V

And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creatures after its kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind: and it was so.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth npon the earth.

Gen. i.

Ibi vacabimns et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus. Ecce quod erit in fine sine fine. Nam quis alius noster est finis nisi pervenire ad regnum, cuius nullus est finis?

AUGUSTINE

In the formation of what we may call our historical mind—namely, that modification of our animal and primitive outlook which has been produced by men of exceptional intellectual venturesomeness—the Greeks played a great part. We have seen how the Greek thinkers introduced for the first time highly subtle and critical ways of scrutinizing old beliefs, and how they disabused their minds of many an ancient and naïve mistake. But our current ways of thinking are not derived directly from the Greeks; we are separated from them by the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. When we think of Athens we think of the Parthenon and its frieze, of Sophocles and Euripides, of Socrates and Plato and Aristotle, or urbanity and clarity and moderation in all things. When we think of the Middle Ages we find ourselves in a world of monks, martyrs, and miracles, of popes and emperors, of knights and ladies; we remember Gregory the Great, Abélard, and Thomas Aquinas—and very little do these reminiscences have in common with those of Hellas.

It was indeed a different world, with qnite different fundamental presuppositions. Marvellous as were the achievements of the Greeks in art and literature, and ingenious as they were in new and varied combinations of ideas, they paid too little attention to the common things of the world to devise the necessary means of penetrating its mysteries. They failed to come upon the lynx-eyed lens, or other instruments of modern investigation, and thus never gained a godlike vision of the remote and the minute. Their critical thought was consequently not grounded iu experimental or applied science, and without that the western world was unable to advance or even long maintain their high standards of criticism.

After the Hellenes were absorbed into the vast Roman Empire critical thought and creative intelligence—rare and precarious things at best—began to decline, at first slowly and then with fatal rapidity and completeness. Moreover, new and highly uncritical beliefs and modes of thought became popular. They came from the Near East—Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor—and largely supplanted the critical traditions of the great schools of Greek philosophy. The Stoic and Epicnrean dogmas had lost their freshness. The Greek thinkers had all agreed in looking for salvation through intelligence and knowledge. But eloqnent leaders arose to reveal a new salvation, and over the portal of truth they erased the word " Reason " and wrote " Faith " in its stead; and the people listened gladly to the new prophets, for it was necessary only *to believe* to be saved, and believing is far easier than thinking.

It was religious and mystical thought which, in contrast to the secular philosophy of the Greeks and the scientific thought of our own day, dominated the intellectual life of the Middle Ages.

Before considering this new phase through which the western human mind was to pass it is necessary to guard against a common misapprehension in the use of the term " Middle Ages." Our historical text-hooks usually include in that period the happenings between the dissolution of the Roman Empire and the voyages of Columbus or the opening of the Protestant revolt. To the student of intellectual history this is unfortunate, for the simple reason that almost all the ideas, and even institutions, of the Middle Ages, such as the church and monasticism and organized religious intolerance, really originated in the late Roman Empire. Moreover, the intellectual revolution which has ushered in the thought of our day did not get well under way until the seventeenth century. So one may say that mediæval thought

began long before the accepted beginning of the Middle Ages, and persisted a century or so after they are ordinarily esteemed to have come to an end. We bave to continue to employ the old expression for convenience' sake, but from the standpoint of the history of the European mind three periods should be distingnished, lying between ancient Greek thought as it was flonrishing in Athens, Alexandria, Rhodes, Rome, and elsewhere at the opening of the Christian era, and the birth of modern science some sixteen hundred years later.

The first of these is the period of the Christian Fathers, cnlminating in the anthoritative writings of Augustine, who died in 430. By this time a great part of the critical Greek books had disappeared in western Europe. As for pagan writers, one has difficulty in thinking of a single name (except that of Lucian) later than Jnvenal, who had died nearly three hundred years before Augustine. Worldly knowledge was reduced to pitiful compendiums on which the mediæval students were later to place great reliance. Scientific, literary, and historical information was scarcely to be had. The western world, so far as it thought at all, devoted its attention to religion and all manner of mystical ideas, old and new. As Harnack has so well said, the world was already intellectually bankrupt before the German invasions and their accompanying disorders plunged it into still deeper ignorance and mental obscurity.

The second, or " Dark Age," lasted with ouly slight improvement from Augustine to Abélard, about seven hundred years. The prosperous *villas* disappeared; towns vanished or shrivelled up; libraries were burned or rotted away from neglect; schools were closed, to be reopened later here and there, after Charlemagne's educational edict, in an especially enterprising monastery or by some exceptional bishop who did not spend his whole time in fighting.

From about the year 1100 conditions began to be more and more favourable to the revival of intellectual ambition, a recovery of forgotten knowledge, and a gradual accumulation of new information and inventions unknown to the Greeks, or indeed to any previous civilization. The main presuppositions of this third period of the later Middle Ages go back, however, to the Roman Empire. They had been formulated by the Church Fathers, trausmitted through the Dark Age, and were now elaborated by the professors in the newly established universities under the influence of Aristotle's recovered works and built up into a majestic intellectual structure known as Scholasticism. On these mediæval university professors—the schoolmen—Lord Bacon long ago pronounced a judgment that may well staud to-day. "Having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of readiug, but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle, their dictator), as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges, and knowiug little history, either of nature or time, [they] did out of no great quantity of matter and infinite agitation of wit spin out unto us those laborious webs of learuing which are extant in their books."

Our civilization and the human mind, critical and uncritical, as we now fiud it in our western world, is a direct and uninterrupted outgrowth of the civilizatiou and thought of the later Middle Ages. Very gradually only did peculiarly free and audacious individual thinkers escape from this or that mediæval belief, until in our own day some few have come to reject practically all the presuppositions on which the Scholastic system was reared. But the great mass of Christian believers, whether Catholic or Protestant, still professedly or implicitly adhere to the assumptions of the Middle Ages, at least in all matters in which religious or moral sanctions are

concerned. It is true that outside the Catholic clergy the term "mediæval" is often used in a sense of disparagement, but that should not blind us to the fact that mediæval presumptions, whether for better or worse, are still common. A few of the most fundamental of these presuppositions especially germane to our theme may be pointed out here.

II. OUR MEDIÆVAL INTELLECTUAL INHERITANCE

The Greeks and Romans had various theories of the origiu of things, all vague and admittedly conjectural. But the Christians, relying upon the inspired account in the Bible, built their theories on information which tbey believed had been vouchsafed to them by God Himself. Their whole couception of hnman history was based upon a far more fundamental and thorough supernaturalism than we find among the Greeks and Romans. The pagan philosophers reckoned with the gods, to be sure, but they never assumed that man's earthly life shonld turn entirely on what was to happen after death. This was in theory the sole preoccupation of the mediæval Christian. Life here below was but a brief, if decisive, preliminary to the real life to come.

The mediæval Christian was esseutially more polytheistic thau his pagan predecessors, for he pictured hierarchies of good and evil spirits who were ever aiding him to reach heaven or seducing him into the paths of sin aud error. Miracles were of common occurrence and might be attributed either to God or the Devil; the direct intervention of both good and evil spirits played a conspicuous part in the explanation of daily acts and motives.

As a distinguished Church historian has said, the God of the Middle Ages was a God of arbitrariness—the more arbitrary the more Godlike. By frequent interferences with the regular course of events he made his existence clear, reassured his children of his

continued solicitude, and frustrated the plots of the Evil One. Not until the eighteenth century did any considerable number of thinkers revolt against this conception of the Deity and come to worship a God of orderliness who abode by his own laws.

The mediæval thinkers all accepted without question what Santayana has strikingly described as the "Christian Epic." This included the general historical conceptions of how man came about, and how, in view of his origin and his past, he should conduct his life. The universe had come into being in less than a week, and man had originally been created in a state of perfection along with all other things—sun, moon, and stars, plants and animals. After a time the first human pair had yielded to temptation, transgressed God's commands, and been driveu from the lovely garden in which he had placed them. So sin came into the world, aud the offspring of the guilty pair were thereby contaminated and defiled from the womb.

In time the wickedness became such on the newly created earth that God resolved to blot out mankind, excepting only Noah's family, which was spared to repeople the earth after the Flood; but the unity of language that man had formerly possessed was lost. At the appointed time, preceded by many prophetic visions among the chosen people, God sent his Son to live the life of men on earth and become their Saviour by submitting to death. Thereafter, with the spread of the gospel, the struggle between the kingdom of God and that of the Devil became the supreme conflict of history. It was to culminate in the Last Judgment, when the final separation of good and evil should take place, and the blessed should ascend into the heavens to dwell with God for ever, while the wicked sank to hell to writhe in endless torment.

This general account of man, his origin and fate, embraced in the Christian Epic, was notable for its

precision, its divine authenticity, and the obstacles which its authority consequently presented to any revision in the light of increasing knowledge. The fundamental truths in regard to man were assumed to be established once and for all. The Greek thinkers had had little in the way of authority on which to build, and no inconsiderable number of them frankly confessed that they did not believe that such a thing could exist for the thoroughly sophisticated intelligence. But mediæval philosophy and science *were grounded wholly in authority*. The mediæval schoolmen turned aside from the hard path of scepticism, long searchings and investigation of actual phenomena, aud confidently believed that they could find truth by the easy acceptance of revelation and the elaboration of unquestioned dogmas.

This reliance on authority is a fundamental primitive trait. We have inherited it not only from our mediæval forefathers, but, like them and through them, from long generations of prehistoric men. We all have a natural tendency to rely upon established beliefs and fixed institutions. This is an expression of our spontaneous confidence in everything that comes to us in an unquestioned form. As children we are subject to authority and cannot escape the control of existing opinion. We unconsciously absorb our ideas and views from the gronp in which we happen to live. What we see about us, what we are told, and what we read, must perforce be received at its face value so long as there are no conflicts to aronse scepticism.

We are tremendously suggestible. Our mechanism is much better adapted to credulity than to questioning. All of us *believe* nearly all the time. Few doubt, and only now and then. The past exercises an almost irresistible fascination over us. As children we learn to look up to the old, and when we grow up we do not permit our poignant realization

of elderly incapacity among our contemporaries to rouse suspicions of Moses, Isaiah, Confucins, or Aristotle. Their sayings come to us unquestioned; their remoteness makes inquiry into their competence impossible. We readily assume that they had sonrces of information and wisdom superior to the prophets of our own day.

Dnring the Middle Ages reverence for authority, and for that particular form of authority which we may cali the tyranny of the past, was dominant, but probably not more so than it had been in other societies and ages—in ancient Egypt, in China and India. Of the great sources of mediæval anthority, the Bible and the Church Fathers, the Roman and Church law, and the encyclopædic writings of Aristotle, none continnes nowadays to hold us in its old grip. Even the Bible, although nominally unquestioned among Roman Catholics and all the more orthodox Protestant sects, is rarely appealed to, as of old, in parliamentary debate or in discussions of social and economic questions. It is still a religions authority, bnt it no longer forms the basis of secular decisions.

The findings of modern science have shaken the hold of the sources of mediæval authority, but they have done little as yet to loosen our inveterate habit of relying on the more insidious authority of current practice and belief. We still assume that received dogmas represent the secure conclusions of mankind, and that current institntions represent the approved results of much experiment in the past, which it wonld be worse than futile to repeat. One solemn remembrancer will cite as a warning the discreditable experience of the Greek cities in democracy; another, how the decline of "morality" and the disintegration of the family heralded the fall of Rome; another, the constant menace of mob rule as exemplified in the Reign of Terror.

But to the student of history these alleged illustrations have little bearing on present conditions. He is struck, moreover, with the ease with which ancient misapprehensions are transmitted from generation to generation and with the difficulty of launching a newer and clearer and truer idea of anything. Bacon warns us that the multitude, "or the wisest for the mnltitnde's sake," is in reality "ready to give passage rather to that which is popular and snperficial than to that which is substantial and profound; for the truth is that time seemeth to be of the nature of a river or stream, which carrieth down to us that which is light and blown up, and sinketh and drowneth that which is weighty and solid."

It is very painful to most minds to admit that the past does not fnrnish us with reliable, permanent standards of conduct and of public policy. We resent the imputation that things are not going, on the whole, pretty well, and we find excuses for tnrning our backs on disconcerting and puzzling facts. We are full of respectable fears and a general timidity in the face of conditions which we vaguely feel are escaping control in spite of our best efforts to prevent any thoroughgoing readjustment. We instinctively try to show that Mr. Keynes mnst surely be wrong about the Treaty of Versailles; that Sir Philip Gibbs must be perversely exaggerating the horrors of modern war; that Mr. Hobson certainly views the industrial crisis with nnjustifiable pessimism; that "big bnsiness" cannot be that socially perverse and incredibly inexpedient thing Mr. Veblen shows it to be.

Yet, even if we could assume that traditional opinion is a fairly clear and reliable reflection of hard-earned experience, surely it shonld have less weight in our day and generation than in the past. For changes have overtaken mankind which have fundamentally altered the conditions in which we live, and which are revolutionizing the relations between indi-

viduals and classes and nations. Moreover, we must remember that knowledge has widened and deepened, so that, could any of us really catch up with the information of our own time, he would have little temptation to indulge the mediæval habit of appealing to the authority of the past.

The Christian Epic did not have to rely for its perpetnation either on its intellectual plausibility or its traditional authority. During the Middle Ages there developed a vast and powerful religious State, the mediæval Church, the real successor, as Hobbes pointed ont, to the Roman Empire; and the Church with all its resources, including its control over " the secular arm " of kings and priuces, was ready to defend the Christian beliefs against question and revision. To doubt the teachings of the Church was the supreme crime; it was treason against God himself, in comparison with which—to judge from mediæval experts on heresy—murder was a minor offence.

We do not, however, inherit our present disposition to intolerance solely from the Middle Ages. As animals aud children and savages, we are naïvely and unqnestioningly intolerant. All divergeuce from the customary is suspicious and repugnant. It seems perverse, and readily suggests evil intentions. Indeed, so natural and spontaneous is intolerance that the question of freedom of speech and writing scarcely became a real issue before the seventeenth century. We have seen that some of the Greek thinkers suffered for their new ideas. The Roman officials, as well as the populace, pestered the early Christians, not so much for the substance of their views as because they were puritanical, refused the routine revereuce to the gods, and prophesied the downfall of the State.

But with the firm establishment of Christianity edicts began to be issued by the Roman emperors making orthodox Christian belief the test of good

citizenship. One who disagreed with the emperor and his religious advisers in regard to the relation of the three members of the Trinity was subject to prosecution. Heretical books were burned, the houses of heretics destroyed. So, organized mediæval religious intolerance was, like so many other things, a heritage of the later Roman Empire, and was duly sanctioued in both the Theodosian and Justinian Codes. It was, however, with the Inquisition, beginning in the thirteenth century, that the intolerance of the Middle Ages reached its most perfect organization.

Heresy was looked upon as a contagious disease tbat must be checked at all costs. It did not matter that the heretic usually led a conspicuously blameless life, that he was arduous, did not swear, was emaciated with fasting and refused to participate in the vain recreations of his fellows. He was, indeed, overserious and took his religion too hard. This offensive parading as an angel of light was explained as the Devil's camouflage. No one tried to find out what the heretic really thought or what were tlie merits of his divergent beliefs. Because he insisted on expressing his conception of God in slightly unfamiliar terms, the heretic was often branded as an atheist, just as to-day the Socialist is so often accused of being opposed to all government, when the real objection to him is that he believes in too much government. It was sufficient to classify a suspected heretic as an Albigensian, or Waldensian, or a member of some other heretical sect. There was no use in his trying to explain or justify; it was enough that he diverged.

There have been various explanations of mediæval religious intolerance. Lecky, for example, thought that it was due to the theory of exclusive salvation; that, since there was only one way of getting to heaven, all should obviously be compelled to adopt it, for the saving of their souls from eternal torment. But oue finds little solicitude for the damned in

mediæval writings. The public at large thought hell none too bad for one who revolted against God and Holy Church. No, the heretics were persecuted because heresy was, according to the notions of the time, a monstrous and unutterably wicked thing, and because their beliefs threatened the vested interests of that day.

We now realize more clearly than did Lecky that the Church was really a State in the Middle Ages, with its owu laws and courts and prisons and regular taxation to which all were subject. It had all the interests and all the touchinesses of a State, and more. The heretic was a traitor and a rebel. He thought that he could get along without the pope and bishops, and that he could well spare the ministrations of the orthodox priests and escape their exactions. He was the "anarchist," the "Red" of his time, who was undermining established authority, and, with the approval of all right-minded citizens, he was treated accordingly. For the mediæval citizen no more conceived of a State in which the Church was not the dominating authority than we can conceive of a society in which the present political State may have been superseded by some other form of organization.

Yet the inconceivable has come to pass. Secular anthority has superseded in nearly all matters the old ecclesiastical regime. What was the supreme issue of the Middle Ages—the distinction between the religious heretic and the orthodox—is the least of public questions now.

What, then, we may ask, has been the ontcome of the old religious persecutions, of the trials, tortures, imprisonings, burnings, and massacres, culminating with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes? What did the Inquisition and the censorship, both so long unquestioned, accomplish? Did they succeed in defending the truth or "safeguardiug" society? At any rate, conformity was not established. Nor did

the Holy Roman Church maintain its monopoly, although it has survived, purified and freed from many an ancient abuse. In most countries of western Europe and in North America one may now believe as he wishes, express, without penal consequences, such religious views as appeal to him, and join freely with others who share his sympathies. "Atheism" is still a shocking charge in many ears, but the atheist is no longer an outlaw. *It has been demonstrated, in short, that religious dogma can be neglected in matters of public concern and reduced to a question of private taste and preference.*

This is an incredible revolution. But we have many reasons for suspecting that in a much shorter time than that which has elapsed since the Inquisition was founded, the present attempt to eliminate by force those who contemplate a fundamental reordering of social and economic relations will seem quite as inexpedient and hopeless as the Inquisition's effort to defend the monopoly of the mediæval Church.

We can learn much from the past in regard to wrong ways of dealing with new ideas. As yet we have only old-fashioned and highly expensive modes of meeting the inevitable changes which are bound to take place. Repression has now and then enjoyed some temporary snccess, it is trne, but in the main it has failed lamentably and produced only suffering and confusion. Mnch will depend on whether our purpose is to keep things as they are or to bring about readjustments designed to correct abuses and injustice in the present order. Do we believe, in other words, that truth is finally established and that we have only to defend it, or that it is still in the making? Do we believe in what is commonly called progress, or do we think of that as belouging only to the past? Have we, ou the whole, arrived, or are we ouly on the way, or mayhap just starting?

In the Middle Ages, even iu the times of the Greeks

and Romans, there was little or no conception of progress as the word is now used. There could doubtless be improvement in detail. Men could be wiser and better or more ignorant and perverse. But the assumption was that in general the social, economic, and religious order was fairly standardized.

This was especially true in the Middle Ages. During these centuries men's single objective was the assurance of heaven and escape from hell. Life was an angry river into which men were cast. Demons were on every hand to drag them down. The only aim could be, with God's help, to reach the celestial shore. There was no time to consider whether the river might be made less dangerous by concerted effort, through the deflection of its torrents and the removal of its sharpest rocks. No one thought that human efforts should be directed to making the lot of humanity progressively better by intelligent reforms in the light of advancing knowledge.

The world was a place to escape from on the best terms possible. In our own day this mediæval idea of a static society yields only grudgingly, and the notion of inevitable vital change is as yet far from assimilated. We confess it with our lips, but resist it in our hearts. We have learned as yet to respect only one class of fundamental innovators, those dedicated to natural science and its applications. The social innovator is still generally suspect.

To the mediæval theologian, man was by nature vile. We have seen that, according to the Christian Epic, he was defiled from birth with the primeval sin of his first parents, and began to darken his score with fresh offences of his own as soon as he became intelligent enough to do so. An elaborate mechanism was supplied by the Church for washing away the original pollution and securing forgiveness for later sins. Indeed, this was ostensibly its main business.

We may still well ask, Is man by nature bad?

And accordingly as we answer the question we either frame appropriate means for frustrating his evil tendencies or, if we see some promise in him, work for his freedom and bid him take advantage of it to make himself and others happy. So far as I know, Charron, a friend of Montaigne, was one of the first to say a good word for man's "animal" nature, and a hundred years later the amiable Shaftesbury pointed ont some honestly gentlemanly traits in the species. To the modern student of biology and anthropology man is neither good nor bad. There is no longer any "mystery of evil." But the mediæval notion of *sin*—a term heavy with mysticism and deserving of careful scrutiny by every thoughtful person—still confuses us.

Of man's impulses, the one which played the greatest part in mediæval thoughts of sin and in the monastic ordering of life was the sexual. The presuppositions of the Middle Ages in the matter of the relations of men and women have been carried over to our own day. As compared with many of the ideas which we have inherited from the past, they are of comparatively recent origin. The Greeks and Romans were, on the whole, primitive and uncritical in their view of sex. The philosophers do not seem to have speculated on sex, although there was evidently some talk in Athens of women's rights. The movement is satirized by Aristophanes, and later Plato showed a willingness in *The Republic* to impeach the current notions of the family and women's position in general.

But there are few traces of our ideas of sexual "purity" in the classical writers. To the Stoic philosopher, and to other thoughtful elderly people, sexual indulgence was deemed a low order of pleasure and one best carefully controlled in the interests of peace of mind. But with the incoming of Christianity an essentially new attitude developed, which is still,

consciously or unconsciously, that of most people to-day.

St. Augustine, who had led a free life as a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage and Rome, came in his later years to believe, as he struggled to overcome his youthful temptations, that sexual desire was the most devilish of man's enemies and the chief sign of his degradation. He could imagine no such unruly urgence in man's perfect estate, when Adam and Eve still dwelt in Paradise. But with man's fall sexual desire appeared as the sign and seal of human debasement. This theory is poignantly set forth in Augustine's *City of God*. He furnished therein a philosophy for the monks, and doubtless his fourteenth book was well thumbed by those who were wont to ponder somewhat wistfully on one of the sins they had fled the world to escape.

Christian monasticism was spreading in western Europe in Augustine's time, and the monkist vows included "chastity." There followed a long struggle to force the whole priesthood to adopt a celibate life, and this finally succeeded so far as repeated decrees of the Church could effect it. Marriage was proper for the laity, but both the monastic and secular clergy aspired to a superior holiness which should banish all thoughts of fervent earthly love. Thus a highly unnatural life was accepted by men and women of the most varied temperament and often with slight success.

The result of Augustine's theories and of the efforts to frustrate one of man's most vehement impulses was to give sex a conscious importance it had never possessed before. The Devil was thrust out of the door only to come in at all the windows. In due time the Protestant sects abolished monasteries, and the Catholic countries later followed their example. The Protestant clergy were permitted to marry, and the old asceticism has visibly declined. But it has

done much to determine our whole attitude towards sex, and there is no class of questions still so difficult to discuss with full honesty or to deal with critically and with an open mind as those relating to the intimate relations of men and women.

No one familiar with mediæval literature will, however, be inclined to accuse its authors of prudishness. Nevertheless, modern prudishness, as it prevails especially in England and the United States—our squeamish and shamefaced reluctance to recognize and deal frankly with the facts and problems of sex—is clearly an outgrowth of the mediæval attitude which looked on sexual impulse as of evil origin and a sign of man's degradation. Modern psychologists have shown that prudishness is not always an indication of exceptional purity, but rather the reverse. It is often a disguise thrown over repressed sexual interest and sexual preoccupations. It appears to be decreasing among the better educated of the younger generation. The study of biology, and especially of embryology, is an easy and simple way of disintegrating the "impurity complex." "Purity" in the sense of ignorance and suppressed curiosity is a highly dangerous state of mind. And such purity in alliance with prudery and defensive hypocrisy makes any honest discussion or essential readjustment of our institutions and habits extremely difficult.

One of the greatest contrasts between mediæval thinking and the more critical thought of to-day lies in the general conception of man's relation to the cosmos. To the mediæval philosopher, as to the stupidest serf of the time, the world was made for man. All the heavenly bodies revolved about man's abode as their centre. All creatures were made to assist or to try man. God and the Devil were preoccupied with his fate; for had not God made him in His own image for His glory, and was not the Devil

intent on populating his own infernal kingdom? It was easy for those who had a poetic turn of mind to think of nature's workings as symbols for man's edification. The habits of the lion or the eagle yielded moral lessons or illustrated the divine scheme of salvation. Even the written word was to be valued, not for what it seemed to say, but for hidden allegories depicting man's struggles against evil and cheering him on his way.

This is a perennially appealing conception of things. It corresponds to primitive and inveterate tendencies in humanity and gratifies, under the guise of humility, our hungering for self-importance.[1] The mediæval thinker, however freely he might exercise his powers of logical analysis in rationalizing the Christian Epic, never permitted himself to question its general anthropocentric and mystical view of the world. The philosophic mystic assumes the rôle of a docile child. He feels that all vital truth transcends his powers of discovery. He looks to the Infinite and Eternal Mind to reveal it to him through the prophets of old, or in moments of ecstatic communion with the Divine Intelligence. To the mystic all that concerns our deeper needs transcends logic and defies analysis. In his estimate the human reason is a feeble rushlight which can at best cast a flickering and uncertain ray on the grosser concerns of life, but which only serves to intensify the darkness which surrounds the hidden truth of God.

In order that modern science might develop it is clear that a wholly new and opposed set of funda-

[1] St. Ethelred, returning from a pious visit to Citeaux in the days of Henry II, encountered a great storm when he reached the Channel. He asked himself what *he* had done to be thus delayed, and suddenly thought that he had failed to fulfil a promise to write a poem on St. Cuthbert. When he had completed this, "wonderful to say, the sea ceased to rage and became tranquil."—*Surtees Society Publications*, I, p. 177.

mental convictions had to be substituted for those of the Middle Ages. Man had to cultivate another kind of self-importance and a new and more profound humility. He had come to believe in his capacity to discover important truth through thoughtful examination of things about him, and he had to recognize, on the other hand, that the world did not seem to be made for him, but that humanity was apparently a curious incident in the universe, and its career a recent episode in cosmic history. He had to acquire a taste for the simplest possible and most thoroughgoing explanation of things. His whole mood had to change and impel him to reduce everything so far as possible to the commonplace.

This new view was inevitably fiercely attacked by the mystically disposed. They misunderstood it and berated its adherents and accused them of robbing man of all that was most precious in life. These, in turn, were goaded into bitterness, and denounced their opponents as pig-headed obscurantists.

But we must, after all, come to terms in some way with the emotions underlying mysticism. They are very dear to us, and scientific knowledge will never form an adequate substitute for them. No one need fear that the supply of mystery will ever give out; but a great deal depends on our taste in mystery—that certainly needs refining. What disturbs the so-called rationalist in the mystic's attitude is his propensity to see mysteries where there are none, and to fail to see those that we cannot possibly escape. In declaring that one is not a mystic, one makes no claim to be able to explain everything, nor does he maintain that all things are explicable in scientific terms.[1]

[1] *Tertium Organum, the Third Canon of Thought*, by P. D. Ouspensky, shows how exacting philosophic and scientific thought may land one in what would ordinarily be considered a highly mystical frame of mind.

Indeed, no thoughtful person will be likely to boast that he can fully explain anything. We have only to scrape the surface of our experiences to find fundamental mystery. And how, indeed, as descendants of an extinct simian race, with a mind still in the early stages of accumulation, should we be in the way of reaching ultimate truth at any point? One may properly urge, however, that as sharp a distinction as possible be made between fictitious mysteries and the unavoidable ones which surround us on every side. How milk turned sour used to be a real mystery, now partially solved since the discovery of bacteria; how the witch flew up the chimney was a gratuitous mystery with which we need no longer trouble ourselves. A "live" wire would once have suggested magic; now it is at least partially explained by the doctrine of electrons.

It is the avowed purpose of scientific thought to reduce the number of mysteries, and its success has been marvellous, but it has by no means done its perfect work as yet. We have carried over far too much of mediæval mysticism in our views of man and his duty toward himself and others.

We must now proceed to recall the method adopted by students of the natural sciences in breaking away from the standards and limitations of the mediæval philosophers and establishing new standards of their own. They thus prepared the way for a revolution in human affairs in the midst of which we now find ourselves. As yet their type of thinking has not been applied on any considerable scale to the solution of social problems, and in the general conduct of life. *By learning to understand and appreciate the scientific frame of mind as a historical victory won against extraordinary odds, we may be encouraged to cultivate and popularize a similar attitude toward the study of man himself.*

§ VI