

became a picture as well known, and as important in religion, as a Madonna by Raphael or Leonardo's *Last Supper*. Popular affection for it lasted right up until the Second World War.

Other sacred pictures were popular but did not reach quite such an enormous public. One enchanting work by Hunt was *The Triumph of the Innocents*. Mary and her child ride to Egypt to escape from Herod's massacre; on the road they are escorted by a little host of friendly children or cherubs, the spirits of the babies who were killed.

SOCIALISM

In Europe in the 1830s there were for the first time idealists who offered to make a Christian society although they could not themselves profess Christian faith in any known form. Would it be possible by state action to make a society where there are no poor people; where all people are educated and no longer brutes in their morals? Get rid of poverty, not by handouts or unemployment pay, but by changing the structure of society. Society can be made better, not by better morals instilled by religion, but by changing the laws so that no one will need to steal. Burglary will not be necessary, and capitalist exploitation will not be possible, because all property will belong to the state.

Some of the theorists held that private property is theft. They applied to all the world the doctrine of the monks, that no one owns anything but everyone is allowed to use what belongs to the monastery. Most church people disliked this doctrine on the grounds that to own things is an essence of human freedom and that the right of a human to be human depends on a measure of possession.

Second, the proposed redistribution of goods could not be done without revolution, since those who 'owned' the goods would not let them go without a battle. There was talk of a class war – the poor against the rich – to achieve the rights of the poor. The churches certainly could not accept a doctrine which



John Keble, poet and pastor, one of the best of Victorian clergy in England; by George Richmond.

recommended members of a community or a nation to kill other members, even to achieve equality among the survivors. They believed in God and the individual, and they feared a doctrine which seemed to say that certain persons had no rights in the community.

But as they thought about the schemes of this sort that were offered, some of them saw that the theory might be married to Christian ideals. The Hebrew prophets from Amos onward were full of the cry for social justice, the hatred of oppression, the wickedness of 'grinding the faces' of the poor. The Virgin Mary's hymn, the Magnificat, was quoted: 'He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.' They looked in the Acts of the Apostles and found that the earliest community at Jerusalem had 'all things common'. And though they did not much consider the sixteenth century, they could have appealed to some of the thinkers in the early Reformation, who argued for cities doing with their money and for their poor

Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World*, 1854; much used in modern devotion.