captains; and the men who only make things and grow things and produce things shall be led captive in chains behind them, as of old. Labour will return, as the servant of exchange; but the men who can perform the conjuring-tricks of exchange quickly enough will never need to do any labour at all; and will once more reach the loftiest order of millionaires without having ever done a stroke of work in their lives; except talking into telephones and having hurried conversations with stockbrokers. For this was the very principle of that divine Boom, which has now been for a time followed by the diabolic Slump. And it seems clear, in this particular scripture or oracle, that when the world slump is ended, the world boom will begin again. Trade will return, and resume its task of putting the trade mark on everything, even on the sky. It will go on with renewed energy to fill the very vault of heaven with the names of filthy medicines to cure foul diseases; destroying at a stroke the visionary mediaeval dogma that the heavens are incorruptible. It will turn the whole country into a suburb with bill-boards instead of houses; and teach everybody Salesmanship, which is the culture of cads. It will bring back to us all these beautiful things: the admiration for boasts; the ac-

ceptance of bribes; the worship of the world's luckiest liars or most distinguished double-crossers who have somehow landed on the Lido instead of Devil's Island; it will bring us back the complete rule of the few, the wealthy, and the unworthy, as our great reward . . . always supposing, of course, that the world obeys Jesus.

It seems quite possible, and even probable, that it had not even so much as dawned on this writer that there is another view of the case. I suppose he would be quite surprised if I told him that the one gleam of light, the one glimpse of hope, in all this darkness and despair, is the fact that it is just possible that we have seen the end of that abominable prosperity, and that those accursed things will not return; that credit will not return, to enable a money-lender in New York to ruin a countryside in Roumania; that exchange will not return, in the guise of a triumphant huckster and middleman, cheating the craftsman with bad wages or the customer with bad goods; that labour will not return in the familiar form of slave-labour and every trade will no longer be a branch of the slave trade. There is only one really cheerful element in the situation; and that is that there really is a very good chance that these solid, practical, business-like things are dead for ever; that men will never really trust them again, having tried them and found whither they lead; and that they no longer have the power to help us, even if we were fools enough to let them try. There is only one good thing about the Slump; and that is that it may stop men from trusting again in the Boom. The one enduring aspect of Unemployment is that it may possibly call a halt for the full comprehension of the

more subtle horrors of Employment; especially that highly paid and heavily organized employment of which men like Mr. Ford were boasting, before the judgement struck them out of the sky. When all the promises of mere traders are perforce broken, when all the praises of mere trade have perforce become a jest; when all that was called practical has turned out to be a practical joke, and all that was called modern is in ruins more useless than Stonehenge—then, there is a very real psychological possibility that men may think of things forgotten; of property, of privacy, of piety in the old sense of reverence for the human sanctities; for the family, from the hearthstone to the headstone. If once men understood that London Bridge is really and truly broken down, they may possibly learn to swim, or learn to row, or learn to paddle their own canoes; or even, in the case of some strange poets or saints such as the world has known, learn to be reasonably happy even on their own side of the river. But for those to whom the paddling of all the little canoes of private property seems like primitive savagery, to those who are never happy anywhere, except in preparing to travel very rapidly somewhere else, to them I can only speak in words of more doubtful comfort. I would not introduce the greatest of names quite so lightly as does the *Sunday Express*, but I can refer its prophets to a minor prophet, somewhere in the Old Testament, who uttered these strange and somewhat disturbing words: "Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord. Wherefore should you desire the Day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light."

The Principles of the Corporate State

HAROLD GOAD

AFTER some ten years of successful development in Italy the Corporate State may surely be regarded as one of the two most important political experiments of recent times. Hitherto far too little attention has been paid to it in England and America, whereas excessive interest has constantly been shown in the apparently unsuccessful political experiment of Communism in Russia. From Italy we today have far more to learn than from Russia, if only for the reason that the Italian race is far nearer to our own in temperament, civilization, and historical tradition.

It is above all necessary to begin an account of the machinery of the Corporate State by carefully distinguishing it from the general movement of the Fascist Revolution, and the institutions arising out of that revolution, such as the "Fascist Party", with its closely-knit hierarchy depending from the Grand Fascist Council as from a sort of General Staff. This "Fascist Party" is little more today than an honourable order of those who from the first supported the Revolution. Similarly, combatant Fascist bands, that fought down the Communists, have long ago been converted into the National Militia. The Special Tribunal for the trial of political offences under the law for the defence of the State may also be included among these revolutionary institutions; and here one should remember that the recent Amnesty has released the