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# WAKEFIELD AND MARX

By H. O. PAPPE

## I

EDWARD GIBBON WAKEFIELD'S role as an empire builder is to-day beyond dispute. He played an active part in the process of empire-building by persistently drawing attention to the possibilities of settlement in undeveloped areas of Australia and in New Zealand. However, his part in laying the foundation for a Commonwealth in the future was even more important. His share in the Durham report began, in J. S. Mill's words, 'a new era'. His never-ceasing interest in, and his fight for, colonial responsible self-government have brought Graham Wallas to his opinion that 'there are few political inventors to whom historians would ascribe so large a measure of political success'.

When Wakefield took the political stage, emigrants were largely adventurers or fugitives. The adventurers went out to prepare themselves for a future in the home country, to which they were to return prosperous. The colonies were to them a means and not an end. The fugitives were partly compulsory emigrants, such as the convicts who provided largely the first two generations of the Australian settlement. Those who went out without legal compulsion were fugitives too. They were not—like the pilgrim fathers—bent on establishing a new country in which they would be able to worship God to their own private pattern. They had to escape the bleak age of a contorted society. To all those Wakefield held out the promise of a dignified life without the risks of a departure into the uncharted seas of a new lawless world.

He believed that it was possible to transplant the vital elements and the effective order of the mother country to the new world. It is this that has made his memory precious to those who approved the order which he helped to spread over the globe. His name, for this reason, carries more weight with those who contemplate 'Oceana' from the centre than with many living at the periphery. It is felt widely among the latter that the particular measures of Wakefield's systematic colonization soon came to grief. There were obviously innate economic and psychological weaknesses in the system arising from difficulty in arriving at a just price for the land, especially in areas that were surrounded by land free from Wakefield's restrictive policy and open to the speculative enterprise of the squatter. It is these technical failures which appear to condemn Wakefield in the eyes of some historians in Australia and New Zealand.

But it is another line of thought that has led to a much more pungent criticism in recent years. It is conceived from the view-point of the men of 1848 who feel that Wakefield's planning in terms of old-world society has spoilt the free development of a brave new world. This sceptical attitude is at the back of J. C. Beaglehole's description of Wakefield's work, and the same attitude has determined Fitzpatrick's bitter strictures.<sup>1</sup> The most outspoken condemnation of Wakefield's part in founding an inequitable society has been offered by W. B.

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Beaglehole, *New Zealand. A Short History* (London, 1936). Brian Fitzpatrick, *The British Empire in Australia: An economic history, 1834-1939* (Melbourne, 1941), p. 40 et seq.

Sutch.<sup>1</sup> He cannot see 'why Wakefield's name still receives honour in New Zealand school books'. He thinks that New Zealand had to develop a system of Social Security because its society, largely under Wakefield's influence, was based on a system of insecurity; an insecurity inevitably suffered by the less privileged in a class-ruled country. New Zealand thus differed considerably from other colonial societies, in particular the North American, where social services were felt as a necessity only at a later stage. The basic make-up of the early New Zealand colony was closely related to the 'mentalité hiérarchique' and the economic system of the mother country, while the older colonies had pursued their own ways and had worked out their own social constitutions. 'That is why Edward Gibbon Wakefield's ideas are so important to the story of the quest of security, for whether he was responsible or not, it was the economic relationships advocated by him which produced conditions needing social services to alleviate them.'<sup>2</sup>

The general omission of Marx's name in this discussion<sup>3</sup> is curious, as Marx decidedly took sides in the debate on colonization; the more curious as it was Wakefield's writings on colonization which made him take up the challenge. For Marx, his views on colonization were considerably more than a contribution to contemporary controversy; they were to be the crowning confirmation of his economic theory.

## II

'Modern Theory of Colonization' is the heading of the last chapter of Book I of *Capital*. It is entirely in the form of a controversy with E. G. Wakefield's *England and America* which had been published in 1833. It was not only in this context that Marx dealt with Wakefield, whom he considered as the most notable political economist of the thirties. There is a significant affinity between the two thinkers. Wakefield's idea of making the labourers, as potential purchasers of land in the colonies, pay for the immigration of future workers appears to be a striking illustration of Marx's surplus value theory. The statement that 'labour creates capital before capital employs labour'<sup>4</sup> seemed to anticipate Marx's famous version: 'By its surplus labour this year, the working class creates the capital that will next year employ additional labour.'<sup>5</sup>

A similar degree of agreement covers their factual approach to the question of the accumulation of capital. Marx distinguished between two types of private property, one of which is based upon the producer's own labour, whilst the other is based upon the labour of others. Current economic thinking lumped both kinds of property together under the term capital. Marx claimed that only the latter was capital, and that capital could grow only upon the tomb of the former, or, in other words, upon the expropriation and exploitation of the small producers. This process of primary accumulation, i.e. of appropriation of the means of production by a minority, was more or less completed in the European scene. 'It is otherwise in the colonies. There the capitalist regime encounters on all hands the resistance of producers who own the means of production with which they work and who can gain wealth for themselves by their own labour instead of working to enrich a capitalist.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Quest for Security in New Zealand* (Penguin Special, 1942).

<sup>2</sup> Sutch, *op. cit.* p. iv.

<sup>3</sup> This applies also to such outstanding works as Dr Garnett's and Prof. Mills's. Of Wakefield's biographers only Dr Harrop mentions Marx, in passing.

<sup>4</sup> E. G. Wakefield, *England and America* (1833), II, 110.

<sup>5</sup> Marx, *Capital*, II, 640 (Everyman's edition).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 848.

In the virgin conditions of new settlements it seemed to become obvious that capital was not more than a social relation between persons, rather than a stock of goods at a given moment.<sup>1</sup> This was illustrated in the case of Mr Peel who went to Western Australia with means of subsistence and of production to the value of £50,000, as well as with 300<sup>2</sup> persons; men, women, and children, of the working class. These, on arrival at Swan River, dispersed to take up land as independent owners, and Mr Peel was 'left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river'.<sup>3</sup> As long as it was possible to take up land and produce peacefully, anyone could accumulate on his own account. Capitalist accumulation was impossible under such conditions.

'Where land is very cheap and all men are free, where every one who so pleases can easily obtain a piece of land for himself, not only is labour very dear, as respects the labourers' share of the produce, but the difficulty is to obtain combined labour at any price.'<sup>4</sup> Under such conditions, hired workers soon 'would have ceased to be labourers for hire; they would have become independent landowners, if not competitors with their former masters in the market of labour'.<sup>5</sup> This is what happened in the North American colonies up to the time of the Civil War, where the progressive population of the frontier was not to be counted upon as hired labourers.

To Wakefield this development appeared to be an unnatural state of affairs. He considered the division of labour and the accumulation of capital as part of the social contract. The development leading to the division of the people into owners of capital and owners of labour rested, like every step in civilization, 'on concert or combination amongst all the members of society',<sup>6</sup> and it was in order to prevent what he considered a dispersion of national wealth and to further 'primary accumulation' that Wakefield advocated 'systematic colonization'. His intention was to transfer the stratified society of England to the colonies by means of a strictly enforced social constitution.

Marx, on the other hand, though he agreed about the facts, concluded that the passion for owning land was a natural and justified claim of the individual. He urged that capitalists had been created artificially in the mother country. In the colonies, he said, Wakefield's systematic colonization was called upon to produce wage earners. This development was far from being natural, as Wakefield had claimed. In fact, Marx commented, if there were such a natural law, then 'the mass of mankind (would have) expropriated itself, in honour of the accumulation of capital. One would suppose, then, that this instinct for self-denying fanaticism would, above all, have free play in the colonies; for there only do men and things exist under conditions which might make it possible to translate a social contract from dreamland into the world of reality. Were things thus, why should systematic colonization be called upon to replace the spontaneous colonization which is its opposite?'

Such, in a simplifying re-arrangement, is the gist of the Wakefield-Marx controversy.

<sup>1</sup> Marx, *op. cit.* p. 849.

<sup>2</sup> Marx mistakenly thought they had been 3000. Also elsewhere he is not completely reliable in his quotations from Wakefield.

<sup>3</sup> E. G. Wakefield, *England and America*, II, 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* I, 247.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* II, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* I, 17.

## III

*Habent fata sua libelli.* Wakefield's thought suffered an eclipse in the nineteenth century. Marx's theory of colonization gave rise to that controversy on imperialism to which Hobson, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Hilferding, Schumpeter and Hancock have contributed. The discussion has narrowed down to the question of colonies ruled by the mother country. It has, at the same time, widened out into an analysis of the causes of imperialist wars and of the final fate of capitalism. However, there is sufficient substance in its original form to justify its rescue from oblivion.

One point of striking interest emerges at a first glance. It is that Wakefield and Marx should travel such a distance together. We have got used to the spectacle of capitalists and socialists differing deeply in their fundamental approach to social economic questions. We are apt to forget that their starting-point was the same and their methods were originally alike. When Marx attacked the Wakefield scheme as the prototype of the villainous capitalist system, he did not mean to whitewash other contemporary methods by contrast. He intended this as little as he meant to single out England when he exposed labour conditions there. He was aware of the fact that these conditions were much worse on the continent: *De te fabula narratur*, he assured his German reader. He realized that Wakefield's scheme was not the alternative to an equalitarian development. He was much more critical of the virtual monopolies granted by contemporary colonial practice in America and Australia. The appeal of 'systematic colonization' to an exemplary stock of settlers was too obvious to be overlooked. Marx wanted to expose the Wakefield scheme as the best that capitalism could produce in the circumstances, and he wanted to show that the best was not good enough. But he was not intent on condemning individuals, whom he held to be unconscious tools of a development they were not able to grasp. 'I should be the last to hold the individual responsible for conditions whose creature he himself is, socially considered, however much he may raise himself above them subjectively.'

Marx was steeped deeply in classical economic thought. He accepted the analysis of classical economics but he differed in the conclusions which he derived from the liberal premises. If liberals saw in the colonies only useless ornaments of governments, Marx saw in them the last straw to which capitalism in its decay could cling. Wakefield, though liberal, was (in common with other utilitarians) nearer to Marx in this respect than to Adam Smith. He accepted Malthus's pessimistic view and is likely to have based his ideas upon Ricardo's opinion that 'with a population pressing against the means of subsistence, the only remedies are either a reduction of people or a more rapid accumulation of capital. In rich countries, where all the fertile land is already cultivated, the latter remedy is neither very practicable nor very desirable, because its effect would be, if pushed very far, to render all classes equally poor.'<sup>1</sup> According to Wakefield, there were three reasons which made colonization desirable and necessary. All three were connected with the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence.

(1) *The extension of markets* for manufactured goods, so as to provide England with cheap corn not available elsewhere.

(2) *Enlargement of the field for employing capital*, offering possibilities of investment better than those at home. There was a definite limit to the 'field of employment' of capital, as Wakefield never tired of emphasizing. 'It does not follow that,

<sup>1</sup> *Principles*, chap. v, On Wages.

because labour is employed by capital, capital always finds a field in which to employ labour.' Wakefield developed this thought in his commentary on the *Wealth of Nations* and thought he had discovered a new principle. What was new, however, was only the emphasis on a maxim which, in J. S. Mill's words, was actually a corollary of the principles of classical economy. It has, indeed, become one of the major tenets of Marxian theory which, in different form, holds that there is a definite and self-destructive limit to the accumulation of capital. Because of this, capitalism, it is held, must branch out into the temporary relief offered by Imperialism, i.e. by additional (and equally exhaustible) fields of employment in the colonies. Yet little credit has been given to Wakefield by those who share his attitude. There seems to be no mention of Wakefield's name, for instance, in Maurice Dobb's *Political Economy and Capitalism*, a book in which the concept of the field of employment of capital looms large.

(3) *Relief from excessive numbers*: This, in retrospect, seems to be an obvious enough remedy for the impasse of the Bleak Age. But Wakefield's agreement with socialists was only superficial on this point. Like them he saw an impasse, but unlike them, he did not want to change the system. He wanted to relieve pressure and restore the old balance of order. He developed this thought as an alternative to the original proposal by philosophical radicalism of securing full employment at high wages to the whole labouring population through a voluntary restriction of their numbers.

There was, of course, wide-spread opposition to colonization from those desiring a plentiful supply of cheap labour. But excess of numbers and low wages lost their attraction with the growing discontent and revolutionary spirit of the industrial revolution. High wages became a necessity in order to preserve security for property. The class struggle was looming large 'in a country situated like England, in which the ruling and the subject orders are no longer separated by a middle class, and in which the subject order, composing the bulk of the people, are in a state of gloomy discontent arising from excessive numbers; for such a country, one chief end of colonization is to prevent tumults, to keep the peace, to maintain order, to uphold confidence in the security of property, to hinder interruptions of the regular course of industry and trade, to avert the terrible evils which, in a country like England, could not but follow any serious political convulsion'.<sup>1</sup>

This, one thinks, could have been written by Marx; and, though they differed in their choice of remedies, Wakefield and Marx were largely agreed in stressing the importance of labour in the process of creating wealth against 'those political economists who worship capital'.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV

So much for the ends of colonization as regards the mother country. Actually, it is rather their attitude towards the ends of colonization as respects the colony that provides an insight into Wakefield's and Marx's innermost minds. It will be helpful to contrast their views with those of Adam Smith.

Both Marx and Adam Smith were agreed that the conditions of virgin countries, such as America, were ideal for the development of free societies. For Smith the following elements: free, educated and disciplined colonists, plentiful and cheap land, and high wages were bound to lead to a rise in population, health, wealth and greatness.

<sup>1</sup> *England and America*, II, 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 96.

This was in direct contrast to Wakefield who, indeed, had attacked Smith's ideas on colonization as early as in *A Letter from Sydney*. For Wakefield, America was not a Jeffersonian paradise but a Hamiltonian world in the making. He maintained that no progress was attainable but by the method of inequality and compulsion which had developed the European scene. The natural dependence, in ancient civilized countries, of the labourer on the capitalists had to be created in the colonies by artificial means. It was just the newness of the territory with its vast opportunities that blocked the road to progress. It was the government's duty to interfere with colonial development and to establish and maintain the most desirable proportion between people and territory, thus guaranteeing an ample supply of labourers for hire.

'According to Dr Smith, therefore, the [Americans] ought by this time to have rivalled at least, if not to have surpassed, their parent state in wealth and greatness. Yet look at their condition. Their metropolis is not to be compared to many of the mere pleasure-towns of England. Want of capital prevented the State of New York from commencing its great Canal from Lake Erie until long after the profit of that undertaking had been demonstrated; and other States are now attempting to raise money in London for great works, which cannot be undertaken unless capital be obtained from the parent country. In the useful arts, excepting only perhaps that of steam-navigation, they are far behind the parent country. Their manufactures, miserable at best, exist only through restrictive laws. Thus the doctrine of Adam Smith concerning the effect of cheap land and dear labour, in producing national wealth and greatness, has been refuted by the safest of all arguments—an ample experiment.'<sup>1</sup>

Marx and Smith equally looked with favour at the young emerging economy of the colonies. Yet both Marx and Wakefield differed from Adam Smith in picturing the particular state of affairs in the New World not as something *sui generis*, but as a transitory stage of development. This would lead inevitably to old-world conditions once the possibilities of the frontier with their boundless extent of fertile land were exhausted. For Marx this was a process of regression to an inferior order of society. It proved to him that inequality with regard to the possession of productive means, including the land, was at the root of the evil embodied in capitalist society. For Wakefield it was only at this stage, i.e. when labour had become plentiful and cheap, that the disadvantages of a new society would give way to the cultural advantages of an old nation. Society would become firmly established in a definite order and be assured of workers to carry out profitable schemes of development. If the American solution through slavery and the Australian method of using convict labour were no longer morally acceptable, then it was desirable to create a decent menial class by law.

If Adam Smith was a humanitarian optimist, both Wakefield and Marx appear as pessimists regarding human propensities. Marx obviously fears the depraving influence of trade and industry; he can imagine benefits to be derived from the division of labour only if a radically changed human nature is made sociable through the agency of a new economic system. Wakefield's pleading is in favour of interference by the superior knowledge of tradition and learning as a safeguard against the pernicious trends of undirected development.

Both then may be regarded as planners in the modern sense of the word. However, Wakefield was an outstanding representative of liberal economic thought. And equally in Marx's case there are elements that allow for a different interpretation. In his writings on colonization and the more distant past he

<sup>1</sup> E. G. Wakefield, *A Letter from Sydney* (Everyman ed.), p. 74.

extols the free, self-dependent, pre-capitalist farmers (in contrast to the European peasants, those 'troglodytes of civilization'). The flourishing state of fifteenth-century England appealed to him as well as the picture of the unlimited freedom of the colonies. He was not wedded to the Stakhanovite ideal as his epigones contend. On the contrary, he was desperately opposed to the idea of specialization and the principle of the division of labour. Just as Hobbes had attacked Aristotle on this score, so Marx maintained that 'Plato's Republic, in so far as it discusses the division of labour as the formative principle of the State, is nothing but an Athenian idealization of the Egyptian caste system'.<sup>1</sup> His ideal was the rounded personality who can do everything that others do.

This romantic view places Marx well within the company of colonial radicalism. There the advances of technology (and, for that, of European preponderance) were viewed with dismay. Jefferson, despite his great learning, was deeply distrustful of Pandora's gifts. 'In Europe', he said, 'the lands are either cultivated, or locked up against the cultivator. Manufacture must therefore be resorted to of necessity, not of choice, to support the surplus of their people. But we have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husband-man... Those with labour in the earth are the chosen people of God... Dependence (upon customers) begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the design of ambition.'<sup>2</sup>

Marx then, appears as less doctrinaire than Marxists would often make one believe. On the other hand, he does not appear as a liberal. Though he was so sharply opposed to Wakefield's systematic colonization, he was himself a planner.

## V

Wakefield's planning seems to have been concerned only with means. His aim was not to design a new society, but to transplant the conditions for organic growth of the old world to the new. It may be helpful to consider first his place within colonial thought.

Marx we found to be akin to the spirit of the colonial population of the frontier. Though Wakefield played an outstanding role in the fight for colonial self-determination and self-government, it may well be said that he viewed colonization through the eyes of the mother country. What he wanted to preserve was the civilization that had grown up in the old world. A system of 'shovelling out paupers' was bound to turn colonies into prison centres ('The Governor of New South Wales is a jailer'), or else into anarchical settlements of the early whaling or later gold mining type. With no traditional restraints, freedom of enterprise and license of vice were found to be the same thing in practice. Wakefield's concern (and achievement) was therefore, as John Stuart Mill put it, 'that the flower and not the refuse of the old country should be transferred to the new'.

Wakefield, the professed expert on colonial administration, actually thought of colonies as his future home. The vision that drove him was the picture of his paradise re-gained, a paradise that he had irretrievably lost through his own action. He was as single-minded and strong-willed as Marx. As Marx marked out his road in the *Communist Manifesto*, so Wakefield conjured up his vision in his greatest piece of writing, his first treatment of the colonial problem, *A Letter from Sydney*. It was his way of escape from Newgate prison where he had been sent for his attempt at abducting from a boarding school a young heiress whom he

<sup>1</sup> *Capital*, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> *The Living Thought of Jefferson* (ed. Dewey), pp. 70, 74.



wanted to marry for ambition's sake. The role that was denied his ambition and ability on the English scene was yet to be provided where his past would not discount him.

This personal motive explains much of Wakefield's zeal and consistency. The colonies were to be made attractive for his like, i.e. for 'a man of independent fortune who prefers his library, even to the beauties of nature, and to whom intellectual society is necessary for his peace of mind'.<sup>1</sup> A colonial career was to be made honourable and worthy of a gentleman.

This is a far cry from the conventional romantic conception. But, though it was connected with a practically new colonial technique, the attitude was well in the colonial tradition. For centuries it had been the ambition of younger sons, and others without an adequate outlet for their enterprise, to found a new home overseas that was safe for gentlemen. The experience won in Ireland under the Tudor re-conquest had left its mark upon the great colonizers of future times. In the pamphlets of the sixteenth century on colonization the same note is struck as in the nineteenth-century discussion. 'Unemployment and overpopulation, the missionary motive, and a union of profit and fame—experience soon taught the persuasive quality of these arguments.'<sup>2</sup> As far as colonial promoters were concerned, the 'condition of England' motive was no particular feature of the early Victorian period.

Wakefield's technique, as H. Mumford Jones tells us, was anticipated by Francis Bacon who, in his proposals for a feudal constitution for the Irish settlement, had stressed the necessity of living together in towns in order to reap the benefits of the division of labour.<sup>3</sup> Wakefield meant to use the scientific method of systematic colonization to bring about a conventional result. He wanted to ease the birth pangs of his new society, or more accurately, he wanted it to jump the adolescent stage and start like a homunculus at maturity. It may then well be said that, despite his system, he was eventually not a planner, and that Marx was not right in accusing him of interfering with the free play of natural development.

## VI

However, the controversy about planning does not lead us far. Nobody who approaches the world with an ordering mind is free from the taint of planning. The divergence consists in differing opinions regarding the methods that are to bring about the desired social ideal. There is no doubt that Marx and Wakefield stood for different methods. Can it be said that this was because their ultimate social aims were not the same? Marx's ideas on this point were those of the French Revolution, fraternity, liberty, equality. Equality was for him the key to his millennium.

Wakefield cannot be classed as easily as Marx. He was curiously half-way between Carlyle-Disraelian conservatism and Whiggish economics. It would be absurd to class him with those we understand to have been rugged individualists. He had a keen social conscience. He knew as well as William Cobbett about the 'poverty, misery, and pauperism that were becoming so frightful in the country'.<sup>4</sup> He did not approve of self-interest let loose.

<sup>1</sup> *A Letter from Sydney*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Mumford Jones, *Ideas in America* (Harvard, 1944), p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Also William Penn planned the Philadelphia settlement as 'a great town', aimed to assure the benefits for society of 'help, trade, education, and government, also roads, travel, entertainment', See Curtis F. Nettels, *The Roots of American Civilisation* (New York, 1938), p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> *Rural Rides*, 1 August 1823.

Both Marx and Wakefield, it may be said, would have agreed on the issue of liberty. Where they differed, was in their attitudes towards equality. The French revolution had not succeeded in reconciling the ideal of liberty and the passion for equality, in fact, 'le système de l'égalité chassa celui de la liberté'.<sup>1</sup> The liberal concluded from this that the two concepts were incompatible, and that there was something like a natural hierarchy in society. Marx attributed the failure of the revolution to the abortive attempt at grafting liberal principles on an economic order that, by definition, was based upon inequality. Hence his economic teaching.

However, though we have laid our hands here upon a fundamental difference between Marx and Wakefield, it does not seem to be a necessary condition for their diverging conclusions. There are outstanding believers in *laissez-faire* who share in Marx's ultimate aims. The great divergence, then, is one of methods derived from a different reading of historical experience.

## VII

If we want to bring the divergence between Marx and Wakefield to a simple formula, it would boil down to this: while they agreed in their critical attitude toward the society of the old world, Wakefield considered the disease as symptomatic and curable, whereas Marx thought it was constitutional, and that the old society had to die to give place to a new society.

Wakefield as a man need not be defended against backwardness. He did more to create a new world within the limits of the period than Marx. But if Marx erred in the sweeping extent of his condemnation before he had means to substitute a better society, Wakefield was too complacent in his acceptance of this society. He put his finger upon the social sores of his time, but he also would have liked to set the scene for a replica of the order that had caused them. Already Adam Smith had added a note of gloom to his optimistic outlook when he considered 'the enormous debts which at present oppress, and will in the long run probably ruin, all the great nations of Europe'.<sup>2</sup> A reverberation of such thoughts appears in Wakefield's theory of the field of employment of capital. But he brushed the uncomfortable thought aside, though he should have anticipated similar difficulties for a later stage of his colonial dream. He wanted to re-build for his own purposes an extension of Britain overseas with its differences in individual wealth. But he, like Marx, thought that the European world was in danger of foundering on the rocks of economic misery and had to be relieved of its human ballast. He therefore must needs hope for a more balanced order than the one he left. Though in him the vision was less accentuated than it was in Carlyle, Dickens, J. S. Mill, Ruskin, Morris, he had started out with a vision of a better world, a world of healthier and lovelier people and of laws forbidding the existence of want, of an Australia Felix.

However, we must not make too much of this. Wakefield was fundamentally in accord with the aristocratic order from which he started. This is why his reform proposals were concerned with details only. Unlike Marx, he was not a perfectionist. Or to be correct, the liberal economist in him was, but the member of the ruling class in him was not. If we class him amongst the rationalists because of his professed belief in *laissez-faire*, we have to do so with a qualification. He was not a liberal of Adam Smith's stamp, whose Scottish origin and

<sup>1</sup> Mallet du Pan, as quoted by A. P. D'Entreves, *Cambridge Journal*, 1, no. 2, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Wealth of Nations*, Book v, chap. III, p. 863.

commercial interests and eighteenth-century mind emphasized a democratic outlook. Wakefield was not naturally inclined to scrap past experience and to base his economic or social plans upon the abstract power of reasoning. He did not want to cut the ties of tradition, that capital and bank of the ages. He made it clear that by 'a new people' he understood an uncivilized people that had still to acquire the benefits of accumulated age-old wisdom. We recall his unfavourable report upon the American settlements, which contrasted with Marx's more admiring view of the U.S.A. Indeed, the report shed more light upon Wakefield than upon the U.S.A. When he wrote it in Newgate prison, America was as unknown to him as Australasia. His knowledge (so often full of an intuitive grasp) was based upon reading, and amongst the available reports he was free to pick what suited his pleading. But at the same time Tocqueville, the greatest observer of the American scene, was writing that no people in the world had made such rapid progress in trade and manufactures as the Americans. . . 'despite almost unsurmountable natural impediments. . . In the United States the greatest undertakings are executed without difficulty, because the whole population is engaged in productive industry, and because the poorest as well as the most opulent members of the commonwealth are ready to combine their efforts for these purposes'.<sup>1</sup> This judgement was, in 1844, fully upheld by John Robert Godley, the founder of the Canterbury settlement, who extolled the superiority of the Americans 'in all the faculties. . . which contribute to produce. . . material civilization'.<sup>2</sup>

Wakefield was blind to the possibilities innate in an equalitarian world. They were unknown, whereas the noble components of the old aristocratic order were known—not less than the drawbacks.

The pitfalls of both the aristocratic and egalitarian attitudes should be obvious. Both contain the germ of oppression if not watched. The one offers the high standard developed by and within an aristocratic class, the other that regard for man without which any order is bound to end in oppression and revolt. 'Both are imperfect, both are useful in their way, and therefore both are best together, to correct or to confirm one another.'<sup>3</sup> Both Wakefield and Marx have something to teach us.

<sup>1</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Oxford Classics, ed. H. S. Commager, p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters from America*, I, ix.

<sup>3</sup> William Hazlitt, *Table Talk*, On Genius and Common Sense (Collins ed.), p. 45.