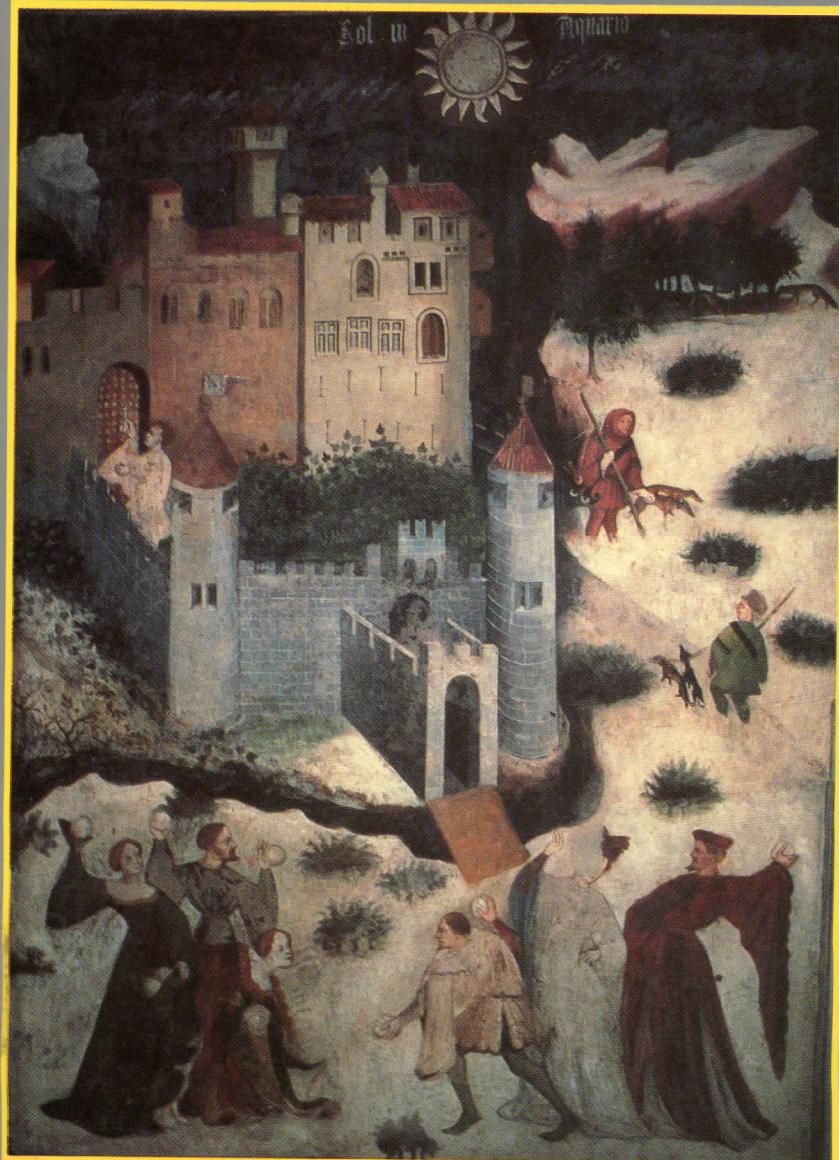


Medieval Civilization



Jacques Le Goff

CARTIER

Medieval Civilization 400-1500

Jacques Le Goff

*Translated by
Julia Barrow*

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Christian Society (Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries)

I

AROUND THE year 1000 AD, western sources depicted Christian society according to a new system which immediately enjoyed a great success: society was composed of a 'threefold people' - priests, warriors, and peasants. The three categories were distinct and complementary, each one having need of the other two. Together, the three worked in harmony to make up the fabric of society. This model apparently made its first appearance in the very free translation of Boethius' *Consolation* made by Alfred the Great of England in the late ninth century. The king had to have '*gebedmen, fyrdmen, weorcmen*', or 'men of prayer, men of war, men of work'. A century later, this tripartite plan reappears in the writings of Aelfric and Wulfstan. Then Bishop Adalbero of Laon, in a poem which he dedicated to the Capetian king Robert the Pious in about 1020, produced a more elaborate version:

The community of the faithful is a single body, but the condition of society is threefold in order. For human law distinguishes two classes. Nobles and serfs, indeed, are not governed by the same ordinance The former are the warriors and the protectors of the churches. They are the defenders of the people, of both great and small, in short, of everyone, and at the same time they ensure their own safety. The other class is that of the serfs. This luckless breed possesses nothing except at the cost of its own labour. Who could, reckoning with an abacus, add up the sum of the cares with which the peasants are occupied, of their journeys on foot, of their hard labours? The serfs provide money, clothes, and food, for the rest; no free man could exist without serfs. Is there a task to be done? Does anyone want to put himself out? We see kings and prelates make themselves the serfs of their serfs; the master, who claims to feed his serf, is fed by him. And the serf never sees an end to his tears and his sighs. God's house, which we think of as one, is thus divided into three; some pray, others fight, and yet others work. The three groups, which coexist, cannot bear to be separated; the services

rendered by one are a precondition for the labours of the two others; each in his turn takes it upon himself to relieve the whole. Thus the threefold assembly is none the less united, and it is thus that law has been able to triumph, and that the world has been able to enjoy peace.

This crucial text contains some extraordinary phrases. The reality of feudal society is suddenly revealed in the formula 'the master, who claims to feed his serf, is fed by him'. And the existence of classes - and consequently of antagonism between them - although immediately disguised by the orthodox affirmation of social harmony, is admitted in the observation: 'God's house, which we think of as one, is thus divided into three.' What is important for us here is the characterization of the three classes of feudal society, which was to become classic: those who pray, those who fight, those who work: *oratores, bellatores, laboratores*.

It would be fascinating to follow the history of this theme, its changes, its connections with other motifs, for example with the three sons of Noah from biblical genealogy, or with the three sons of Rigr, from Germanic mythology. Out of dozens of texts, here is one in which the tripartite division has put on an animal guise. In the early twelfth century Eadmer of Canterbury, recording the teaching of Anselm of Canterbury, expanded this *exemplum* or sort of symbolic fable.

Exemplum of the sheep, the oxen and the dogs. The purpose of sheep is to provide milk and wool; that of oxen is to work the ground, and that of dogs is to defend sheep and oxen from wolves. If each type of animal performs its duty, God protects them . . . Similarly he has set up orders which he has established in view of the various duties which must be fulfilled in this world. He has established some - clerks and monks - so that they may pray for the others and so that, full of gentleness, like sheep, they may give the others the milk of preaching to drink and may inspire in them a fervent love of God by the wool of good example. God has established the peasants to sustain their own lives and other people's, as the oxen do by their work. God has established yet others - the warriors - to show force in so far as it is needful, and to defend those who pray and those who till the land from enemies such as wolves.

But is a literary theme a good introduction to the study of medieval society? What relation does it bear to reality? Does it express the actual structure of social classes in the medieval west? Georges Dumézil has made the point that the division of society into three is characteristic of Indo-European societies, and thus the medieval west would be connected with, in particular, the Italic tradition of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus, with probably a Celtic intermediary. Others, who include Vasilii I. Abaev, think that the 'division into three by function' is 'a necessary stage of the evolution of all human ideology' or rather

of all social ideology. The main point is, however, that this model emerged or re-emerged just when it seemed to suit the development of western European society. Between the eighth and the eleventh century the aristocracy organized itself into a military class, as we have seen, a typical member of this class being called a *miles* or knight. This seems to have been the case right up to the frontiers of Christian Europe, since a tombstone inscription recently found in Gniezno cathedral tells us about an eleventh-century *miles*. In the Carolingian period the clergy transformed themselves into a clerical caste, as Canon Delaruelle has shown, and the evolution of the liturgy and of religious architecture is an expression of this change. Choirs and cloisters were enclosed and restricted to the clergy of the chapter. External schools attached to monasteries were shut down. From now on the celibate priest celebrated Mass with his back turned to the faithful, who no longer came in procession to bear the 'oblations' to the celebrant. They were no longer able to hear the recitation of the canon of the mass which from now on was said in a low voice. The Host was no longer normal bread but unleavened bread, 'as if the mass had become foreign to daily life'. Finally, the condition of peasants tended to become more uniform and to sink to the lowest level, that of the serfs.

One has only to compare this schema with those of the early middle ages to appreciate the change. There are two images of society which occur most frequently between the fifth and the eleventh centuries. Sometimes it is a multiple, diversified model, listing a certain number of social and professional categories in which one can trace the relics of a Roman system of classification, distinguishing professional groups, legal categories, and social conditions. Thus Bishop Rather of Verona in the tenth century listed nineteen categories: civilians, soldiers, craftsmen, physicians, merchants, advocates, judges, witnesses, procurators, employers, mercenaries, councillors, lords, slaves (or serfs), masters, pupils, the rich, the middling, and beggars. This list more or less preserves the specialization of the professional and social categories which had been characteristic of Roman society, and which had perhaps survived to some extent in northern Italy.

More often, however, society was boiled down to two groups in confrontation - clergy and laity from one point of view, or strong and weak, rich and poor, if one was merely taking lay society into consideration, or free and unfree if one were viewing it from a legal standpoint. It is clear that this dualistic model corresponds to a simplification of social categories in western Europe in the early middle ages. Government, whether spiritual, political, or economic, was monopolized by a minority while the masses submitted. Less often, the middling or 'mediocre' make their appearance between the great and the small. This happened when people were careful to express nuances or when they fell back on a tripartite scheme because their minds automatically classified

everything into threes (just as in our schools where it comes naturally to divide essays into three parts). Ralph Glaber uses this pattern. But this division into three seems chiefly to be the result of a rhetorical mannerism: to what did it correspond in any concrete way?

The division of society by function, which makes its first appearance around the year 1000, was quite different. It was bound up with the functions of the priest, the warrior, and the farmer. It was characteristic of a certain phase of evolution in primitive societies, probably not only Indo-European ones. One could probably find affinities, if not continuity, between a source such as Eadmer of Canterbury's passage quoted above and the animal symbolism used for the tripartite division of functions in other societies, which would leave no doubt about the relationship between the way medieval people viewed society and the way in which it was viewed in other fairly primitive societies. E. Benveniste has emphasized how, in the agricultural lustration and the *suovetaurilia* of Graeco-Italic cults, one finds the pig corresponding to Tellus, the ram to Jupiter, and the bull to Mars. L. Gerschel has established the connection in the systems of divination and the thought of ancient Rome between the man, the horse, and the ox, as species, or the head, the four-horse chariot, and the heifer, as omens, with the three functional values of sovereignty, military prowess, and economic prosperity. Georges Dumézil has reminded us of the symbolic importance of the eagle of Jupiter, the shewolf of Mars, and the trout which symbolized the earth-goddesses and fertility. The sheep, oxen, and dogs of Eadmer are a medieval transformation of this custom of symbolizing a tripartite society by animals.

What is the meaning of the division into three functions? And, chiefly, what contacts did the three functions, or rather the three classes which represented them, maintain with each other? It is clear that the tripartite schema was a symbol of social harmony. Like the fable of Menenius Agrippa, *The Limbs and the Stomach*, it was a vivid way of defusing the class struggle and of mystifying the people. However, although it has been correctly observed that this schema aimed to keep the workers - the economic class, the producers - in a state of submission to the other two classes, it has not been sufficiently noticed that the schema, which was dreamed up by the clergy, aimed also at subjecting the warriors to the priests, and at making them the protectors of the Church and of religion. Thus it is an episode in the ancient rivalry between the magicians and the warriors, on a par with the Gregorian Reform and the conflict between Sacerdotium and Imperium. It is contemporary with the *chansons de geste*, which were the literary battleground of the conflict between the clerical and knightly classes, just as the *Iliad* is a witness to the conflict between the power of the magicians and the valour of the warriors, as Vasilii I. Abaev, working from the episode of the Trojan Horse, has cleverly

demonstrated. Think of the distance which separates Roland and Lancelot. What has been described as the Christianizing of the chivalric ideal is more certainly the victory of the power of the priests over the strength of the warriors. Roland, whatever has been said about him, has the ethics of his class. He thinks about his lineage, his king, and his country. There is nothing in him of the saint, except that he served as a model for the saint of his age - the eleventh and twelfth centuries - the *miles Christi*. The whole of the Arthurian cycle, on the other hand, culminates in the triumph of the 'first function' over the second. Already in the work of Chrétien of Troyes a difficult balancing act culminates, by way of the development of Percival, in the metamorphosis of the knight, the quest of the Holy Grail, and the vision of Good Friday. The prose Lancelot concludes the cycle. The epilogue with Arthur's death is a twilight of the warriors. The symbolic implement of the military class, the sword Excalibur, is finally thrown by the king into the lake and Lancelot becomes truly a sort of saint. The power of the magicians, though in a rather refined form, had absorbed the valour of the warriors.

On the other hand, one might wonder if the third category, that of the workers, the *laboratores*, was entirely synonymous with the class of producers, and if all the peasants represented the economic function. A whole series of sources could be gathered together to show that between the end of the eighth and the twelfth century the words related to the word *labor*, when used in its economic sense (which in fact is rarely purely the case, since these terms are almost always contaminated to some extent by the psychological idea of weariness or distress) tally with a precise meaning, that of agricultural advance, whether an increase in the area under cultivation or an improvement in the yield. The Capitulary of the Saxons at the end of the eighth century distinguishes *substantia* from *labor*, that is the patrimony or inheritance on the one hand and the profits gained by working the land on the other. *Labor* meant land clearance and its fruits. A gloss in a manuscript on one of the canons of a Norwegian synod of 1164 defines *labores* as *novales*, that is to say newly cleared lands or assarts. The *laborator* was the man whose productive capacity was great enough for him to produce more than the others. As early as 926 a charter of St Vincent of Mâcon refers to '*illi meliores qui sunt laboratores*', 'those men of the better sort who are the *laboratores*'. Hence was to be derived the French word '*laboureurs*', which, from the tenth century, designated the upper level of the peasantry, the ones who owned at least a yoke of oxen and their work-implements.

Thus the tripartite schema really portrayed only the upper classes: the clerical class, the military class, and the upper layer of the productive class. Although some writers, such as Adalbero of Laon, placed the entire peasant class in the third order, and identified the *laboratores* with the serfs, the schema

included only the *mélior pars*, the élites. We might moreover recall the way in which this threefold society was transformed in the later middle ages. In France it became the three estates: the clergy, the nobility, and the third estate. However the third estate was not to be identified with the entire class of commoners. It did not even represent all the bourgeoisie. It was composed of the upper levels of the bourgeoisie, the 'notables'. The ambiguity which had gone on since the middle ages over the nature of this third class, which theoretically contained all those who did not figure in the first two classes, and which in fact was limited to the richest or most learned section of the remainder, was cleared up in the dispute which occurred in the French Revolution between the men of '89 who wanted to halt the Revolution at the victory of the élite of the Third Estate and those who wanted to turn it into a triumph for the entire people.

In fact, in the society of what has been called the first feudal age, up to about the middle of the twelfth century, the mass of manual workers quite simply did not exist. An eleventh-century work, again of St Vincent of Mâcon, contrasts the '*laboratores*' with the '*pauperiores qui manibus laborant*', 'the poorer people who work with their hands'. Marc Bloch noticed with surprise that the lay and ecclesiastical lords of this period had precious metals turned into pieces of craftsmanship which they then had melted down again in case of need, as we have seen. They reckoned the work of the artist or craftsman as of no economic value. It is a fact that this age was unaware of work or workers. Only an error of vocabulary lets us translate *laboratores* simply as 'workers'.

Nonetheless it is the case that we have just been talking about social classes and have been applying this term to the three categories of the tripartite schema, even though traditionally they were seen as orders; orders were supposed to correspond in the medieval period to functions, not to class distinctions. But, first, this vocabulary is usually not exact. The term *ordo*, which is Carolingian rather than specifically feudal, belongs to religious terminology and thus relates generally to a religious vision of society, to clerics and to laymen, to the spiritual and the temporal. Thus there could only be two orders, the clergy and the people, *clerus* and *populus*, and the sources moreover usually say '*utraque ordo*', 'each of the two orders'. Second, only modern jurists have wanted to establish, without any semblance of justification, a distinction between a class which they suppose to be defined economically, and an order which they suppose to be defined legally. In fact, the orders were religious, but just like social classes they were based on socioeconomic foundations. It is still true that the real inclination of the originators and the users of the tripartite schema in the middle ages (to make three classes of which it was composed into 'orders') was to consecrate this social structure, to make it into an objective, eternal reality created and willed by God, and thus to make a social revolution impossible.

II

Thus it was a profound change when, as had happened occasionally already in the eleventh century, *ordo* was replaced by *conditio* or condition, and, in about 1200, by 'estate'. This laicizing of the way in which society was viewed would be important in itself, but, even more importantly, it was accompanied by the destruction of the tripartite model which itself corresponded to a crucial development in medieval society. Clearly a critical moment in the history of the tripartite model in a society comes when a new class appears which has not hitherto had a place in the system. The solutions adopted by different societies, which Georges Dumézil has studied for Indo-European societies, are varied. Three of them do not disturb the traditional view of things much. The first solution manages to keep the new class on one side and to refuse it a place in the system. The second amalgamates and dissolves it into one of the three pre-existing classes. Even the more revolutionary third solution, which turns the three-part model into a four-part one, does not disturb things much. Usually the spoilsport class is the mercantile one. This marks the change from a closed to an open economy and the emergence of a powerful productive class which is not content to submit itself to the clerical and military classes. We see clearly how traditional medieval society experimented with these conservative solutions when we read in a fourteenth-century English sermon, 'God made the clerics, the knights and the ploughmen, but the devil made the burgesses and the usurers,' or when a thirteenth-century German poem says that from now on the fourth class, that of the usurers or *Wuocher*, governs the other three.

What is significant is that in the second half of the twelfth century and during the course of the thirteenth the tripartite model of society, even if it continued to be used as a literary and ideological theme for a long time to come, was being pulled apart. It yielded to a more complicated and more subtle model which resulted from, and reflected, a social upheaval. The tripartite society was succeeded by the society of 'estates', that is to say of socio-professional conditions. The number of these conditions varied according to the taste of the writers, but some features of the models are constant, notably the mixture of a religious classification based on clerical and family criteria with a division according to professional roles and social conditions.

Sometimes, moreover, just as the three sons of Noah had lent themselves to the representation of the tripartite model, other themes from Biblical or Christian symbolism were adapted to the new model of society. Honorius of Autun compared society to a church whose columns were the bishops, the stained-glass windows the masters, the vaults the kings, the roof-tiles the knights, and the paved floor the people who by their work fed and sustained

Christendom. In the thirteenth century the popular Saxon preacher Conrad, a Franciscan, more simply identified the altar with Christ, the towers with the pope and the bishops, the choir with the clerics, and the nave with the laity. At about the same time Berthold of Regensburg distinguished ten social classes corresponding to the ten angelic choirs. A German sermon collection of about 1220 listed as many as 28 estates: (1) the pope, (2) the cardinals, (3) the patriarchs, (4) the bishops, (5) the prelates, (6) the monks, (7) the crusaders, (8) the lay brothers, (9) the wandering monks, (10) the secular priests, (11) the lawyers and physicians, (12) the students, (13) the wandering students, (14) the nuns, (15) the emperor, (16) the kings, (17) the princes and counts, (18) the knights, (19) the nobles, (20) the squires, (21) the burgesses, (22) the merchants, (23) the retail shopkeepers, (24) the heralds, (25) the obedient peasants, (26) the rebellious peasants, (27) women . . . and (28) the preaching friars. In fact it is a double, parallel hierarchy of clergy and laity, the former headed by the pope and the latter by the emperor. Without yet mentioning estates, Stephen of Fougères, in his *Livre de manières*, written in about 1175, had already, in the first part of his poem, defined the duties of the kings, clergy, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and knights, and in the second part the duties of the villeins, the citizens and burgesses, and of married and unmarried ladies.

The new schema is still that of a hierarchical society, moving from top to bottom, except in the Spanish *Libro de Alexandre* from the mid-thirteenth century where the survey of the estates starts with the 'labourers' and ends with the nobles. But the hierarchy involved is different from that of the tripartite society of the orders. Here the hierarchy is more horizontal than vertical, more human than divine. It does not involve the will of God, does not derive from divine law, and can be modified to some extent. Here again iconography makes the ideological and intellectual shift clear. The portrayal of orders imposed from above, though this was to persist and even be reinforced in the age of absolute monarchy, was replaced by a picture of the estates in single file. Admittedly the powerful, the pope, the emperor, bishops, and knights, led the dance, but in which direction? Not upwards but downwards, to death, for the triumphant society of the orders had yielded to the procession of estates swept along in the dance of death. Society was desacralized and at the same time fragmented and broken up. This was at once a reflection of the evolution of social organization and the result of a fairly conscious manoeuvre by the clergy, who, seeing the society of the orders escape from them, weakened the new society by dividing it, shattering it into fragments and leading it towards death. Did not the Black Death arrive in 1348 to show precisely that God's will was to destroy all 'estates'?

The destruction of the tripartite model of society was bound up with the growth of towns from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, which itself must

be set in the context of a growing division of labour, as we have seen. The three-part schema broke up at the same time as did that of the seven liberal arts. This was also the moment when bridges were being built between the liberal and the mechanical arts, between the intellectual and technical disciplines. The city workshop was the crucible where the tripartite society was dissolved and the new image was prepared. Willynilly, the Church adapted to this. The most openminded theologians announced that each profession and each condition could be justified if it organized itself with a view to salvation. In the mid-twelfth century, Gerhoch of Reichersberg, in his *Liber de aedificio Dei*, spoke of 'this great factory, this great workshop, the universe', and states,

He who by baptism has renounced the devil, even if he does not become a clerk or a monk, is supposed to have renounced the world so that all those who make profession of the Christian faith, whether they be rich or poor, nobles or serfs, merchants or peasants, must reject what is hostile to that faith and follow what belongs to it. In fact each order [the vocabulary is still one which thinks in terms of orders] and more generally each profession finds in the catholic faith and in apostolic teaching a rule adapted to his condition; and if each order fights the good fight it will be thus to attain the crown [that is to say salvation].

Of course this recognition went with careful surveillance. The Church admitted that the estates existed, by assigning specific sins to them, class sins, like distinctive labels, and also inculcating a professional morality in them.

To begin with, this new society was the society of the devil. Hence the considerable vogue in clerical literature, from the twelfth century, for the theme of the 'daughters of the devil' who were married to the estates of society. On a flyleaf of a thirteenth-century Florentine manuscript, for example, we read: 'The devil has nine daughters whom he has married off:

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| simony | to the secular clerks |
| hypocrisy | to the monks |
| rapine | to the knights |
| sacrilege | to the peasants |
| feint | to the sergeants |
| fraud | to the merchants |
| usury | to the burgesses |
| worldly pomp | to the matrons |

and luxury which he did not want to marry to anyone but whom he offers to all as a common whore.'

An entire homiletic literature offering sermons *ad status* - addressed to each estate - flourished. The mendicant orders devoted prime time to this in their

preaching in the thirteenth century. Humbert of Romans, the Dominican cardinal, codified them in the middle of the thirteenth century. The high point in this recognition of the estates came when they were enthroned in confession and penance. Thirteenth-century confessors' manuals which defined sins and cases of conscience ended by cataloguing sins according to social class. Each estate had its own vices and sins. Moral and spiritual life was adapted to the framework of society, and the society to which it was adapted was that of the estates. In the late thirteenth century, John of Freiburg, in his *Confessionale* which was a résumé of his great *Summa Confessorum* for the use of confessors who were 'simpler and less expert', classed sins under fourteen headings, each of which is an estate: (1) bishops and prelates, (2) clerks and benefice-holders, (3) parish priests, vicars, and confessors, (4) monks, (5) judges, (6) advocates and proctors, (7) physicians, (8) university doctors and masters, (9) princes and other nobles, (10) husbands and wives, (11) merchants and burgesses, (12) artisans and workmen, (13) peasants, (14) *laboratores*.

In this fragmented society, spiritual leaders preserved a nostalgia for unity in spite of everything. For long on the defensive, the Catholic flock, poor and despised by the rest of the world (which, from Cordoba to Constantinople, Cairo, Baghdad, and Peking was unaware of it, or else thought it beneath notice) could only reinforce itself by sticking together. Christian society had to form a body, a *corpus*. This ideal was affirmed by Carolingian theoreticians and by the papacy in the age of the crusades from the time of Urban II onwards. When unity seemed to be swept away by diversity, John of Salisbury, around 1160, was still trying, in his *Policraticus*, to rescue the unity of Christendom by comparing lay Christian society with a human body whose limbs and organs were made up of different professional categories. The sovereign was the head, the counsellors the heart, the judges and provincial administrators the eyes, ears, and tongue, the warriors the hands, the financial officials the stomach and intestines, and the peasants the feet. In medieval Christendom, a world of single combat, society was chiefly the arena of a struggle between unity and diversity, just as in a more general sense it was the arena of a duel between good and evil. Medieval Christianity with its totalitarian system for a long time identified good with unity and evil with diversity. Nonetheless, in the small points of everyday life a dialectic grew up between theory and practice, and affirmations of unity very often came to terms with an inevitable tolerance of diversity.

III

If Christianity was the body, what was the head? In fact Christianity was bicephalous: its two heads were the pope and the emperor. Medieval history

is more concerned with their disagreements and conflicts than with their agreement, which was perhaps only realized, and then only in an ephemeral way, by Otto III and Silvester II around the year 1000. For the remainder of the period, the relations between the two heads of Christianity displayed the competition at the top of the two dominant but rival orders, the clerical and the lay hierarchy - priests and warriors, magical power and military might. Furthermore, the duel between Sacerdotium and Imperium did not always appear in an unmediated form. Other protagonists were involved.

On the side of Sacerdotium the situation can be explained fairly quickly. Once it had been accepted that it was impossible to make the patriarch of Constantinople and oriental Christianity admit Roman supremacy (this was underlined by the schism of 1054) the pope's leadership was hardly ever contested by the Church in the west. Here and there a bishop might rebel or an emperor sometimes raise up an anti-pope - there were about ten in the twelfth century - but the pope was certainly the head of religious society, even if he only affirmed his supremacy step by step and only let it become reality little by little. Gregory VII achieved a decisive step in this respect with his *Dictatus Papae* of 1075 where he declared, among other things: 'Only the Roman pontiff is justly called universal . . . He is the only one whose name should be pronounced in all churches . . . He who is not with the Roman church should not be considered a catholic.' In the course of the twelfth century the pope, from being the 'vicar of St Peter' became the 'vicar of Christ', and by the process of canonization controlled the consecration of new saints. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially through advances in papal taxation, he made the Church into a true monarchy. It was only at the end of the fourteenth and the start of the fifteenth century that his supremacy was seriously threatened by the councils of the church, and in the end these were quelled as well.

Beside him, or opposite him, the emperor was far from being so unopposedly the head of lay society. First, there were periods with no emperor. These were longer than the short vacancies of the papal see; the longest papal vacancy, which was rather exceptional, was the 34-month one which occurred between the death of Clement IV in November 1268 and the election of Gregory X in September 1271. There was no emperor in the west from 476 to 800 and there was, practically speaking, none from 899, or at any rate from 924, until 962. Again, there was no emperor during the Great Interregnum between the death of Frederick II (1250) and the election of Rudolf of Habsburg in 1273. A double election in 1198 meant that for some years there were two kings, Otto IV and Philip of Swabia, and then from 1212 to 1218 Otto IV and Frederick II were both rulers together, in opposition to each other. Equally it should not be forgotten that a fairly long time often elapsed between the

election in Germany, which made the elected candidate merely 'king of the Romans', and the coronation in Rome, prior to which the emperor as such did not exist. Frederick Barbarossa, crowned king of the Romans at Aachen on 9 March 1152, was only crowned emperor at Rome on 18 June 1155. Frederick II was made king at Aachen on 25 July 1215 and emperor at Rome on 22 November 1220.

More importantly, the emperor's hegemony over Christendom was more theoretical than real. It was often disputed in Germany, it was denied in Italy, and it was generally ignored by the most powerful rulers elsewhere. From the Ottonian period onwards the kings of France held themselves to be in no way subject to the emperor. From the early twelfth century English and Spanish canonists as well as French ones denied that their kings were subject to the emperor or to imperial laws. Pope Innocent III recognized in 1202 that, *de facto*, the king of France had no superior in temporal affairs. A canonist claimed in 1208 that 'every king has in his own kingdom the same powers as the emperor in the empire' - '*unusquisque enim tantum iuris habet in regno suo quantum imperator in imperio*'. The *Etablissements* of St Louis announced, '*Li rois ne tient de nului fors de Dieu et de lui*' - 'the king holds from no one save from God and himself'. In short, the theory that 'the king is emperor in his kingdom' was coming into being. Moreover, people had been observing since the tenth century what Robert Folz called the 'fragmentation of the idea of empire'.

The title of emperor started to be used a little more widely. Significantly it appeared in two lands which had escaped the domination of the Carolingian emperors, the British Isles and the Iberian peninsula, and in both cases it shows a claim to supremacy over a unified area - the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Iberian Christian kingdoms. The imperial dream lasted barely a century in Britain. Aethelstan was the first to have himself referred to as emperor, in 930; Edgar declared himself to be an emperor in 970 ('I, Edgar, by the grace of God, august emperor of all Albion'), and, on the final occasion, Cnut, who died in 1035, declared, 'I, Cnut, emperor, who, by the favour of Christ, have taken to myself the kingdom of the Angles in the island,' and his biographer summed up, 'When he had reduced five kingdoms, Denmark, England, Wales, Scotland, and Norway, he became emperor.'

In Spain, the imperial chimera lasted longer. Ordoño II in 917 referred to his father, Alfonso III, as emperor, and the title continued to be used in chronicles and several diplomas of the tenth century. Meanwhile, curiously enough, the bishops of Compostela adopted the title *apostolicus* which was normally reserved for the bishop of Rome, the pope. From the time of Ferdinand I (1037-65), who united León to Castile, the imperial title became customary. From 1077 the formula became fixed in two forms: 'by the grace

of God emperor of all Spain' or 'emperor of all the nations of Spain'. The 'Spanish empire' had its apogee under Alfonso VII who had himself crowned emperor at León in 1135. After him the Castilian monarchy was divided. Spain was broken up into the '*cinco reinos*' and the title of emperor of Spain disappeared only to make a brief reappearance for Ferdinand III in 1248, after the capture of Seville from the Muslims. Thus, although it could be partial, the idea of empire was always connected to the idea of unity, however fragmentary.

Parallel to this, the German emperors limited their claims increasingly to the German Holy Roman Empire in a strict sense, to Germany and its territorial extension in Italy. This was in spite of certain declarations by their chancery or by their flatterers - in 1199 Walther von der Vogelweide invited 'his emperor', Philip of Swabia, to put on the crown decorated with the white opal, the guiding star of all the princes. Chiefly it was restricted to Germany, especially after the emperor began to be elected by a college of princes. Already Frederick Barbarossa, who had taken the title of emperor before his coronation in Rome on 18 June 1155, had named the princes who had chosen him as 'fellow-workers in the glory of the emperor and the empire'. There was a double triumph for this electoral college in 1198 because instead of electing Henry VI's son, the future Frederick II, they elected Henry's brother Philip of Swabia, and soon afterwards a rival, Otto. They had created not one but two emperors. From now on this emperor was always the German emperor or the emperor of Germany under the title of the emperor of the Holy Roman German empire. The idea of universal empire assumed a dazzling final form under Frederick II, whose legal claims to world supremacy were crowned with an eschatological vision. While his enemies portrayed him as the Antichrist, or the herald of Antichrist, he presented himself as the Emperor of the End of Time, the saviour who was to lead the world into the golden age. He was the *immutator mirabilis*, a new Adam, a new Augustus, and soon almost a second Christ. In 1239 he extolled his birthplace, the town of Iesi in the Italian Marches, as his own Bethlehem. In reality, the behaviour of the emperors was always much more prudent; they contented themselves with an honorary pre-eminence and a moral authority which conferred on them a sort of patronage over other kingdoms: *auctoritas ad quam totius orbis spectat patrocinium* - 'an authority to which pertains the protection over the whole world', as Otto of Freising, Frederick Barbarossa's uncle, put it.

Thus, if medieval Christianity had two heads, these were not so much the pope and the emperor as the pope and the king (or king-emperor), or better, as the contemporary formula put it, Sacerdotium and Imperium, the spiritual and the temporal powers, the priest and the warrior. The imperial ideology probably retained fervent supporters even after it had been undermined.

Dante, the most passionate supporter of medieval Christendom, who craved for its unity, beseeched and implored the emperor to fulfil his role, his duty to be the supreme and universal leader, and abused him for not doing so. However the real dispute was between the *sacerdos* and the *rex*. How did each try to resolve this dispute in his favour? Each tried to unite the two powers in his person, the pope in becoming emperor, the king in becoming priest. Each tried to realize the unity of the *rex-sacerdos* in himself. In Byzantium, the basileus had succeeded in having himself regarded as a sacred figure and in being the religious leader at the same time as the political one. This is what is known as caesaropapism. Charlemagne seems to have tried to unite in his person the double dignity of emperor and priest. At the time of his coronation in 800, the laying on of hands recalled the gesture in a priestly ordination, and suggested that from now on Charles was invested with 'a royal priesthood'. He was a new David, a new Solomon, a new Josiah. However, Heinrich Fichtenau has shown that where he is called *rex et sacerdos*, it was the priest's ability to preach, not his charismatic functions, which were attributed to him, as Alcuin makes clear. No source describes him as a new Melchisedek, the only priest-king in the Old Testament in the strictest sense. Even so, kings and emperors were to pursue their attempt to have themselves recognized as having a religious character, sacred if not priestly, throughout the middle ages.

The chief means which they could use to further this policy was unction and coronation, religious ceremonies which made them the Lord's anointed, the king crowned by God, *rex a Deo coronatus*. Anointing was a sacrament. It was accompanied by liturgical acclamations or *laudes regiae*. Ernst Kantorowicz rightly discerned in these a solemn recognition on the part of the Church that the new sovereign was being added to the heavenly hierarchy. Sung after the litanies of the saints, they showed 'the union between the two worlds even more than their symmetry'. They proclaimed 'the cosmic harmony of Heaven, Church and State'. Unction was a form of ordination. The emperor Henry III announced in 1046 to Wazo, bishop of Liège, 'I too, who have received the right to exercise authority over all, have been anointed with holy oil.' One of Henry IV's propagandists in his conflict with Gregory VII, Wido of Osnabrück, wrote in 1084-5: 'The king must be set apart from the mass of laymen, for since he is anointed with consecrated oil, he partakes of the priestly ministry.' In the preamble to a diploma of 1143, Louis VII of France remarked:

We know that in accordance with the prescriptions of the Old Testament, and, in our day, with the law of the Church, only kings and priests are consecrated by anointing with holy chrism. It is fitting that those who, alone among everyone, are placed at the head of God's people, united amongst themselves by holy unction, should obtain

for their subjects temporal as well as spiritual goods, and that kings and priests should obtain these for each other.

The ritual of this mixture of sacring and ordination was fixed in the *ordines* such as 'the order of the consecration and coronation of the kings of France' to be found in a manuscript from Châlons-sur-Marne, dating from about 1280, now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.* Its precious miniatures show us some of the most significant moments of this religious ceremony. Here were asserted, on the one hand, the role of the military leader (the investiture with spurs and sword), and, on the other, the quasi-sacerdotal figure, priestly above all through unction, but also because he was invested with ring, sceptre, and crown. These pictures show the king being received at the door of Rheims Cathedral, the abbot of St Rémi of Rheims bearing the phial of holy oil or *sainte ampoule*, the king pronouncing his promise, the king prostrating himself while the litanies were being sung, the king receiving his silk shoes from the grand chamberlain and his gold spurs from the duke of Burgundy, the king anointed with holy oil on his forehead and on his hands (he was also anointed on his chest, on his back and shoulders), the king listening to the mass, the king dressed in a purple tunic, the king receiving the sword, the ring, then the sceptre, and finally the crown, and then, after the queen had been crowned, taking communion. The detail of this ceremony has been described according to this *ordo* by M. de Pange in his *Roi très chrétien*.

P. E. Schramm has thrown light on the religious symbols which bestowed all their meaning on imperial and royal insignia. The imperial crown, in the form of a diadem consisting of eight embossed gold plates and an arch rising over the crown of the head picked out with eight small semicircular plates, used the number eight, the symbol of eternal life. Like the octagon in the imperial chapel at Aachen, the imperial crown was the image of the heavenly Jerusalem with its walls covered with gold and precious stones. The *ordo* proclaimed the crown to be a 'sign of glory', and the crown announced the reign of Christ through the cross (a sign of triumph), through the single white opal, nicknamed the 'orphan' or *orphanus*, which was a sign of pre-eminence, and through the pictures of Christ, David, Solomon, and Hezekiah. The ring and the long staff or *virga* were copies of episcopal insignia. The emperor was also invested with the Holy Lance or lance of St Maurice which was borne before him and which was supposed to contain a nail from Christ's cross. We may recall that the kings of France and England had the power to touch for the king's evil, or scrofula, and to cure those who were affected. Finally, the fact that kings preferred charismatic power to military force is maintained by

*BN MS latin 1246

the Carmelite Jean Golein, in his *Traité du sacre* written in 1374 at the request of Charles V of France. The king

is supposed to keep homage to God which he has done him for his kingdom. He holds his kingdom from God and not at all by his sword alone, as the ancient writers said, but from God, just as he bears witness on his gold coins in so far as he says 'Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat'. He never ever says 'the sword rules and conquers', but says 'Jesus conquers, Jesus reigns, Jesus commands'.

Thus, once they became Christian, the barbarian kings tried to recapture the power of the sorcerer-kings. This power had been held by the pagan Frankish kings, the *reges criniti*, the long-haired kings of a short-haired people. These kings had a magical head of hair which was the source of marvellous power; they were 'as great as Samson'.

Parallel to this the papacy began to attempt to take over the imperial function, particularly from the eighth century onwards with the forged Donation of Constantine. According to the text of the Donation the emperor announced that he would abandon the city of Rome to the pope and for this reason would transfer himself to Constantinople. He authorized the pope to wear the diadem and papal insignia and allotted senatorial trappings to the Roman clergy. 'We have also decreed that our venerable Father Silvester, supreme pontiff, as well as all his successors, should wear the diadem, that is to say the crown of very pure gold and of precious stones which we have removed from our head and granted to him.'

Silvester is supposed to have refused the diadem and accepted only a high white mitre, the *phrygium*, which itself was royal insignia of oriental origin. The *phrygium* evolved rapidly into a crown, and a Roman *ordo* of the ninth century already called it a *regnum*. When it reappeared in the mid-eleventh century, 'it had changed shape and significance', and had become the tiara. The circlet at the bottom was turned into a diadem adorned with precious stones. A crown with flowerets replaced it in the twelfth century, a second crown was superimposed in the thirteenth century and a third probably under the Avignon popes. It had become the *triregnum*. Already Innocent III had explained at the start of the thirteenth century that the pope wore the mitre '*in signum pontificii*', as a sign of the pontificate, of the supreme priesthood, and the *regnum*, '*in signum Imperii*', as a sign of the Empire. A *pontifex-rex* now answered the challenge of a *rex-sacerdos*. The pope did not wear the tiara while he was exercising his sacerdotal functions but in the ceremonies where he appeared as a sovereign. From the time of Paschal II, in 1099, the popes were crowned on their accession. After Gregory VII their 'enthronement' at the Lateran was accompanied by 'immantation' or the donning of the imperial

red mantle or *cappa rubea*, possession of which, in the case of rivalry between two popes, conferred legitimacy. The pope without the mantle became the anti-pope. From the time of Urban II the Roman clergy was called the Curia, which at once evoked the ancient Roman senate and a feudal court.

Thus not only did the papacy detach itself, and begin to detach the Church, from a certain subservience to the lay feudal order, but also – and this is an essential aspect of the Gregorian reform – it proclaimed itself to be the head of the lay as well as of the religious hierarchy. From there it strove to make the subordination of imperial and royal power to its own power obvious and effective. We know the unending litigation and the immense quantity of literature arising out of, for example, the Investiture Contest, which itself was only one aspect or one episode in the great conflict between Sacerdotium and Imperium, or rather, as we have seen, between the two orders. We may recall that Innocent III increased the number of states owing allegiance to the Holy See. Let us now pause and consider certain symbols around which the argument hardened, because they were the most significant: the two swords and the sun and moon. These were theories and visual images at the same time, as was almost always the case in the medieval west.

Yet who helped the kings more than the Church did? Leo III had made Charlemagne and to a large degree the Benedictines of Fleury (St Benoît-sur-Loire) and of St Denis made the Capetians. The Church made use of the ambiguous nature of kingship (of which more later), which was the head of the feudal hierarchy but also of another hierarchy, that of the State, of a public power which transcended the feudal order. The Church favoured the former against its rival, military force, and the clergy assisted the king in mastering the warrior. Naturally this was with the intention of making the monarchs their instrument and of assigning to the kings the essential role of defender of the Church, both the actual Church of the priestly order and the ideal Church of the poor. The role which the medieval Church allotted to kingship was that of the secular arm, which carried out the commands of the priestly order, and polluted itself in the place of the Church by using physical force and violence and spilling the blood of which the Church washed its hands. A whole collection of books written by clerics defined this royal function. These were the numerous *Mirrors of Princes*; they flowered chiefly in the ninth century when bishops operated the imperial puppets after the humiliation and submission of Louis the Pious, and in the thirteenth century, when Louis IX strove to be the model king on both a moral and spiritual plane.

The Council of Paris in 829 defined the duties of kings in terms that were taken up and developed two years later by Jonas, bishop of Orléans in his *De institutione regia*. This was to remain the model for *Mirrors of Princes* throughout the middle ages. At the Council of Paris the bishops announced

The royal ministry consists especially in governing and ruling the people of God in fairness and justice and in seeing to the provision of peace and concord. Above all the king must be the defender of churches, of the servants of the God, of widows, orphans, and all other poor and needy people. He must also show himself to be as far as possible zealous and awe-inspiring so that no injustice may occur, and if it does, so that he may allow no one to guard a hope of not being discovered in the audacious act of wrongdoing, but so that all might know that nothing may remain unpunished.

In exchange, the Church endowed royal power with a sacral character. Thus it was necessary that all subjects should submit faithfully and with blind obedience to the royal power because 'he who resists this power resists the order willed by God'. Furthermore, it was in favour of the emperor and the king rather than of the feudal lord that the clergy established a parallel between heaven and earth and made the king into the personification of God on earth. Iconography tended to let God in majesty be merged with the king on his throne. Hugh of Fleury, in the *Tractatus de regia potestate et sacerdotali dignitate* which he dedicated to Henry I of England, went so far as to compare the king with God the Father and a bishop merely with Christ. 'One alone reigns in the kingdom of heaven, he who hurls the thunderbolts. It is natural for there to be only one following him who reigns on earth, one only who is to be an example to all men.' Alcuin spoke in similar terms and what he said for the emperor held good for a king from the point where the latter became 'emperor in his own kingdom'. But let the king step aside from this programme, let him cease to be submissive, and the Church immediately reminded him of his unworthiness and denied to him the priestly character that he was endeavouring to acquire.

Philip I of France was excommunicated for marrying Bertrade de Montfort. According to Orderic Vitalis, he was struck by God with shameful sicknesses, and according to Guibert of Nogent he lost his thaumaturgical powers. Gregory VII reminded the emperor that since he did not know how to drive out demons he was certainly inferior to the exorcists. Honorius of Autun stated that the king was a layman.

In fact, the king can only be either a layman or a cleric. If he is not a layman, he is a cleric. But if he is a cleric, he must be a doorkeeper, reader, or exorcist, or an acolyte, subdeacon, deacon or priest. If he has none of these grades, then he is not a cleric. If he is neither a layman nor a cleric, he must be a monk. But his wife and his sword prevent him from being taken for a monk.

Here we can grasp the reasons for the relentlessness with which Gregory VII and his successors imposed celibacy and the renunciation of fighting on the clergy. It was not a moral preoccupation. It was a question of separating the

class of priests from that of the fighters, lumped together with the other isolated and humbled laymen, by keeping the sacerdotal order free of the defilement of blood and sperm, which were unclean liquids affected by taboos.

When the archbishop Thomas Becket was assassinated by knights, possibly at the instigation of Henry II of England, the priestly order broke out against the knightly order. The extraordinary propaganda spread by the Church throughout all Christendom in favour of the martyr, to whom churches, altars, ceremonies, statues, and frescos were dedicated, was a manifestation of the struggle between the two orders. John of Salisbury, an associate of the murdered prelate, made use of Thomas' martyrdom to carry to its extremes the doctrine of the limitation of royal power. This doctrine had been prudently affirmed by the Church from the first moment when it had, for its own purposes, exalted royal power. The bad king - the one who did not obey the Church - became a tyrant. He lost his dignity. The bishops of the Council of Paris in 829 had declared: 'If the king governs with piety, justice and mercy, he merits his kingly title. If he lacks these qualities, he is not a king but a tyrant.' It was the immovable teaching of the medieval Church, and Thomas Aquinas supported it with solid theological grounds. But the medieval Church was never very precise either in theory or practice about the practical consequences to be drawn from condemning a bad king who had become a tyrant. Excommunications, interdictions, and depositions occurred. John of Salisbury was alone or almost alone in going to the extreme limit of the doctrine and preaching tyrannicide in the cases where no other solution seemed to exist. Thus the Becket affair showed that the duel between the two orders found its logical conclusion in a settling of accounts.

However, in theory the Church's weapons were more spiritual. The popes responded to imperial and royal pretensions with the image of the two swords which, since the time of the Fathers of the Church, had symbolized spiritual and temporal power. Alcuin had claimed them for Charlemagne. St Bernard constructed a complex doctrine which concluded in spite of everything by restoring the two swords to the pope. It was Peter to whom the two swords had been entrusted. The priest made use of the spiritual sword and the knight the temporal one, but only for the Church, and at the nod (*nutu*) of the priest, the emperor contenting himself with transmitting the order. The canonists of the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries did not hesitate any longer. Since the pope had become the vicar of Christ, and Christ was alone the keeper of the two swords, the pope alone - Christ's lieutenant - controlled them here below.

The same thing happened with the simile of the sun and the moon. The Roman emperor had identified himself with the sun and certain medieval emperors tried to revive this comparison. The papacy under Gregory VII, and even more under Innocent III, cut this endeavour short. It borrowed the image of the sun and moon from Genesis:

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. And it was so. And God made 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 the heaven to give light upon the earth. And to rule over the day and over the night. . . .

For the Church the greater light, the sun, was the pope, while the lesser light, the moon, was the emperor or king. The moon has no light of its own, but only a light which it borrows from the sun. The emperor was not only the lesser light but also the leader of the world of the night, in contrast to the world of the day, which was ruled and symbolized by the pope. If we realize what day and night meant to men in the middle ages, we can understand that the lay hierarchy from the Church's point of view was only a society of suspect forces, the shadowy half of the body of society.

If the pope prevented the emperor and the other monarchs from appropriating the role of a priest, he failed to seize temporal power. The two swords remained in separate hands, and when the emperor slipped into the background in the middle of the thirteenth century, it was Philip the Fair who decisively checked the pretensions of Boniface VIII. Yet almost everywhere in Christendom the temporal sword was already firmly in the hands of the lay rulers. It only remained to the two dominant powers to forget their rivalry and think only of their solidarity and jointly establish their ascendancy over society. In modern times the alliance of throne and altar, sabre and aspergillum, despite minor vicissitudes and antagonisms such as pragmatic sanctions and concordats, Gallicanism, Josephism, and the Napoleonic tyranny, was to continue this medieval complicity between Sacerdotium and Imperium, the sacerdotal and the warrior forces, between the *oratores* and the *bellatores*, in the exploitation of the *laboratores*. As the bishop of Paris, Maurice of Sully, said in 1170, in the vulgar tongue, so as to be better understood; 'Good people, render your earthly lord what you owe him. You must understand and accept that you owe your earthly lord your dues, tallages, forfeits, services, cartage and military service. Render it all, entire, in the place and at the time desired.'

IV

The dreams of unity were always disappointed. Adalbero of Laon remarked 'God's house, which was thought to be one, is thus divided in three' at the start of the eleventh century, the very century when the unattainable unity

of Christendom effectively broke up. The crusades would not succeed in creating this unity or in recreating it, but would contribute a little more to its fragmentation. Social fragmentation would be accompanied by political rupture once the rival leaderships of pope and emperor were asserted. In 1077 Canossa represented the collapse of the brief period of harmony which had united Otto III and Silvester II in the year 1000. Unity was prevented even more by national divisions, or, rather, by increasing linguistic differences. Of course, we know, as famous historical examples and some present-day exceptions (some happy, other traumatic) tell us, that national frontiers are not identical with linguistic ones. Yet who would deny that difference of language causes separation more than unity? The inhabitants of medieval Christian Europe were acutely conscious of the fact. The clergy wrote lamentations which said that the diversity of languages was one of the consequences of original sin. They associated this evil with Babylon, mother of all the vices. Rangerius of Lucca stated in the early twelfth century, 'Just as once Babylon, by multiplying the languages, added new and worse evils to the old ones, so the multiplication of peoples multiplies the harvest of crimes.' And the common people were saddened to realize that other people spoke differently. For example, the thirteenth-century German peasants in the story of Meier Helmbrecht did not recognize their prodigal son when he returned home pretending to speak several languages.

'My dear children,' he said in Low German, 'may God make you always blessed'. His sister ran up to him and hugged him, whereupon he said to her, 'Gracia vester!' The children then ran up and the old parents came up behind, and both of them welcomed him with boundless joy. He said to his father, 'Deu sal!' and to his mother, Bohemian-fashion, 'Dobra ytra!' The man and his wife looked at each other, and the mistress of the house said, 'Husband, we are mistaken, this is not our child. This is a Bohemian or a Wend.' The father said, 'He's a Frenchman! He's not our son (may God preserve him), and yet he looks like him.' So then Gotelint, the sister, said, 'It's not your child. He spoke to me in Latin, so he must be a clerk.' 'Faith,' said the servant, 'if I judge from what he said, he was born in Saxony or Brabant. He spoke in Low German, so he must be a Saxon.' The father said simply, 'If you are my son Helmbrecht, I shall be won over to you if you pronounce one word according to our custom and in the manner of our ancestors, so that I may understand you. You are always saying 'Deu sal', and I don't understand one word of what you are saying. Honour your mother and myself - we have always deserved this. Speak one word in German and I will rub down your horse, I myself, not the servant . . . '

Medieval men always put their ideas into pictures, and they made use of the Tower of Babel as a symbol for representing the misfortune of linguistic diversity. In imitation of oriental iconography, they usually made it an image

of terror and catastrophe. The full impact of the image on medieval minds has been shown by Arno Borst in the collection of his marvellously erudite body of work. The distressing image of the Tower of Babel began to acquire resonance in the western European imagination from around the year 1000. The oldest representation in western Europe can be found in a manuscript of Caedmon from the end of the tenth or the early eleventh century. In an *interrogatio* from the early eleventh century we come across the following questions and answers: 'How many languages are there in the world? Answer: 62. Question: Why are there no more and no fewer? Answer: Because of the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Shem had 27 sons, Ham 30, and Japheth 15, which add up to 62 altogether.' The clergy in the middle ages and even in our own day tried to drive away the shadow of Babel by using Latin. Latin is supposed to have effected the unity of medieval civilization and thus of European civilization, or so Ernst Robert Curtius has brilliantly argued. But what Latin? It was a dead Latin, from which its true heirs, the vulgar languages, were detaching themselves. It was sterilized slightly more by each succeeding renaissance, beginning with the Carolingian renaissance. Kitchen Latin, the humanists called it; but, on the contrary, it was a deodorized, flavourless Latin. It was the language of a caste, it was clerical Latin, and it was an instrument for dominating the masses rather than for international communication. It was a true example of a sacred language which isolated the social group which had the privilege not of understanding it - which was not very important - but of speaking it, whether well or badly. The naïve lamented the fact that the common people turned the essential prayers into gibberish, as in Walter de Coimy's *Ave Maria du vilain*. Even more they deplored the fact that in this respect the priests might be crassly ignorant. In 1199 Gerald of Wales reported a series of howlers uttered by English clergy. Eudes Rigaud, archbishop of Rouen from 1248 to 1269, reported other cases from among the priests of his diocese. The Latin of the medieval church was tending to turn into the incomprehensible language of the *Frates Arvales* in ancient Rome. Even among university graduates, Latin had difficulty in maintaining itself. It was necessary for college statutes to forbid students and masters to abandon Latin for the vulgar tongue.

The living reality of the medieval west was the progressive triumph of the vulgar tongues and the increase in the number of interpreters, translations, and dictionaries. Of course, there was no shortage of nostalgia-sufferers who dreamed of a return to a single language which would be a token of purity and of a rediscovered golden age. Joachim of Fiore branded the Tower of Babel as a symbol of the pride of men possessed by Satan. When the eternal Gospel reigns on the earth made new and the regenerated Church is 'the only mistress of the nations' - *sola domina gentium* - her reign will be combined with the

rule of Latin: 'the Roman Church, that is to say all Latinity - *Romana ecclesia, hoc est tota Latinitas*'. The Christian exclusiveness of those demanding a single language was reminiscent of the linguistic xenophobia of the Greeks. Everyone who did not speak Latin was a barbarian who did not speak properly, or who did not have a tongue, or who made animal noises. Writers even in vulgar languages were so smitten with '*clergie*' that they made the word Latin synonymous with the word language. In the writings of William IX of Aquitaine and of Chrétien of Troyes the birds sing 'in their Latin'.

The retreat of Latin before the vulgar languages did not take place without linguistic nationalism creeping in. Here a nation in the making asserted itself by defending its language. Jakob Swinka, archbishop of Gniezno at the end of the thirteenth century, complained to the Curia about the German Franciscans who did not understand Polish, and ordered that sermons should be preached in Polish, '*ad conservationem et promocionem lingue Polonice*' - 'for the defence and furthering of the Polish language'. That a nation tended to identify itself with a language is exemplified by medieval France, which was only with difficulty welded together out of northern France, the *langue d'oïl*, and southern France, the *langue d'oc*. Already in 920, at an encounter between Charles the Simple and Henry the Fowler at Worms, young German and French knights met in a bloody skirmish, according to Richer, because they were 'angered by the other side's different language'. According to Hildegard of Bingen, Adam and Eve spoke German, but others claimed that French had been first. In the middle of the thirteenth century, in Italy, the anonymous author of a poem written in French on the Antichrist stated: 'The French language / is such that he who learns it first / can never thenceforth talk otherwise / or learn another tongue.' And Bruno Latini wrote his *Trésor* in French 'because this speech is more delectable and more widespread among the people'.

After the barbarian nations had settled in all their variety in the shattered unity of the Roman Empire, and nationality had encroached on or taken the place of the 'territoriality' spoken of in the laws, some clerics created a literary genre which gave every nation a national virtue and vice. In the rise of national feeling after the eleventh century antagonism seemed to carry the day, for from now on only the vices were linked with the various 'nations' as national attributes. This can be seen in the universities where students and masters, who were grouped in 'nations' (which were as yet, however, far from corresponding to any single nation in territorial or political sense) saw themselves described by Jacques de Vitry thus: 'the drunken English with tails (in the Hundred Years' War, the English were to be called the '*Anglais caudés*' or tailed English), the arrogant and effeminate French, the brutal and lewd Germans, the conceited and boastful Normans, the treacherous, reckless Poitevins, the

vulgar, stupid Burgundians, the faithless, fickle Bretons, the avaricious, vicious, and cowardly Lombards, the seditious and scandal-mongering Romans, the tyrannical, cruel Sicilians, the bloodthirsty, fire-raising Brabantine brigands, the prodigal, glutinous Flemings, as soft as butter and idle.' Thus each linguistic group was married off to a vice just as the groups in society had each been married to a daughter of the devil. A divided society seemed condemned to shame and misfortune. However, just as some farseeing minds justified a division into socio-professional groups, so others defended the making of a division along linguistic and nationalistic lines. They took refuge behind a passage of Augustine, 'African, Syrian, Greek, Hebrew and all the other different languages make up the variety of the dress of this queen, Christian teaching. But just as the different pieces of clothing join to make a single garment, so all the languages join together in a single faith. May there be variety in the dress but no rent.' Stephen of Hungary said in 1030: 'The guests who come from different lands bring different languages, customs, tools, and weapons, and all this diversity is an adornment to the kingdom, an embellishment to the court and an object of fear to enemies outside, for a kingdom which has only one language and one custom is weak and fragile.' And just as Gerhoch of Reichersberg had declared in the twelfth century that no profession was useless, and that all professions could lead to salvation, so Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century asserted that all languages are able to lead men to the truth. '*Quaecumque sint illae linguae seu nationes, possunt erudiri de divina sapientia et virtute*'. Here one senses that totalitarian society had had a setback and that it was ready to spill over into pluralism and tolerance.

V

Medieval law did not give its sanction to fragmentation without resistance. The orderly system of unanimity was imposed for a long time. A maxim bequeathed by Roman law which passed into canon law governed medieval legal practice: *Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus comprobari debeat* - 'What touches all must be approved by all.' The fracturing of unity was a scandal. The great canon lawyer Huguccio in the thirteenth century states that the man who did not join the majority was *turpis* or shameful, and that 'in a body, a college, an administration, discord and diversity are shameful'. It is obvious that this unanimity had nothing democratic about it, for when rulers and lawyers were forced to do without it they replaced it with the notion and the practice of the qualitative majority, the *maior et sanior pars*, the greater and wiser part, where *sanior* defines *maior* and gives it a qualitative, not a quantitative, sense.

The theologians and canon lawyers of the thirteenth century who realized sadly that 'human nature is prone to discord' - '*natura humana prona est ad dissentendum*' - emphasized that this was a question of the corruption of nature resulting from Original Sin. The medieval mind was ceaselessly creating communities or groups, what were then called *universitates*, a term which designated any sort of corporation or college, and not only the sort of corporation we now call a university. Obsessed by the idea of the group, the medieval mind could even envisage it as composed of a minimum number of persons. Starting from a definition in the *Digest*: 'Ten men form a people, ten sheep a flock, but only four or five pigs are needed to constitute a herd,' the canon lawyers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries gravely discussed whether a group could exist if it contained as few as two or three persons only. The important thing was that the individual should not be left alone. The loner could do only wrong. The great sin was to stand out. If we try to approach men in medieval western Europe as individuals we quickly realize not only that, as in every society, each individual belonged to several groups or communities, but also that in the middle ages they seemed to merge into such groups rather than to assert themselves within them.

If pride was then thought of as 'the mother of all vices' it was because pride is 'exaggerated individualism'. Salvation lay only in and through the community; self-esteem was sin and perdition. Thus the medieval individual was trapped within networks of obedience, submission, and solidarity which ended up overlapping each other and contradicting each other to the point where he was allowed to free himself and assert his independence only by being forced to make a choice. The most typical one was that of the vassal of several lords who could be forced to choose between them if they found themselves on opposite sides in a dispute. But in general, and over a long period, these allegiances were harmonized with each other and were fitted into a hierarchy, with the result that the individual was even more closely attached. In fact, of all these bonds, the strongest was the feudal bond.

It is significant that for a long time medieval individuals were not portrayed with their own physical features. Personalities were not described or depicted in literature or art with their own characteristics. Each was reduced to a physical type corresponding to his rank and social category. Nobles had blond or red hair. Golden hair or flaxen hair, often curly, together with blue or grey eyes, must have been additions made by nordic warriors to the canon of medieval beauty. Even when, by chance, a great personality escaped this convention for describing physical details, such as Charlemagne, whom Einhard rightly described as being 7 feet tall - as was proved when his skeleton was measured after his tomb was opened in 1861 and found to be 1.92 metres - his intellectual personality was stifled under commonplaces. The emperor was endowed by

his chronicler with all the Aristotelian and Stoic qualities which were proper to his rank. It is not at all surprising that autobiography was rare, and itself was often conventional, and, as Georg Misch has shown in his *Histoire de l'autobiographie*, we have to wait until the late eleventh century for Otloh of St Emmeram to write the first personal autobiography. It was still in the form of a *Libellus de suis temptationibus, varia fortuna et scriptis* which tried to present moral lessons through the example of the author; even a personality as independent as Abelard's, in his *Historia Calamitatum mearum* (History of my Calamities) was to do just the same. Coming between the two, in 1115, the *De vita sua* of Abbot Guibert de Nogent, although it flows more freely, was only an imitation of Augustine's *Confessions*.

Medieval man had no sense of freedom as it is conceived of today. Freedom to him was a privilege and the word was more readily used in the plural. Freedom meant a guaranteed status: it was, according to Gerd Tellenbach's definition, 'one's legitimate place before God and men'. It meant belonging to society. There was no liberty without community. It could only exist in a relationship of dependence, with a superior guaranteeing to a subordinate that he would respect his rights. The free man was the man who had a powerful protector. When the clergy demanded the 'freedom of the Church' at the time of the Gregorian reform what they meant by this was removing themselves from the domination of secular lords so as to be subject directly only to the highest lord, God.

VI

In medieval western Europe the individual belonged first and foremost to his family. The family was a large, patriarchal or tribal one, directed by the head of the family. It stifled the individual, forcing him to submit to the collective ownership of property, collective responsibility, and collective action. The importance of the family group at the level of the lordly class is well known; the knight had to accept the circumstances, duties, and ethics of his lineage. Lineage was a community of blood-ties made up of 'kin' and '*amis charnels*', that is to say relatives by marriage, but it was not a relic of some vast primitive family. It was a stage in the organization of the loosely knit family group, the *Sippe*, which was a feature of Germanic societies of the early middle ages. The members of the lineage were bound by the solidarity of the lineage, which was displayed chiefly on the battlefield and in affairs of honour. In the *Couronnement de Louis*, William of Orange begs Our Lady, 'Come to my aid / so that I do not commit an act of cowardice / which might be held against my lineage'. At Roncevaux Roland refused for a long time to sound the olifant

to call Charlemagne to his aid, for fear that his kinsmen might be dishonoured. Above all, family solidarity was displayed in acts of private vengeance, in the feud. In Burgundy in Ralph Glaber's time an inexpiable hatred set two families against each other.

The struggle had lasted for many years, when one day during the wine harvest the two sides started to fight on land which was part of the very property concerned. In this fight many on each side lost their lives. From the house with which we are concerned, eleven sons and grandsons died. And in the course of time the quarrel persisted, the hatred became more bitter, and innumerable woes continued to affect the family, many of whose members were killed over a period of 30 years and more.

Vendetta was practised, recognized and extolled for a long time in medieval western Europe.

The support which one had the right to expect from a kinsman led to the common assertion that true riches lay in having many relatives. William of Orange lamented at the deathbed of his nephew Vivien, 'Alas! I have lost all the seed of my lineage.'

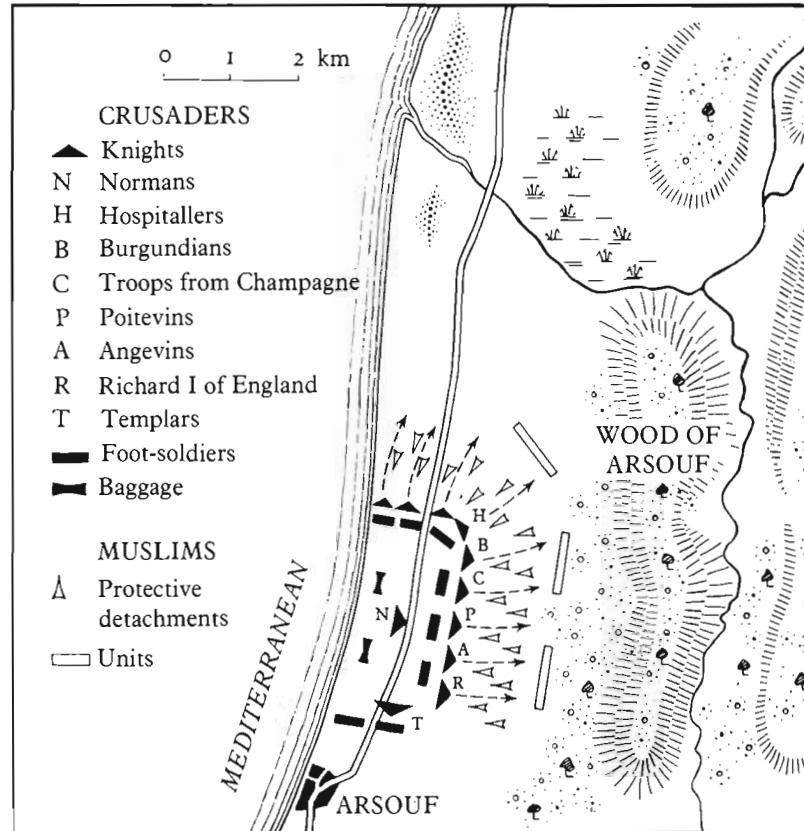
Lineage seems to correspond to the evolutionary stage known as the agnatic family, the basis and purpose of which are to conserve a common patrimony. What was original about the feudal agnatic family was that the military role and the personal relations inherent in allegiance to a superior were as important for the masculine half of the lineage as was the family's economic role. The mixture of interests and feelings aroused, moreover, unusually violent tensions within the feudal family. The lineage felt the appeal of drama even more than that of keeping faith. Rivalry was especially prevalent among brothers, since the eldest was not automatically assured of authority; this could pass to whichever of the brothers could make the others recognize his ability to command. However, such recognition was often unwilling and often disputed. Royal feudal families were full of fraternal rivalry and hatred which were further exacerbated by the lure of the crown: hence the struggles between the sons of William the Conqueror - Robert Curthose, William Rufus, and Henry I - or in fourteenth-century Castile between Peter the Cruel and Henry of Trastamara, who to make matters worse were only half-brothers.

Feudal lineages by their very nature begat young Cains. They also fathered disrespectful sons. The narrow timespan between generations, the limited life-expectancy and the need for the lord as military leader to establish his authority in battle once he was old enough to justify his rank, all exasperated the impatience of young feudal warriors. Hence sons rebelled against their fathers. The younger Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey of Brittany all rebelled against Henry II of England. In a later period Louis XI of France, by

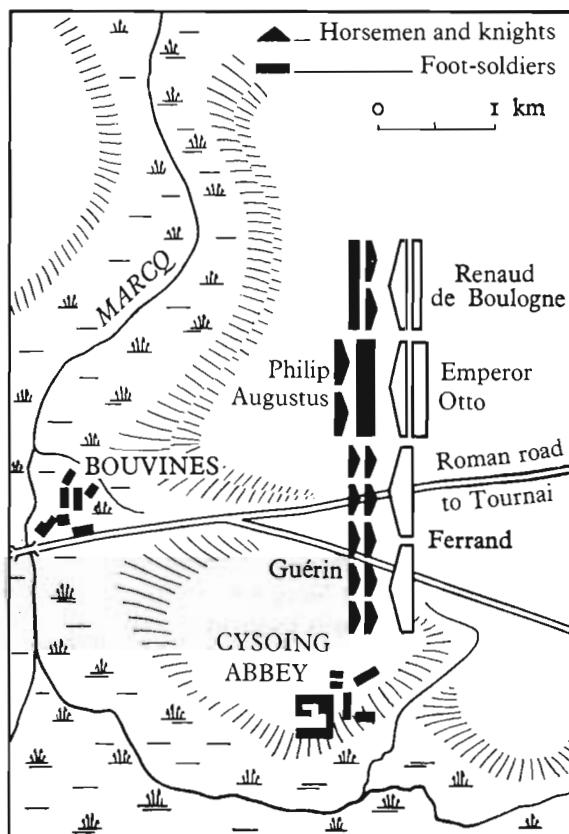
Figures 21, 22, 23 Battles of Arsouf (1191), Bouvines (1214), Courtrai (1302)

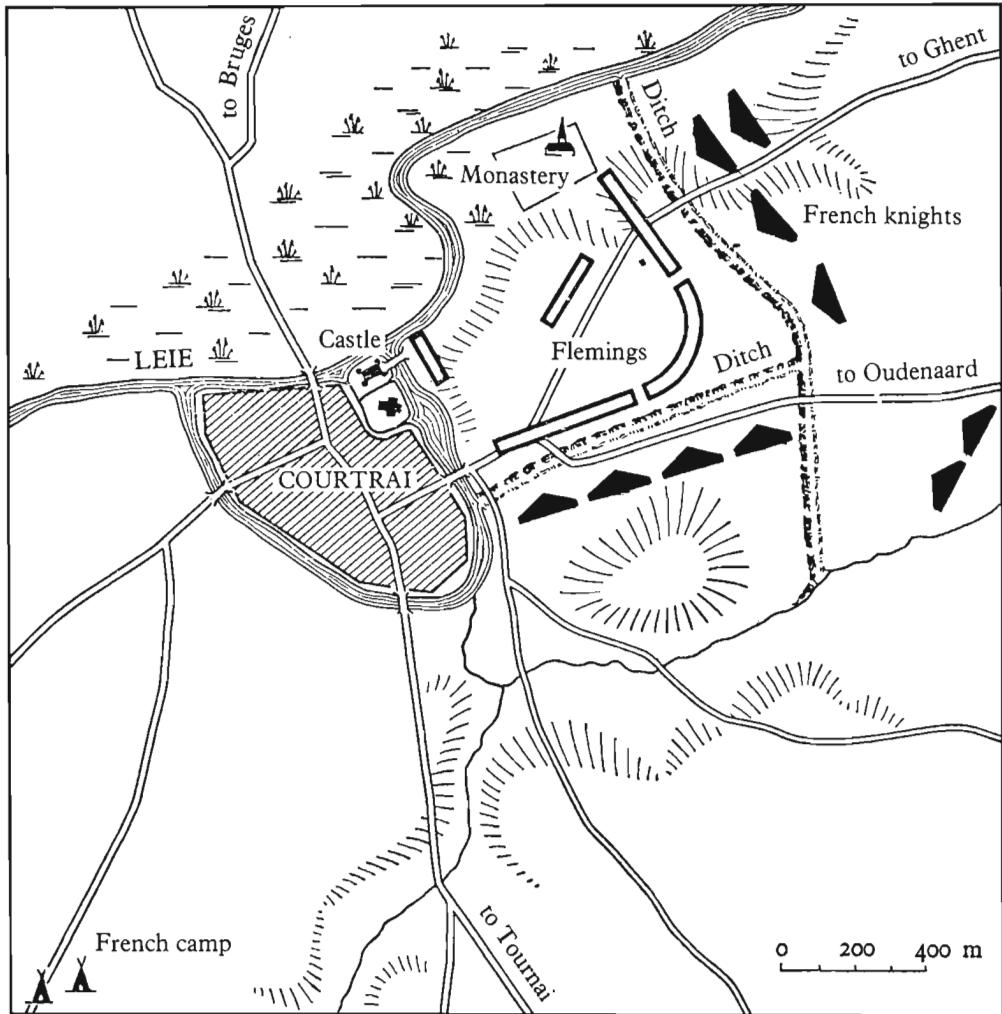
In medieval battles, order and cohesion were decisive for success. Communal organization was essential. At Arsouf (21) on 7 September 1191, the crusading army under Richard I of England was marching in an orderly fashion along the shore, followed and protected by the Christian fleet, when the Muslim army under Saladin attacked it opposite the forest of Arsouf. The king was able to turn his column immediately into a mass several ranks deep, which made vigorous charges against the Muslims, who were routed. The cohesion of the different units or 'battles' grouping compatriots together played a key role in the victory. The Templars, who fought 'like the sons of a single father' and some families fighting as groups, such as that of Jacques of Avesnes, particularly distinguished themselves. The crusaders kept their ranks so close together that, according to the chronicler, if one had thrown an apple at the Christian army it would not have fallen on the ground but would have been certain to hit a horse or a man. At Bouvines (22) on 27 July 1214 the army of the king of France, Philip Augustus, beat the united armies of the Emperor Otto, Ferrand Count of Flanders, and of Reginald of Boulogne, thanks to a series of mistakes made by the imperial side, which were well exploited by the leader of the French king's army, Bishop Guérin. Guérin extended the front line of his troops (1200–1300 knights and 5000 infantry) to avoid the wings being overrun, but he did not spread them out as much as did his enemies, who deployed 1300–1500 knights and 7500 infantry, who were less cohesive, over about 10 km. When they had obtained a success they followed it up too quickly; the Germans under Otto plunged into the French infantry and got as far as Philip Augustus, whose horse was killed, and so Guérin was able to split up the allies' left wing and defeat it, and then their centre and right wing in succession. The cohesion of the French formations or '*batailles*' was decisive. An analysis of the description of the battle by the chronicler Guillaume le Breton yields mention of five single combats (three of them by a knight against an enemy unit) as against fifteen combats between units. This does treat the myth of medieval battles being composed of individual duels as it deserves. At Courtrai (23) on 11 July 1302 occurred a revolutionary victory of the infantry of the Flemish communes over the flower of French chivalry. The feudal armies misjudged the infantrymen: they estimated that ten heavily armoured knights were worth a hundred infantry. The French, numbering 2500 nobles and about 4000 crossbowmen and infantry, thus had a large lead, qualitatively speaking, over the 8000 Flemish infantry (mostly from Bruges), who were supported by about 500 nobles. However the Flemings overcame their trepidation. They were supported by the two princes and the nobles who placed themselves at their head and by the Franciscans who blessed the troops and heard confessions, and by the layer of soldiers in the first two ranks who were armed with pikes and *goedenday*. Furthermore they were able to choose a site which helped them. With their backs to the river Leie they could not flee and were forced to conquer or die. Two ditches which separated them from the French cavalry prevented the latter from launching their charges from a distance. The mêlée and the carnage which followed were appalling. Half the French knights, more than 1000, were killed and there was a huge amount of booty, including the 500 gilded spurs which gave the battle its traditional name (Battle of the Golden Spurs). The

21 Battle of Arsouf
(after Verbruggen, *De Krijgskunst in West-Europe*)



22 Battle of Bouvines
(after Verbruggen, *ibid.*)





23 Battle of Courtrai
(after Verbruggen, *ibid.*)

Flemings hung them up in the church of Notre-Dame at Courtrai; the French knights took them back again after their revenge at Roosebeke in 1382. The fleeing knights were so terrified that when they returned to Tournai in the evening they could not eat. The victory of the '*ongles bleus*' was contemporary with the victories by Scottish and Swiss infantrymen (the former at Bannockburn in 1314, the latter at Morgarten in 1315 and at Vottem in 1346). Troops from the lower classes were able to organize themselves at the point when the decline of the feudal lords began.

rebelled against his father Charles VII, showed that he, too, was a feudal heir. Moreover, the need to gain money and a reputation combined to make the young lord, when he came of age, distance himself from his father and turn himself into a knight-errant while waiting for his inheritance. Tensions were also bred by multiple marriages and by the existence of numerous bastards, for illegitimacy, which was shameful among lesser people, brought no opprobrium among the great. Such tensions, which might have been expressly designed to give writers inspiration for dramatic action, can be found in epic literature. The *chansons de geste* are full of family drama. In Huon it is Charlot, Charlemagne's natural son, and also Huon's own brother, the traitor Gerard, who usurp his inheritance.

As is normal in an agnatic family, the bond linking uncle and nephew was especially important - more precisely the *avunculus* or mother's brother with her son, the nephew. Again, the *chansons de geste* depict a large number of pairs of uncles and nephews - Charlemagne and Roland, William of Orange and Vivien, Raoul de Cambrai and Gautier. Nepotism figured widely in medieval society; its ecclesiastical form was merely a special case owing to the force of circumstances. The agnatic rather than patriarchal type of family also occurred in the peasant class, where it was more closely connected with farming and with the inheritance of land. It grouped together all those who lived in the same house and devoted themselves to getting profit from the same land. We do not know much, however, about the peasant family, although it does constitute the basic economic and social unit of modern societies comparable with that of medieval western Europe. Even though it was a real community it had no means of expressing itself in law. It was, in fact, what in the France of the Ancien Régime was called the 'communauté taisible' or 'untalked-of community', and the very adjective 'taisible', 'what one keeps quiet about', almost a secret, clearly shows that the law was reluctant to recognize its existence.

VII

It is difficult to grasp the place which was held by women and children in the heart of this primordial unit, the family, and also to assess the evolution which occurred in their conditions. That women were inferiors in the family group is beyond question. In this warfaring, virile society, basic subsistence was always threatened. Consequently, fertility was more of a curse (hence the interpretation of Original Sin as being to do with sexual intercourse and procreation) than a blessing, and women were not held in honour. It is likely that Christianity had done little to improve their material or moral position.

Had not a woman been chiefly responsible for the Fall? Of all the forms taken by diabolic temptation, women were the worst incarnation of evil. '*Vir est caput mulieris*' - The man is the head of the woman' said St Paul (Ephesians 5.23), and it became an item of Christian belief and teaching after him. Many have liked to believe that the cult of the Virgin, which triumphed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was a turning-point in Christian spirituality, underlining the redemption of sinful woman by Mary, the new Eve. This turning point may also be observed in the cult of Mary Magdalen which started to grow from the twelfth century, as has been shown from the history of Vézelay in Burgundy as a religious centre. However, when Christianity agreed that women had made the grade, their rehabilitation occurred not at the beginning but at the end of a period in which the position of women in society was relatively high. The part played by women in medieval heretical movements, especially Catharism, or near-heretical movements such as that of the Béguines, is a sign of their dissatisfaction with the place which was allotted to them.

However, the contempt with which they were treated should be qualified. For one thing, women, even if they were not as useful as men in medieval society, nevertheless played (procreation apart) a significant part as far as the economy was concerned. In the peasant class women were almost equivalent to if not as good as men at work. When Helmbrecht tried to persuade his sister Gotelint to flee the home of her peasant father to marry an outlaw, who would let her live like a lady, he told her, 'If you marry a peasant, no woman will ever be more wretched than you. He will make you spin, break, strip and beat flax and pull up beets.' In the upper classes women, even though they had more refined pursuits, nevertheless were economically active to an important degree. They ran the women's quarters, where by fancy skills such as the weaving of fine materials, embroidery, and tapestry, they supplied a large proportion of the clothes needed by the lord and his companions. In more prosaic terms, they were the textile workers of the seigneurial class. The two sexes were customarily distinguished as the 'sword side' and the 'distaff side' not only in colloquial but also in legal terminology. In literature, the poetic genre associated with women, which Pierre le Gentil in fact named the '*chanson de femme*', was traditionally known as the '*chanson de toile*' (weaving song) because it was sung in the women's quarters, in the women's workshop where the spinning took place. When, between the ninth and eleventh centuries, the upper layer of the economically productive class, the *laboratores* of the age, managed to rise socially, the women who belonged to this layer benefited from this rise too. It is noticeable that, throughout the middle ages, although the birth of girls did not arouse great joy, girls were not, as in other misogynistic societies, penalized by infanticide, as far as we can conjecture.

The penitentials, which list a long series of barbarous and ferocious practices, are in general silent on this subject. Furthermore, in the upper classes of society, women, or at least some of them, always enjoyed a certain status. Once again, literature has caught some reflection of the brilliance shed by these great ladies. Bertha, Sibile, Guibourg, Kriemhild, and Brunhild, with their different characters and destinies, gentle or cruel, unfortunate or happy, form a group of first-class heroines. They are, as it were, the earthly understudies of the female religious figures who blossomed in Romanesque and Gothic art: solemn, ceremonial Madonnas who first became more human, then started to sway at the hips and became mannerized, or the wise and foolish virgins who held lengthy debates on vice and virtue, or the disquieted and disquieting Eves who seem to be moved by a medieval Manichaeanism to enquire, 'Did heaven form this constellation of wonders to be a serpent's dwelling?' In courtly literature, of course, the ladies who inspired or wrote poetry, real-life heroines such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, Marie de Champagne, or Marie de France, just as much as the fictional Iseult, Guinevere, or the *Princesse lointaine*, played a more important part; they invented modern love. But this is another story, which will be mentioned later.

It has often been claimed that the crusades, which left women on their own in western Europe, meant that their powers and rights increased. David Herlihy quite recently maintained that the condition of women, especially in the upper level of the seigneurial class and in southern France and Italy, had improved at two stages, in the Carolingian period and at the time of the crusades and the Reconquista. The poetry of the troubadours is supposed to reflect the growth in status of the women left behind. However, if we put our credence in St Bernard when he is conjuring up a Europe deprived of its menfolk, or Marcabru when he makes a châtelaine sigh because all her lovers are off on the second crusade, we are taking the longings of a fanatical propagandist of the crusade and the fiction of an imaginative poet to be universal realities. Anyway, one does not get the impression from reading the works of the troubadours that the world of courtly poetry is a universe of lonely women, to say the very least. And a study of legal documents proves that, in matters concerning the management of the property of married couples at any rate, the position of women grew worse between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Children were a different case. Indeed, were there any children in the medieval west? If we look at works of art, children do not appear in them. In a later age angels were habitually portrayed as children and even as *putti*, those ambivalent mixtures of angels and cupids, but in the middle ages angels, whatever their sex, were always adults. Even when statues of the Virgin began to show her as a perfect woman, as beautiful as she was gentle and clearly feminine - evoking a real, doubtless often a loved model, whom the artist was

trying to immortalize - the infant Jesus remained a horrid little dwarf, in whom clearly neither the artist, nor the commissioners of the work, nor for that matter the public, were interested. We must wait till the end of the middle ages for the spread of an iconographic theme which can be felt to display a new interest in children. It is an interest which, in a period of high infant mortality, was chiefly an anxious one. The theme was the massacre of the Innocents, which was echoed in devotion by the vogue for the feast of Holy Innocents. Foundling hospitals, placed under the patronage of the Innocents, are barely to be found before the fifteenth century. The utilitarian middle ages had no time to display pity or wonder towards children, and barely even noticed them. It has been said that in the middle ages there were no children, only small adults. Furthermore the child often did not have a grandfather, the figure involved in bringing up children in traditional societies, to form its character, since life-expectancy was too short in the middle ages for many children to have known their grandfather. Barely were they out of the women's quarters, where childhood was not treated as a matter of serious concern, when they were thrown into the toil of farming or military apprenticeship. Here again the terminology of the *chansons de geste* is enlightening. *Les Enfances Vivien*, or *Les Enfances du Cid* show the young precocious adolescent hero as already a young man - as is natural in primitive societies. The child was to make its appearance with the domestic family in which only a small group of direct descendants and ancestors lived together; this domestic family emerged and multiplied in the urban milieu, with the formation of the burgess class. The child was a product of the town and the burgess class which by contrast pushed down women and stifled them. Women were tied to the hearth while the child was freed and all of a sudden filled the houses, schools, and streets.

VIII

Trapped inside a family which imposed on him the slavery of collective ownership and community life, the individual was also, except in the towns, swallowed up inside another community, the territorial lordship on which he lived. Of course the difference between the noble vassal and the peasant, whatever might be the latter's condition, was considerable. But at different levels, glamorously or unglamorously, they both belonged to the lordship, or rather to the lord, whose dependants they were. Both of them were the 'men' of the lord, the former in a 'noble' sense, the latter in a humiliating one; the terms which often accompany the word 'man' moreover specify the gap which existed between their conditions. For example the phrase 'man of mouth and hands' for the vassal evokes an intimacy, communion, or contract which puts

the vassal, although an inferior, into the same class as his lord, whereas the phrase '*homme de pôté*' or *homo potestatis* for the peasant means the man who depends on or is in the power of his lord. Yet in exchange for their only protection and the economic benefit of dependence, a fief for the one, a tenure for the other, the two had to render the lord a number of duties - aids, services, and rents - and both had to bow to his authority, which manifested itself nowhere more clearly than in that of the administration of justice.

Of all the functions annexed by feudal lords at the expense of the public power, there was none which was harder for the lord's dependants to bear than the judicial function. Probably the vassal was summoned more often to sit on the 'right' side of the tribunal as a judge at the side of, or even in place of, his lord, than on the 'wrong' side, but he also had to submit to the lord's verdicts in misdemeanours, if the lord only had the right to dispense lesser justice, and in serious cases too, if the lord had the right to hear these. In this state of affairs the prison, gallows, and pillory, the sinister extensions of the lord's court, were symbols of oppression rather than of justice. The forward march of royal justice probably did not only mean an improvement in justice but more importantly helped to emancipate individuals who saw their rights better protected in the larger community of the realm than in the smaller, and for that reason alone more constricting, if not more oppressive, community of the manor. Yet this advance was slow. St Louis, one of the sovereigns most careful both in combating injustice and in making royal power respected, was extremely anxious to respect private seigneurial jurisdictions. William of St Pathus narrates a significant story about this. The king, surrounded by a great crowd of people, was listening to a sermon being given by a Dominican, Friar Lambert, in the graveyard of the church at Vitry. Nearby a gathering of people in a tavern was making such a noise that it was impossible to hear what the preacher was saying. 'The blessed king asked to whom the jurisdiction in this place belonged and he was told that it belonged to him. So he ordered some of his sergeants to make the people who were disturbing God's word stop doing so, which was done.' The sovereign's biographer concludes, 'It is believed that the blessed king asked whose the local jurisdiction was because he was afraid that if it had belonged to someone else and not to him he might have encroached on someone else's jurisdiction.'

Just as a clever vassal could juggle to his advantage with the many, sometimes contradictory, duties which he owed as a faithful follower, so the cunning villein could escape without loss from the tangled operation of rival jurisdictions. However the masses usually found them an occasion for additional oppressions.

It is still true that the individual was a resourceful man. The oppression caused by the many layers of collectivism in the middle ages thus gave the word 'individual' a shifty sound: the individual was a man who could only

escape from the group by committing some misdeed. He was prey for the lawkeepers, if not for the gallows. The individual was the automatic suspect. Most of these communities certainly claimed loyalty from their members and charged them with responsibilities; theoretically these were a payment for protection, but the burden of the price paid was heavy, while the protection was not always effective or obvious. In theory it was to provide for the needs of the poor that the Church levied tithes from the members of the parish (yet another community). Yet the tithe went more often to enrich the clergy, especially the higher clergy. Whether this was true or not, most parishioners believed it, and tithe was one of the taxes most hated by medieval people.

IX

Benefits and subjection seem to have achieved a better balance with each other in the heart of other, outwardly more egalitarian, communities: village and town communities. The village communities often put up a successful resistance to seigneurial exactions. They were essentially economic in purpose. They shared out, managed, and defended those pastures and the areas of forest which formed the common land. The upkeep of these was vital for most peasant families, who could not subsist without the essential contribution they could find there for feeding their pigs or their goats or for replenishing their woodpiles. However, the village community was not egalitarian. Its affairs were controlled and conducted by a few heads of families for their own profit. Often they were rich; sometimes they were the lowly descendants of families which had originally been more eminent. Rodney Hilton and Sir Michael Postan have shown that in many English villages in the thirteenth century there was a group of better-off villagers who advanced money both for individual loans (in such cases they were acting the part of usurers which the Jews could not, or could no longer, play in rural England) and for the numerous, often large, sums owed by the village as a whole: fines, legal expenses, and communal dues. These were the warrantors or guarantors, a group which was almost always made up of the same names for a given period, who appear in the village charters. They also often formed the guild or the confraternity of the village, for the village community itself was usually not the heir of a primitive rural community, but a relatively recent social formation. It was contemporary with the very movements which, as a result of the growth from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, created completely new institutions in the countryside as well as in the town. It is perhaps in Italy that one can observe most clearly that these were two parallel aspects of the same phenomenon, although it was experienced throughout western Europe. In the

twelfth century communal insurrections broke out, at the same time as in the towns, in the countryside in Ponthieu and in the area around Laon. Here the peasants set up federations of communes, based on a federation of villages and hamlets. Since the work of, notably, R. Caggese, P. Sella, F. Schneider, and G. P. Bognetti, it has been well known that in Italy the birth of rural communities went together with that of urban communes. More importantly, they have stressed the fundamental role played in both cases by the economic and ideological relationships which grew up between groups of neighbours. These *viciniae* or *vicinantiae* were the kernels of communities in the feudal epoch. The institution and the concept were fundamental. Opposed to them were, as we shall see, the institutions and concepts connected with foreigners. Good came from neighbours, evil from foreigners. Yet when they became organized communities the *viciniae* developed a class structure, and a group of *boni homines*, good or worthy men, appeared at their head. They were the notables from whom were recruited the consuls or officials or functionaries of the community.

Similarly in the towns the guilds and confraternities which ensured the economic, physical, and spiritual protection of their members were not, as often imagined, egalitarian institutions. It is true that they fought fraud, bad workmanship, and bogus imitations relatively effectively by controlling the work process, and by controlling production and the market they eliminated competition to the point of being, as Gunnar Mickwitz has argued, protectionist cartels. However, they allowed the 'natural' mechanisms of supply and demand to function under the cover of the 'just price' or *iustum pretium*. As John Baldwin has clearly proved by analysing the economic theories of scholastic theologians, this 'just price' is nothing other than the market price (*pretium in mercato*). The corporate system might be protectionist on a local level, but it favoured free trade in the wider context within which the town was situated. In fact the system favoured social inequalities, which grew just as much out of this *laissez-faire* on a higher level as out of the protectionism which functioned for the benefit of a minority at a lower level. The corporations were hierarchies and although the apprentice was a potential master, the workman was an inferior without great hope of promotion. More especially, the guilds excluded two social categories, whose existence really gave the lie to the harmonious economic and social planning which the system was theoretically destined to create.

One of these categories, at the top of society, was a rich minority who mostly maintained their economic power by the exercise of political power, directly or through an intermediary. They were *jurés*, *scabini*, and consuls. They escaped the iron collar of the guilds and acted as they pleased, as Armando Sapori has shown for the great Italian merchants. Sometimes they grouped themselves

in guilds such as Florence's Arte di Calamala, which dominated economic life, and had a serious impact on political life. Sometimes they purely and simply ignored the shackles of corporate institutions and their statutes. They were chiefly merchants dealing in long-distance imports or exports, the *mercatores* or 'givers of work' who controlled an entire commodity in a locality, from the production of the raw material to the sale of the finished product. An exceptional document edited by Georges Espinas allows us to make the acquaintance of one of them, Sire Jehan Boinebroke, merchant-draper of Douai in the late thirteenth century. The Church demanded of the faithful, especially merchants, that at least at their deaths they should restore by their wills the sums which they had received unjustly by usury or any sort of exaction, so as to be sure of salvation. The formula thus turned up as a matter of course in the last wishes of the dead, but it was rarely effective. In the case of Jehan Boinebroke it was. His heirs invited his victims to come and reimburse or compensate themselves. The text of some of these claims has come down to us. From them emerges the terrible portrait of a man who must have been less an isolated case than a representative of an entire social class. He bought wool and dyestuffs at a low price; he paid 'little, very little or nothing at all' to his inferiors, the peasants and small workmen. Very often he paid them in kind,¹ by what we would now call the truck system. He controlled them financially through usury and through employment and lodging, for he housed his employees as an extra form of pressure. Finally he could crush them by his political power, for he was *échevin* or *scabinus* (a sort of magistrate) at least nine times. Holding this office in 1280, he savagely crushed a strike by the Douai weavers. His hold over his victims was such (for it was not merely the ascendancy of a man who was perhaps exceptionally wicked, but that of a class) that those who dared to come and make a claim did so trembling, still terrorized by the memory of that tyrant who was clearly the urban equivalent of the feudal despot.

At the bottom the masses remained without protection: more of them later.

It is still true that even if rural and urban communities oppressed, rather than freed, the individual, they were founded on a principle which made the feudal world tremble. 'Commune, a detestable name,' exclaimed the ecclesiastical chronicler Guibert de Nogent in a famous phrase in the early twelfth century. What was revolutionary about the origins of the urban movement and its rural pendant – the formation of the rural communities – was that the oath which linked the members of the primitive urban society was an egalitarian oath, in contrast to the contract of vassalage, which bound the inferior to a superior. It substituted a society organized on horizontal lines for (and in opposition to) the vertical feudal hierarchy. The *vicinia*, the group of neighbours, who had originally been brought together simply because their

houses stood next to each other, turned itself into a fraternity (*fraternitas*). The word and the reality which it defined had a particular success in Spain, with its flourishing *hermandades*, and in Germany, where the sworn fraternity, *Schwurbruderschaft*, gathered to itself all the emotive force of the old Germanic brotherhood. It demanded from the burgesses an obligation of fidelity, or *Treue*. At Soest in north-west Germany, in the mid-twelfth century, the burgess who had injured the person or the property of a *concivis*, or fellow-citizen, had to renounce his right to be a burgess. The fraternity finally turned itself into a community based on an oath - the *coniuratio* or *communio*. This was the German *Eidgenossenschaft* and the French and the Italian commune. It united equals to the point where, even if economic inequality (for example in matters of urban taxation) could not be eliminated, it had to coexist with formulae and practices which safeguarded a theoretical equality between all the citizens. Thus at Neuss in south-west Saxony in 1259 it was laid down that if it was necessary to raise a tax for the need of the commune, the poor and the rich would swear equally (*equo modo*) to pay according to their means.

X

Even if medieval towns were not the threat to feudalism or the antifeudal exception that they have often been described as being, it is none the less true that they were above all an unusual phenomenon. As far as men in the period of urban growth were concerned, they were new things in the scandalous sense which was given to this adjective in the middle ages. For the men from the fields, the forest, and the moors, the town was at once an object of attraction and repulsion. Like metal, money, and women, it was a temptation. Yet the medieval town was not, at first sight, a frighteningly large monster. By the start of the fourteenth century, very few towns exceeded the 100,000 mark, and then only slightly. Venice and Milan both did. Paris, the biggest town in northern Europe, whose size has sometimes been overestimated to as much as 200,000 inhabitants, probably at that time had no more than 80,000. Bruges, Ghent, Toulouse, London, Hamburg, Lübeck, and all the other cities of the same size, the first-class cities, numbered from 20,000 to 40,000 inhabitants.

Moreover, as has often been justly pointed out, the medieval town was completely intermingled with the countryside. Townsfolk led a semirural life within the walls, which gave protection to vines, gardens, indeed even meadows and ploughed fields, livestock, and dung. And yet the contrast between town and country was stronger in the middle ages than in most societies and civilizations. Town walls were a frontier, the strongest known in this period. The ramparts, with their towers and gates, separated two worlds. The towns

asserted their singularity and individuality by ostentatiously displaying the walls which protected them on their seals. Whether it was viewed as Jerusalem, the throne of righteousness, or as Babylon, the seat of evil, the town was always a symbol of the extraordinary in the medieval west. The distinction between townsman and peasant was one of the sharpest dividing lines in medieval society.

Presumably early medieval towns had retained their Roman glamour in the eyes of prefeudal or feudal society. Towns were centres of political or religious power, the residences of the king or the count and of the bishop. They were the only places with great buildings, made of brick or stone, they were the localities whose capture, pillage, or possession brought riches and fame. Has it been sufficiently remarked that towns were a focus of attraction to the heroes of *chansons de geste*? In the *Chanson de Roland*, in contrast with hostile nature - rocks, mountains, or even flat country - the towns, for example Saragossa and Aachen, 'the finest seat in France' were beacons. Constantinople was a seductive vision because it was a City with a capital C. The habitual epithets for towns were 'proud', 'arrogant', or 'noble'. Thus Paris was 'the noble city' in *Mainet* and in *Berthe au grand pied*, who found the end of her trials there. Oberon, whom one would believe to be associated solely with the forests where his spells were spun, retained nostalgia for his birthplace, 'Monimur, his city'. The whole cycle of William of Orange revolves around towns: Orange, Nîmes, Vienne and, again, Paris. However, the *Moniage Guillaume* did not try to idealize Paris. 'France then was not very populous; it was barely cultivated, and one did not see there all the rich manors, castles, and rich towns which spread over her surface nowadays. Paris at that time was very small.' Nonetheless William had come to relieve the siege of King Louis, and his first sight of the town at the end of his journey was a revelation, an emotional moment. 'When William opened his eyes morning had broken and he could see Paris beyond the meadows.' And William left a memorial to the Parisians of today in the form of the name of his enemy, the Saxon pagan Ysoré, whom he slew in single combat and buried on the spot, in a place which became the Tombe Isoré, or Tombe Issoire. Narbonne, captured by Aimeri, was especially splendid:

Between two high crags, on the edge of a bay, he saw a fortified Saracen town standing on a height. It was well enclosed by walls and posts, and no one had ever seen a more solid town laid out. They saw leaves shaken by the wind in the plantations of yews and laburnums; no one could enjoy a finer sight. The town had twenty towers made of shining limestone. Another tower, in the middle, drew their glances. No man in this world, however good a storyteller he might be, would be able to describe to you in less time than a summer day the labours which the pagans had undertaken to build

this tower. The battlements were entirely sealed with lead; the defenders were about a bowshot from the enemy. At the top of the keep stood a ball made of fine gold from Outremer. Within this the Saracens had enclosed a carbuncle which blazed and shone with a light like that of the sun at dawn. The king gazed at the town and desired it in his heart. . . .

Between the tenth and the thirteenth century the face of western towns changed. Henri Pirenne's work on their leap forward will always be a landmark. One function of towns came to be of prime importance, reviving the old cities and creating new ones. This was the economic and commercial role of the towns, and soon their artisanal role as well. The town became a centre of what feudal lords detested: shameful economic activity. Towns were cursed.

In 1128 the small town of Deutz, just across the Rhine from Cologne, burnt down. The abbot of the monastery of St Heribert there, the famous Rupert of Deutz, a theologian who was strongly attached to traditions, immediately saw in this the anger of God inflicting punishment on the place because it was involved in the development of Cologne and had turned itself into a trading centre, a haunt of unspeakable merchants and workmen. Thence, by way of the Bible, Rupert outlined an anti-urban history of mankind. Cain had been the inventor of towns and had constructed the first of them, and he had been imitated by all evil people, all the tyrants and enemies of God. On the other hand the patriarchs, and the righteous generally, those who feared God, had lived in tents in the desert. To settle in towns was to choose the world and indeed the growth of towns encouraged a new outlook on life: the result of fixing people in one spot, and of the development of property and of the instinct for property. In particular, towns encouraged the choice of the active life.

What also favoured the spread of an urban outlook was the birth of a city patriotism. Without doubt, as we shall see, the towns were the scene of a bitter struggle between the classes, and the ruling classes were the instigators and the principal beneficiaries of this urban spirit. Besides, as Armando Sapori has emphasized, the great merchants themselves, at least in the thirteenth century, were prepared to pay for this with their own money and their own lives. In 1260, when a fierce war broke out between Siena and Florence, one of the chief Sienese merchant-bankers, Salimbene dei Salimbeni, gave the commune 118,000 florins, closed his shops, and himself hurried off to war.

The rural lordship could only inspire in the mass of the peasants who lived there a sense of the oppression of which they were the victims, and the castle, even if it sometimes offered them refuge and protection, cast only a hated shadow over them. By contrast, the city skyline with its great buildings, even though they were an instrument and a symbol of the domination of the rich in the towns, inspired city-dwellers with feelings in which admiration and pride

were often overwhelmingly dominant. Urban society had succeeded to a certain degree in creating common values in all inhabitants - aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual values. Dante's '*Il bel San Giovanni*' was an object of veneration and pride to all Florentines. This urban pride was first and foremost an achievement of the most urbanized areas - Flanders, Germany, northern and central Italy. Let us look at some evidence from three Italian cities. Milan's marvels were described by Fra Bonvesin dalla Riva in 1288 in his *De magnalibus urbis Mediolani* - 'The town is in the shape of a circle and its wonderful round form is a sign of its perfection.' Genoa's 'beauties' were praised in the vernacular by an anonymous poet at the end of the thirteenth century: '*Zenoa è citae piuna / de gente e de ogni ben fornia / Murao ha bello e adorno / chi la circonda tuto intorno*' - 'Genoa is a city full of people and well supplied in everything. She has fine ornate walls which surround her all around.' Lastly Chiaro Davanzati glorified Florence in 1267, before Dante did; '*Ah dolze e gaia terra fiorentina / fontana di valore e di piagenza . . . ?*' - 'Ah sweet and gay land of Florence, fountain of worth and of pleasure . . . ?'

But what the role and the destiny of these islands of urbanism in the land mass of western Europe? Their prosperity could in the end only be fed from the land. Even the towns which had most enriched themselves by trade - Ghent, Bruges, Genoa, Milan, Florence, Siena, and also Venice, which still had to struggle against the problems posed by its geographical situation, had to base their activity and power on their rural hinterland, or what Italian towns called their '*contado*' or 'countryside', from which Italian peasants obtained their name of *contadini*.

Relations between towns and the rural areas which they controlled were complex. At first sight cities were highly attractive to the population in the countryside. The peasant who left his village could above all find liberty there. Either he automatically became free by moving into the town, since servitude was unknown on town soil, or else the town, when it obtained control of the surrounding countryside, was eager to free the serfs. Hence the famous German phrase '*Stadtluft macht frei nach Jahr und Tag*' - 'Town air frees after a year and a day', that is after the new citizen had stayed this length of time in the town. Yet the town also exploited the land around it, behaving like a lord towards it. The urban lordship exercised its right of jurisdiction over the area in its control and above all exploited it economically. It bought its produce (grain, wool, and dairy products for sustenance, industrial production, and commerce) at low prices and forced it to buy its own produce. This included things which it supplied merely as an intermediary, for example salt, which became effectively a tax, since the town obliged villagers to buy it in quantities which it laid down, with a tax on the price. The urban armies were soon mostly formed of recruited peasants. Bruges for example got its soldiers from the

countryside around - the '*Franc de Bruges*'. The towns built up a cheap rural workforce which they controlled entirely. Quite soon they were afraid of their peasants. Just as the lords in the open countryside barricaded themselves inside their castles, the towns, once night had fallen, pulled up their drawbridges, pulled chains in front of their doors, and garrisoned their walls with sentries. These were chiefly on the lookout for the nearest and likeliest enemy, the peasant from round about. At the end of the middle ages, university graduates and lawyers, who themselves were a product of the town, even worked out a legal system to crush the peasants.

Finally, even the towns which succeeded in becoming nation-states in the middle ages, the republic of Venice, the grand duchy of Tuscany, and the free Hanseatic towns, continued to flourish after the middle ages only against the trend of history. Little by little they became anachronisms. The lands where the towns continued longest to form the economical, political, and cultural backbone, Italy and Germany, were the last to establish their political unity, in the nineteenth century. Medieval urban society had no historic future ahead of it.

XI

The Church's dream of an ideal society which would be at least harmonious even if not united ran up against the bitter reality of social clashes and struggles. The quasi-monopoly which clerics had over literature, at least until the thirteenth century, disguised the intensity of the class struggle in the middle ages and sometimes gives the impression that only a few wicked laymen, lords or peasants, tried every now and then to disturb the social order by attacking the clergy or the Church's possessions. Nonetheless, ecclesiastical authors said enough on the subject for us to be able to uncover the longlasting nature of these antagonisms, which sometimes erupted in sudden violent explosions.

The best known source of conflict was the hostility of the burgesses to the nobles. This was spectacular. The urban setting resounded with it; the echo has been preserved for us in writings such as the narratives of chroniclers, and the charters, statutes, and treaties by which the sudden changes were often ratified. The fairly frequent cases in which urban revolts broke out against bishops as lords of towns, which are narrated with horror by clerical authors, have provided us with exciting accounts which show that, with the rise of new classes, a new system of values was emerging which no longer respected the sacred character of prelates. Events in Cologne in 1074 were recorded by the monk Lampert of Hersfeld.

The archbishop spent the period of Easter at Cologne with his friend, the bishop of Münster, whom he had invited to celebrate the feast with him. When the bishop of

Münster wished to return home, the archbishop ordered his sergeants to find him a suitable boat. By searching they discovered a good boat which belonged to a rich merchant of the city and claimed it for the archbishop's use. The merchant's men who were in charge of the boat resisted, but the archbishop's men threatened to ill-treat them if they did not obey immediately. The merchant's men hurried off to find their master, told him what had happened, and asked him what they should do. The merchant had a bold, vigorous son. He was related to the chief families of the town and was very popular because of his personality. He quickly assembled his men and as many young men of the town as he could, rushed towards the boat, ordered the archbishop's men to get out and drove them out by force The supporters of the two sides took arms and it seemed that a great battle was being prepared in the town. News of the struggle reached the archbishop, who immediately sent men to quell the revolt, and, since he was very angry, he threatened the young men who had rebelled with a harsh punishment at the next session of his court. The archbishop had all the virtues and he had often proved his excellence in all aspects of life, both temporal and ecclesiastical, but he had one fault. When he lost his temper, he could not control his tongue and he cursed every man without distinction with the most violent expressions. Finally the rebellion seemed to die down, but the young man, who was in a great rage and intoxicated by his success at the beginning, did not cease to cause as much trouble as he could. He went throughout the town making speeches to the people concerning the archbishop's bad government, and accused him of imposing unjust burdens on the people, of depriving innocent people of their goods and of insulting honest citizens. . . . It was not difficult for him to arouse the populace . . . Moreover everyone thought that the people of Worms had accomplished a great exploit in driving out their bishop who had ruled them too severely. And since they were more numerous and richer than the people of Worms and they had weapons, they did not like it that others might think that they were not as brave as the people of Worms and they thought that it was shameful to be subject like women to the power of the archbishop who was governing them like a tyrant

In Laon in 1111 we know, from the famous account of Guibert de Nogent, that the rebellion of the citizens ended with the butchering of Bishop Gaudri and the mutilation of his corpse. One rebel cut off a finger to seize the ring.

Ecclesiastical chroniclers faced with these urban rebellions were more astonished than indignant. The characters of some bishops probably seemed to them to explain, if not to justify, the anger of the burgesses and of the people. Yet when the latter rebelled against the feudal order, against the society approved of by the Church, and against a world which, since it had become Christian, seemed to have nothing to do save to wait for the transfer from the earthly to the heavenly city (this was the theme of Otto of Freising in his *History of Two Cities*), ecclesiastical historiography admitted that it could not understand it.

Thus at Le Mans in 1070 the inhabitants rebelled against William the Conqueror, who was busy making sure of his conquest of England, and the bishop took refuge with him.

Then the people [wrote the episcopal chronicler] formed an association which they called a commune, they united themselves by an oath and forced the lords from the surrounding countryside to swear allegiance to their commune. Emboldened by this conspiracy, they began to commit innumerable crimes, condemning many people without discrimination and without cause, blinding some for the most trivial of reasons, and horrible to say, hanging others for trivial faults. They even burnt down the castles in the region during Lent, and, what was worse, during Holy Week. And they did all this without reason.

XII

However, the chief battlefield of social tensions lay in the countryside. Struggle between lords and peasants was endemic and sometimes it erupted in attacks of extreme violence. Revolts in towns between the eleventh and the thirteenth century were led by burgesses who wished to ensure political power for themselves which would guarantee the free exercise of their professional activities and thus their financial prosperity, and which would bring them a status related to their economic power. In the country, by contrast, peasant risings aimed not only to improve the position of peasants by fixing, reducing, or abolishing the services and dues which weighed on them heavily, but were often simply an expression of their struggle for existence. The majority of peasants consisted of the masses who subsisted on the very edge of the starvation level, at risk from famine and epidemic. What was later in France to be called the Jacquerie could draw on an extraordinary strength of despair. In towns too, as we have seen in Cologne in 1074, the new social classes were motivated by hatred and the desire to take their revenge for the contempt in which they were held by ecclesiastical and lay lords, but this emotional motivation was very much stronger in the countryside, in proportion to the immense contempt which the lords had for their villeins. In spite of the improvements to their lot which the peasants gained in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many lords did not, even at the end of the thirteenth century, recognize that their tenants had any property other than their naked bodies, for of course there was that essential difference between their condition and that of the slave in the ancient world. The abbot of Burton on Trent in Staffordshire, whose monastery had confiscated from its peasants all their livestock (800 head of cattle, sheep, and pigs), reminded them of this after

they and their wives and children had followed the king from one of his residences to another to obtain a writ ordering the abbot to restore their animals. The abbot announced to them that they possessed nothing except their bellies - '*nihil praeter ventrem*'. He forgot that, owing to him, these bellies were often empty. In 1336, the Cistercian abbot of Vale Royal in Cheshire made his peasants admit by oath on the Bible that they 'were villeins, they and their sons after them, for all eternity. . . .' The peasant was a savage beast, as sources rivalled each other in repeating. According to G. G. Coulton, the peasant was 'the medieval Caliban'. His natural destination was hell. He needed to be extraordinarily cunning to get to heaven - by using trickery as it were. This was the theme of the *fabliau Du vilain qui gagna le paradis par le plaid*, that is to say by pleading in court.

Here is Rigaut in the *geste* of Garin le Lorrain: 'He saw Rigaut, the son of the villein Hervis, advancing towards him. He was a strong-limbed youth with big arms, and a square back and shoulders, and his eyes were a hand's breadth apart; in 60 countries you would not have found a coarser, less attractive face. His hair was shaggy, his cheeks grimy and tanned; they had not been washed for six months, and the only water which had ever moistened them was rainwater.' Here is how another young peasant appeared in the forest where Aucassin was riding along. 'He had a great mop of a head as black as smut with eyes set a palm's width apart, broad cheeks, an enormous flat nose with cavernous nostrils, thick lips redder than underdone meat and great ugly, yellow teeth' (Matarasso, 1971, p. 45).

Similar hostility was shown concerning the moral state of the peasant. The feudal age derived the word villainy, meaning moral ugliness, from the word villein. The people who were fiercest in their attacks against the peasants were the Goliards, those clerks who were themselves pretty much beyond the pale, who suffered from intensified class prejudices. Hence the Goliardic poem *The Declension of the Peasant*:

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Nominative singular | <i>hic vilanus</i> | this villein |
| Genitive | <i>huius rustici</i> | of this rustic |
| Dative | <i>huic tferero</i> | to this devil |
| Accusative | <i>hunc furem</i> | this thief |
| Vocative | <i>o latro!</i> | o robber! |
| Ablative | <i>ab hoc depredatore</i> | by this plunderer |
| Nominative plural | <i>hi maledicti</i> | these accursed ones |
| Genitive | <i>horum tristium</i> | of these wretches |
| Dative | <i>his mendacibus</i> | to these liars |
| Accusative | <i>hos nequissimos</i> | these wicked people |
| Vocative | <i>o pessimi!</i> | o evil ones! |
| Ablative | <i>ab his infidelibus</i> | by these infidels |

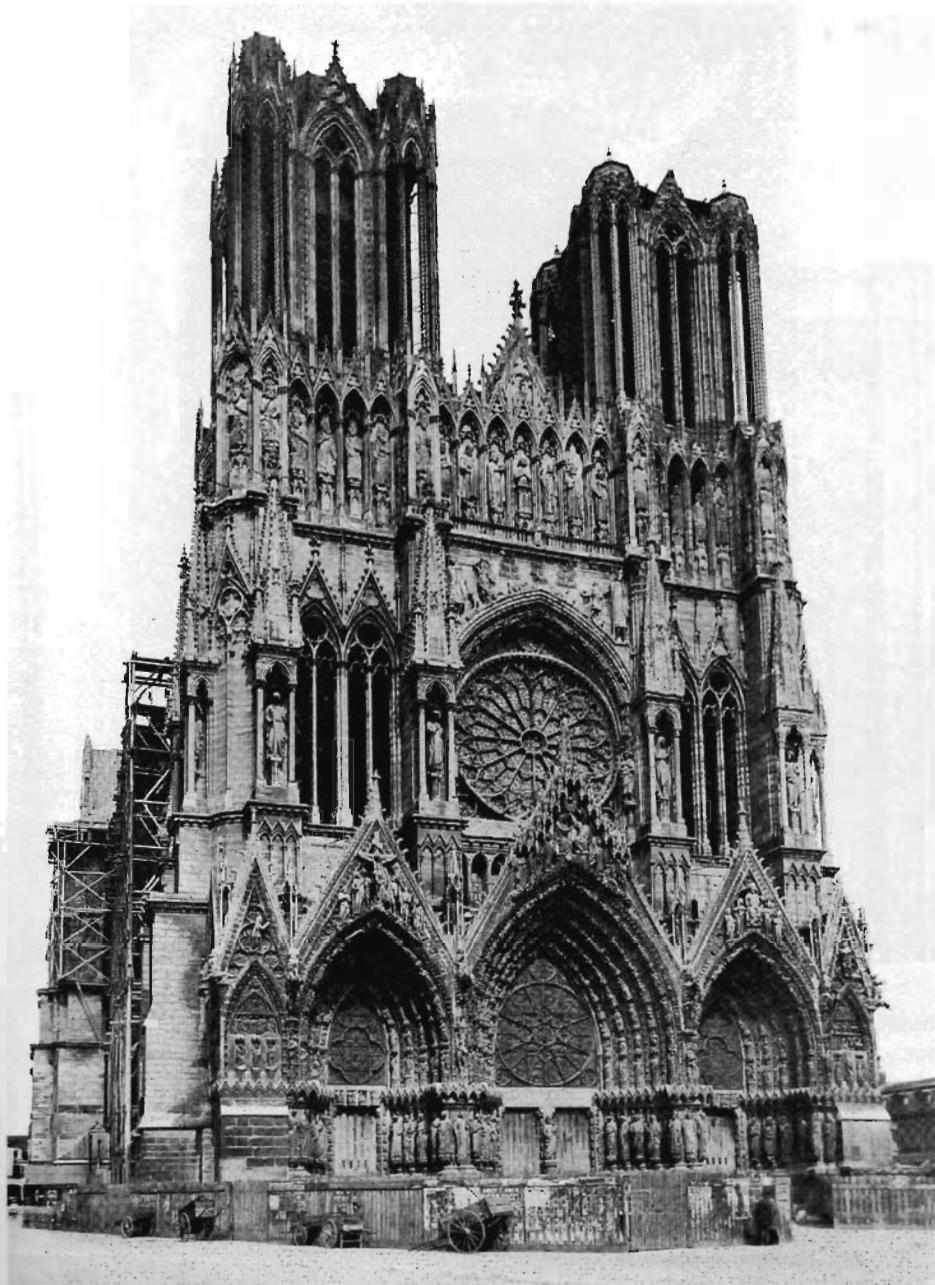


Plate 17 Facade of Rheims Cathedral

The work of four master masons and several sculpture workshops, this was built between 1210 and 1260.

(Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographie Lauros-Giraudon.)



Plate 18 Working in wood: shipbuilders

Working in wood and shipbuilding were important medieval crafts and sometimes (as at Venice, where the Arsenal early on became a major enterprise) rose to the status of industries. The biblical scene which allowed the portrayal of shipbuilding was the construction of Noah's Ark. Tools and craftsmen hold a place of honour on this sculpted door jamb (restored in modern times) in the Upper Chapel of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris (1246-8).

(Paris, Sainte Chapelle. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographie Lauros-Giraudon.)



Plate 19 An episode in the history of a nation: the baptism of Clovis

No event was more important for the kings of France than the baptism of Clovis, who established the triumph of the Frankish kings (to whom the Capetians claimed to be linked). Thus the scene was depicted frequently. In this miniature from a manuscript of the life of St Denis, drawn in the abbey of St Denis' scriptorium in about 1250, all the essential elements are represented: God in the form of the Holy Spirit as a dove bringing the sainte ampoule (or vial of holy oil) with which St Remigius consecrates the king who is then also crowned.

(Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. fr. 1098, fo. 50.)



Plate 20 Remodelled towns: Boynes

Boynes (France, dept Loiret, arr. and canton Pithiviers), a settlement on the borderline between a village and a town, goes back to before the twelfth century; it has a surviving twelfth-century building with a Romanesque crypt. However, its decisive growth occurred in the thirteenth century, when the present-day church was built and also the high town walls, whose square plan influenced the axis of the street plan.

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Plate 21 A medieval town: the stronghold of Carcassonne

Acquired by the king of France in 1229 after the Albigensian Crusade, Carcassonne became the seat of a royal seneschalry, and, like other towns, was fortified in the reigns of Louis IX (1226-70) and Philip III (1270-85). It was fortified with particular care, because of the danger of attack by the heretics, the inhabitants of Languedoc, the Spanish, the English, and, in the fourteenth century, the Great Companies.

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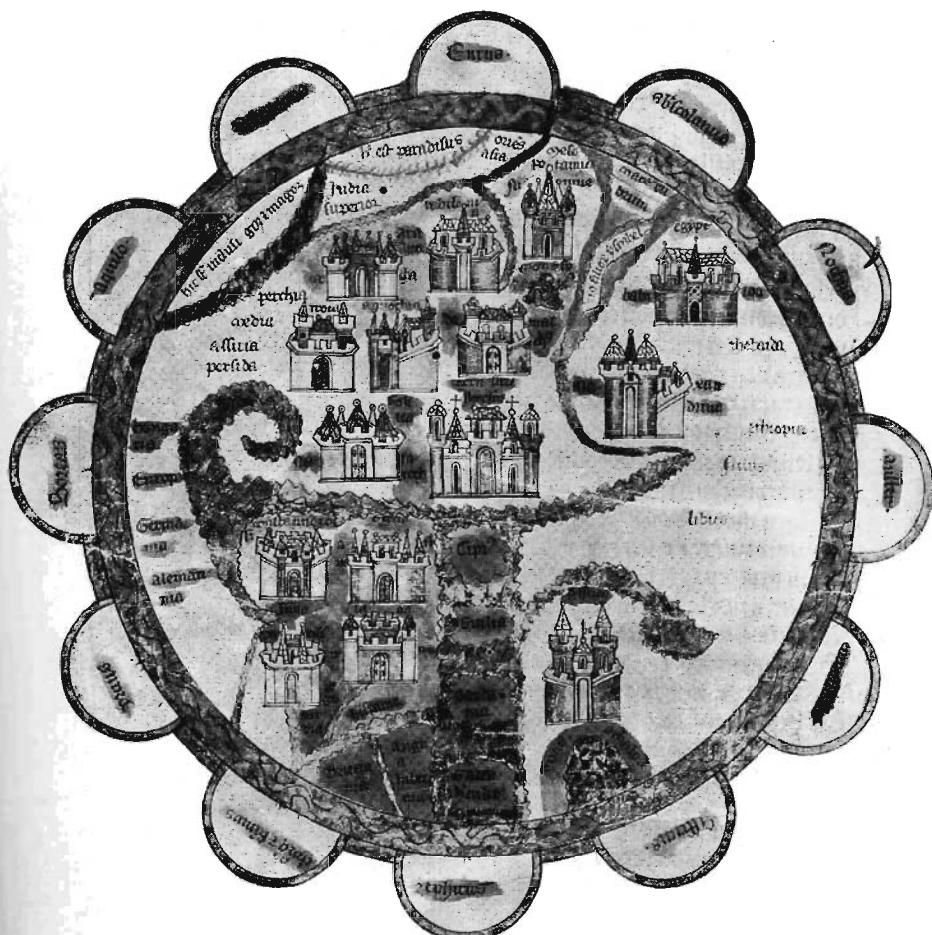


Plate 22 Medieval cartography: the world in the thirteenth century

A characteristic example of medieval cartography. The map is circular, with the three continents shown in a T-pattern around the Mediterranean in the middle. Jerusalem, the 'navel of the world', occupies the centre, and the earthly paradise the upper edge, with the region where Gog and Magog are shut up to the left. A curious collection of towns is depicted, the fruit of the Christian historical and geographical mentality. In Europe are shown Rome, Athens, Constantinople and Paris (the map was made at St Denis). In Africa there is an unnamed town in North Africa, and Alexandria and 'Babylon' (Cairo) in Egypt. In Asia are Jerusalem, Nazareth, Damascus, Antioch, Troy, Mecca, Babylon and Nineveh. This map is an illustration to a manuscript of the *Chroniques de Saint-Denis* written at the end of the reign of Louis IX, at the King's request, in French, by the monk Primatus, who offered the book to Philip III in about 1275. Charles V owned the manuscript and had it copied.

(Paris, Bibliothèque St Geneviève. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographie Lauros-Giraudon.)



Plate 23 A medieval hero: Charlemagne

Of all the figures from the past, the one who had the greatest popularity in all Christian Europe, especially in Germany and France, was Charlemagne. This miniature, in a manuscript of the *Chronicles of St Denis* completed in about 1275 (see caption to plate 22), illustrates the start of the Roncesvaux episode. Charlemagne is pictured sending the traitor Ganelon to the two Saracen kings of Spain, Marsile and Baligand. Tales circulating during the Reconquista developed the episode at Roncesvaux.

(Paris, Bibliothèque St Geneviève, Ms 771. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographie Lauros-Giraudon.)



Plate 24 Seal of Gravelines

This thirteenth-century seal represents the patron saint of the town, St Willibrord of Echternach, apostle of Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg in the eighth century. The saint, dressed as a mitred bishop, bearing a crozier and raising his hand in benediction, is performing the symbolic 'passage' or crossing in a boat.

(Paris, Photographie Lauros-Giraudon.)

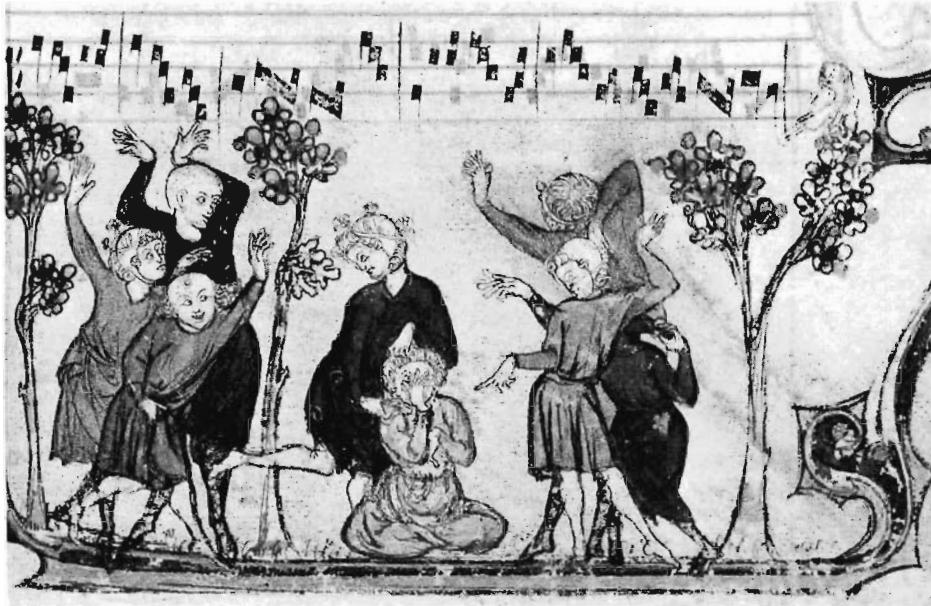


Plate 25 Popular games and rustics: blindman's buff

This miniature is to be found in a collection of songs called *Le chansonnier de Paris*, written in a workshop in Paris between 1280 and 1315. It provides valuable evidence of fashionable songs and polyphonic settings, whose interest is heightened by the illustrations. These are inspired by three main influences - religious, courtly and rustic. The songs are in French and Latin; the miniatures do not always correspond to the text. One religious song in Latin has a picture of the Trinity above it and beneath it a representation of young people participating in the popular game of blindman's buff.

(Montpellier, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Médecine, Ms. 196, fo. 88.)



Plate 26 A leper

A leper shaking his rattle at the gate of a town - together with a blind man and cripple. This miniature comes from an early fourteenth-century copy of a French translation of the Mirror of History by the Dominican Vincent of Beauvais - a summary of universal history in moral anecdotes from the Creation to St Louis (Louis IX).

(Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms 5080, fo. 373. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographic Lauros-Giraudon.)



Plate 27 Aristocratic pastimes: a game of chess

Chess became an indoor battle comparable to tournaments. On this lid of an ivory mirror case made in France early in the fourteenth century, we see a chess game between the *chanson de geste* hero Huon of Bordeaux and Yvarin, the daughter of the Saracen admiral. They were playing for the damsels's hand in marriage or Huon's head.

(Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographie Lauros-Giraudon.)

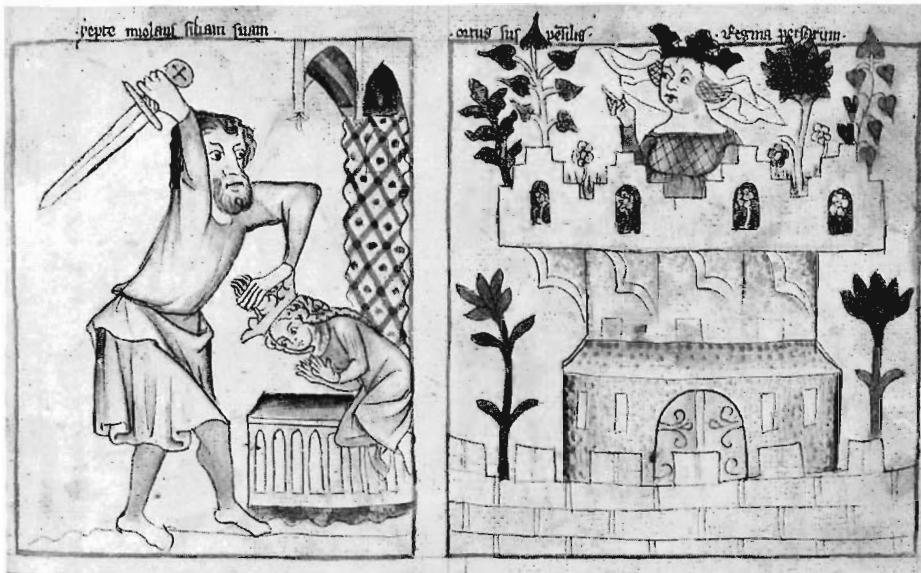


Plate 28 Profane history of the ancient world and typological symbolism

From the middle of the twelfth century, at a point when the church had to fight against Catharism, which completely or partially rejected the Old Testament, a hitherto unobtrusive form of symbolism came into its own, one which related the events preceding Christ's Incarnation (the 'types') with their opposite numbers in the New Testament (the 'antitypes'). An early example of this typological symbolism is to be found in the St Bertin cross pedestal illustrated above (plate 10). From the early fourteenth century two works which expounded all sacred history by means of this method were widely diffused: these were the *Biblia pauperum* or *Bible of the Poor* and the *Speculum humanae salvationis* or *Mirror of Human Salvation*. In the *Mirror*, each event of the New Testament is announced by three 'types'. Since sacred history did not always provide enough prefigurations, the *Mirror* fell back on the profane history of antiquity. These details of a miniature from a manuscript of the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, in a copy belonging to the abbey of Kremsmünster made in about 1336 from a manuscript from the abbey of Weissenaу, represent two types of the Virgin: the daughter of Jephtha and Semiramis, whose hanging garden is connected with the theme of the enclosed garden which is a symbol of virginity. (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. SN 2612, fo. 8v.)

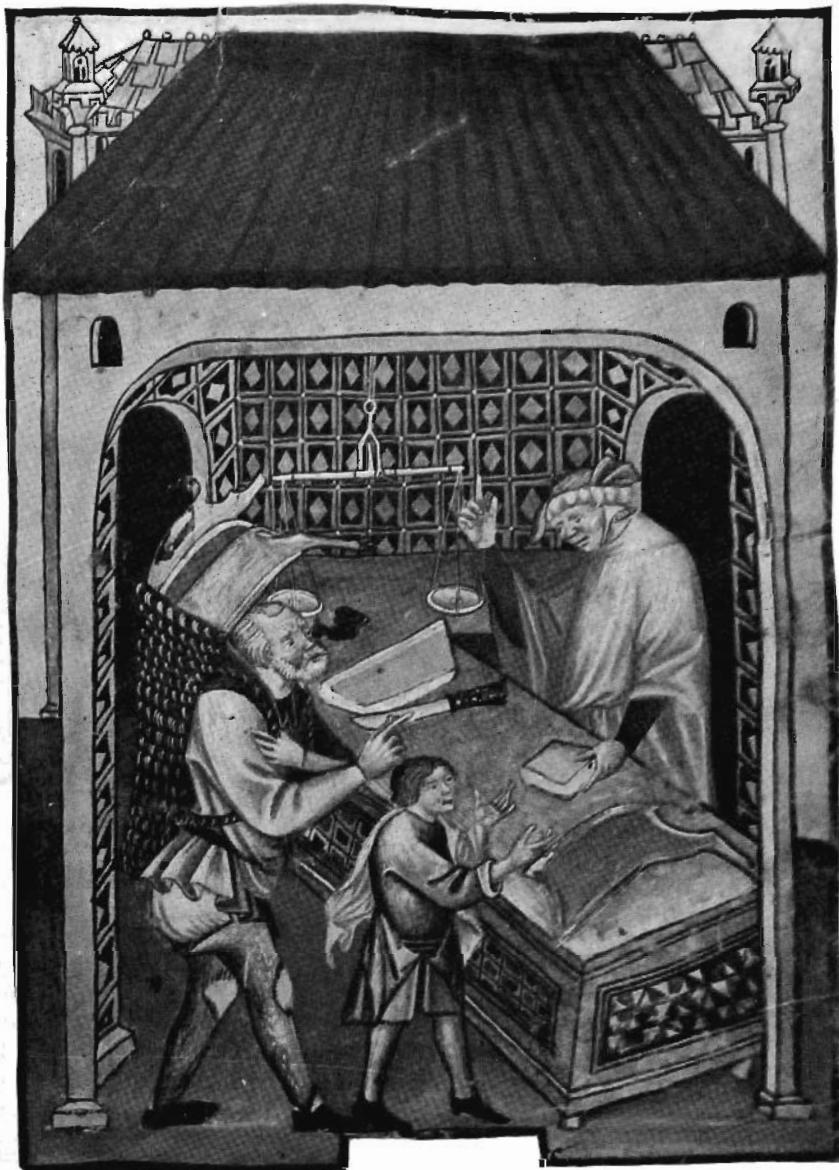


Plate 29 Feeding the townsfolk: a seller of salt-meat

The miniatures of this early fifteenth-century manuscript of the medical treatise of the Spanish Arab Albucasis (tenth century) were probably painted in Italy, but the copy went soon after to Bohemia because it bears notes in a cursive hand in Czech. The miniatures show the preparation and sale of various products whose advantages and disadvantages for the health are described in the text. The middle ages made great use of salt, the main means of preserving food and an important trade commodity.

(Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 1673, fo. 39. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographic Bulloz.)



Plate 30 Calamities: the Black Death

The great plague which had disappeared from the west since the early middle ages reappeared in 1348, brought by a ship coming from the east. Almost all of Christian Europe was affected, and later recurrences, which became weaker, more widely spaced apart and more localized, lasted until the early eighteenth century. The Black Death must have killed about a third of the population of western Europe in 1348–50. The scenes of horror which it caused were impressed on the minds of the survivors. Towns barely managed to bury their dead. Many priests, monks and nuns fled. Those who remained to assist the sick and the dead were looked up to as examples. This miniature shows the burial of plague-victims at Tournai in 1348. It illustrates a manuscript of the *Annales* of Gilles le Muisis, abbot of St Martin, Tournai, who himself very probably died of the plague.

(Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, MS 13076-13077, fo. 24v.)



Plate 31 Ceremonies: the princely baptism of the Dauphin Charles (VI)

Princely ceremonies introduced another order into society, the monarchical order, at the affective level. The whole of the populace was bidden to participate in the events of the private lives of their rulers, which took on the importance of national events and assisted national cohesion. Here we see the baptismal procession of the future Charles VI. The queen, who had given birth only three days before, carries the baby, surrounded by the great princes of the court and preceded by torch-bearers. It is the hour of prime (6 a.m.) on 6 December 1368. The passage illustrated by this miniature in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* (composed for Charles V between 1375 and 1379) emphasizes the pomp lavished on this ceremony - crowd barriers set up the night before for the people, princesses 'finely adorned with crowns and jewels . . .'.
(Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 2813, fo. 446. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographic Lauros-Giraudon.)

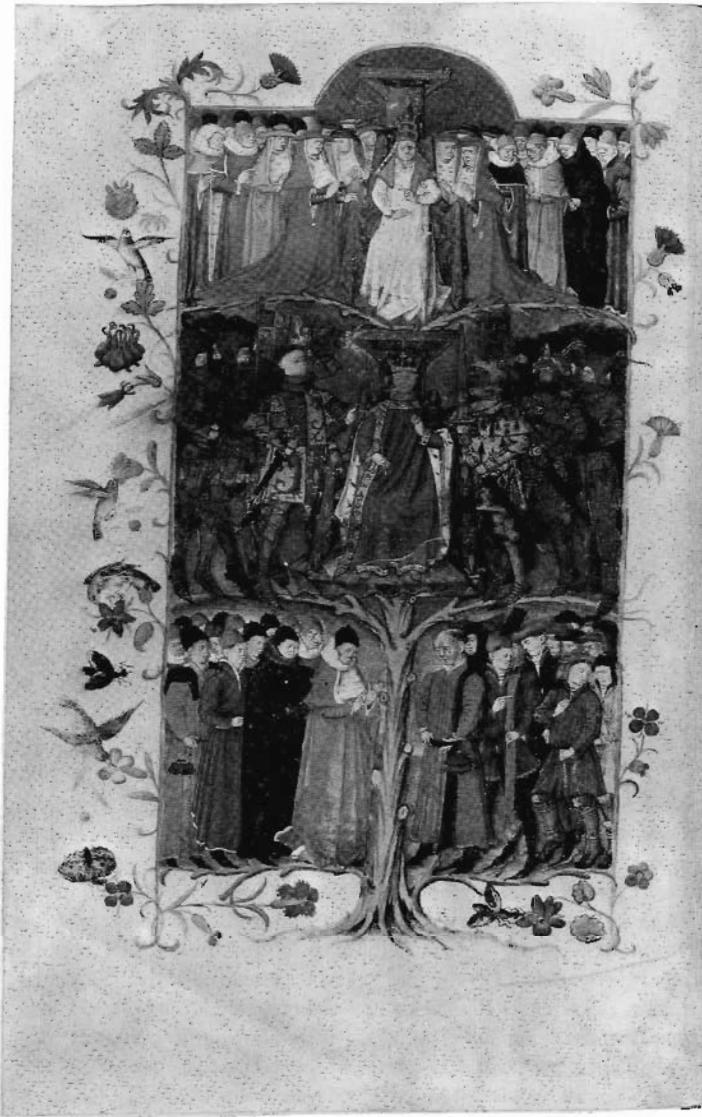


Plate 32 Monarchical society at the end of the middle ages

In 1450, Charles VII had practically reconquered France and established royal authority. In that year the constable in Richemont, who had rallied Brittany (he is here wearing its arms) to the king, commissioned this manuscript of the Tree of Battles, on the occasion of the surrender of Cherbourg. In the picture the king on his throne is presiding over the three estates of society. At the top, the clergy surround the pope, who is superimposing his authority on the king's. In the centre is the sovereign with the Dauphin, the future Louis XI, at his right, and Richemont on his left, surrounded by the military aristocracy. Beneath is the third estate, burgesses on the left and merchants and peasants to the right. The purse, the sign of wealth but as yet not of rank, was the merchants' symbol.

(Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms 2695, fo. 6.)



Plate 33 The west and the sea: a Venetian ship at the end of the fifteenth century

By the fifteenth century, western European commercial expansion was asserting itself from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. In spite of the Turks, Venetian galleys dominated much of the trade of eastern Europe. This engraving, from Durazzo, shows a Venetian ship around 1470–80. (Paris, Musée du Louvre, no. 1710, from the Edmond de Rothschild collection. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographic Bulloz.)



Plate 34 Humanistic morality and technology: Temperance and her clock

The humanistic theme of the virtues abounds in Italian art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was Italians who introduced it into France in the tomb of Charles VIII at St-Denis, and tombs at Dol (Ille et Vilaine) and Ferrières (Loiret). But portraying the virtues became common after Michel Colombe and Jean Perréal, in the early years of the sixteenth century, built the magnificent tomb of the last duke of Brittany, Francis II, and his wife, Marguerite de Foix. The four medieval virtues stand at the four corners of the tomb. Temperance holds a clock, a symbol of the new measurement of time which defined an intellectual and mental universe which had broken with that of the middle ages. 'Humanistic pride triumphed over the old Christian modesty' (Emile Male).

(Nantes Cathedral. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Photographe Lauros-Giraudon.)

The peasants who work for us all [wrote Geoffrey of Tours] who wear themselves out in all weathers, throughout all the seasons, and who offer themselves up to servile tasks, scorned by their masters, are ceaselessly overwhelmed, and this in order to provide enough for other people's lives, clothing and frivolities . . . They are persecuted by fire, rapine and the sword; they are thrown into prisons, into chains; then they are forced to ransom themselves, or else they are killed violently, tortured to death by hunger, or they are offered up to all sorts of tortures . . .

At the time of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, the English peasants, according to Froissart, cried out, 'We are men made in the semblance of Christ, and yet we are treated like savage beasts.' An unusual poem of the first half of the thirteenth century, *Le conte des vilains de Verson*, recounts the rebellion of the peasants of the village of Verson-sur-Odon, near Caen, against their lord, the abbot of Mont Saint Michel. The villeins' uprising was quelled by the reply, 'Go and make them pay / they should acquit themselves well for this / go and take their horses / Take their cows and calves / Because the villeins are too disloyal.' As Frantisek Graus rightly said, the peasants 'were not only exploited by feudal society, they were also ridiculed in art and literature', and the Franciscan Berthold of Regensburg observed in the thirteenth century that there had almost never been a peasant saint (whereas, for example, Innocent III had canonized a merchant, Homobonus of Cremona, in 1199).

In such circumstances it cannot be surprising if an enduring impatience or perpetual discontent lay at the back of the peasants' view of the world. 'The peasants are always angry,' ran a Goliardic poem from Bohemia, 'and their heart is never content.' So there is nothing surprising if this anger sometimes exploded in outbursts. The monk who told the story of the conflict between the abbot of Vale Royal and the peasants of Darnall and Over in 1336 was indignant to see them behave like mad dogs - *rabicanes*. William of Jumièges and Wace, in the *Roman de Rou* (the tale of Rollo, Duke of Normandy), describe the rebellion of the Norman peasants in 977:

The peasants and the villeins
Those of the woodland and those of the open country
Twenty, thirty, a hundred at a time
Held many assemblies;
They went about spreading the motto . . .
'Our enemy is our master'
They talked in secret about this
And several of them swore among themselves
That never by their will
Would they have a lord or an advocate . . .
By these sayings and words

And by others even madder
 They showed their consent
 And they swore to each other on oath
 That they would keep together
 And would defend themselves together
 And they elected, I know not where or when,
 The most cunning and the best speakers
 Who were to travel through the country
 And who would receive oaths. . . .

'As soon as the duke was informed of this, he immediately sent Count Ralph with a great number of knights to repress the savagery in the countryside . . .' And here is the seigneurial repression:

Ralph was so carried away
 That he was incapable of judgement:
 He made them sad and sore
 He pulled out the teeth of many
 And had others impaled
 Had their eyes torn out or their fists cut off
 He had their knees roasted
 Even if they should die as a result.
 Others were burnt alive
 Or plunged into boiling lead
 Thus he settled with them.
 They were hideous to look at.
 They could not been seen in that place from then on
 Without being well recognized.
 The commune was reduced to nothing
 And the villeins behaved themselves;
 They withdrew and climbed down
 From what they had undertaken.

Iconography often represented the struggle of the peasant against the knight fairly openly in representations of David and Goliath. The way the two figures are dressed is evidence of the artists' intention.

However, the usual form taken by the struggle of the peasants against the lords was the muted guerilla war of pilfering from the lord's lands, poaching in his forests, and setting his ricks on fire; or it was passive resistance such as botching the labour service, or else refusing to deliver dues in kind or to pay taxes; or, finally, it could even sometimes be desertion or flight. In 1117 the abbot of the monastery of Marmoutier in Alsace put a stop to labour services by his serfs and replaced them by dues in money. He took this decision as

a result of 'the carelessness, uselessness, slackness and laziness of those who performed services'.

In his treatise on *Housebondrie* written in the middle of the thirteenth century, Walter of Henley, always anxious to increase agricultural renders by all means, gave dozens of recommendations for the surveillance of peasants at work. Pictures show us the lord's overseers armed with sticks spying on the labourers. Although Walter of Henley admitted that the strength of the horse at work was greater than that of the ox, he judged with some disillusionment that it was useless for the lord to run to the considerable expense of buying a horse, since 'the spite of the labourers prevents the plough drawn by the horse from going faster than one pulled by oxen'.

Peasants' hostility to technical progress was even more striking. It cannot be explained, as can the machine-breaking by workers at the start of the industrial revolution, by the unemployment caused by technology. Peasants were hostile because the use of machines in the middle ages entailed a monopoly of the machine for the profit of the lord, who made men use the machine under obligation for his own profit, as an extra burden. Rebellions by peasants against manorial mills were common. Inversely, there were often cases where lords, especially abbots, had their peasants' handmills destroyed to force them to bring their grain to the abbot's mill and pay the mill tax. Already in 1207, the monks of Jumièges had the last handmills on one of their estates broken. A famous struggle over watermills broke out in England between the monks of St Albans and their peasants. When the abbot, Richard II of St Albans, finally triumphed in 1331, he treated the confiscated millstones as trophies and paved the floor of his parlour with them.

Amongst the insidious forms taken by the class struggle, a special place should be made for the immumerable battles which were fought out over weights and measures. Deciding the capacity of, and owning, the measuring standards which fixed the amount of work and the dues owed was an essential means of economic domination. Witold Kula has magisterially opened up our understanding of the social history of weights and measures. Appropriated by one side and contested by the other, the weights and measures, which were kept in the manor or in the castle, in the abbey, or in the town hall (when they belonged to burgesses), were constantly fought over. The many sources which mention the punishments inflicted on those peasants or artisans who used false measures (a crime which was likened to that of altering demesne boundaries) attract our attention to this form of class struggle. Just as the multiplication of jurisdictions favoured the high-handedness of the lords, the number and the variability (which were entirely at the lord's mercy) of the measures were a means of seigneurial oppression. When the English kings tried in the fourteenth century to impose a royal standard for the principal

measures, they exempted feudal dues and rents for which the measuring standards were left to the lord's discretion. A reading of *fabliaux*, of legal and moral treatises, and of legal documents gives the impression that the middle ages was a paradise for tricksters and the great age of fraud. The way in which the ruling classes controlled measurements explains this, and the Church, which turned fraud into a serious sin, could not check these signs of class struggle.

XIII

Confrontation between classes, which was a basic feature of life in the countryside, soon reappeared in the towns. It was no longer the struggle of victorious burgesses against the lords, but the struggle of the lesser people against the rich burgesses. From the end of the twelfth to the fourteenth century a new dividing line effectively emerged in the towns, setting the poor against the rich, the weak against the strong, the common people against the burgesses, the *popolo minuto* against the *popolo grasso*. It was caused by the creation of that ruling urban class which was called the patriciate, made up of the group of families who accumulated wealth and real estate in the town. They managed to dominate economic and political life by taking over municipal responsibilities, which means that a mass of the newly oppressed rose up against them.

From the end of the twelfth century one can observe people called the *meliiores burgenses* or *maiores oppidani*, who were quick to assert their dominance. From 1165 at Soest in Westphalia we find mentioned 'men of the better sort under whose authority the town prospered and in whom the essence of justice and affairs resides' - the '*meliiores . . . quorum auctoritate pretaxata villa nunc pollebat et in quibus summa iuris et rerum consistebat*'. In Magdeburg in 1188 an urban statute laid down that 'it was forbidden in the assembly of the burgesses for the dolts to proffer suggestions contrary to the established order and to go against the will of the *meliores* in anything at all'. Thus rich and poor were set against each other in the towns. In French-speaking towns where it was traditional to describe occupations as being 'based on labour or on commodities', labour and trade were distinguished from each other. Manual workers soon arose against men whom they for their part called idlers. From the end of the thirteenth century strikes and riots against 'the rich men' increased in number, and in the fourteenth century, as a result of the crisis, they inspired the common people in the towns to rise up in violent rebellion.

In spite of the Manichaean taste of the middle ages for simplifying all conflicts into a confrontation between two sides, the good and the bad, it should

not be thought that class struggle was limited to these duels between lords and peasants or burgesses and people. The reality was more complicated; one of the principal reasons for the constant failures of the weak in the face of the strong, apart from their economic and military powerlessness, was the internal divisions which made them even more impotent. We have already seen how social distinctions had grown up within the peasant classes. As early as the Norman revolt of 997 Wace noted that though the poorer peasants could not escape the tortures we have heard him describe, the richer ones escaped by buying their physical safety through having their goods confiscated.

Among the lower classes in the towns one should at least distinguish between the *popolo minuto* or the artisans and the journeymen of the guilds, and the masses of wage-earning manual workers who enjoyed no corporate protection: unskilled labourers were exposed to the luck of the labour market. A group of workers formed every day in the square where hiring took place (in Paris this happened in the Place de Grève), where the employers or their agents came to find labour; the proletariat was ceaselessly menaced by unemployment. At the end of the thirteenth century it was the men who had become the lowest class, the *laboratores*, whom John of Freiburg put in the final place in his summarized confessors' manual. Through them we can observe how, as Bronislaw Geremek has clearly shown for Paris, in the period from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, work and workmen had become a commodity.

XIV

Exploitation of female labour certainly was one of the worst forms of oppression by the employers. Here is the lament of the silk-workers whom Chrétien of Troyes put into the song of Yvain (circa 1180). It is the *Song of the Shirt* of the middle ages:

We shall spend our days weaving cloths of silk, without ever being better clad. We shall always be poor and naked, and shall always suffer from hunger and thirst, for we shall never be able to earn enough to procure for ourselves any better food. Our bread supply is very scarce - a little in the morning and less at night, for none of us can gain by her handiwork more than fourpence a day for her daily bread. And with this we cannot provide ourselves with sufficient food and clothes. For though there is not one of us who does not earn as much as twenty sous a week, yet we cannot live without hardship . . . So while we are reduced to such poverty, he, for whom we work, is rich with the product of our toil. We sit up many nights, as well as every day, to earn the more, for they threaten to do us injury, when we seek some rest, so we do not dare to rest ourselves. (Chrétien of Troyes, 1914, p. 249)

Women were also at the centre of an apparently less dramatic conflict. They were the object of rivalry between men from different social groups. These frivolous games between men and women were, however, one of the bitterest forms taken by class struggle. The contempt women could show for men of a particular social class was one of the most painful wounds the latter could receive. It is somewhat surprising to see clergy join in the conflict, but in fact the rector or the monk, lewd, and weighed down with prosperity, was one of the most common characters in the *fabliaux*. In fact it is above all the Goliard, the cleric on the edge of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, who voiced his claims in the matter. The disputation between the clerk and the knight was a commonplace in medieval literature. The clerk (who was always the author of the work) usually cast himself in the lead role, and thus gave himself a clear advantage over the warrior in women's hearts. In the poem *Le concile de Remiremont* the nuns, after a long debate, decreed the excommunication of those who preferred knights to clerks. The contempt which the clergy felt for peasants can also be seen in this Goliardic poem from Bohemia: '*Filia, vis rusticum / Nigrum et turpissimum? / Nolo, mater cara . . .*' - 'My daughter, do you want a peasant / Black and vile? / I do not want him, mother dear'. Finally, lyric poetry often proclaimed the love of knights for shepherdesses in *pastourelles*. In reality these adventures were not always fortunate. The poet Theobald, Count of Champagne, admitted, in verse, that two peasants put him to flight when he was getting ready to have it off with a shepherdess.

XV

Class struggle in medieval western Europe was paralleled by fierce rivalries within classes, as we know. Conflicts between feudatories and the continuation of clan warfare, the private wars springing out of the Germanic feud, the medieval seigneurial vendetta, fill history and literature. Furthermore, these violent group enmities, these 'lasting hatreds', these 'old grudges well preserved' were class privileges. At the end of the thirteenth century, Philippe de Beaumanoir observed that 'people other than gentlemen cannot wage war'. There were wars of the Lorrainers against the men of Bordeaux in the *Geste de Raoul de Cambrai*, the fights of the Cid's friends and kinsmen against the family of the *Infantes* of Carrión, the interminable vengeances concerning the *Infantes* of Lara, the ceaselessly recurring attacks of the Colonna and the Orsini who were allied with the Gaetani, in which a Gaetani pope, Boniface VIII, was involved, and, of course, clan warfare in the North of Europe, from Scotland to Scandinavia. Confrontations between feudal families fill medieval history, in the lists at tournaments, in the open country or at the sieges of castles.

In spite of its claims, however, the seigneurial class did not have a monopoly of these conflicts. In the heart of city society burgess families gave themselves up to ruthless struggles for the leadership of the patrician class or for the control of the town; sometimes they acted alone, and sometimes they organized factions. It is not surprising that these rivalries between citizens and between burghesses occurred especially in Italy, where towns had evolved early on. In 1216, in Florence, a series of vendettas set two groups of families, two *consorterie*, those of the Fifanti-Amidei and of the Buondelmonte, against each other. It arose from a broken-off marriage, an insult which was all the crueler for the Fifanti-Amidei since the Buondelmonte bridegroom failed to turn up on the day when the whole of the bride's *consorteria* were waiting for him in wedding clothes on the Ponte Vecchio. For this the villain was murdered when he turned up at the cathedral some time later to marry someone else. Grafting itself on to the struggle between two candidates for the Empire, Otto of Brunswick and Frederick of Staufen, which degenerated into the struggle between the emperor and the pope, the rivalry between the two Florentine families turned into the conflict between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines.

Less frequent perhaps, but still memorable, was the individual attitude of a few members of the upper classes who led the struggle on the side of the lower class rebels and often provided them with the educated leaders which they lacked. Sometimes they did this out of interest, sometimes out of idealism, or else, in the case of poor clerks, when they realized that they felt a stronger solidarity with the poor than with the clergy. These 'class traitors' came from the clergy or the burgher class, rarely from the nobility. In 1327 the '10,000' villeins and poor citizens who marched against the monks of Bury St Edmunds were led by two priests who bore the rebels' banners. Then there was the mysterious figure of Henry of Dinant, a tribune of Liège in the years 1253-5, a patrician who led the populace in the attack on the patrician class. Fernand Vercauteren, following the chroniclers of the thirteenth century, saw in him an ambitious man who used the people and his own discontent to reach the top, in short a Catiline. Yet we only know these popular leaders through their enemies. Jean of Outremeuse tells us of Henry of Dinant that he 'made the people rise against their lord and against the clerks and people put much trust in him . . . he was a man of high birth, wise and sly, but he was so false and treacherous and covetous, that the envy which he had for everyone made him worthless'. We should distrust those judgements which characteristically label the rebels as 'envious'. *Invidia*, envy, was, according to the moralists (clerics) and the confessors' manuals, the great sin of the peasants and the poor. Such a diagnosis, made by the spokesmen of the powerful, often masks what was only a revolt by the oppressed moved by justifiable indignation. All the great leaders of the great revolts of the

fourteenth century, such as Jacques and Philippe van Artevelde and Etienne Marcel, were described as envious.

XVI

Beyond these individual cases one might ask whether the two powers of the Church and the monarchy did not automatically escape the class struggle, since they kept themselves outside it and sought to pacify it. The Christian ideal called on the Church to maintain an equal balance between rich and poor, between peasants and lords; indeed the Church was even supposed to give support to the poor to offset their weakness. It was supposed to ensure that social harmony would reign. It had given its blessing to such harmony in the tripartite model of society. Admittedly as far as charity went, in the battle against famine, the Church's action was of considerable importance; it is also true that its rivalry with the knightly class sometimes made it act in support of peasants or citizens against their common adversary. In particular, the Church had inspired the movements known as the Peace of God or the Truce of God which brought benefit to all the victims of feudal violence. Yet the claims so often made by the Church that it arbitrated impartially between the weak and the strong fail to hide that in fact it most often chose to side with the oppressors. Since the Church was active in the world and formed a privileged social group which by the grace of God it had turned into an order, that is to say a caste, it was naturally inclined to lean towards the side where it already in fact found itself.

Bishop Warin of Beauvais proposed the following peace oath, which he wished all lords to swear to King Robert the Pious:

I shall not take away any ox or cow or any other beast of burden; I shall not seize peasant men or women or merchants; I shall not take any of their money and I shall not force them to ransom themselves. I do not want them to lose their property because of the wars their lords fight, and I shall not whip them to take away their subsistence. From the Kalends of March to All Saints I shall not seize horse, mare or foal in the pastures. I shall not destroy the mills and I shall not steal the flour which is there, unless they are situated on my land or if I am on campaign; I shall give no thief protection.

In reading this it should not be forgotten that his oath applied to many abbots and bishops.

The monks of St Laud of Angers stated in the *arenga* to a charter: 'God himself willed that, among men, some should be lords and others serfs, in

such a way that the lords should be obliged to venerate and love God, and that the serfs should be obliged to love and venerate their lord, according to the Apostle's saying: Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling. . . . And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven.' They must have realized that to justify social inequality was to admit the inevitable class conflict which was the result. It is noteworthy that peasants were particularly hostile to ecclesiastical lords; presumably their anger must have been especially aroused by the gap between the ideal professed by these clerics and their behaviour. Certainly, since monasteries kept better archives and accounts, ecclesiastical lords obtained more effectively by law, supported by their charters and rent-rolls, the exactions which lay lords more often seized by force.

It does indeed seem that we should admit the justice of the self-criticism uttered by that anonymous ecclesiastical dignitary (sometimes erroneously identified with St Bernard) who exclaimed in the twelfth century:

No, I cannot say it without shedding tears: we, the Church leaders, are more timid than the coarse disciples of Christ in the age of the early Church. We deny or suppress the truth out of fear of the worldly. We deny Christ, the truth itself! When the plunderer pounces on the poor man we refuse to render assistance to this poor man. When a lord harasses a ward or a widow, we do not go against him: Christ is on the cross and we hold our peace!

The way in which the monarchy thought about and reacted to these problems has some analogy with the behaviour of the Church. Indeed, both often lent each other mutual support in a common struggle in which the battle cries against individual tyrannies were the defence of the general interest and the protection of the weak against the powerful. Kings made the maximum use of all the weapons provided for them by the feudal system. They got all the lords to do them liege homage; they refused to do homage for lands which they themselves held in fee in order to affirm that they were not merely at the top of the entire feudal hierarchy but absolutely above it; they ensured that their right of protection over many ecclesiastical establishments (their 'advocacy' or 'patronage') was recognized. French kings thrust themselves into the largest possible number of contracts of '*pariage*', by which they became the joint lords of lordships situated outside the royal domain and in areas where royal influence was weak. For their own benefit, kings strengthened the ideal of fidelity which was the essence of feudal morality and psychology. Yet at the same time kings sought everywhere to remove themselves from the control of lords. By making succession to the Crown hereditary, they enlarged the

royal domain, imposed their officials everywhere, and attempted to replace feudal military service, aids, and jurisdictions with a national army, state taxation, and centralized justice. It is significant that the peasants tried to place themselves under royal protection, though admittedly it was more distant than that of the lords. It is also true that the lower classes, especially the peasantry, often placed their hopes in the person of the king who, they hoped, would deliver them from seigneurial tyranny. St Louis recounted to Joinville with emotion the attitude of the people towards him at the time of a baronial revolt during his minority:

And the saintly king told me that when he was at Montlhéry, neither he nor his mother dared to return to Paris until the inhabitants of Paris came armed to look for them. And he told me that from Montlhéry to Paris the roads were full of people, armed and unarmed, and that all of them acclaimed him and prayed to Our Lord to give him a long and good life and to defend and guard him from his enemies.

This royal myth was longlived. Until final explosions such as those of 1642-9 in England or 1792-3 in France, it was to survive all the occasions when the monarchy, on being faced with a serious danger of social subversion, showed that it too would join its natural side, that of the feudal lords, whose interests and prejudices it shared. Under Philip Augustus the peasants of the village of Vernon revolted against their lord, which was the chapter of Notre Dame in Paris, and refused to pay it *taille*. They sent a delegation to the king who gave judgement in favour of the canons and snapped at the peasants' delegation: 'May the chapter be cursed if it does not throw you into a latrine (*in unam latrinam*)'.

Yet the king sometimes felt himself to be lonely when faced with the classes of society. Far from controlling them, he felt himself to be threatened by every one of them. Since he was outside feudal society he was afraid of being annihilated by it. Such, according to the chronicle of John of Worcester, was the nightmare of Henry I of England. When the king was in Normandy in 1130 he had a triple vision. First he saw a mob of peasants besiege his bed with their work tools, grinding their teeth and disturbing him by telling him their complaints. Then a multitude of knights wearing hauberks and with helmets on their heads and armed with spears, lances, and arrows threatened to kill him. Finally a gathering of archbishops, bishops, abbots, deans, and priors besieged his bed, with their croziers raised against him. 'And here', wailed the chronicler, 'is what frightens a king clad in purple, whose word, according to the saying of Solomon, should strike terror as does the roaring of a lion.' This was the very lion ridiculed by Renart the Fox,

in the *Roman de Renart*, and with it all kingly majesty. The kings were always to some extent outsiders in the medieval world.

XVII

In medieval Europe there were also other communities in addition to those we have just described, communities which overlapped more or less with the social classes, and they were particularly favoured by the Church which saw in them a means of diluting and weakening class conflict. Such were the confraternities. Their origins are not well known and their links with the guilds are obscure; whereas the latter were essentially professional the former were chiefly devotional. Yet in the fourteenth century it seems very probable that confraternities belonged, if not to professional groups, at least to particular social classes; the confraternities of barbers, apothecaries, and surgeons, for example, which were usually under the patronage of the Holy Sepulchre, were separate from the superior confraternities of the physicians or the 'long-robed surgeons' who were placed under the protection of Saints Cosmas and Damian.

Again, there were the groups of widows and virgins whom the Church held in special esteem. A spiritual work which was very fashionable in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the *Mirror of Virgins* or *Speculum virginum*, compared the fruits of virginity, widowhood, and marriage. A miniature in this work shows the comparison: married women only reaped 30-fold what they had sown whereas widows reaped what they had sown 60-fold and virgins 100-fold. But rather than forming groups which took no account of class, the virgins tended chiefly to be identified with the nuns, and the widows with the mass of the very poor, in an age where being deprived of a husband and breadwinner pushed most women who could not or would not remarry into extreme hardship.

Classes formed of different age-groups must have been livelier; not those which the clergy created in the theoretic and literary categories of the seven ages of life, but those well integrated into the real-life customs of military and peasant societies characteristic of traditional civilizations. Among these classes formed of different age-groups, one in particular was indeed organized and effective: the class of the young men, which, in primitive societies, is that of the adolescents who underwent initiation rites together. And indeed young men in the middle ages did undergo an apprenticeship, but here too social structures appeared which set this stratification within the framework of another system. The young men of the knightly class and those of the peasant class formed two quite distinct groups. For the former the apprenticeship was a training in arms and feudal warfare which ended with an initiation ceremony,

that is, being dubbed knight, by which one entered into the knightly class. Among the latter the young people of the village were entrusted with rites intended to ensure the community's economic prosperity, in the form of the Chthonian cycle of spring festivals, from St George's Day (23 April) to St John's Day (24 June). These rites often consisted of long rides on horseback, or they were performed on horseback (we can see them in pictures of the labours of the months, for the months of April and May) and they culminated in the ordeal of leaping over the bonfires lit on St John the Baptist's Day. Here too, the town was often responsible for breaking these traditions and the personal links on which they were based. Yet relics of these rites survived, such as the initiation of the young schoolboys and students (the *béjaunes*, *bejants*, *fledgelings*) which was intended to make them lose their wild peasant nature. (Might there have been a connection between the word *Jacques* used to mean 'peasant' in France at the end of the middle ages and the name *Zak* or *Jak* used for newly matriculated students in Poland?) The young apprentices had their initiation in the course of working as a journeyman and more especially of the Grand Tour which they had to accomplish. Young lawyers received their initiation by joining the body of clerks attached to the courts of justice.

On the other hand it appears that the elderly as a class (the elders of traditional societies) did not play an important part in the world of medieval Christendom. It was a society where people died young, a society of knights and peasants who were only useful when they were in the prime of life. The clergy was led by bishops and popes, who, even if we overlook the scandal of the adolescents elected in the tenth century (John XI was made pope in 931 at 21 and John XII in 954 at 16), were often elected young; Innocent III was about 25 at his election in 1198. Medieval society was ignorant of gerontocracy. At the most it might perhaps have turned sentimental at the thought of grand old men with white beards, like the elders in Revelations and the prophets whom we see at church doors, or like the imitation of Charlemagne - the old emperor with the hoary beard - in literature. It was also how medieval society imagined and portrayed hermits, medieval patriarchs with an impressive lifespan.

XVIII

We must also think about the importance of social links which were forged in many places where people came together, and which were fairly closely linked with the structure of social classes and the different walks of life. The first of these meeting-places was the one which was controlled by the clergy: it was the church which was a centre of parish life. The church in the middle

ages was not only a place of communal spiritual life (which was especially important since here ideas and emotions took shape around the themes of the Church's propaganda) but an assembly place. Meetings were held here, conversations, games, and markets were held here, and the church bells rang to summon people to assemble in case of danger, especially fire. For a long time, in spite of efforts by the clergy and church councils to reduce its role to that of God's house, it was a social centre with numerous functions, comparable to a Muslim mosque.

Just as the parish was a social microcosm organized by the Church, so the household inside a castle was a cell of society shaped by feudal lords. Here the young sons of vassals were assembled to serve the lord and undergo their military training, even, where necessary, acting as hostages, together with the lord's own family and household, and with a whole collection of entertainers who were intended to satisfy the need felt by great lords for amusement and pomp. Minstrels, trouvères, and troubadours held an ambiguous position. They were obliged to sing the praises and the chief merits of their employers. They were absolutely dependent on the wages and favours bestowed by these masters. They often wished to become lords in their own turn, and sometimes succeeded in doing so, like the *Minnesänger* who became knights and received armorial bearings. The famous Heidelberg manuscript whose miniatures show the *Minnesänger* and their coats of arms testifies to how men could be promoted by the noble art of lyric poetry. Just as often, however, they were handicapped by their position as artists dependent on the whims of a fighting man. They were intellectuals aroused by ideas which sometimes ran counter to those held by the great lords, and they were ready to make themselves critics of their masters. Literary and artistic offshoots from the castle milieu often testify in a somewhat disguised form to opposition to feudal society.

Common people had other meeting places. In the country the meeting place was the mill where the peasants had to bring their grain and stand in queues to wait for the flour. It may easily be imagined that they often discussed agricultural innovations there, and that, after these innovations had become widespread, the peasants hatched their rebellions at the mill. Two pieces of information prove how important mills were as meeting places for peasants. Statutes of religious orders in the twelfth century envisaged that monks would go there to collect alms. Furthermore, prostitutes hung around the approaches to mills in such numbers that St Bernard, who was always ready to set morality above economic interest, incited monks to destroy these haunts of vice.

In towns the burgesses had their covered markets and guild-halls such as that of the Parisian guild of the *Marchands de l'eau*. This group included the most important merchants of the city and their hall was suitably named the *Parloir aux Bourgeois* or Burgesses' Parlour. The great social centre in the

town, as in the village, was the tavern. Since this was usually a 'manorial' tavern, one which belonged to the lord and which sold wine or ale which were generally made or taxed by him, the lord encouraged people to go there. The parish priest on the other hand poured forth tirades about these centres of vice where gambling and drunkenness went unchecked and which competed with parish meetings, sermons, and church services (we may recall the tavern which made so much noise that St Louis could not hear the Dominican preacher). Not only did the tavern gather together the men of the village or of the town ward (another form of community within the town, and one which was to assume great importance in the late middle ages, like the street where men of the same geographical origins or of the same profession bunched together), but also the tavern keeper often acted as a banker and lodged strangers, for the tavern was often also an inn, and hence an important nodal point in the network of relations. News telling of events far away, legends and myths all circulated from the tavern. Conversations held there formed men's views of the world. And since drink inflamed the wits, the tavern made a major contribution in giving medieval society its impassioned tone and those moments of drunkenness which made the violence within ferment and explode.

It has sometimes been maintained that religious faith gave some social rebellions a solidarity and an ideology which were lacking in their material claims. Heresy is thought to have been the supreme form of revolutionary movement. It is beyond question that heresies in the middle ages were chiefly adopted, more or less consciously, by social groups which were discontented with their lot. Even in the case of the nobility of southern France which actively participated on the side of the heretics in the first stage of the Albigensian crusade, historians have been able to stress how serious were its complaints against the Church. By increasing the number of degrees of consanguinity within which marriage was impossible, the Church had encouraged the fragmentation of the lay aristocracy's estates which thus fell all the more easily into its hands. Above all, it is certain that many heretical movements, by condemning earthly society and especially the Church, concealed a very powerful revolutionary ferment. This is the case with Catharism, with the more diffuse ideology of Joachimism, and with the various millenarian heresies whose subversive aspects have already been described. Yet the heresies gathered together heterogeneous social groupings, and the class differences within them weakened the effectiveness of the movement. Within Catharism - at least in the form it took in the Languedoc - one can distinguish an aristocratic phase when the nobility led affairs, a burgess phase where merchants, notaries, and town notables controlled the movement after it had been abandoned by the nobility following the crusade and the Treaty of Paris, and finally, at the end of the thirteenth century, survivals which were more openly lower class in

appearance. By now village craftsmen and Pyrenean mountain dwellers and shepherds carried on the struggle almost alone. Above all the strictly religious preoccupations of the heresies in the end robbed these movements of their social content. Their revolutionary programme degenerated into millenarian anarchy which deprived men of all hope in earthly solutions. The nihilism which attacked work in particular, for work was more harshly condemned by many heretics than by anyone else - the Cathar *perfecti* were not supposed to work - paralysed the social effectiveness of rebellions conducted under a religious banner. Heresies were the most acute form of ideological alienation.

XIX

However, heresies were dangerous for the Church and for the feudal order. The heretics were therefore persecuted and condemned to social exclusion, which was increasingly clearly defined at the Church's instigation during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Under the influence of the canon lawyers, at the same time as the establishment of the Inquisition, heresy began to be defined as a crime of '*lèse-majesté*'. Huguccio, the most important decretist at this decisive moment, defined it as an attack on 'the public wellbeing of the Church' and to the good order of Christian society in his *Summa* of about 1188.

Along with heretics, Jews (the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 forced them to wear a distinctive badge) and lepers (leper hospitals multiplied after the Third Lateran Council in 1179) were put on the index, confined, and tracked down. Yet this was also a time when certain groups of outcasts were finally received into Christian society. The early middle ages had seen an increase in the number of suspect livelihoods. Increasing barbarism had allowed primitive taboos to reappear. There was a blood taboo which operated against butchers, hangmen, surgeons, and even soldiers; there was a taboo about dirt or impurity which affected fullers, dyers, cooks, and cloth-bleachers. In the early thirteenth century Jean de Garlande mentioned the aversion felt by women for the textile workers with their 'blue nails', who, with the butchers, were to play a leading part in the revolts of the fourteenth century. There was a money taboo which, as we have seen, is to be explained by the outlook of a society in which a natural economy predominates. The Germanic invaders added to this the contempt of the warrior for the workers, and Christianity added its distrust of worldly activities. These were at all events forbidden to clerics, and were therefore laden with a weight of disgrace which fell on the laymen who carried them out.

Yet economic and social evolution brought with it a division of labour and the promotion of distinct professions, and Martha was justified with respect to Mary, that is, the active life was justified; it forms an honourable counterpoint to the contemplative life on the doorways of Gothic cathedrals. Under such pressure the number of illicit or despised occupations was reduced almost to zero. The Franciscan Berthold of Regensburg in the thirteenth century put all the 'estates of the world' into the 'family of Christ' except the Jews, strolling jongleurs, and vagabonds who formed the 'family of the devil'.

All the same, this Christendom which had absorbed into itself the new society born of the growth of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and which had now reached its 'frontier', was only the more ruthless to those who did not wish to adapt to the established order and to those whom the Church did not wish to admit to it. Furthermore its attitude towards the excluded remained ambiguous. The Church seemed to detest and admire them simultaneously; it was afraid of them, but the fear was mixed with a sense of fascination. It kept them at a distance, but fixed the distance so that it would be close enough for the outcasts to be within reach. What it called its charity towards them was like the attitude of a cat playing with a mouse. Thus leper hospitals had to be sited 'a stone's throw from the town' so that 'fraternal charity' could be exercised towards the lepers. Medieval society needed these pariahs, who were exiled because they were dangerous, and who yet had to be visible, because it eased its conscience by the cares which it expended on them. Even better, it could project on to and fix in them, magically, all the evils which it was banishing away from itself. Lepers, for example, lived both inside and outside the world, like the ones to whom Mark delivered up the guilty Iseult in Béroul's frightening narration from which the tender and courteous Thomas recoiled:

Then a hundred lepers, deformed, with shrivelled, whitish flesh, ran up on their crutches with a clattering of rattles, and pushed together in front of the pyre. Under their swollen eyelids their red eyes enjoyed the spectacle. Yvain, the most hideous of the sick people, cried out to the king in a shrill voice: 'Sire, you wish to throw your wife into that brazier; it's good justice but too short. That great fire will burn her quickly and that great wind will scatter her ashes quickly. And when the flame dies down soon after her agony will be over. Do you want me to suggest a much worse punishment to you so that she will live but in great dishonour and always hoping for death? Do you wish it, O king?' The king replied, 'Yes, life for her, but with great dishonour and worse than death. Whoever will teach me such a torture, I shall love him the better for it.' 'Sire, I shall briefly tell you what I think. See, I have here 100 companions. Give us Iseult, and let us have her in common. The sickness arouses our lust. Give her to your lepers. No lady will ever have had a worse end. Look, our rags are stuck to our oozing sores. She who in your presence took pleasure in rich stuffs lined with vair, in jewels

and in rooms decorated with marble, she who enjoyed fine wines, honour and joy, when she sees the court of her lepers, when she is forced to enter our slums and sleep with us, then Iseult the Beautiful, the Fair, will recognize her sin and will regret this fine fire of thorns! The king listened to him, stood up and remained motionless for a long time. Then he ran towards the queen and grasped her by the hand. She cried, 'For pity, Sire, burn me rather than that, burn me.' The king picked her up, Yvain took hold of her, and the 100 sick people crowded around him. On hearing them shout and yelp all hearts melted with pity, but Yvain was joyful. Iseult went away; Yvain took her away. Outside the city, the hideous procession made its way downhill. . . .

Carried away by its new idealization of work, Christian Europe even drove away the idle, both those who wanted to be and those who were forced to be. It threw on to the streets all sorts of infirm, sick, and unemployed people who were swallowed up in the great army of vagabonds. It treated all these wretches, whom it identified with Christ, just as it treated Christ, who was fascinating but terrifying to them. It is symptomatic that the man who really wanted to live like Christ, Francis of Assisi, not only mixed with outcasts but wanted only to be one of them. A poor man, a stranger, a jongleur - God's jongleur as he called himself - it was thus that he presented himself. How could he fail to cause scandal? The pious St Louis, on the other hand, once he had said his prayers, left his poor and his lepers and coldly legislated in his *Etablissements*, 'If some people have nothing and are in a town without earning (that is to say without working) and are fond of frequenting taverns, let the magistrates arrest them and ask them what they live on. And let them throw them out of the town.' It is the same mixture of attraction and fear that men had earlier felt for the smith, an admired yet sinister figure, whom Sigurd killed after he had received his sword from him.

With the Jews, Christians maintained a dialogue throughout the middle ages, which they interrupted with persecutions and massacres. The Jewish usurer, or rather irreplaceable moneylender, was hateful, but necessary and useful. Jews and Christians held debates, especially about the Bible. Public debates and private meetings between priests and rabbis occurred constantly. At the end of the eleventh century, Gilbert Crispin, abbot of Westminster, described in a bestseller his theological disputation with a Jew from Mainz. In the middle of the twelfth century Andrew of St Victor consulted rabbis because he was anxious to revive biblical exegesis. St Louis narrated to Joinville a discussion between clerics and Jews at the abbey of Cluny. Admittedly, he disapproved of such meetings. "So I tell you," said the king, "that no one, unless he is an expert theologian, should venture to argue with these people. But a layman, whenever he hears the Christian religion abused, should not attempt to defend its tenets, except with his sword, and that he should thrust into the scoundrel's belly, and as far as it will enter" (Joinville, 1971, p. 175).

Some kings, abbots, popes and above all German emperors protected the Jews. Yet from the end of the eleventh century antisemitism unleashed itself in the west. People have blamed this movement on the crusades, and it is not impossible that the crusading spirit gave antisemitism an additional, emotive verve, although, if one believes Ralph Glaber, the earliest pogroms seem to have happened in about 1000. It is true that they became far more numerous at the time of the First Crusade. Thus, reported the *Annales Saxonici*, at Worms and Mainz,

the enemy of the human race did not hesitate to sow tares among the grain, to raise up false prophets, to mix false brothers and loose women in the army of Christ. By their hypocrisy, their lies and their impious suborning they perturbed the Lord's army They thought it right to avenge Christ on the pagans and the Jews. That was why they killed 900 Jews in the town of Mainz, without sparing women or children. . . . It was piteous to see the large and numerous heaps of corpses which were taken out of the town of Mainz on waggons.

At about the time of the Second Crusade in 1146 appeared the first accusation of ritual murder (the case of William of Norwich, who died in 1144), that is to say the murder of a Christian child whose blood was supposedly mixed into unleavened bread, and of the profanation of the host, a crime that was all the more serious in the Church's eyes because it was regarded as deicide. Thenceforth there was to be no lack of false accusations to give the Christians scapegoats in times of discontent or calamity. At the time of the Black Death in 1348 the Jews were accused in many places of having poisoned the wells, and they were massacred. Yet the chief reason for the fact that the Jews were kept apart was the evolution of the economy and the creation of the two worlds of town and countryside. The Jews could not be admitted to the social systems - the feudal system and the communes - that resulted. No one could do homage to a Jew or swear an oath to a Jew. The Jews thus found themselves little by little excluded from possessing or even being granted land, and also from the professions, including trade. Nothing remained to them except the borderline or illicit forms of commerce or usury. However it was not until the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation that the Church instituted and encouraged the ghetto. It was in the period of the great recession of the seventeenth century and of absolute monarchy that the '*grand renfermement*' or great enclosing set in, whose definitive history, at least in so far as the mad are concerned, has been written by Michel Foucault.

The middle ages were ambivalent in their treatment of the mad, too. Sometimes they were regarded as being almost inspired, and the lord's jester or the king's fool became a counsellor. The village idiot, in this peasant society,

became the community's mascot. In the *Jeu de la Feuillée* the dervish, the mad young peasant, points the moral of the story. We can even see a certain attempt to distinguish different categories of madness: the 'furious' and the 'frenetics' who were sick people whom one could try to look after, or rather to shut up in special hospitals, one of the first of which was the Bethlehem or Bedlam hospital in London founded in the late thirteenth century; the 'melancholics' whose illness too was perhaps physical, linked with bad humours, but who had more need of the priest than of the doctor, and finally the great crowd of the possessed whom only exorcism could free of their fearsome legion of demons.

Many of these possessed were easily confused with wizards. Yet our middle ages were not the great period of witchcraft that the period from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century was to be. Between heretics and the possessed, wizards seem to have found it hard to find a place. They were the heirs, steadily declining in number it appears, of the pagan wizards and country fortunetellers who had been pursued by the penitentials of the early middle ages as part of rural evangelization. Moreover it was from these penitentials that Regino of Prüm in his canon of circa 900 and Burchard of Worms in his *Decretum* of circa 1010 got their inspiration. Here we find ghouls or lamias, who are the vampires, and werewolves. These were called *Werenwulf* in German, said Burchard, which emphasizes the popular character of these beliefs and of the people who adhered to them. It was a wilderness-world in which the Church had only a limited ascendancy; and the Church remained cautious in its incursions. Did it not accept that a werewolf had come to watch over the head of the Anglo-Saxon king, St Edmund, who had been decapitated by the Vikings?

Yet from the thirteenth century the State, thanks to the rebirth of Roman law, started to hunt down witches. It is not surprising to see those kings who were most keen on state control throw themselves into this most energetically. The popes, who considered wizards, like heretics, to be guilty of *lèse-majesté* and disturbers of the Christian order, were among the first to have them persecuted. As early as 1270 a manual for Inquisitors, the *Summa de officio inquisitionis*, devoted a special chapter to the seers and idolators guilty of organizing 'demon worship'. Some tried, however, to make distinctions. The legal expert Oldradus da Ponte di Lodi wondered if telling fortunes and administering love potions were heretical acts. He decided that they were more a case of superstition than of heresy. Whatever the Church's diagnosis, however, from now on wizards and witches who did not recant were to be burnt at the stake.

Frederick II persecuted wizards, following Azzo of Bologna, who in his *Summa super Codicem* of around 1220 announced that *malefici* were liable to

capital punishment, and the Doge Jacopo Tiepolo issued a statute against them. Yet the ruler who was most enthusiastic to eliminate them and who was most steadfast in accusing his enemies of witchcraft was Philip the Fair. His reign saw a certain number of cases where modern *raison d'état* appeared in the most monstrous forms: the softening up of the accused, the extraction of confessions by all means, and above all the technique of accusing suspects of all possible crimes, all mixed together: rebellion against the sovereign, impiety, witchcraft, debauchery, and most particularly sodomy.

The history of medieval homosexuality, however, has not yet been written – neither the practice nor the theory. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries poets can be observed singing the praises of young boys in the manner of antiquity, and monastic sources occasionally drop hints that the male clerical milieu cannot have been insensible to Socratic love. Chiefly, however, we see that with the inheritance of Jewish sexual taboos, and in complete opposition to the Graeco-Roman ethic, sodomy was ceaselessly denounced as the most abominable of all crimes. By way of Aristotelian philosophy, somewhat curiously invoked in this regard, unnatural vice was placed at the head of the hierarchy of vices. Yet, just as in the case of bastards who were despised when they were of low birth but treated like legitimate children in royal families, homosexuals who were highly born (such as the English kings William Rufus and Edward II) were not troubled about this in the slightest degree. On the other hand it is likely that the limited extent of homosexuality is to be explained less by the severity of canon law, which considered sodomy to be a capital crime, than by the fact that the structure of the family failed to produce conditions which might favour the formation of Oedipus complexes. Perhaps this is solely a false impression, created because the Church censored allusions to such behaviour. At any rate sodomy was one of the principal crimes attributed to the Templars, who were the most famous victims of the most famous trial mounted by Philip the Fair and his counsellors. A reading of the proceedings in the Templar trial shows that the king of France and his entourage in the early fourteenth century had perfected a system of judicial repression which could stand any comparison with the most notorious show trials of our age. Similar trials were mounted against others, notably the bishop of Troyes, Guichard, who was accused of having tried to kill the queen by voodoo on a wax statue with the help of a witch, and against other personalities at the court of Philip the Fair. Pope Boniface VIII was accused of having discreetly disposed of his unfortunate predecessor Celestine V.

This was also the period when lepers started to be locked up, but the predicament of leprosy, for reasons which were no doubt biological, differed from that of sorcery. Although it did not disappear, leprosy retreated considerably in western Europe from the fourteenth century. Its apogee was the twelfth

and thirteenth centuries, when leper hospitals were founded in large numbers. Their memory is preserved in place names; for example, in France, the '*maladreries*', the suburbs named La Madeleine, and the names of hamlets and villages invoking the term *mézel*, a synonym for leper, and so on. In 1227 Louis VIII bequeathed in his will 100 *sous* to each of 2000 leper hospitals in the kingdom of France. The Third Lateran Council in 1179, in authorizing the construction of chapels and cemeteries inside hospitals, helped to make them into closed worlds which the lepers could only leave if they made a space before them by making a noise with a rattle which they had to shake, just as the Jews made good Christians scatter by wearing their badges. Yet the ritual of the 'separation' of lepers, which became generalized in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a ceremony where the bishop, with symbolic gestures, cut the leper off from society and made him dead to the world (sometimes he had to descend into a tomb) was, as yet, rare in the middle ages. This separation did not even exist from the point of view of the law; legally the leper retained the rights of a healthy man, except in Normandy and the Beauvaisis.

However, lepers were affected by a large number of prohibitions, and they too were treated as scapegoats in times of calamity. After the great famine of 1315-18 Jews and lepers were persecuted throughout all France and suspected of having poisoned wells and springs. Philip V, a worthy son of Philip the Fair, had cases brought against lepers throughout the country, and, after they had been tortured into making confessions, many were burnt. High-born lepers, however, were no more inconvenienced than were noble bastards or pederasts. They could continue to perform their offices and live among healthy people, as in the cases of Baldwin IV, king of Jerusalem, Ralph, count of Vermandois, and Richard II, that terrible abbot of St Albans who had his parlour paved with the millstones that he had seized from his peasants.

Other social outcasts were the sick in general, and above all the crippled and the maimed. In a world where sickness and infirmity were considered to be exterior signs of sin, those who were afflicted with them were cursed by God and thus by man too. The Church took some of them in on a temporary basis, for the sick were usually allowed to stay only a very short time in hospital, and it fed some of them sporadically, on feastdays. The others had to fall back on begging and tramping the roads as their only resource. Being poor, sick, and a tramp were almost synonymous in the middle ages, and hospitals were often sited at bridges or mountain passes over which wanderers had to go. Guy de Chauliac, describing the attitude of Christians to the Black Death in 1348, narrates that in certain places people accused the Jews of causing the disaster and massacred them and that in other places it was the poor and the maimed (*pauperes et truncati*) who were blamed and they were driven out.

The Church refused to ordain cripples as priests. Even in 1346, for example, Jean de Hubant, who founded the College of Ave Maria in Paris, laid down that adolescents who had 'a physical deformity' should not have scholarships there.

The outcast *par excellence* in medieval society was, however, the stranger. As a primitive, closed society, medieval Christianity rejected the intruder who did not belong to any known community; he was a bringer of the unknown and of disquiet. St Louis devoted his attention to this theme in the chapter entitled *D'homme étrange* in his *Etablissements* and he defined him as the 'man unknown in the land'. Actors, jongleurs, and foreigners were put in the same category in a law made at Goslar in 1219. A foreigner was a man who was not faithful to someone, who was not someone's man, who had not sworn obedience and who was, in feudal society, 'oathless'.

So medieval Christianity established fixed points for some of its eyesores. Towns and, in the countryside, the areas round castles showed off their places and instruments of punishment: the gallows on the highroad just outside the town or just below the castle, the pillory in the market place, in the courtyard or in front of the church, and, above all, the prison, possession of which was the sign of supreme judicial power, of high justice, of the highest social rank. There is nothing astonishing about the fact that medieval artists were particularly fond of drawing prisons when they were illustrating scenes from the Bible or from the lives of saints and martyrs. They were an ever-present reality, a threat, and a nightmare in the medieval world.

Medieval society released on to the streets all the people it could not tie up or shut away. Sick people and vagabonds, mixed up with pilgrims and merchants, wandered singly, in small groups, even in processions. The strongest and the most fanatical went off to swell the gangs of robbers hidden in the woods. Thus the story of Helmbrecht, the young German peasant of the thirteenth century who wanted to escape from his social condition, is a useful summary of social history. 'I saw, and this is certainly true, a peasant's son who had curly blond hair which fell in full length over his shoulders. He gathered it up into a cap, which was adorned with pictures. I doubt if anyone has seen so many birds on a cap; parrots and doves, they were all embroidered on it.'

Helmbrecht announced to his father, 'I wish to see for myself what being at court is like. Your corn sacks will never ride on my neck again. I shall never load dung on to your cart again either. May God curse me if I ever harness your oxen and sow your oats. In truth, it does not go with my long blond hair, with my curly locks, or with my nicely fitting clothes, or my artistic bonnet and the silk doves which ladies sewed on it. Never again shall I help you farm.' In vain his father reminded him of the moral of medieval society, 'Seldom does he succeed who fights against his rank. Your rank is the plough.'

However, Helmbrecht wanted to live like a lord, and the life of the lord meant the exhilaration of riding fast horses (the cars of the middle ages) and the oppression of the peasants. 'I want to hear the cattle low when I drive them across the fields. If I stay so long, it is because I have no horse. That I do not gallop away with the others and drag the serfs by their hair through the hedges truly pains me.' Months passed and the prodigal son returned to dazzle his parents. But he had become a brigand, not a lord. 'Long ago when I was a boy,' his father told him, 'your grandfather Helmbrecht - my father - sent me to the court with cheese and eggs, as farmers do today. There I saw the knights and I observed all that they did.' And the old farmer recalled what he, the bedazzled young countryman, had seen from a corner of the courtyard of the castle. He saw the inhabitants of the castle at their revels: tournaments, dancing, fiddlers, and jugglers. However, he knew that a lord's life was not for him nor for his son. The young brigand departed once more, enticing away his sister, whom he married off, peasant-fashion, without benefit of clergy, to one of his companions of fortune. From now on he was called Slitezgeu or Devour-Land. His brother-in-law was Lemberslint or Devour-Lambs, and the rest of the gang were called Slickenwider (Swallow-ram), Hellesac (Hell's sack), Rütschrîn (Force-Chest), Küefraz (Eat-Cow), and Müschinkelch (Cup-Crusher). Here they are torturing and stealing from the peasants: 'I take one man's eye out; I hang another in the smoke; I tie this one on to an antheap; I pull the hair out of another's beard with pincers; I flay one; I beat up that one's limbs; I hang up this one by his heels. Thus what the peasants have is mine.' Helmbrecht's end, as we might suppose, was unfortunate. 'What must happen happens. God does not fail to punish the one who does what he should not do.' God chose two instruments to punish Helmbrecht. The first of these was the lord's bailiff.

They were not allowed any lawyer. . . . The constable had nine of the thieves hanged, and spared the life of only one of them, Helmbrecht (Devour-Land). The hangman put out his eyes and cut off one of his hands and one of his feet Helmbrecht, the blind robber, was given a stick and a boy guided him to his father's house, but his father refused to take him in; he drove him away, without wishing to relieve his distress 'Hey! lad! take away the blind man Vile blackguard, get away out of the door right now' Yet his mother slipped a loaf into his hand, as if to a child. Thus the blind robber departed. When he was walking through the countryside, accompanied by his guide, no peasant failed to shout at him: 'Ha ha! Helmbrecht the robber! If you had stayed on the farm like me you would not be being led around blind.'

The other instrument of God was the peasants from whom Helmbrecht had stolen, and who would not forgive a man of their own class crimes which they were obliged to allow in their lord:

They made the wretch confess to his sins; then one of them picked up a pinch of earth from the ground and gave it to the poor sinner as a viaticum against hell, and they hanged him from a tree On all the roads and the paths cart traffic had stopped, but now all can travel in safety, since Helmbrecht was hanged What if Helmbrecht perhaps still has some young followers? They too will become little Helmbrechts. I can give you no peace from them, until they swing too.

9

Mentalities, Sensibilities, and Attitudes

I

THE MENTALITIES and sensibilities of medieval men were dominated by sense of insecurity which determined the basis of their attitudes.

It was a material and moral insecurity, for which, according to the Church, there was only one remedy, as we have seen: to rely on the solidarity of the group, of the communities of which one formed a part, and to avoid breaching this solidarity by ambition or derogation. It was a fundamental insecurity which boiled down to a fear of the life to come. This was assured to no one, and good works and good conduct never guaranteed it absolutely. The risks of damnation, with the help of the devil, were so great and the chances of salvation so slim that fear inevitably prevailed over hope. The Franciscan preacher Berthold of Regensburg in the thirteenth century gave the chances of damnation as 100,000 to 1, and the usual image for calculating the proportion of the chosen and the damned was that of the little group of Noah and his companions as opposed to the huge number of mankind wiped out by the Flood. Indeed, for the men of the middle ages natural calamities were the image and the measure of spiritual realities, and the historian can justifiably say that the yield of the moral life seemed as small to medieval mankind as the yield from agriculture. So mentalities, sensibilities, and attitudes were prescribed predominantly by the need for reassurance.

II

Chiefly they needed to rely on the past, on their predecessors. In the same way that the Old Testament prefigured and laid the foundations for the New, the ancients provided a justification for the moderns. Nothing that could be proposed was certain, except what had been vouchsafed for in the past. Some

of the sureties were especially favoured and referred to as 'authorities'. Obviously it was in theology, the highest branch of learning, that the use of authorities found its greatest glory, and, since it was the basis of spiritual and intellectual life, it was subjected to strict regulation. The supreme authority was Scripture, and, with it, the Fathers of the Church. However, this general authority tended to take the form of quotations. In practice these became 'authentic' opinions and, in the end, the 'authorities' themselves. Since these authorities were often difficult and obscure, they were explained by glosses which themselves had to come from an 'authentic author'. Very often the glosses replaced the original text. Of all the florilegia which conveyed the results of intellectual activity in the middle ages, the anthologies of glosses were consulted and ransacked the most. Learning was a mosaic of quotations or 'flowers' which, in the twelfth century, were called 'sentences' (*sententiae* or opinions). The collections or *summae* of sentences were collections of authorities. Robert of Melun was already protesting in the middle of the twelfth century against according credit to glosses in these sentences, but in vain. Père Chenu acknowledged that the *Sentences* of the inferior thinker Peter Lombard, which was to be the theology textbook in universities in the thirteenth century, was a collection of glosses 'whose source can only be discovered with difficulty', and furthermore that, even in the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas 'one can see a largish number of texts acting as authorities which can only be identified through the distortions of the *glossae*'.

Of course the men who used authorities stretched their meanings to the point where they barely impeded personal opinions. Alain of Lille, in a saying which was to become proverbial, stated 'the authority has a wax nose which can be pushed in all directions'. Of course the medieval intellectuals were also to welcome unexpected authors, such as pagan and Arab philosophers, as authorities. Again, it was Alain of Lille who asserted that one had to fall back on the authorities of the 'gentile' philosophers to shame Christian ones. In the twelfth century, Arab writers were so fashionable that Adelard of Bath slyly remarked that he had attributed many of his own thoughts to the Arabs so that they would be more willingly accepted by his readers. This, it should be stressed, ought to make us prudent when we consider the influence of the Arabs on medieval Christian thought, which has been exaggerated by some. References to Arab thinkers were often only a sacrifice to fashion, original thought being masked for the sake of publicity. References to the past, however, were almost obligatory in the middle ages. Innovation was a sin. The Church made a point of condemning *novitates* or novelties. This happened with both technical and intellectual progress. Inventions were immoral. The most serious thing was that the respectable 'argument from tradition', which can be understood to be valuable when it was a matter 'of an agreement of witnesses'

unanimously coming to give their evidence over the centuries' was often made the object of a disputable practice. 'Here, most of the time,' wrote Père Chenu, 'one author is cited, one text is used, with no regard to time and place, without worrying about the body of evidence to be established.'

The weight of ancient authorities did not oppress the intellectual domain alone; it made itself felt in all sectors of life. Indeed it is the mark of a traditional, peasant society where truth is the secret handed down from generation to generation, bequeathed by a 'sage' to the one whom he has judged worthy of this trust, and spread by hearsay much more than by writing. A monk made a note on a manuscript of Adhemar of Chabannes of the continuity which formed the basis of the value of a learning transmitted by tradition: 'Theodore the monk and Abbot Hadrian taught Aldhelm the art of grammar. Aldhelm instructed Bede, Bede (through the intermediary of Egbert) instructed Alcuin, the latter instructed Rabanus and Smaragdus, the latter Theodulf; after him came Heiric, Hucbald, and Remigius, the latter with numerous pupils.'

Moral life was also ruled by authorities. Medieval ethics were taught and preached with stereotyped anecdotes which illustrated a lesson and which were ceaselessly repeated by moralists and preachers. These collections of *exempla* are made up of a monotonous sequence of medieval moral tales. At a first reading, they can be amusing; but when they turn up hundreds of times elsewhere, they show how repetition was used as a method. Repetition was the expression, in the intellectual and spiritual life, of the desire to abolish time and change and of the force of inertia which seems to have absorbed a large part of the mental energy of medieval men. Here is one *exemplum* out of many, whose formation has been revealed by Astrik Gabriel: the anecdote of the fickle student, of the 'son of inconstancy' who commits the great sin of wanting to change his status. The *exemplum* appears in the *De Disciplina Scolarium*, a treatise written between 1230 and 1240 by an English cleric, who, of course, begins by attributing it to one of the most incontestable authorities, Boethius himself. Then, with or without embellishments, with different variants, the story of this student, who makes his way through the clerical life, trade, farming, knighthood, law, marriage, and astronomy (a pretext for satirizing the 'worldly estates') recurs everywhere. Thus, intriguingly, it crops up in certain fourteenth-century French translations of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* into which it was inserted by the translators, who believed that Boethius was the author of the *exemplum*. It also occurs in the numerous *fabliaux* dedicated to the estates of the world and, again, in various commentaries, some on Boethius, and some on the *De disciplina scolarium*. The palm was finally won back by the English Dominican Nicholas Trivet (who died around 1328), who quoted the story in the two commentaries which he wrote, one on each of these two works. In addition he betrays what is perhaps

the foundation of the story by quoting the popular proverb 'a rolling stone gathers no moss', *non fit hirsutus lapis per loca volutus*. With proverbs we reach the basic level of folk-culture. We are still waiting for the fundamental study of proverbs which would give us access to the very storehouse of the medieval mind. In this traditional peasant society, the proverb played an important role. But how far was it the learned elaboration of earthy wisdom, or the popular echo of propaganda put out by the ruling classes?

As one would expect, the past exerted its full weight at the level of the basic framework of medieval society, the feudal class-structure. The foundation of feudal law and practice was formed by custom. In legal terms, to quote the classic definition of François Olivier-Martin, it is 'a juridical usage born of the repetition of public, peaceful acts, which have encountered no resistance over a long period of time'. One word in this - 'peaceful' - might make us hesitate, for custom was only law established by a force which was able to silence dissent over a long period. We may calculate how revolutionary was the impact of Pope Gregory VII's famous saying, 'The Lord did not say "My name is Custom".' However, custom ruled society long after Gregory's time. It was anchored in time before mind. It was what went back furthest in the collective memory. Legal proof in the feudal epoch was existence 'from all eternity'. In a conflict between the cathedral chapter of Notre Dame, Paris, and its serfs at Orly in 1252, we see, for example, how the parties proceeded to prove their rights. When the peasants claimed that they did not have to pay the *taille* to the chapter, the canons responded by instituting an inquest of knowledgeable people, who were questioned *de fama*, that is about what tradition said. Thus one of the oldest men in the area, Simon, bailiff (*maire*) of Corbreuse, who was more than 70 years old, 'old and sick', was questioned. He replied that according to the *fama*, the chapter could impose the *taille* on its men and that it had done so 'since time immemorial' *a tempore a quo non exstat memoria*. Another witness, the archdeacon John, a former canon, stated that he had seen in the chapter 'ancient rolls', in which it was written that the canons had the right to tallage the men of Orly. He also stated that he had heard even older men say that the usage existed 'since times far past' *a longe retroactis temporibus*, and that the chapter put its faith in these rolls 'as it should be given to the antiquity of the writing', *sicut adhibetur ancientie scripture*. Even nobility was chiefly a guarantee of an honourable family standing from a long way back. This, even more than the social recruitment of the higher clergy, explains to a great extent the number of noblemen among the saints and the fact that nobility was attributed to many saints who in reality did not possess it. Similarly the tree of Jesse proved the antiquity of the royal line in Mary's family and thus in Christ's earthly family. It was a survival of a medieval spirit which made a naïve archbishop of Paris under the

restoration of the monarchy in the early nineteenth century say, 'Not only was Our Lord the son of God but equally he belonged to an excellent family.'

III

There was proof by miracle as well as proof by authority (that is to say by proven antiquity). What made medieval minds agree to believe in something was not what could be observed and proved by a natural law or by a regularly repeated mechanism; on the contrary, it was the extraordinary, the supernatural, or at any rate the abnormal. Science itself was more willing to take as its subject the exceptional, the *mirabilia*, and prodigies. Earthquakes, comets, and eclipses were the subjects worthy of admiration and study. Medieval art and science tackled man by way of a detour among strange monsters.

Of course, proof by miracle chiefly defined beings who were themselves extraordinary, the saints. Popular belief here tallied with Church doctrine. When, from the end of the twelfth century, the papacy began to reserve to itself the canonization of saints (hitherto they had most often been proclaimed by the *vox populi*), it made miracles one of the obligatory conditions which the candidate had to fulfil at his canonization. At the start of the fourteenth century, when canonization processes were regulated, the dossiers on each case had obligatorily to include special chapters narrating the candidate's miracles, the *capitula miraculorum*. However, miracles were not limited to the ones which God worked through the intermediary of the saints. They could occur in anyone's life, or rather at the critical moments in the lives of all those who, for one reason or another, had deserved to benefit from these supernatural interventions. Of course, the favoured beneficiaries of these manifestations were the heroes. In the *geste* of *Girard de Vienne* it was an angel who brought the duel between Roland and Oliver to an end. In the *Chanson de Roland* God halted the sun; in the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* he gave the valiant knights the superhuman power to allow them to carry out the exploits which they had rashly boasted they could perform in the 'gabs'. However, even the simplest people could be favoured with a miracle, and, what was more, the greatest sinners, if they had been devout. Faithfulness (modelled on that of the vassal) towards God, the Virgin or a saint, could save men more effectively than an exemplary life. A famous work of the early thirteenth century, Walter de Coincy's *Miracles of the Virgin*, shows us the compassion of Mary towards her faithful. For three days she supported in her hands a thief who had been hanged for his misdeeds, because he had never forgotten to pray to her before going off to steal. She resuscitated a monk who was drowned when coming back from visiting his mistress, but who was saying his matins at the moment

when he fell into the water. She secretly delivered a pregnant abbess who had pledged her particular devotion.

The outstanding proof of truth by miracle was conferred by the judgement of God in the ordeal. 'God stands by the side of right' was the high-sounding saying which justified one of the most barbarous customs of the middle ages. Admittedly, so that chances should not be too unequal on the terrestrial plane, the weak, especially women, were authorized to have themselves replaced by a champion - there were professional ones, condemned as the worst mercenaries by the moralists - who would undergo the trial in their place. Here again a completely formal notion of righteousness justified the ordeal. Thus in the *geste* of *Ami* and *Amile*, the two friends who resembled each other like twins, Ami took the place of the guilty Amile in a judicial combat, for he himself was innocent of the fault of which his companion was accused, and he triumphed over his adversary. In the Holy Land, according to the *Chanson de Jérusalem*, a clerk called Peter claimed that St Andrew had revealed to him the burying place of the Holy Lance, which had pierced Christ's side on the Cross. Excavations were started and a lance was found. To know if the lance was authentic, that is to say if the clerk had spoken the truth, he was submitted to the ordeal by fire. The clerk died of his wounds after five days. However, it was soon considered that he had undergone the ordeal victoriously and that the lance was authentic. His legs had been burnt because he had doubted the truth of his vision to begin with. And the ordeal of Iseult is well known. 'She approached the fire, pale and unsteady. All were silent: the iron was red. Then she plunged her naked arms into the embers, grasped the iron bar, walked nine paces carrying it, and then, having thrown it away, stretched out her arms in a cross with the palms open, and each saw that her flesh was sounder than a plum from a plum-tree. Then from all chests arose a great cry of praise towards God.'

Merely examining the etymology of the word 'symbol' helps us to understand the place held by symbolic thought not only in the theology, literature, and art of medieval western Europe, but in its intellectual equipment. *Symbolon*, to the Greeks, meant a sign of recognition, represented by the two halves of an object shared between two persons. The symbol was the sign of a contract. It was a reference to a lost unity; it brought to mind or summoned up a superior, hidden reality. Now, in medieval thinking, 'each material object was considered to be the representation of something which corresponded to it on a higher level, and thus it became its symbol'. Symbolism was universal, and thought was a perpetual discovery of hidden meanings, a constant 'hierophany'. For the hidden world was a sacred world, and symbolic thinking was only the elaborated, decanted form, at a learned level, of the magic thinking in which the popular mentality was bathed. Amulets, philtres, and magical

formulae, widespread in both trade and use, were only the coarsest of these beliefs and these practices. Relics, sacraments, and prayers were the authorized equivalents of these as far as the masses were concerned. It was always a question of finding the keys which would force open the hidden world, the true and eternal world, the one in which men could be saved. Acts of devotion were symbolic acts by which men tried to make God recognize them and to oblige Him to keep the contract made with Him. The wording of charters of donation, in which the grantors mentioned their desire to save their souls by this means, made this magic trafficking plain. It turned God into the grantor's debtor and constrained Him to save the grantor. Similarly thought consisted in finding the keys which opened the doors of the world of ideas.

Thus medieval symbolism began at the level of words. To name something was already to have explained it. Or so Isidore of Seville had said, and, after him, etymology flourished in the middle ages as a fundamental science. To name things and realities was to know them and to take possession of them. In medicine, to diagnose was automatically to cure by pronouncing the name of the illness. When the bishop or the inquisitor could declare a suspect 'heretical', the main point had been achieved, and the enemy had been called to account and unmasked. The *res* and the *verba* did not oppose each other; each symbolized the other. Although language veiled reality for the intellectuals of the middle ages, it was also the key, the instrument matching this reality. 'Language,' said Alain of Lille 'is the faithful hand of the spirit.' For Dante, the word was an entire sign which uncovered reason and meaning - *rationale signum et sensuale*. One can therefore understand the importance of the argument concerning the exact nature of the relations between the *verba* and the *res*. From the eleventh century to the end of the middle ages almost all thinkers were ranged on one side or the other, so much so that traditional historians of philosophy have sometimes simplified the intellectual history of the middle ages into a confrontation of realists and nominalists, the Guelfs and Ghibellines of medieval thought. This was the conflict over the 'universals'.

The foundation of medieval pedagogy was the study of words and of language, the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, the first half of the course in the seven liberal arts. The basis of all education until at least the end of the twelfth century was grammar. Through it one arrived at all other branches of learning, especially at ethics, which superimposed itself on the liberal arts and to some extent topped them off. Grammar was a discipline of many values, 'polyvalent', as Canon Delhaye defined it, not only because it allowed men to deal with all subjects through commentaries on authors, but because it allowed men, thanks to the words, to arrive at the hidden meanings of which they were the keys. In his *Source of Philosophy*, *Fons Philosophiae*, Godfrey of St Victor in the twelfth century gave homage to

grammar, which taught him letters, syllables, and 'literal' and 'tropic' discourse, tropic discourse being that which reveals the figurative, allegorical meaning. At Chartres the famous master Bernard of Chartres also based all his teaching on grammar. In any case they were only following or taking up a tradition going back to antiquity, which had been bequeathed to the middle ages by Augustine and Martianus Capella. In expounding the Scriptures according to the four types of meaning, some medieval exegetes, following St Paul, thought that the letter killed while the spirit gave life, but most saw in the *littera* an introduction to the *sensus*.

Nature was the great reservoir of symbols. The constituents of the different natural orders were the trees in this forest of symbols. Minerals, plants, and animals were all symbolic. Tradition liked to give some of them special treatment: among the minerals, the precious stones, which struck men's feelings for colour and which evoked the myths of riches; among the vegetables, the plants and flowers mentioned in the Bible; among the animals, the exotic, legendary, and monstrous beasts which flattered the medieval tastes for the extravagant. Lapidaries, lists of flowers, and bestiaries, in which these symbols were catalogued and explained, occupied an important place in the ideal library of the middle ages.

Stones and flowers not only had symbolic meanings but also beneficent or maleficent powers. Yellow or green stones, by a homeopathy of colours, cured jaundice and liver illnesses, while red stones cured haemorrhages and blood-flows. The red sard signified Christ spilling his blood on the cross for mankind, and the transparent beryl, pierced by the sun, represented the Christian enlightened by Christ. *Floraria* were close to being herbals. They introduced into medieval thought collections of simples, old wives' remedies, and the secrets of monastic herborists. The bunch of grapes was Christ who gave his blood for mankind in an image symbolized by the mystic wine-press. The Virgin was represented by the olive-tree, the lily, the lily-of-the-valley, the violet, and the rose. St Bernard stressed that the Virgin was symbolized as much by the white rose which signified her virginity as by the red rose which portrayed her charity. The centaur, whose stalk is four-sided, was a cure for the quartan ague, while the apple was the symbol of evil and the mandragora was aphrodisiac and demoniac. When someone gave it a tug it cried out, and whoever heard it died or went mad. In these two cases etymology gave enlightenment to medieval men: the apple was *malum* in Latin, which also meant evil, and the mandragora was a 'man-dragon' (mandrake in English).

The animal kingdom was chiefly composed of evil things. The ostrich which laid its eggs in the sand and forgot to sit on them was an illustration of the sinner who forgets his duties towards God. The goat was a symbol of lechery. The scorpion which stings with its tail was the incarnation of falsehood; in

particular it was the incarnation of the Jewish people. The symbolism of the dog was pulled in two directions, between antique tradition which made it a representation of uncleanness, and the tendency of feudal society to rehabilitate it as a noble animal, the indispensable companion of the lord out hunting, and a symbol of fidelity, the highest of the feudal virtues. Mythical animals were all satanic, true images of the devil, such as the asp, the basilisk, the dragon, and the gryphon. The lion and the unicorn were ambiguous. They were symbols of strength and purity, but they could also be symbols of violence and hypocrisy. However, the unicorn became fashionable and was idealized at the end of the middle ages, immortalized in the sequence of tapestries of the *Dame à la Licorne*.

Medieval symbolism found a particularly large field of application in the very rich Christian liturgy, chiefly in fact in interpreting religious architecture. Honorius of Autun explained the meaning of the two principal types of church. Both cases, the round plan and the cross-shaped plan, were aiming at an image of perfection. It is easy to understand that the round church was the image of the perfection of the circle, but it must be realized that the cross-shaped plan did not only represent Christ's crucifixion, but rather was the *ad quadratum* form based on the square, designating the four points of the compass and epitomizing the universe. In both cases the church was a microcosm.

Amongst the most basic forms of medieval symbolism, the symbolism of numbers played an important role. It was a framework for thinking and was one of the guiding principles of architecture. Beauty came from proportion and harmony, whence the pre-eminence of music as a numerical science. 'To know music,' said Thomas of York, 'is to know the order of all things.' According to William of Passavant, bishop of Le Mans from 1145 to 1187, the architect was a 'composer'. Solomon had said to the Lord, *Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere dispositi* (Wisdom, 11.21), 'You have disposed all things according to measure, number and weight'. Number was the measure of things. Like words, numbers adhered to realities. 'To create numbers,' said Thierry of Chartres, 'is to create things'. Art, which was an imitation of nature and of creation, had to take number as a guide. At Cluny, according to Kenneth John Conant, the monk Gunzo, who inspired the great church of Abbot Hugh which was begun in 1088 (Cluny III), was a celebrated musician, *psalmista praecipuus*. A miniature shows him seeing in a dream Saints Paul, Peter, and Stephen tracing out the plan of the future church for him with ropes. According to Conant, the symbolic number which is supposed to have been the sum of all the numerical symbolisms used in the construction of the church at Cluny was 153, the number of fish in the miraculous draught.

Guy Beaujouan has drawn our attention to unpublished treatises of the twelfth century which show that number symbolism enjoyed an even greater

vogue in the Romanesque period than we think. Victorines and Cistercians distinguished themselves in this game, which they took seriously. In a treatise printed in the *Patrologia Latina*, Hugh of St Victor, expounding the symbolic numerical data according to the Scriptures, explained the significance of the disparities between numbers. Beginning with the seven days of Genesis (or rather of the six days when the Creator did his work, or the Hexaemeron), $7 > 6$ is rest after labour, $8 > 7$ is eternity after earthly life (the 8 recurs in the octagon of the chapel at Aachen, in San Vitale at Ravenna, in the Holy Sepulchre, and in the Heavenly Jerusalem, or, if we begin from 10 which is the image of perfection, $9 < 10$ is the lack of perfection and $11 > 10$ is excess. The Cistercian Odo of Morimond, who died in 1161, revived St Jerome's numerical speculation in his *Analytica Numerorum*. St Jerome, in his short work against Jovinian, a small treatise in favour of virginity, which was to enjoy a great vogue in the twelfth century, the 'antimatrimonial century' (perhaps as a remedy for the growth in population), explained the symbolism of the numbers 30, 60, and 100 applied to the three states of marriage, widowhood, and virginity.

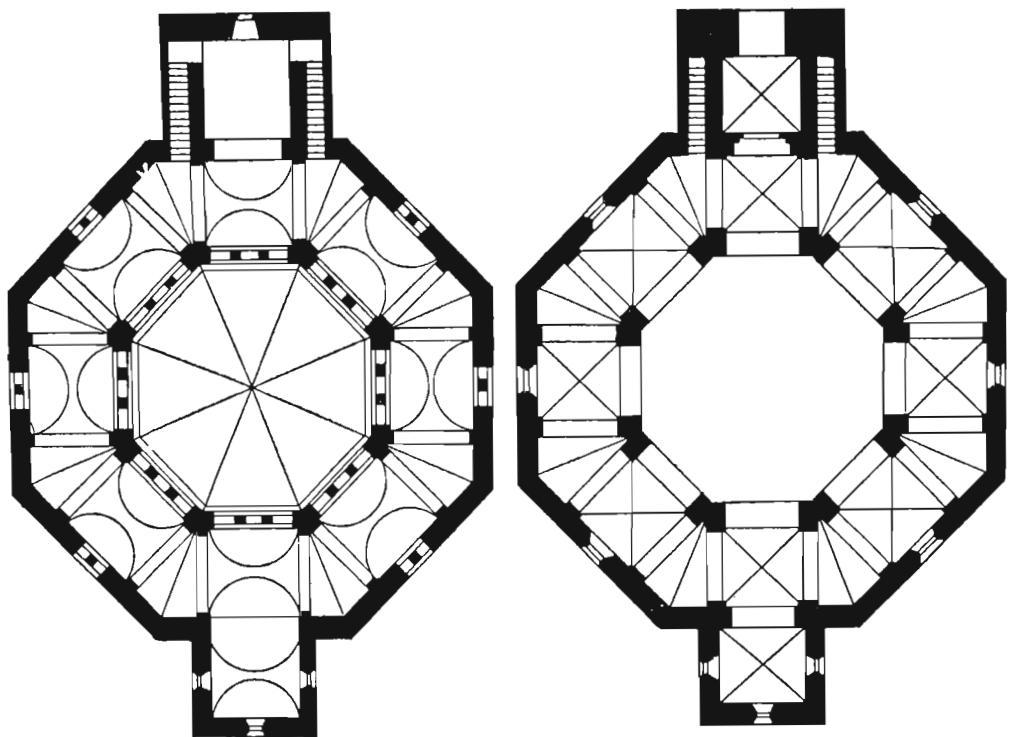
To represent 30, the tips of the thumb and the index finger caress each other softly, which depicts marriage. To show 60, the thumb is bent over, and so to speak submissive to the index, which surrounds it, and this is the image of the widow whose continence suppresses the memory of past pleasures, or who is bent under her veil. Finally, to make 100, the fingers represent a virginal crown. Moving on from this, Odo of Morimond expounded the symbolism of the fingers. The little (or auricular) finger, which cleans the ears so that they can hear, symbolizes faith and good will, the ring-finger symbolizes penitence, the middle finger charity, the index finger demonstrative reason, and the thumb divinity. Obviously all this can only be understood if one reflects that people in the middle ages calculated with their fingers and that counting on the fingers was at the basis of these symbolic interpretations, just as proportions were determined by natural measurements, such as the length of the footstep or the forearm, the span of the fingers, the area which could be ploughed in a day, and so on. The loftiest speculations were linked to the humblest gestures. We realize from these examples that it is difficult to distinguish the role of the abstract and that of the concrete in the mental furniture of medieval men. Claude Lévi-Strauss rightly took exception to the 'so-called incapacity of primitive people to think in abstract terms'. On the contrary, the medieval mind was inclined to abstraction, or more precisely towards a vision of the world which relied on abstract connections. Thus the complexion was considered particularly beautiful because it was a mixture of white and red, excellent colours which symbolized purity and charity, as we have seen. Yet, conversely, one feels the concrete images to be on a level behind the abstract notions. Following Isidore of Seville, the medieval clerics

thought that *pulcher* came from *pellis rubens*. A handsome man has a red skin because one feels the palpitation of the blood flowing underneath, a principle of nobility as of impurity, but in any case a basic principle. But how does one disentangle the concrete from the abstract in this taste for blood? It recurs in another word which means beautiful: *venustus*, which again was supposed to be derived from *venae* or veins.

In fact, this overlapping of the concrete and the abstract was the very foundation of the framework of medieval attitudes and feelings. A single passion, a single need made men sway between, on the one hand, desiring to find behind the concrete, which was perceptible, the abstract, which was more real and, on the other hand, trying to make this hidden reality appear in a form which could be perceived by the senses. Nor is it any more certain that the propensity for the abstract was more the prerogative of the learned, intellectual classes of the clergy, with the propensity towards the concrete occurring more among the uneducated groups, a sense for the abstract characterizing the *litterati* on one side and a sense for the concrete characterizing the *illitterati* on the other. One might be tempted to think that the medieval masses were rather inclined primarily to perceive an evil principle in the symbols of evil, and that the clergy then made them see this in the concrete forms of the devil and his incarnations. We are aware of the popular success of a heresy such as Catharism, a variety of Manichaeanism which replaced God and Satan with a good principle and an evil principle. In the same way the art of the early middle ages, through the aesthetic traditions which inspired it, whether they were indigenous or from the Steppes, showed that 'non-figurative' tendencies were more 'primitive' than the others.

IV

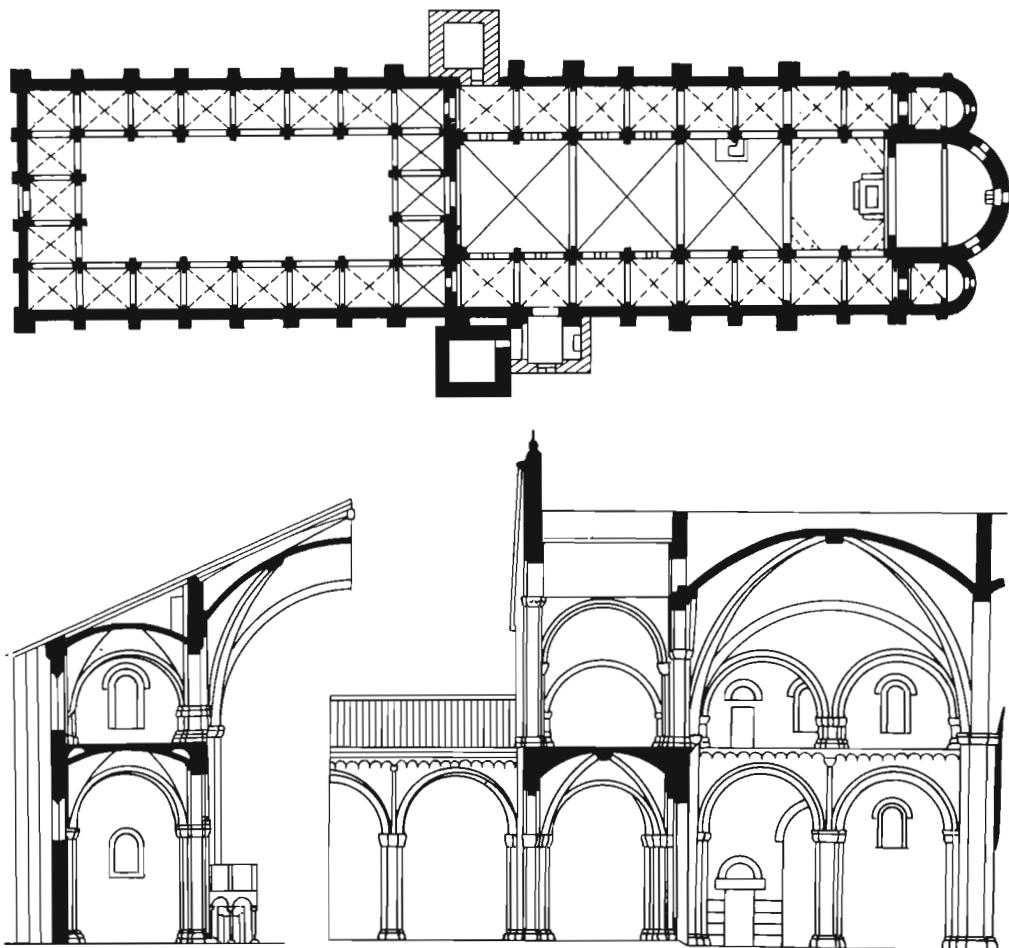
Given the taste for colour and the glamour of physical appearance, which were fundamental tendencies of medieval feeling, one may wonder what fascinated men in the middle ages more: perceptible attractions or abstract ideas, such as light energy or force, which were concealed behind the appearances. The medieval taste for bright colours is well known. It was a 'barbarous' taste, which favoured big jewels inserted into the boards of book-bindings, glowing gold objects, brightly painted sculpture, paintings covering the walls of churches and of the houses of the powerful, and the coloured magic of stained glass. The almost colourless middle ages which we admire today are the work of the destruction wrought by time and of the anachronistic taste of our contemporaries. However, behind this coloured phantasmagoria lay the fear of darkness and the quest for light which was salvation.



24 Ottmarsheim
(after Kautzsch)

Figures 24, 25 Church plans: the central plan and the basilican plan

These are the two most common types of church plan in the Christian west. The former derives from the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the latter from the Roman basilica. Each is based on oriental models and symbolic interpretations. The octagonal church at Ottmarsheim (24) in Alsace, which was consecrated by Pope Leo IX in 1049 in the course of a tour of consecrations, is modelled on the famous imperial chapel of Charlemagne in Aachen. The fashion set by this church, especially in German-speaking areas, increased the number of churches with a round plan, which, in the early middle ages, had chiefly been reliquary churches or *martyria*. Sant' Ambrogio, Milan (25), was built in about 1100 on the site of a ninth-century Carolingian basilica, which itself had replaced a fourth-century sanctuary. The new church kept the unusually large atrium and the tri-apsidal choir, which extended into a basilica with a nave and three aisles. The great innovation was the rib vaulting, which might suggest Gothic if the forms were not purely Romanesque in character, 'that is to say intended to emphasize the masses and strength of the walls, not to eliminate them' (A. Chastel).



25 Sant'Ambrogio, Milan
(after Dehio and Bezold)

Technical and ethical advances seem to have directed themselves towards an ever-increasing domestication of light. The walls of Gothic churches were scooped out, letting floods of light enter, coloured by the stained glass windows. Window glass made a timid appearance in houses from the thirteenth century. Under Grosseteste, Witelo, and others, thirteenth-century science scrutinized light, put optics in the forefront of its preoccupations, and, on the technical level, gave tired or sick eyes the ability to focus with the invention of spectacles at the extreme end of the century. Scientists were particularly interested in the rainbow. It was coloured light, natural analysis, a whim of nature. It simultaneously satisfied traditional propensities and the new directions of the medieval scientific spirit. Behind all this, there was what has been called the 'medieval metaphysics of light', or as we might more generally and more modestly put it, the search for the security of light. Beauty was light. Light reassured. It was a sign of nobility. In this respect, the medieval saint is a good example. As André Vauchez wrote, 'the saint is a being of light': for example St Clare's '... angelic face was brighter and more beautiful after prayer, it shone so much with joy. Truly the gracious and generous Lord filled his poor little bride so much with his rays that she spread divine light all around her.' On the death of St Edmund of Canterbury, 'a dew of light suddenly arose from him and his face was flushed a fine pink.' The *Elucidarium* stated that at the Last Judgement the saints would be resurrected with bodies of different colours according to whether they had been martyrs, confessors, or virgins. Think about the odour of sanctity, which of course was symbolic, but which was real for people in the middle ages. At Bologna, on the night of the 23-24 May 1233, on the occasion of the canonization of St Dominic, his coffin was opened to translate the body in the presence of a group of preaching friars and of a delegation of noblemen and burgesses. 'Anxious, pale, the brothers prayed, full of disquiet.' When the coffin had been unnailed all the onlookers were immersed in a wonderful odour.

Yet light was the object of the most ardent aspirations, charged with the highest symbols. Here are Cligès and Félice as depicted by Chrétien of Troyes: 'The day outside was somewhat dark, but he and the maiden were both so fair that a ray shone forth from their beauty which illumined the palace, just as the morning sun shines clear and red' (Chrétien of Troyes, 1914, pp. 126-7). 'Among all bodies, physical light is whatever is the best, the most delectable, the most beautiful. . . . That which constitutes the perfection and beauty of corporeal things is light,' said Robert Grosseteste, and quoting Augustine he recalled that 'the name of beauty', once it is understood, makes us perceive 'the first light' directly. This first light is none other than God, the luminous and incandescent centre. Dante's *Paradiso* is a march towards the light.

William of Auvergne joined together number and colour to define what is beautiful. 'Visible beauty is defined either by the appearance and the position of the parts within the whole, or else by the colour, or else by these two characteristics put together, whether one juxtaposes them or one considers the harmonic relation which relates the one to the other.' Grosseteste, furthermore, made colour and proportion derive simultaneously from the fundamental light energy.

The beautiful was also the valuable. Of course one of the reasons why the powerful had precious objects collected was the economic function of treasure-hoards – as a reserve in case of need. However, aesthetic taste also had its part in this admiration for works of art and perhaps particularly for the raw materials. Medieval men admired the quality of the raw material more than the work of the artist. It is from this point of view that one should study church treasures or the presents which rulers and magnates offered to each other, or descriptions of great buildings and towns. The *Liber Pontificalis*, which describes the artistic undertakings of the popes in the early middle ages, is full of gold and glitter. An anonymous work of the mid-twelfth century on the *Mirabilia Romae*, the Wonders of Rome, speaks chiefly of gold, silver, bronze, ivory, and precious stones. Describing, or rather enumerating, the riches of Constantinople, the great attraction for the western Christians of the middle ages, is a commonplace in historical writings and romances. In the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, what chiefly struck the westerners were the bell-towers, the eagles, the 'shining' bridges. Inside the palace in Constantinople, it was the tables and chairs of fine gold, the walls covered with rich paintings, the great hall whose vaulting was supported by a pillar of silver covered with inlaid enamel, surrounded by a hundred columns of marble inlaid with gold.

The beautiful was the colourful and brilliant, which was most often what was valuable. However, the beautiful was at the same time the good. The high value set on physical beauty was such that beauty was an obligatory attribute of sanctity. The Good God was first of all the Beautiful God, and the Gothic sculptors fulfilled the ideal of men of the middle ages. Medieval saints did not only possess the seven gifts of the soul (friendliness, wisdom, concord, honour, power, security, and joy) but also the seven gifts of the body – beauty, agility, force, liberty, health, pleasure, and longevity. This was true even of 'intellectual' saints. Thomas Aquinas is a case in point. A Dominican legendary tells us: 'When St Thomas used to walk in the countryside, the people who were busy in the fields there used to abandon their labours and hurry to meet him, admiring the imposing stature of his body and the beauty of his human features: they were drawn towards him much more by his beauty than by his sanctity.' In southern Italy he was called the *Bos Siciliae* or the ox of Sicily. So this intellectual was viewed by the people of his time principally as a hulk.

This cult of physical force was obviously to be found mainly among the members of the military aristocracy, the knights, for whom warfare was a passion. The bellicose ideal of medieval men of war was hymned by the troubadour Bertran de Born. Before he became a Cistercian monk, he had been the companion of Richard I of England, that paragon of a knight (Joinville, a century later, recorded admiringly: 'When any horse belonging to a Saracen shied at a bush its master would say to it: "D'you think that's King Richard of England?" And when the children of the Saracen women started to cry, their mothers would say to them: "Stop it, do! Or I'll go and fetch King Richard, and he'll kill you!"' (Joinville, 1971, p. 305).

Fair to me is the press of bucklers
with colours of vermillion and azure,
of standards and banners,
of different colours among each other
to put up tents, shelters, and rich pavilions,
to break lances, to pierce shields
and to split burnished helms; to give and receive blows.
And I have great pleasure
when I see ranged in the country
armed knights and horses
I am pleased when the scouts
make people and livestock flee;
I am pleased to see warriors
charge against them by force all together.
Above all it makes my heart happy
to see castles besieged,
baileys broken and thrown down,
to see the army on the edge
all around the walled ditches
and the lists with their stout, serried stakes.
I like it also when the lord
throws himself the first into the attack,
on his armed horse, without quivering
to embolden his men
with his valiant courage . . .
I tell you, nothing has savour for me,
neither eating, drinking or sleeping, as much as hearing someone cry: 'Forward!'
on both sides, and to hear horses
neigh, riderless, in the forest,
and to cry 'Help, Help!'
and to see fall into the ditches
great and small in the plain,

and to see the dead with, in their sides,
stumps of lances and their pennons.

For a great war turns a mean lord into a generous one:
thus I love to see the pomp of kings,
let them need stakes, ropes and pommels
and let the tents be put up to camp outside.
Ah, let us meet by hundreds and by thousands,
Let someone sing of our deeds after us!
Trumpets, drums, banners and pennons
flags and black and white horses
we shall soon see; let it make for good living!
Usurers will have their goods stolen from them,
and on the roads convoys will no longer
go peacefully by day, nor burgesses without a *fracas*,
nor merchants who will come from France,
but he will be rich who will pillage with a good will!

Joinville says at the outset of his hagiographical biography of St Louis that he will deal with the king's life in two parts. 'The first part tells how, on all occasions, King Louis governed his life according to the will of God and the laws of Holy Church, as also for the good of his realm. The second part speaks of his outstanding valour and his great feats of arms' (Joinville, 1971, p. 163). The military ideal was hand-to-hand fighting: 'Know that this was a fine deed of arms, for there was no shooting with the bow or the cross-bow, but men fought hand-to-hand with blows of maces and swords.' This is what men boasted of, to please women: 'The good count of Soissons, hard put to it as we were at that moment, still made a joke of it and said to me gaily: "Seneschal, let these dogs howl as they will. By God's bonnet" - that was his favourite oath - "we shall talk of this day yet, you and I, sitting at home with our ladies!"' (Joinville, 1971, p. 225).

The 'idols' of people of all conditions were the doers of exploits or '*prouesses*', those great deeds of sportsmanship. Here is one of Tristan's exploits:

Near the road by which they were travelling
stood a chapel on a hill,
on the corner of a crag,
looking down on the sea, facing the blast.
The part which is called the chancel
was built on a little pinnacle.
Beyond it, nothing at all: the cliff.
This hill was all made of stone.
If a squirrel had leapt from there,

He would have perished, without fail . . .
 Tristan did not go slowly!
 Behind the altar, he went to the window,
 pulled it towards him with his right hand
 and, through the opening, he leapt out . . .
 Lords, a great wide stone
 projected from the middle of this crag.
 Tristan leapt from it very lightly.
 The wind was puffed up inside his clothes
 and kept him from falling heavily.
 The Cornishmen still call
 this stone 'Tristan's leap' . . .
 Tristan leapt: the sand was soft . . .
 The others waited for him before the church,
 but in vain: Tristan had gone away!
 God has done him a fine act of grace.
 On the shore, with great leaps, he fled.
 He clearly heard the fire which crackled!
 He did not have the will to go back:
 He could not run faster than he ran . . .'

We find the same impulse towards heroic acts among the clergy, especially among the monks. The Irish taught medieval religious high deeds of asceticism and the rapture of mortifications. The saints, who were the successors of the martyrs of the earliest times, were the 'athletes of Christ'. Their exploits too were chiefly physical ones. Art, too, sought to display prowess, through a finicky treatment of objects in detail or extravagance in building, which ever-increasingly opened out the walls to make windows or went higher or bigger. The Gothic artist worked towards the exploit. A frequently expressed habit of thinking embodied the warrior vision and dualistic simplicity together. This was thinking by way of the opposition between two adversaries. For men of the middle ages, the whole of one's moral life was a duel between good and evil, between the virtues and the vices, the soul and the body. Prudentius in his *Psychomachia* had made the vices and virtues fight each other. Both the work and the theme enjoyed a singular success in the middle ages. The virtues became knights and the vices became monsters.

V

All this exaltation was a quest. To escape from this empty, delusive and ungrateful world was what medieval society, high and low, ceaselessly attempted

to do. To go and recover the hidden truth (*verità ascoza sotto bella menzogna*, Dante, *Convivio*, II, 1) on the other side of deceitful earthly reality was the major preoccupation of the men of the middle ages. Medieval art and literature were full of *integumenta* or veils, and intellectual or aesthetic progress in the middle ages was above all an unveiling.

Hence there was a constant recourse to those who could provide forgetfulness or create an escape. There were aphrodisiacs and stimulants, love-philtres, spices and potions to cause hallucinations for all tastes and for all purses. Village witches provided them for peasants and merchants, and physicians provided them for knights and rulers. Everyone was in search of visions and apparitions and they were often favoured with them. The Church, which disapproved of these magical methods, recommended other ones. According to it, every important action should be prepared for with prolonged fasts (usually lasting three days), with ascetic practices, and with prayers which created the necessary void for the arrival of inspiration and grace. The life of men in the middle ages was haunted by dreams. Dreams which warned, revealed, and instigated, they were the very west of the life of the mind, as well as its stimuli. The innumerable dreams of biblical figures which sculpture and painting rivalled in depicting were perpetuated in every man and woman in medieval Christendom.

Whence come dreams? [asks the pupil in the *Elucidarium*] Sometimes from God, when it is a case of a revelation of what is to come, as when Joseph learned from the stars that he would be preferred to his brothers, or of a necessary warning, as when the other Joseph learned that he had to flee to Egypt. Sometimes they come from the devil, when it is a case of a shameful vision or of an incitation to evil, as when we read in the Passion of our Lord concerning the wife of Pilate. Sometimes they come from the man himself, when he pictures in a dream what he has seen, heard, or read, and receives from it fear if it concerns sad things and hope if it concerns cheerful ones.

All levels of society dreamed. The king of England, Henry I, saw in a dream the three estates of his people in revolt against him, the monk Gunzo received in a dream the numerical specifications for the rebuilding of the church of Cluny, Helmbrecht's father observed in a dream the stages of his son's tragic fate. There were suspect dreams, too, inspired by the devil. In the Life of St Marie d'Oignies by Jacques de Vitry, the devil appeared to the saint and said to her: 'My name is dream. In fact I appear to many people in dreams and above all to monks and religious, as Lucifer; they obey me, and under the impact of my consolations, they let themselves be exalted and go so far as to believe that they are worthy of having dealings with the angels and the divine powers.' Dreaming was knowledge. 'On the third night, Iseult dreamed

that she was holding in her lap the head of a great boar which was staining her dress with blood, and she knew from this that she would never see her lover alive again.'

VI

In addition to these magical attitudes and feelings, other structures appeared and evolved, especially within and through the agency of the towns where developments were more rapid. Already noticeable in the twelfth century, these changes seem to have won the day in the thirteenth century. Of course we shall recall, with Claude Lévi-Strauss, that 'magical thought was not a beginning, a commencement, an outline, a part of a whole not yet realized; it formed a properly articulated system, independent, in this regard, of that other system which was to constitute science . . .'. In fact, however, the two systems did not merely cohabit in medieval society, often in the same men, but, in spite of resistance, tension, and incoherency, the new system permeated and progressively destroyed the old one. We should also observe that the outlook of the historian of civilizations in the face of these changes in mentalities and feelings is necessarily different from that of historians of philosophy and spirituality, who are searching for the stable foundation of a faith in these transformations. Even where their analyses are as luminous, as penetrating, and as sensitive to developments as are those of Père Chenu or Père de Lubac, which have deepened historical understanding, they are dependent on a *parti pris* (in the best sense of the phrase). One must distance oneself from this to try to cast a light on the intellectual history of the middle ages which is perhaps less 'affectionate', but which has the advantage, from being placed at a distance, of making certain proportions and relations emerge better. When, at the start of his fine work *La théologie au douzième siècle*, Père Chenu wrote, 'Our understanding of the twelfth century has been distorted by the rationalist prejudices of Enlightenment philosophy . . . we should firmly maintain against this philosophy and its adherents that symbolic methods of religious expression have at least as much importance and certainly more Christian efficaciousness than dialectical methods' (Chenu, 1957, p. xix). One should answer that 'Christian efficacy' cannot be the historian's term of reference. In spite of its excesses, its lack of understanding, its naïvetés, its errors, Enlightenment philosophy had the merit (though admittedly one must subtract the value-judgements which it incorporated) of pointing out that the 'symbolic methods of religious expression' already belonged to the past in the twelfth century, whereas the 'dialectic methods' represented the mental and intellectual mechanism of the future, while waiting to yield ground to other 'novelties'.

The first novelty in this area in the twelfth century, as we have seen, was the perfection of a new intellectual machinery by men who themselves were 'new', the masters of the urban schools which became the universities. This intellectual machinery constituted itself out of a physical tool, the book. We must not be deceived in this: the university book was quite different from the monastic book. This is not to say that the latter had not been a cultural tool. The great history of monastic culture - as depicted, for example, by Dom Jean Leclercq - suffices to bear witness to the role of the book in this cultural system. However, the monastic book, even including its spiritual and intellectual functions, was first and foremost a treasure. The university book was chiefly a tool. In spite of the efforts made in technique - cursive writing, which was less careful and faster; the great increase in the number of copies through the *pecia* system; the absence of miniatures, or having illustrations where they existed - mass produced books remained expensive until the arrival of printing. One may recall the sixth-century miracle of St Benedict saving the blade of a sickle from sinking. To this miracle corresponds one of St Dominic in the thirteenth century - a new age and new tools: 'One day when St Dominic was crossing a river on the outskirts of Toulouse, his books fell into the water. Then, three days later a fisherman, having cast his line in this place, thought that he had caught a heavy fish, and he pulled the saints' books out of the water, as intact as if they had been carefully kept in a cupboard.' It was not the case, however, that St Dominic succumbed to a new fetishism for the book, which not all university teachers were to avoid. He knew how to restrict the role of the book to its auxiliary function. The *Golden Legend* also bears witness to this: 'When he was asked which was the book which he had most studied, he replied, "The book of charity".'

It is symptomatic, however, that the mendicant orders themselves adapted with difficulty to this new role of the book. St Francis was very distrustful towards intellectual culture because he always considered it to be a treasure and because the economic value of books seemed to him to be in contradiction with the practice of poverty which he wanted for his brothers. A great figure in the order of the Preaching Friars in the thirteenth century, Cardinal Humbert of Romans, was indignant to see the book becoming utilitarian and no longer the object of attentive care. 'Just as the bones which are the relics of the saints are conserved with so much reverence that they are wrapped in silk and enclosed in gold and silver, it is damnable to see books which contain so much sanctity kept with so little care.'

In fact, the change in the function of the book was only a particular instance of a more general development, which diffused the use of the written word and above all recognized that it had a new value, as proof. The ordeal, which was banned by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, was gradually replaced

by written evidence, which threw justice into confusion. In his *Coutumes de Beauvaisis* in the late thirteenth century, Philippe de Beaumanoir in listing categories of proof placed proof 'by letters' in second place after the direct knowledge of the case by the judge, ahead of proof 'by pledge of battle', that is to say by trial by combat, of which he remarked, 'of all the types of proof this is the most dangerous'. Furthermore, he stressed that in cases of proof by letters one should accord as little importance as possible to mortal witnesses - in opposition to what had been the case in the past, 'whence it figures that the letters are valid in themselves and this is in fact the case'. Here too one notices during this transition period the difficulty which people had in adapting to the new function of the written word. The archdeacon summoned to give evidence in the Orly case in 1252 spoke of the 'ancient rolls' which he had seen in the chapter's library more as proofs in themselves by function of their antiquity than by reason of their contents.

In fact, this was the time when customs were generally being written down, when charters were rapidly increasing in number, and when feudal law, like Roman law and canon law, was being embodied in treatises. The traditional society of hearsay and oral tradition was slowly becoming used to handle, if not to read, the written word, just as it had served an apprenticeship in handling money in economic life. In all areas equipment was being renewed. Just as in the case of the technical innovations in the economic field, novelties in the cultural domain did not occur without resistance for, besides the reserve of the traditionalist circles, here too there was opposition from the lower classes to the ruling classes appropriating the new skills which sometimes strengthened seigneurial exploitation. Sometimes the charter guaranteed the rights of the lord more than those of the peasants and it was to be as much detested as the mill or the manorial oven. From now on the destruction of archives and inventories (later known as *terriers*), was to be one of the essential gestures in revolts.

The desacralizing of the book was accompanied by a 'rationalization' of intellectual methods and of mental mechanisms. Not that it was a case of putting the object of the examination and the search in question. Critiques, which were increasingly numerous on the subject of relics, for example (such as the well-known treatise by Guibert de Nogent, who however was not very progressive, from the early twelfth century) did not put the efficacy of relics in question. They simply strove to set aside the false relics which were becoming more and more common because of the crusades and the development of the financial needs of churches. On a deeper level, the scholastic method did not put faith in question. On the contrary, it originated from the wish to illumine, discern, and understand this faith better. It was the development of the famous formula of St Anselm, *Fides quaerens intellectum*, faith itself

seeking understanding. Even so, the methods implemented to this end represented a real transformation in mental attitudes. At the higher level of theology, Père Chenu has clearly shown all that the action of transforming itself into a 'science', as it did in the thirteenth century, signified for theology.

VII

It would be presumptuous to try to define the scholastic method in a few lines. In its origins it had evolved through the development from the *lectio* to the *questio* and from the *questio* to the *disputatio*. The scholastic method firstly generalized the old process of *questiones* and *responsiones*, of questions and answers, which was used mainly with respect to the Bible. But posing problems and putting authorities 'into questions' in the plural led to putting them 'into question' in the singular. Scholasticism in this early period was the foundation of a problematic. Later it evolved into a debate, a 'dispute', as recourse to reasoning became of increasing importance as against the argument purely from authority. Finally the dispute culminated in a *conclusio* given by the master. Of course this conclusion could suffer from the personal limitations of the man who pronounced it, and since the university masters had a tendency to set themselves up as authorities, the conclusion could be a source of intellectual tyranny. But these abuses were unimportant; what mattered was that the system forced the intellectual into a particular alignment. He could not be content with questioning, he had to commit himself. The result of the scholastic method was that the individual had to affirm himself in his intellectual responsibility.

How far some of them went beyond this moderate use of scholasticism it is hard to know. The condemnations of 1270 and 1277 seem to allude not only to the 'Averroists', who, under the influence of masters such as Siger of Brabant, are supposed to have professed a doctrine of the 'double truth', which dangerously separated faith from reason, but also to real agnostics. It is difficult to find out their true opinions, or how many they were, or what their audience was. Indeed, any trace seems to have been wiped out by ecclesiastical censure, but that means merely that their influence was probably limited to rather narrow university circles. In thirteenth-century literature characters appear who are presented as altogether misbelieving or unbelieving. Here too it does not seem that the 'atheists' were more than isolated cases.

One can measure the refinement produced in intellectual equipment by the development of scholasticism in three areas. The first was the more subtle use of authorities, as perfected in Abelard's famous work, the *Sic et Non*, a true *Discours de la méthode* of the middle ages. Firstly the method involved

trying to eliminate the apparent divergences between authorities. According to Père Chenu's summary, a check had to be made to see if this disagreement did not arise from the use of words in an unusual sense or with different meanings, from inauthentic works, or corrupt texts, from passages where the author was a simple reporter of someone else's opinions, or in which he was adapting himself to current ideas, from sentences where he was speaking not in a dogmatic way but by way of exhortation, counsel, or dispensation, or from the variety of senses of the word according to the different authors. Finally, if the disagreement seemed irreducible, one should follow the best qualified authority.

The *disputatio* helped minds to get used to the coexistence of different opinions, to recognize the legitimacy of diversity. Of course the ideal remained that of unity, concord, and harmony. Gratian proclaimed in his *Decretum* that he was seeking the *concordantia discordantium canonum*, the agreement between the discordant canons. He was a symphonist. Yet this symphony was born out of polyphony. 'If you look at the beauty and the magnificence of the universe,' wrote William of Auvergne, 'you will discover that the universe is like a very fine hymn and that the creatures, by their variety, sing in unison and make a harmony of a supreme beauty.'

Finally, men were decreasingly afraid of modernity. As early as the beginning of the twelfth century John Cotton was asserting in his *De Musica* that the modern musicians 'were more subtle and sagacious, for, according to the saying of Priscian, the younger one is, the more perspicacious one is'. In his mediocre *Sentences*, Peter Lombard inserted what his contemporaries referred to as 'profane novelties', *profanae novitates*, and William of Tocco, Thomas Aquinas' biographer, praised him for his innovations: 'Friar Thomas posed new problems in his lecture-courses, discovered new methods, and employed new systems of proofs'.

In the search for new proofs, the scholastics, or at least some of them, developed the use of observation and experimentation. The name most often cited is that of Roger Bacon, who seems to have been the first to have employed the term *scientia experimentalis*. He disdained the Parisian masters, who were too dogmatic, with the exception of Pierre de Maricourt, author of a *Treatise on the Magnet*, whom he called 'the master of the experiments'; he contrasted them with the masters of Oxford, who were instructed in the sciences of nature. In fact the Oxford masters were and remained chiefly mathematicians, and this reveals the difficulties which medieval intellectuals had in establishing organic relations between theory and practice. The reasons for this are numerous, but the social evolution of the university masters bore much of the responsibility for the semi-failure of these attempts. Scholasticism at its birth had tried to establish a link between the liberal and the mechanical arts,

between science and technology. The university men, by placing themselves in the social classes which were ashamed of manual work, made this attempt miscarry. In some fields the divorce between theory and practice had serious consequences. Physicists preferred Aristotle to experiments, physicians and surgeons preferred Galen to dissections. It was the prejudices of the teachers, even more than the reluctance of the Church, which held up the practice of dissection and progress in anatomy, which had in fact had promising beginnings at Bologna and Montpellier around 1300. In their turn the humanists were to live out these inner contradictions.

VIII

However, while they were asserting their grip on nature and acquiring a growing assurance towards the world, the men of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries found new depths in themselves. Spiritual life was growing inwards. A pioneer front was opening up in men's consciences and scholastic questions were getting extended into cases of conscience. Traditionally the merit for this great reversal in psychology and sensibility has been given to Abelard, but it actually resulted from profound changes in what Alphonse Dupont called the 'collective mentality'. Man had sought the measure and the punishment or reward of his faults and his merits outside himself. The penitentials inflicted punishments on him which were equivalent to fines. When he had paid, he was reconciled with God, the Church, society, and himself. From now on regret and contrition (scrupulous souls went as far as remorse) were demanded from him, and he wanted them himself. Contrition absolved him. In the *fabliau* of the *Chevalier au barizel*, the wicked knight accepted the physical penance which consisted in filling the barrel by plunging it in the water, but as long as his heart felt no contrition the barrel remained empty. The day when he repented and shed a tear it was enough in itself to fill up the barrel. There was a lot of weeping in the middle ages, but the heroes of the *chansons de geste* had wept over the pain or the sadness which the world caused them, not those which they inspired in themselves. Gregory the Great in the late sixth century recommended tears as a sign of the reward of compunction. It was not really understood by the men of the middle ages until six centuries later.

Let us seek evidence of this refinement of sensibility, which from now on was to pay more attention to the intention than to the act, by looking at the story of an old woman in Acre at the time of King Louis' Crusade.

As they were on their way from the lodgings to the Sultan's palace Brother Yves caught sight of an old woman going across the street, with a bowl full of flaming coals in her

right hand and a flask filled with water in her left. 'What are you going to do with these?' he asked her. The old woman answered that with the fire she intended to burn up paradise and destroy it utterly, and with the water she would quench the fires of hell, so that it too would be gone for ever. 'Why do you want to do that?' asked Brother Yves. 'Because,' said she, 'I don't want anyone ever to do good in the hope of gaining paradise, or from fear of hell; but solely for the love of God, who deserves so much from us, and Who will do for us all the good He can'. (Joinville, 1971, p. 274)

Just as the penitents changed, the saints changed. In addition to the traditional outward signs of sanctity, poverty and charity were increasingly demanded of them. Moral influence and apostleship counted for more than thaumaturgical or ascetic feats. The twelfth century had deepened their ideal in the mystical life. Etienne Gilson could talk about St Bernard's 'Christian socraticism', but according to André Vauchez,

The traditional saint of the twelfth century was someone who abstained, who refused, and whose sanctity presented a somewhat 'grating' aspect. The thirteenth-century saint was no less exacting towards himself than his predecessor had been, but he seems less tense to us, more smiling and in short more open and positive in his virtues. Francis' poverty was not only a refusal to possess and acquire. It was a new attitude towards the world. . . .

The saint no longer needed to be physically beautiful.

One day [say the *Little Flowers of St Francis*] when they had arrived in a village very hungry, they went to beg for bread for the love of God, according to the rule; and St Francis went into one quarter and Brother Masseo into another. But because St Francis was a man of too despicable an appearance and short of stature and because for this reason he passed for a vile little poor man among those who did not know him, he only received a few mouthfuls of dry bread; but people gave Brother Masseo, because he was a tall man of fine bearing, plenty of big, good fragments and some whole loaves.

The pessimistic Romanesque twelfth century had taken pleasure in the bestiary. The Gothic thirteenth century, which was trying its hand at happiness, turned towards flowers and men. It was more allegorical than symbolic. It was in human form that the abstractions, good and evil, of the *Roman de la Rose* (Avarice, Vieillesse, Bel Accueil, Danger, Raison, Faux-Semblant, Nature) were represented. Gothic was still full of phantasy, but it conformed more to the bizarre than to the monstrous. Above all, it became moral. Iconography became a lesson. The active and the contemplative lives and the virtues and vices in human form, placed in order, decorated the doorways of cathedrals

and furnished preachers with the illustration of their moral teachings. Admittedly, clerics had always assigned art an edifying role. 'Painting has three ends,' said Honorius of Autun. The first of these was a catechetic aim, for painting was 'the literature of the laymen'; the two other aims were the aesthetic and the historical. Already in 1025 the Council of Arras was asserting, 'The illiterate contemplate in paintings what they cannot see through writing.' But the main intention was to impress and even to frighten. From now on everything was *moralisé* or illustrated: bibles, psalters, and illustrated herbals transformed scripture and religious education into moral anecdotes. *Exempla* flourished. This development had disadvantages, too. Sensibility became insipid and religion often became childish. At the level of the vulgarizers, of Vincent of Beauvais, for example, the Gothic age appears to lack vigour. Furthermore, the more mawkish moralizing tyranny was not accepted more readily than the other tyrannies had been. The ordinances of St Louis at the end of his reign on blasphemy and gambling aroused a grieved censure even among his entourage.

IX

Yet in this period there was one feeling whose transmutation appears resolutely modern. This was love. In the more properly feudal age, with its virile, warrior society, the refinement of feelings between two beings had seemed to be confined to friendship between men; the *geste* of *Ami et Amile* being the consummate expression of this. Then courtly love came along. In a valuable book, Denis de Rougemont used it as a pretext for brilliant digressions about the west, marriage, and war, rather than elucidating the phenomenon in his own time. Writing after the appearance of a huge literature on the subject (doubtless with more to come), René Nelli has tackled the problem with knowledge, profundity, and passion. Even at the learned level, the origin of courtly love remains obscure. What does it owe to Muslim poetry and civilization? What links did it have with Catharism? Was it the heresy which Alexander Denommy saw it as? (He identified courtly love, perhaps too quickly, with Andreas Capellanus' treatise *De arte honeste amandi*, written in about 1185; in 1277 Etienne Tempier, with his habitual simplism, drew a few shocking propositions from this treatise to condemn them, mixed up with Thomism, Averroism, and several other doctrines, among the most advanced of the time, of which he disapproved.) On the level of interpreting courtly love, discussion is still continuing. Whereas many used to insist on the 'feudal' character of this concept of love, apparently inspired by the relations between a lord and his vassal, with the lord here being a lady, in an act of revenge

by the fair sex, others, whom I am happier to follow, saw in it a form of revolt against the sexual morality of the same feudal world.

It is evident that courtly love was antimatrimonial, and marriage was, indeed, the favourite area for producing a conflict which aimed at revolutionizing not only morals but also feelings. There was certainly a real novelty in laying claim to the autonomy of feeling and in maintaining that other relations could exist between the sexes than those of instinct, force, interest, and conformity. Why should it be astonishing that it was the nobility of southern France which was the terrain on which this battle was joined? The southern French nobility was equivocal in all its circumstances. Its contradictions became striking in its attitude towards Catharism, which, however, it embraced for other reasons. It was a more cultivated nobility with finer sensibilities than the barbarous feudal lords in the north of France, but it was losing steam faced with a world where all the technical innovations were being born and diffused in the north, and thus it was uncertain. Yet was courtly love really Provençal love? Was not the finest courtly love story that of Tristan and Iseult, who belong to the '*matière de Bretagne*'?

It is still the case that, apart from this protest and this revolt, courtly love was able to find a marvellous balance between the soul and the body, heart and mind, sex and sentiment. Beyond the tawdriness of the vocabulary and ritual which make it a phenomenon of its time, beyond the mannerism and the abuse of courtly scholasticism, and, of course, the silliness of modern troubadours, it remains the imperishable gift which, out of all the mortal forms which it created, a civilization has bequeathed to human sensibility. To quote from it would be ridiculous: one must read it:

Lords, do you wish to hear a fine tale of love and of death?

and then, in addition:

In joy I have my hope, / in a fine heart and a firm will.

X

Perhaps the most important of the changes revealed to us by medieval art are the arrival of realism or naturalism, and the emergence of a new way of looking at the world, a new system of values. From now on the eye halted at the physical appearance, and the perceptible world, instead of being merely a symbol of the hidden reality, acquired value in itself and was an object of immediate delight. In Gothic art the flowers are real flowers, human features are individual

features, the proportions are those of physical measurements and not of symbolic meanings. Of course, this desacralizing of the universe was an impoverishment in one way, but it also spelled freedom. In any case, as early as the Romanesque period, artists had often had aesthetic preoccupations closer to heart than ideological imperatives. One should not push the symbolic interpretation of medieval art too far. Very often artists were guided purely by a sense for beautiful forms and their chief worry was technical exigencies. Ecclesiastical patrons imposed a theme, and the men who were to carry it out found their freedom within the framework traced out for them. Medieval symbolism sometimes only exists in the mind of modern commentators, pseudo-learned men clouded by a conception of the middle ages which is partly mythical. In spite of the weight of ecclesiastical propaganda, many people probably succeeded in escaping from the stifling magical atmosphere in which they were surrounded. It is significant that many medieval works of art are sufficient in themselves without our having to possess the keys to their symbolic meaning. Most of the works of art (should one say the finest ones?) of the middle ages are able to move us purely by their forms, like the charming sirens who make us wish to forget that they represent evil. Feeling emerged slowly in the Gothic age from the forest of symbols into which it had been plunged by the early middle ages. If one looks at the miniatures which adorn Herrad of Landsberg's *Hortus Deliciarum* of the mid-twelfth century (copies, alas, of the originals, which were destroyed in 1870), one is dealing with a reaper, a ploughman, and a puppeteer. The artist has visibly set himself to represent scenes, people, and tools for themselves. Only rarely do details (a tiny angel, relegated to a corner of a miniature) remind us that the subject is the Gospel parable of the good grain and the tares, or man condemned to work after the Fall, or Solomon viewing the universe like a marionette theatre and crying out 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'. On the contrary, everything in the work of art tells us that the artist takes the perceptible world seriously, indeed, that he takes pleasure in it. The withering away of symbolism, or at any rate the fading away of symbolism before perceptible reality, shows a deep change in sensibility. Man, reassured, contemplates the world as God did after Creation, and finds that it is good. Gothic art is confidence.

XI

Before they arrived there, medieval men had to struggle (and the conflict was not over in the thirteenth century) against a widespread impression of insecurity. Their great uneasiness came from the fact that beings and things were not in reality what they appeared to be. What the middle ages most

disliked was lying. The description of God's nature was 'he who never lies'. Wicked people were liars. 'You are a liar, Ferrando de Carrión,' Pero Bermuez accused the Infante, and the Cid's other companion, Martin Antolinez, told the other Infante to his face, 'Shut your mouth, liar, mouth without truth.' The whole of society was made of liars. The vassals were traitors, felons who disavowed their lords, imitators of Ganelon, and thence, of the great traitor who was the prototype of all traitors, Judas. Merchants were defrauders who thought of nothing save deceiving and stealing. Monks were hypocrites, like the Franciscan in the *Roman de la Rose*, Faux-Semblant. Medieval vocabulary was extraordinarily rich in words for designating innumerable types of lie and infinite varieties of liars. Even the prophets could be pseudo-prophets, and their miracles false miracles, works of the devil. Medieval man's grip on reality was so weak that he had to use trickery to prevail. We might imagine that this warlike society stormed everything by attack. This is the supreme illusion. Techniques were so mediocre that the defenders almost always prevailed over the offence. Even in the military domain, the castles and walls were almost impregnable. When an attacker forced an entry, it was almost always by a ruse. The total number of the goods placed at the disposal of medieval mankind was so insufficient that in order to live one had to make shift. He who had neither strength nor trickery was condemned almost certainly to perish. Who was sure and who was he who was sure? Out of all the huge oeuvre of St Augustine, the middle ages ensured a future for the treatise *De mendacio*, 'On Lying'.

XII

But what could one do in the face of vanishing realities other than clutch at appearances? For all that the Church urged medieval people to disregard and despise them and to seek the true, hidden, riches, medieval society was a society of outward show in its behaviour and its attitudes. The chief form of outward show was the body, which had to be humbled. Gregory the Great referred to it as 'this abominable garment of the soul'. 'When man dies, he is cured of the leprosy of the body,' said St Louis to Joinville. The monks, the model of medieval mankind, never ceased to humble the body by means of ascetic practices; monastic rules limited baths and care for one's appearance, which were an effeminate luxury. To the hermits, filth was a virtue. Baptism was supposed to wash a Christian once and for all in a literal as well as in a metaphorical sense. After work, nakedness was a punishment for sin; Adam and Eve after the Fall and Noah after his drunkenness displayed their immodest and sinful nakedness. In any case, nakedness was a sign of heresy

and godlessness, and in every heretic there was, effectively, a son of Adam. It is odd to notice that here too St Francis of Assisi, who often bordered on heresy, was inclined to go against the grain and turn nakedness into a virtue. Poverty was nakedness, and it crossed over into actions, symbolic but real ones; in an unusual episode in the *Little Flowers of St Francis* we see St Francis and Friar Rufinus preaching stark naked from the pulpit at Assisi.

However, the warrior ideal exalted the body as much as the Christian ideal disparaged it. The young heroes in the *chansons de geste* had white skins and blond, curly hair. They were athletes.

He had a broad back and a body in proportion
Broad shoulders and a wide chest, he was strongly built
Big, powerful arms and huge wrists,
A long and graceful neck.

The whole of a knight's life consisted of exalting the physical: hunting, war, and tournaments were his passions. Charlemagne took pleasure in bathing naked with his companions in the pool at the palace in Aachen. Even as a corpse the body was the object of care and attention. Saints' bodies were venerated and their translation ratified canonization. St Clare of Montefalco, who died in 1308, appeared to a nun and told her 'My body must be canonized.' Medieval people, whose sight - an intellectual sense - developed only belatedly (we may recall that spectacles were only invented late in the thirteenth century), chiefly employed the most physical of the senses, the sense of touch. They were all doubting Thomases. To preserve the bodies of great people when they died, mercury was instilled into the nose; then the natural orifices were sealed with wadding soaked in sweet-smelling substances which were thought to prevent corruption, and the face was embalmed. When the body had to be transported over a distance, the intestines were cut out and buried separately, and the body was filled with myrrh, aloes, and other aromatic substances, and then sewn up. Religion promised the resurrection of the body.

To judge from the penitential literature, the number of bastards, the resistance of the clergy to the obligation of celibacy, and the allusions and even specific references in the fabliaux, medieval people's sex lives were little preoccupied with the exhortations of the Church.

Hygiene made progress and the towns must have played a pioneer role here, too. In 1292 at least 26 bath-houses existed in Paris. Hot baths were, moreover, places of pleasure, even of dissolute behaviour. Here is a description of the baths at Erfurt in the thirteenth century:

You will find the baths of this town very pleasant. If you need to wash and you like your comforts, you can enter with confidence. You will have an agreeable welcome. A pretty young girl will massage you absolutely in all good faith with her soft hands. An expert barber will shave you, without letting the smallest drop of sweat fall on your face. When you are tired from the bath you will find a bed to rest on. Then a pretty woman of virginal appearance, who will not displease you, will tidy your hair skilfully with a comb. Who would not kiss her, if he wishes to and she puts up no resistance? When you are asked for payment, a single penny will be enough. . . . !

Monastic writings, besides, provided their own contribution to the care of the body. An unusual Alsatian manuscript of 1154 contains a manual on dietetics written by a nun of Schwarzenthann and illustrated by Sintram, a regular canon at Murbach. It is a calendar which indicates the regime to be followed for each month. In the early thirteenth century, a *Guide to Health* written at Salerno had a widespread circulation.

Medieval society was, as we have seen, obsessed by food. The mass of the peasantry had to be content with little. Broth was the basis of its meals, and often the main accompaniment was vegetables or fruits which had been gathered. However, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the *companagium*, or bread eaten as an accompaniment, became widespread among all social classes, and it was at this point in the west that bread truly took on an almost mythical significance, which was sanctioned by religion. The peasant class did have one great feast: in December they killed their pigs and the produce from this provided food for the feasts at the end of the year and for the meals through the long winters. The pig-killing was enthroned in art in pictures of the labours of the months.

Meals gave the ruling classes their chief opportunity to show their superiority in this essential area of appearances. Ostentatious eating was the main luxury. The produce unavailable to others was laid out: game from the seigneurial forests, precious ingredients - spices - bought at a high price, and the unusual dishes prepared by the cooks. Feasting scenes figure prominently in the *chansons de geste*. The description of the departure of William of Orange's expedition against the Saracens in *Le charroi de Nîmes* is instructive.

They took 300 pack-horses with them. I shall tell you what the first 100 carried: golden chalices, missals and psalters, copes, crucifixes and censers; when they arrived in the ravaged country they would give homage first of all to God. I can also tell you what the next hundred carried: vessels of pure gold, missals and breviaries, and crucifixes and fine linen; when they arrived in the pagan land, they would serve Jesus, the pure spirit. I can tell you also what the last 100 were carrying: pots and frying-pans, cauldrons and trivets, twisted hooks, tongs and andirons. When they came to the ravaged land,

they would be well able to prepare food, they would serve William the warrior, and with him all his knights.

Thus the chivalric ostentation, which was gastronomic, matched the ecclesiastical ostentation, which consisted of liturgical treasures. But the great lords of the Church were not slow to take part in abundant eating. Roger Dion has shown the important role played by abbeys and bishops in creating the medieval vineyard. 'Most of our bishops,' wrote the Chartrian William of Conches indignantly in the twelfth century, 'ransack the world to find tailors or cooks capable of making cunningly seasoned sauces. . . . As for those who devote themselves to learning, they flee from them as from lepers. . . .' The lord's table was also an opportunity to display and to determine etiquette. The Welsh epics, the *Mabinogion*, reflect these customs, which had been perfected by French lords. Thus we find in *Pwyll, Prince of Dyved*: 'After they had washed, they seated themselves at table . . . the room was made ready and they seated themselves at table: Heveydd Hen sat on one side of Pwyll, Rhiannon on the other, and after them, each according to his rank.' In the depiction of vices, gluttony (*gula*) was the prerogative of the lords. However, gastronomy was to develop with the urban bourgeoisie. The earliest cookery books appeared in the middle of the thirteenth century in Denmark, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries they occurred in increasing numbers in France and Italy, and then in Germany.

Finally, the body provided medieval society with one of its principal means of expression. We have already observed how people counted on their fingers. Medieval civilization was one of gestures. All the essential contracts and oaths in medieval society were accompanied by gestures and were made manifest by them. The vassal put his hands between those of his lord and spread them on the Bible; he broke a straw or threw down a glove as an act of defiance. Gestures had meaning and committed people. They were even more important in the liturgy. Signs of the cross were gestures of faith; joined hands, raised hands, hands outstretched in a cross, veiled hands were gestures of prayer. Beating one's breast was a gesture of penitence. The laying on of hands and signs of the cross were gestures of benediction. Censing was a gesture of exorcism. The ministration of sacraments culminated in a few gestures. The celebration of mass was a series of gestures. The pre-eminent literary genre of feudal society was the *chanson de geste*: the words *gesta* and *gestus* are related to each other.

The fact that gestures meant so much was of crucial importance for medieval art. Gestures gave it life, made it expressive, and gave it a sense of line and movement. Churches were gestures in stone, and God's hand emerged from the clouds to guide medieval society.

XIII

Clothing was of even greater social significance. It designated each social class and amounted to a uniform. To wear the clothes of a social condition other than one's own was to commit the serious sin of ambition or of derogation. The *pannosus*, the beggar dressed in rags, was despised. This was the term contemporaneously used of St Yves, in the early fourteenth century, by those who despised him. The *leitmotiv* of *Meier Helmbrecht*, the story of the ambitious man who ends up as an outcast, is the embroidered bonnet, like the ones worn by lords, which Helmbrecht wears out of vanity. Monastic rules carefully laid down what clothing was to be worn, more out of respect for order than out of anxiety to prevent ostentation. It was necessary to wait for the eremitical orders of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, notably the Cistercians, to see monks adopt white, undyed garments as a sign of reform. The white monks set themselves up against the black monks, the Benedictines. The mendicant orders were to go further and wear frieze, an unbleached fabric. These were the grey monks. Each new social class was eager to give itself a costume. Guilds did this, first and foremost the guild of masters and scholars or university. Special attention was paid to accessories such as hats and gloves which determined rank more precisely. University doctors wore long gloves of chamois leather and birettas. Knights reserved spurs for themselves. Although it may seem curious to us, medieval armour was too functional to constitute a true uniform, but knights, in creating the nobility, added armorial bearings to their helmets, their mail coats, their shields, and swords. The coat of arms was born.

Ostentation in dress was flaunted by the rich. It was manifested partly in the quality and the quantity of material - heavy, ample, and finely woven stuffs, and silks embroidered with gold. Dyes also played a part. They changed with the fashion - cloth of scarlet, linked with red dyes, whether vegetable ones such as madder or animal ones such as cochineal, gave way in the thirteenth century to perse, the range of blues and greens which was encouraged by the developing cultivation of woad (but the madder-dealers in Germany had devils painted in blue to discredit this new fashion, to fight off the competition). Then there were furs, which the Hanse went as far as Novgorod to look for, and the Genoese as far as the Crimea. For women there were jewels.

In the late thirteenth century sumptuary laws appeared, particularly in Italy and France. They were doubtless connected with the economic crisis then entering on the scene; more certainly they were connected with the changes in society which were producing parvenus, who wanted to eclipse the long-established families by their flashy display. The sumptuary laws helped to maintain social order by enforcing differences in dress. St Louis, who wanted

to reconcile the preservation of the social order with religious ideals, avoided excessive luxury and also excessive simplicity in clothing and advised his entourage to do the same. At Whitsun one year in Corbeil, Joinville and Master Robert de Sorbon had an argument:

You certainly deserve a reprimand for being more richly dressed than the king, since you are wearing a fur-trimmed mantle of fine green cloth, and he wears no such thing.' 'Master Robert,' I answered, 'I am, if you'll allow me to say so, doing nothing worthy of blame in wearing green cloth and fur, for I inherited the right to such dress from my father and mother. But you, on the other hand, are much to blame, for though both your parents were commoners, you have abandoned their style of dress, and are now wearing finer woollen cloth than the king himself.' Moral of King Louis: 'You ought to dress well, and in a manner suited to your condition, so that your wives will love you all the more and your men have more respect for you. For, as a wise philosopher has said, our clothing and our armour ought to be of such a kind that men of mature experience will not say that we have spent too much on them, nor younger men say that we have spent too little'. (Joinville, 1971, p. 171)

Women's clothing grew longer and shorter according to the rhythm of economic prosperity and crisis. It grew longer in the middle of the twelfth century, to the great indignation of moralists, who found this fashion profligate and indecent, and grew shorter again in the middle of the fourteenth century. By contrast, linen clothing became more important in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with the growing increase in hygiene and in the cultivation of flax. Shirts came to be generally worn. Drawers appeared. Like gastronomy, the triumph of underwear was linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie.

XIV

Houses were the final way in which social differences were manifested. The peasant house was built of cob or timber; if stone was used it was only for the foundations. Usually it was no larger than a single room and had no chimney other than a hole in the roof. It was poorly furnished and equipped. The peasant did not feel tied to his house; its poverty contributed to the mobility of the medieval peasant. Towns still continued to be chiefly built of wood, and fell easily victim to fires. Fire was a great scourge in the middle ages. Rouen burnt six times between 1200 and 1225. The Church had no difficulty in persuading medieval people that they were pilgrims on this earth. Even when they stayed in one place, they rarely had the time to become attached to their houses.

This was not the case with the rich. The castle was a sign of security, power, and status. Keeps were built in large numbers in the eleventh century; anxiety for protection was overriding. Then living comforts became important. Castles were still well defended, but they allowed more room for accommodation and developed living quarters within their walls. Still, life remained concentrated in the great hall. Furniture was limited; tables were usually collapsible and once the meal was over they were put away. The basic item of furniture was the chest or coffer where clothes and tableware were stored. Metal vessels were the supreme luxury. They shone brightly and were also an economic reserve. Since the lord's life remained an itinerant one, it was necessary for him to be able to carry his baggage away with him easily. Joinville on crusade burdened himself with almost nothing save jewels and relics. Another luxury was the tapestries which were also of practical use. When they were hung up they acted as a screen and divided bedrooms. They were carried from castle to castle. They reminded this warrior race of its principal form of habitation, the tent.

Perhaps the great ladies, however, acted as patrons and strove for more elegance in interior decoration. According to Baudri de Bourgueil, the bedroom of Adela of Blois, the daughter of William the Conqueror, had its walls decorated with tapestries depicting the scenes from the Old Testament and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and with embroideries showing the conquest of England. On the ceiling there were paintings showing the heavens with the milky way, the constellations, the signs of the zodiac, the sun, the moon, and the planets. The floor was a mosaic which displayed a map of the world with monsters and animals. The bed had a canopy supported by eight statues: philosophy and the liberal arts.

The signs of status and wealth were stone, and the towers which crowned the castle. The rich burgesses built in a similar style in the towns in imitation - '*maison forte et belle*', as people said. However, the burgess became attached to his house and furnished it. Here too he set his mark on the evolution of taste and invented comfort. Since it was the symbol of the power of an individual or of a family, the castle was often razed when its owner was conquered. In the same way the rich exile from the town saw his house destroyed or burnt - the *abattis* or *arsis* of the house.

XV

Once the basic essentials of subsistence and, for the powerful, the no less important requirements of one's standing had been satisfied, little remained for the people of the middle ages. Careless of wellbeing, they sacrificed

everything, when it was in their power to do so, on outward show. Their only profound and disinterested joys were feasts and games, although among the nobility feasts were also opportunities for ostentation and advertisement.

The castle, the church, and the town acted as theatrical backdrops. It is symptomatic that the middle ages had no specialized building for the theatre. Wherever there was a centre of social life, scenes and representations were improvised. In the church, religious ceremonies were holidays, and theatre in the strict sense emerged from the liturgical drama. In the castle there was a succession of banquets, tournaments, and acts by minstrels, jugglers, dancers, and bear-leaders. In the town, trestles were put up in the squares and the '*jeux de la feuillée*' were put on. All classes of society turned family holidays into ruinous celebrations. Marriages left peasants impoverished for years and lords impoverished for months. Games had a particular fascination for this alienated society. Slaves of nature, people devoted themselves to gambling; dice were rolled on all tables. Society was imprisoned in rigid social structures, but it turned the social structure itself into a game. Chess was bequeathed to the medieval west by the east as a royal game in the eleventh century; the westerners feudalized it by humbling the power of the king, and transformed it into a mirror of society after the Dominican Jacopo da Cessole, in the thirteenth century, had taught them to 'moralize' the game. Society projected and sublimated its professional preoccupations in symbolical and magical games. Tournaments and military sports expressed the essence of knightly life, and popular festivals the being of peasant communities. The Church had to put up with being travestied in the Feast of Fools. Above all music, singing, and dancing carried all classes of society away. The whole of medieval society acted itself. Monks and clerics abandoned themselves to the tones of the Gregorian chant, lords to profane modulations (the *Klangspielereien* of the jongleurs and the *Minnesänger*), and the peasants to the onomatopoeic verse of the charivari. Again, it is Augustine who has defined this medieval joy; it was jubilation, 'cries of joy without words'. Thus, in spite of calamities, violence, and dangers the men of the middle ages found forgetfulness, security, and release in the music which surrounded their civilization. They rejoiced.