MCCABE, JOSEPH: THE DUMBNESS OF THE GREAT [1948*]
- I bought this at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park; cover must originally have been sugar-paper blue; now it's faded to a light bluish-grey, and the paper has yellowed. A remark in Gardner's 'Fads and Fallacies' leads me to believe it's a 'Little Blue Book'. Gardner mentions a debate on evolution in which McCabe took part.
- Subtitled: 'A survey of the nonsense, absurdities, inconsistencies, illogicalities, inaccuracies and idioties of the world's outstanding leaders'
- Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius. Published in Girard, Kansas; from the Truth Seeker Co, Inc, San Diego, Ca. 92112 USA.

Copyright says 1948 but there's little internal evidence of the dates McCabe actually wrote. The section on Gladstone suggests 1940; the section on modern Popes ends with Pius XI (1922-1939). But I've just seen a reference to Pius XII and Nuremberg; so after all 1948 seems a good guess.
- Example of US left wing publication; final few pages advertise novels by Upton Sinclair, a book on the Atom Bomb by Sinclair, what to do in the world of 1948; a dream. And 'The World's Oldest Profession', '80 Years a Rebel', and 'Lies and Fallacies of the Encyclopedia Britannica', both by McCabe, latter dealing with Bowdlerization under the impact of the Catholic Church; none of these titles are dated. In the text he mentions his 'History of the Popes'.
- Unindexed
- Note: Interesting absence of charts, diagrams, tables, despite the fact he's tracing attitudes and modes of belief of great subtlety over many centuries; see e.g. the opening chapter on the ancient world. I'm sure one of the reasons is that he personally wants to be an oracle or fount; he's less concerned to get across what he knows in a form that's easy to refer to, than to produce a stream of information which he presumes will be convincing. It seems a variation on the [male?] academic attitude of never admitting you don't know something.
- Surprising number of British writers, perhaps confirming a comment by Gore Vidal along the lines that in the first half of this century they were worth reading; but in the second half, not
- Big chunks scanned in 30 Oct and 3 Nov 1995

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I ARISTOTLE AND THE ANCIENT WORLD

['Greeks .. marched from valley of the Danube.. found civilizations across the sea which boasted of thousands of years existence, they naturally thought there must be a superior wisdom in the Egyptian and the Babylonian.. In those days knowledge .. was either communicated by the gods or it was seen.. by.. "seers"./ Pyramids/ Book of the Dead/ Babylonia/ Mesopotamia, inundation, Assyrians, Persians and Zarathustra/ Buddha; Confucius; Hindu religion and Mahabharata; Ionians; Epicureans etc; Pythagoras; Plato; Aristotle.. all from the viewpoint that scientific knowledge is good, mysticism is bad, so attitudes of these thinkers and schools can be inferred from that. Note: Aristotle is ridiculed for saying the brain is cold, though this seems a sensible theory. [Note: continued influence of Greeks?:] Lucretius: 'Man's first weapons were his fingers, teeth, nails, stones, and sticks. Later was the age of iron, but it was preceded by one of bronze.]

II AUGUSTINE AND THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS

[Entire chapter scanned; it includes Greek impulsion to science; importance of Alexandria; Roman non-contribution; ignorance of Bishops and 'Fathers'; perversion of learning to bring into line with bible figments; myth of religion sweeping the Roman world; had to await Constantine in 222; anti-intelligence; attitudes to women; source of fables about early church]

'There are two kinds of absurdities perpetrated by <joke: & cp Russell:> men of high intelligence. One is the crude guess at the nature of things which is inevitable while knowledge is scanty. Men of an earlier age would pardon us for being amused at these things, and we recognize the inevitability of them and are grateful that they broke out avenues of inquiry instead of bowing to authority and tradition. Science had to begin that way. A different kind of absurdity is that of one who permits a creed or philosophy to make him defy existing knowledge or distort it into harmony with such creed or philosophy. It is important to remember the distinction. It is possible that some propositions which we stoutly hold today will seem amusing to another generation, but if they are statements that are made after severe inquiry and with mind unhampered by any traditional belief we shall be forgiven. It is far otherwise with those who obstruct the advance of knowledge in the name of some alien interest. It is, in fact, of great importance to us to realize how that advance of the race in real knowledge which substantially began with the Ionian scientists and has proved such a rich source of power and enlightenment. in our time has been repeatedly and for many centuries held back in the interest of philosophy or theology. We want to identify these forces.

The first such obstruction to man's advance in that knowledge of himself and his world that is the indispensable basis of human welfare we have seen. In the name of "spirit," which is just the sublimation of a superstition of primitive man, certain scholars of Athens either scorned outright (Plato) all study of nature or pretended to find an inner light or power of intuition which was superior to reasoning upon what one saw. Fortunately the little influence they had perished when they died, and it was the materialistic ideal of the Stoics and Epicureans - indeed, almost entirely of the latter - that impelled the Greeks from 300 B.C. onward to develop and expand the science of the Ionians. This was chiefly done in Alexandria, an island of culture where neither the priests of Egypt to the south nor those of Athens across the sea, could dictate in the name of their legends.

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The Romans added practically nothing to the sum of human knowledge. Lucretius finely expressed the creed of the Epicureans, and Pliny gathered together the scattered and amusing fragments of "natural history" much as Aristotle had done. His work abounds in such gems as:

'Eels originate in what are called the bowels of the earth and are found spontaneously in mud and moist earth.
"On the approach of a woman in the menstrual state milk turns sour, seeds which are touched by her become sterile, garden plants wither ... her look blunts the edge of steel ... A swarm of bees, if looked upon by her, will die immediately.

"Elephants are so intelligent that they do homage to the moon ... so modest that they always mate in secret, and only on five days every other year, when they purify themselves ... Adultery is unknown among them ... They live to be 200 or 300 years old."

The earth, he says, is 1/26th part of the entire universe of which it is the center, and stretches from the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar) to India. The moon is the nearest of the stars:

"It is rightly believed to be the star of the breath, and it is this star that saturates the earth and fills bodies at its approach and empties them as it recedes. Shell-fish and all animals with blood, increase in size as it approaches and animals die only when the tide ebbs ... this is true at all events in the case of man."

But already the mathematicians, astronomers, and close observers of Alexandria were correcting these illusions. They proved the sphericity and the approximate size of the moon and the sun, and were building up a picture of the universe.

But by this time there had appeared in the Greek-Roman world a force which was destined to extinguish the new aspiration of men to understand themselves and the universe around them and to plunge the human family back into barbarism: the force which nearly every oracle in America now assures you opened the founts of wisdom to men, created a higher civilization, and is so indispensable a basis for the maintenance of that civilization that we ought to blast the cities of unbelievers with atomic bombs and drench their country with poison gas and poisonous germs.

I do not propose here to examine the absurdities and extravagances - the belief in the devil and hell, the coming end of the world, the malediction of wealth and comfort, the sour condemnation of sexual pleasure, and so on - that are attributed to the gospel Jesus or the additional monstrosities - original sin, bloody atonement, etc. - of Paul, but to glance at the contortions into which the Fathers or leaders of the church were driven by their blind obedience to the largely mythical books of the Jews and of Christianity. Most of these bishops were men of no learning. The Roman see had not a single bishop with the knowledge of an ordinary Roman gentleman during its first 400 years and no Pope of real learning for nearly 1,000 years. Most of the other "Fathers" were little better but, as we should expect, it was impossible for them to be indifferent to learning in the city of Alexandria. Here the early leaders were Origen and Clement, and Catholic literature glows with admiration of their prodigious learning.

As I said, they could not afford to be indifferent to learning in a city like Alexandria, which had succeeded Athens as the cultural metropolis of the world, but their only interest in it was to convince the Greeks that it could be brought into harmony with the fantastic state-ments of the Christian books. Origen, one of the early Christians who castrated himself in virtue of a text about eunuchs in the New Testament, might be called the Father of Modernism; and he was correspondingly suspected of heresy. He began the figurative or allegorical interpretation of the Bible. You just turn an inconvenient text inside out and prove that a writer of 2,000 years earlier really anticipated the discoveries of the learned Alexandrians if you read a deep symbolism into everything. The Alexandrians smiled when, for instance, they read about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on an ass. They had heard the same about the jolly god Bacchus. But the gospel story Origen said, was just a symbol of the new religion coming to men on the back of the Old Testament.

Clement sustained the good work. Abraham's three-days' journey to Mount Moriah was a symbol of the three stages of the soul's progress in knowledge of God. The mention of three Hebrew towns in Isaiah was really a forecast of the three Wise Men who visited Jesus in his cradle. The barley loaves and fishes of one of the miracles of Jesus symbolized the preparation of the world for Christianity by the Jewish Law and the philosophers. Does not barley ripen before wheat? And was not philosophy born in the waves of the pagan world just as the fish are in the sea? But the harvest was poor amongst the educated Greeks, and church leaders in happier (or more ignorant) regions did not like
the idea that God, in dictating the scriptures to their writers, concealed his meaning until learned Greeks came along and discovered truths which enabled you to see what he really meant. Ought these explorers of the guts of the earth, these frivolous guessers at the structure of the heavens to be mentioned in the same breath as the word of God? Were not the whole of their attempts to discover the nature of terrestrial things a wilful waste of time that ought to be spent in thinking about God?

So the plot to strangle the infant science in its cradle was woven. Until the 4th century this was of no more practical consequence than the stupid assaults on modern geology of the Seventh Day Adventists or the ravings of Father Divine. As I have shown elsewhere the orthodox claim still pressed upon the general public in American papers by Catholic writers who pay the paper instead of being paid by it, that the new religion swept the Roman world, is as fabulous as the Age of Chivalry. At Rome, for instance, they shivered amongst the social outcasts outside the City--they had not even one small chapel until the year 222--until the Emperor Constantine became a semi-Christian and they were let in and dazed with a shower of gold. They had, as groups, never been conspicuous for virtue, and their ascetic minorities now shrank more than ever. The clergy became numerous, rich, and sensual--read St. Jerome's scorching description of them and their "holy virgins"--and one might expect that, if there were any truth in the modern claim that the church always was the patroness of learning, they, or a few of them, would cherish the Roman world's slender inheritance of it. The historical truth is different. It was just at this stage that the general and virulent contempt of science began. And this was not from asceticism which was so rare that St. Jerome says that if you met an obviously ascetic woman in the streets of Rome you said: "There goes a Manichaean," a deadly heretic. It was because knowledge was, is, and always will be as fatal, to all clerical bodies as our modern insecticides are to smaller parasites.

Lactantius, tutor of the Emperor Constantine, and the best educated Christian of his time, led the campaign. He took up and intensified the saying of that other "learned" Latin Father, Tertullian, that "after Jesus Christ all curiosity, after the gospels all inquiry, are unnecessary." As proof of the stupidity of these explorers of the universe he quoted some of them who had realized that the earth is a globe and said that there might be men on the other side of it or at the antipodes. With fine scorn he asks:

"Is there anyone so senseless as to believe that there are men whose footsteps are higher than our heads or that the crops and trees grow downward?"

Constantine's chaplain, Bishop Eusebius, who was the second most accomplished Christian (and smoothest courtier) of the time, said:

"It is not from ignorance of the things they (the pagan scholars)

admire but, from contempt of their useless labor that we think little of these matters and turn our souls to better things."

Eusebius's successor Basil repeatedly has the same scorn of research. He says of the great Greek investigators:

"Endowed with a penetrating mind for vanities they become deliberately blind when it is a question of knowing the truth. They measure the distance of stars ... With all their resources of observation only one thing escapes them ... the discovery of God, the creator of the universe."

Jerome, the finest Latin writer in the church, is just as scornful about the study of literature. Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan, the best-educated (in pagan schools) Christian of his time and in his pagan days Governor of a province, is just as bad. I need not quote the more ignorant bishops and will sum up the campaign in quotations from Augustine.

But it is necessary to note first that the ravings of these leaders of the church extended to far more of life than the acquisition of knowledge. From the same root came their contempt of marriage and of women. They follow Paul's
disdainful concession that "it is better to marry than to burn" (in hell). Jerome said with the same disdain of weaklings: "I praise marriage because it produces virgins," and in his letters to aristocratic Roman young ladies he draws pictures of the inconveniences of matrimony in coarser language than any novelist dare or would use today. "Evangelical chastity," he says in another letter "will cut down the forest of the law and of marriage." They knew that they could not get more than a few of the Greeks and Romans to share their loathing of the sex-act, in or out of marriage, and they concentrated, with supreme contempt of social interests, on forbidding divorce or a second marriage. Athenagoras fairly put the feeling of most of them when he said that "marriage is only a decorous sort of adultery." A second marriage, even when a man's wife died, was worse. It was not even plausibly decent. Even in this, however, human nature in the faithful was too strong for the zealots and it was not for another seven centuries that the church could suppress divorce.

But while the assault on marriage and divorce failed, this contempt of sex, which easily extended to contempt of woman, had grave consequences for women which lasted for 1,500 years. In the old feminist movement in America a dozen women gave in their books the sordid opinions of their sex in the Fathers, yet the clergy easily persuade women today that the Church was always their best friend. St. Gregory Nazianzus who was considered the most tender and emotional of the Fathers, said (in poetry):

Fierce is the dragon, cunning the asp
But woman has the malice of both.

Tertullian wrote a book on "The Adornment of Women." He told them that if one of them realized "her condition as a woman" in the Christian religion she would "dress in rags and remain dirty as a sorrowful and repentant Eve. Thou art the devil's gate" he says to her, "the betrayer of the tree, the first deserter of the divine law." The learned Clement of Alexandria said that "it brings shame to a woman even to reflect of what nature she is." Gregory Thaumaturgus said: "You might find one chaste man in a thousand men but not one chaste woman in a thousand women"; and the great Ambrose said that "it becomes not the modesty of a maid to choose a husband." St. Augustine wonders in his commentary on Genesis why God made women at all and can suggest only that it was in order to make the fall of man certain. Jerome thought the only use of her was to help "those who are afraid to sleep alone at night." And all these poisonous absurdities, for which woman was to suffer bitterly until the 19th century, were perpetrated by men who are now represented as moral prophets who uplifted civilization, because the Jews had turned into a sacred oracle and mis-

represented, out of anti-feminist prejudice, an ancient Sumerian fable about the fall of man. In the Babylonian version the man is not tempted by the woman. She was a man's equal in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

On many other points also the social code was distorted instead of improved. These Fathers began the condemnation of taking interest on a loan that lasted more than 1,000 years and was endorsed by all the great theologians of the Middle Ages. "Money," said Basil, is "a fecund monster." "Let us cut off these monstrous births of gold and silver; let us stop this execrable fecundity," said Chrysostom. But how could one expect a sound or sensible code of social conduct from men who despised almost all that it was the function of social life to provide for the citizen?

In fine, history was as grossly treated as science. Having a Bible that was full of supposed history they could not abolish it so they loaded it with lies and fictions. Again it was Lactantius and Bishop Eusebius who set the ball rolling as soon as the end of the persecutions left them free to walk the streets of Rome; like colored folk in Richmond after emancipation. Lactantius, who as imperial tutor and librarian had the best sources of information, at once wrote a work, "On the Deaths of the Persecutors," which is a classic of mendacity and the source of half the fables about the early church. It runs in this sense:

"In Nero's time Peter came to Rome (which the Roman Christians of the 1st century denied) and by performing miracles by the power of God he converted many ... And when this was brought to the ears of Nero, and he saw crowds
not only in Rome but everywhere abandon the cult of idols and embrace the new religion, he set out to destroy the
everest temple ..."

He says that Nero in the end just disappeared and will reappear with Satan on the last day. Bishop Eusebius, the "Father of Ecclesiastical History," was equally fluent when it served his purpose; which was, he says, to edify not to instruct the reader. He it is who says that Constantine was converted because before his last battle a cross appeared in the heavens with the words "Conquer by this" (not "In this sign shalt thou conquer"). He says that the emperor, with whom he was intimate, told him so. Constantine was a brute, the murderer of his wife and son, but Eusebius was a more accomplished liar. Within a century Christian writers were turning out forged lives of saints and martyrs, teeming with absurdities and anachronisms, by the thousand.

All these absurdities found a culmination in the later works of Augustine. In order to understand how Catholic writers can quote quite respectable sentiments from the work of Augustine you must know that he had a good education in pagan schools, and for years after his conversion he remained a fairly refined student of the Platonic philosophy. But years of work as a bishop steeped him with the opium which he served out to his ignorant folk and he became extraordinarily credulous and desperate in his attempts to square existing knowledge with his faith. Catholics - even some scientific men of the appeasing school - often quote him as a pioneer of evolution because he said that God had merely put "the seeds of things" into the soil of the world. The truth is that in a later Commentary on Genesis he stuck out sourly for a literal interpretation, and in a work that he called "Retractions" he damned every liberal sentiment he had ever professed. He opened the game of "reconciling science with the Bible" which was to last to our time. At one point he denounces "the delirious elucubrations" of astronomers and says:

"We refuse to make subtle research on the size and distance of the stars: to waste time that could be given to more important and better subjects."

He had not, incidentally, the slightest qualifications to make astronomical research, but the fact is that he uses science to support Genesis. The Bible says that God made a firmament dividing the upper from the lower waters. We saw that the earlier Greek speculators did suppose that the blue arch was a solid structure resting on a wall or a range of hills round the edge of the earth. Augustine grasps at this - it supports the "upper waters" that trickle down sometimes (in rain) - and scornfully rules out the finer work of the later Greek astronomers. These upper waters, he suggests, explain why Saturn moves so slowly. It passes through them. So man's primitive and childlike conception of the universe was imposed upon Europe, in the name of the Bible, for another 1,000 years, and all the brilliant work of the Alexandrian astronomers was lost. And he imposes also the absurdity of astrology:

"It would not be impious to say that the heavenly bodies are not without power on the external variations of bodies."

He means on anything that happens to us and is not an act of free will. Commenting further on the first chapter of Genesis, which has inspired a volume of absurdities that would fill the basin of Lake Michigan and has massively obstructed the progress of science, he says:

"I confess that I do not know why mice and frogs, flies and worms, were created (Luther later suggested that the devil created flies to distract us when we read the Bible.) As to the hurtful creatures, we are either punished or disciplined or terrified by them so that we may not Cherish a love of this life."
Some, reflecting on the wide distribution of animals over the earth, had had doubts about the flood, but that is easy to Augustine. He imagines legions of angels ready at Mount Ararat to bear the elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, etc., back to their jungles when the waters ran down the sewers:

"It cannot be denied that the transfer may have been accomplished through the agency of angels, commanded or allowed to do this by God."

In fact, there are proofs of the flood. Even in those days quarrymen occasionally came upon the bones of the Mesozoic great reptiles. When a find was made in his district Augustine explained to his wondering flock that these were the bones of the human giants mentioned in Genesis! They were drowned in the flood. When the story of God taking six days over his job troubled others Augustine fell back upon the rubbish of Pythagoras:

"There are three classes of numbers - the more than perfect, the perfect, and the less than perfect, according as the sum is greater than equal to, or less than the original numbers. Six is the perfect number. Therefore we must not say that six is the perfect number because God finished all his work in six days but that God finished all his work in six days because six is the perfect number."

In another place he takes up the extensive amours of the early patriarchs, which scandalized some. "They acted from a sense of duty not a feeling of lust," he assures his readers. Well, he was asked, if the procreation of children is so important and a man's wife is barren, may he experiment with a concubine, as the Lord told some of these holy patriarchs to do? Augustine, the great Augustine, the great moralist, gives it up:

"It was lawful to the patriarchs; whether it is lawful now or not I should not like to say."

In short he endorses all the absurdities of the early Fathers and carries through the tendencies of their principles so resolutely that one of his Catholic biographers, Nourisson, says of his moral philosophy:

"Taken literally and in certain pronouncements, though these are usually episodic and have been abused, his teaching destroys liberty of conscience, justifies slavery, shakes the foundation of private property, reduces history to special pleading, enthrones theocracy, and at the same time, in various respects, discourages toil and love of glory, transfers the march of civilization, and paralyzes the energy of all science, especially of the physical and natural sciences."

And this French philosopher is wrong only in the reserves he makes. For instance while it is notorious that Augustine fully supported the persecution of unbelievers, it is not so well known, though it may be read by any man in his greatest work, "The City of God" (Bk. XIX ch: 15) that he defended slavery and declared that God had instituted it because of the sins of men. He says:

"The first cause of slavery, then, is sin - that one man should be put in bonds by another; and this happens only by the judgment of God, in whose eyes it is no crime."

As to the charge that he "discourages toil," which may not disgust but will certainly surprise the reader, it is a correct reference to work "On the Work of the Monks," one of his worst incoherencies. He gives a scorching account of the morals of the swarms of monks who now began to roam over Europe and plainly shows that the parasitic life attracts lazy hypocrites from all parts. Then he concludes that the monastic state is holy and must be encouraged, and he actually forbids the heads of the communities to inquire into the qualifications and character of those who demand admission to it. I commend the work to those (if they can read Latin) who imagine, from reading modern Catholic
literature, that it was Benedict who first formed communities of monks, and that the monasteries were oases of peace and virtue for men who fled from a violent and vicious world. Benedict in the introduction to his Rule repeats and amplifies Augustine's shuddering description of the morals of the vast majority of the monks of his time.

Catholics, who are accustomed to present Augustine in their literature, as the wisest leader and most profound Christian thinker since Paul - the greatest leader that arose in the church before Thomas Aquinas, if not a greater than Thomas - would be embarrassed by the above quotation from a Catholic and expert writer if they ever reproduced it. They are today, and especially in America, not as honest as they were at one time, though honesty was never their chief virtue. My own biography and study of Augustine (1903) was published also in America and was on the reading list for students of history in Columbia and other universities. I doubt if you will find it today. Augustine has to be represented like Aquinas, as so serene, sound, and inspired an oracle that he can be taken as guide even in our age. It is the very cream of absurdity. All the Fathers despised the things of this world, but Augustine, who lived at the time of the fall of the Roman civilization, was worse than any. The aim of his chief work, "The City of God," was to convince folk that this collapse of their civilization did not matter. All the splendid achievements of Rome were not worth bothering about. All the things that make up what we call a high civilization are at the best concessions to the weakness of the flesh and concern about them is a distraction. One thing only matters: an ascetic preparation for the mythical life beyond the grave.'

III AQUINAS AND THE SCHOOLMEN
[Full text scanned; includes absence of culture in Dark Ages, destruction of Alexandria library, Bede, Theodoric, Aquinas]

'The monument to the memory of Augustine and all the absurdities, incoherences, blunders, and inhumanities of him and the other Fathers was the Dark Age. In St. Paul's cathedral at London there is an inscription on the wall that says to the visitors: "If you seek his (the architect's) monument look round you." Europe in the Dark Age was Augustine's monument, for he was taken during the next seven or eight centuries as its supreme architect. If you look for literary absurdities in the past you might dump in almost the whole literature of the next eight centuries. And you will have to be an expert to know anything about it. Who, except a dry-as-dust professor, or a theologian, ever reads any book that was written between Augustine's "City of God" (A.D. 413) and Dante's "Divine Comedy" 900 years later. The only other book that has any circulation is a small collection of "love letters" of Heloise - those of Abelard (after castration) that are strangely coupled with them are as bleak as those of Augustine - and are a defiance by an abbess of the Christian ethic. As to the great works of Aquinas (13th century) not one priest even in 1,000 ever reads a line of them. It is the same with science and for six centuries art, generally. And there are professors of history in American universities who, to please the Catholics, tell you that there never was a Dark Age!

I say that you might include the whole literature of the eight centuries after Augustine in a gallery of absurdities but we are here concerned with the blunders of men who are recommended to us as great or learned. How many such can you count, from memory, in those eight centuries, which were not a Dark Age? Probably only Abelard; and he was twice solemnly condemned for heresy and is known to you only because he was castrated, by order of a canon of the cathedral, for a love-affair. Catholic writers will tell you that your ignorance is due to the world-prejudice against or jealousy of the glories of their church: that in the centuries after Augustine there were learned writers, even on science like Bede, Isidore of Seville, Alcuin, Rhabanus Maurus, and Pope Silvester II. There were, as a fact, a few more brilliant men than these (Scotus Erigena, etc.) but they were, of course, heretics so the Catholic does not mention them. As to the men he does mention, they do little more than repeat the worst blunders of the early pioneers of science and of Augustine, but I may give a few words about them.
It is necessary to understand what happened to the culture of the old world. Briefly, it all went up in Christian smoke, an offering of incense to the new Almighty. Under pressure from the bishops the emperors ordered that all pagan temples must be closed or destroyed. Philistines as all these Christian Emperors were-brutes in many cases - they did not want the destruction of the finer temples, which were museums of art and had libraries attached. But local bishops and monks led the mob against them with axe and torch. The burning of the great Library of Alexandria with its 700,000 books - it is a medieval legend that only a small part of it was burned - symbolized the death of the old culture. A few Roman Christians wrote little manuals of such fragments of science as the Fathers had been able to distort into conformity with the Bible, and these were used by the more prominent writers whom Catholics quote to redeem the "honor" of the Dark Age. During the reign of the heretic king, Theodoric, who did not bow to the Popes and wanted to restore the old civilization, these fragments were collected by Cassiodorus and passed on to the next generation. In the Greek half of Christendom, where there was not the excuse of a barbaric invasion, an Egyptian monk, Cosmas Indicopleustes, who had the repute of being a great traveler, put together a picture of the universe from the crude older astronomy that had been corrected by the Alexandrians, and it was within this narrow frame that everything was confined. Cosmas's map was used by the few scholars. It showed a flat earth - he violently opposed the idea that it was a globe - about 400 days journey (say 4,000 miles) across, overarched by the solid firmament, above which were the vast cisterns that slopped over when it rained, and the plug of which had been pulled out by Jehovah in the days of Noah.

Bede and all the others accepted this. Bede was the abbot of a monastery in the north of England and as credulous and narrow-minded as he was pious. A century ago he was unknown outside the church. In our kindly age he is one of the cultural heroes of the Dark Age. His chief work was a church-history of England, in which he explains that, the Picts, who came from Scythia (!), joined the British and had a great civilization in the island, which - he lived in it, remember - is "almost under the North Pole." In pre-Roman times it had "28-noble cities besides innumerable castles," and it had hot-water springs, which he explains by the fact that "water is heated and boils when it is near certain metals." Doubtless now that I have discovered this passage Catholics will claim that there were then large beds of uranium in the north of England and Bede knew all about it.

The ecclesiastical part of his history probably draws upon existing records but it is full of fables as absurd as his suggestion, to confound skeptics about flood and the floating zoo, that Noah spent 100 years building the ark that God administered (or sent the angels with hypodermics) an anesthetic to the animals when they were all aboard so that they would require no food for the duration of the flood (which brilliantly refuted those pagans who had asked about the storage of the food-supply), and that after all half the animals of the world were born by spontaneous generation (see Aristotle) and parents would not need to be taken into the ark. And so on through the early centuries of the Christian Era, when miracles were as common and as easy to grow as mushrooms, and martyrdoms were hourly events. In his own day, he says the monasteries and nunneries positively scented the air with their fragrance. As baths had died out with the Romans there doubtless was some sort of aroma round them in summer, but as to virtue we have the contemporary assurance of a more intelligent saint than Bede, St. Boniface, that English nunneries were then gay brothels for the "nobles" and the nuns even murdered the babies they bore.

You know what to expect when the purblind monk gets to science. He brilliantly suggests that the firmament is probably of ice; which explains how it can bear a great burden of waters yet be transparent. (The English then no glass.) His explanation of earthquakes and tides is picturesque:

"Some say that the earth contains the (biblical) animal Leviathan, and that he holds his tail after a fashion of his own so that it is sometimes scorched by the sun. Whereupon he tried to get hold of the sun, and thus the earth is shaken by the commotion of his anger. He sometimes also drinks in (the ebb tide) such huge volumes of the water that when he belches them forth again the seas feel the effect (flood tide)."
Amongst other legends which he lodged in the English mind until the islanders became wicked and skeptical in the 19th century was that of the Dead Sea. Where the wrath of God had fallen nothing could live in the sea, no bird could fly over it, and, while beautiful apples grew in the gardens round it, they turned to smoke and ash (Dead Sea fruit) if you plucked them. Another idea that he stamped deep for centuries was that "comets portend revolutions of kingdoms, pestilences, wars, storms, or heat." They are exhalations of fiery air like the gas you see over a marsh and are lit by sparks dropping from above. And so on.

Probably that will be enough of Bede for you. But the great Isidore, Archbishop of Seville, is not much better. Since the Papacy discovered, almost the other day, that science is not really the spawn of the devil but the offspring of Catholic wisdom, Isidore has been growing larger and larger. The notice of him in the Catholic Encyclopedia tells you that he knew Greek and Hebrew as well as Latin and had a profound thirst for knowledge. On the other hand, a work on him published by Columbia University, which - to put it mildly - is not anti-Catholic, shows that he knew neither Greek nor Hebrew and was interested in science and history only to be able to prove how they confirmed the Bible. One of his summaries of history illustrates this:

"Joseph lived 105 years: Greece began the cultivation of grain (which was in full cultivation thousands of years before there was a Greece). The Jews were in slavery in Egypt 144 years: Atlas discovered astrology. Deborah lived 40 years: Apollo discovered the art of medicine and invented the cithara."

He says that the earth is flat and "circular," but he is hopelessly confused as to whether that means that it is a globe or a round flat plain. The four heavens - he has the usual wedding-cake picture of the uni-

verse - correspond to the four elements. The uppermost storey is, since fire is the lightest of the elements, the bright or fiery heavens, from which sparks (shooting stars) drop and comets' tails are fired. Below that is the air-sphere, in which angels (hence their wings), birds, and demons (the Spirits of the Air) live; The third down is the water-world (the reservoirs of heaven), and the fourth is earth. Above the top of the cake is the Christian Olympus, surveying the theater. The stars are bright lights that God riveted in the solid firmament. The sun's motion is due to the rapid whirling of that region, and the moon takes eight years to circle the earth. Tides are probably due to the fact that there are big holes like nostrils in the floor of the ocean, sucking the water in and blowing it out, but some point out how these tides coincide with the waxing and waning of the moon. He leaves that difficulty to God, but he accepts the old story that bodies on earth wax and decrease with the moon.

On natural history he has all the amusing old stories:

"Deer are enemies of snakes, and when they feel themselves sinking from weakness they draw snakes out of their holes with the breath of their nostrils and eat them.

"Lions rub out their tracks with their tails, so that the hunter cannot find them.

"There are whales with bellies the size of mountains."

The latter sentence shows him deducing natural history from the Bible (the story of Jonah), but as a rule he follows the worst of the old stories. On one point he is original. He is great on etymology as a guide to truth. Beaver, for instance, is in Latin castor, and the animal is so named because it castrates itself when it is cornered and eats its testicles, which are good fighting medicine. Female whales copulate with muscles. The reason for this amazing and original absurdity is that the Latin word musculus is much the same as masculus (a male). He into European tradition such fables on the swan's song (a very sweet song"), the eye of the eagle which can look straight into the sun, and so on. In man the heart is the seat of thought (a mixture of Aristotle and the Psalmist), the arteries convey air from the lungs to the body, a man weeps when he knees because that posture brings his knees and his eyes close together ...But that will do for this blazing paragon of learning. He was more intelligent than most of his sensual and boorish colleagues in the gross
Spanish kingdom of the Visigoths but Catholic writers who laud him to the skies absolutely ignore the brilliant civilization that the Arabs set up in the same city, Seville, two or three centuries later. A force of 10,000 Arab horsemen had knocked over the whole vast kingdom of these Visigoths in a few months like a castle of cards built by a child.

The monk Rhabanus Maurus was just another of these compilers of pearls of ancient wisdom rubbed up with biblical powder and need not be quoted; and Alcuin, the British monk who went as literary adviser to Charlemagne does not call for more than a few words. The ancient legend, still set forth in full in Catholic literature that he was a prodigy of learning who helped Charlemagne to cover his kingdom with a network of schools was demolished by scholars 100 years ago. It is true that Charlemagne ordered the gay-living bishops and abbots to open schools, but there is no evidence that they did, and all authorities on the history of education are agreed that if any more were opened they were promptly closed when Charlemagne died. They are further agreed that Charlemagne got much more help from a Lombard anti-Roman cleric whom he brought from Italy. We have still the writings of Alcuin. Besides small works on grammar and rhetoric they are just theological treatises in which the usual astronomic absurdities of the earliest pioneers are made to confirm the scriptures. The earth is a flat plain surrounded by four oceans. Beyond these are the mountain-bases on which the walls that support the firmament and stars rest ... Such was "the Restorer of Science in the West."

21

The truth is that what Catholics falsely represent as a flare of social idealism in the kingdom of Charlemagne - a boorish sensualist whose "greatness" has been severely debunked by modern historians - lit by a representative (Alcuin) of a flourishing British culture blinds the reader, as to the real cultural development of Europe. For a time after the Christianization of England and Ireland some of the hundreds of new monasteries devoted themselves to study. They had small libraries of a hundred books, mainly theological - the Romans before them and the Arabs soon after them had thousands of libraries to hundreds of thousands of books in some - and their "culture" was as I have described it in the case of Bede and Isidore. The real line of development, which the Popes consistently opposed, was that first the "barbarian" Ostrogoths tried to restore Roman culture in north-central Italy, and then the (at first) equally barbarous and anti-Papal Lombards really effected creditable revival in the same region. It was from the Lombard cities that Charlemagne got his real help. But the Church ruined his hesitating attempt, as it ruined both the Ostrogoth and the Lombard civilization, and Europe sank deeper into barbarism.

The situation is even worse when we find the Catholics boasting of Pope Silvester II as not only the first "great Catholic scientist" but actually a scientific Pope. Not only was such scientific knowledge as Silvester (or Gerbert) had of purely Spanish-Arab origin but he had, been educated in Spain. Catholics generally say that he merely went to Christian Barcelona, which was part of Catholic Spain though Arab in culture, but the leading modern authority on him proves that he studied in Cordova, where he left unfragrant memories. The Arabs say that he seduced the daughter of his Muslim host and stole the chief treasures of his library. His contemporaries significantly say that he had a passion for collecting books but was never known to ask for a work of one of the Fathers. In any case his writings, which are mostly theological, occupy only 50 pages in the Migne edition. His fame rests entirely on rumor in Rome, which was then so low that the "noblest ladies" could not sign their names. In fact, there is ground to believe that the clergy upon whom he was imposed by a romantic young German emperor poisoned him off in three or four years and he left nothing but hatred behind him.

It would be tedious and, in fact, would require a volume, to tell all the absurdities that were written in these centuries, yet I may remind the readers, briefly, that this was just the period (say, 900 to 1300) when science made its greatest advance before modern times. This was in the Moslem, or Arab-Persian, and largely skeptical civilization of which I have written repeatedly. It is treated with gross disregard by modern historians generally because it was plainly the splendor of that skeptical civilization - it was reactionary wherever it was really religious - that at last quickened some intellectual life in Europe. These are points upon which I cannot enlarge here. I have done so elsewhere. It will be enough to say that it started a school-movement in the Christian countries of Europe which in the 13th century developed into the busy university or Scholastic movement of which Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, and Roger
Bacon were the chief figures. We will dismiss the latter two shortly and concentrate on Thomas, whom Catholic writers still press upon the world as the Aristotle of the Middle Ages, a man so profound that his writings offer guidance for all time.

Of Roger Bacon it is enough to say that his scientific bearing has been recognized for more than half a century as purely Arab. The poor friar was kept imprisoned, mostly without books, pen, or paper, during most of his monastic life. It seems clear that he had a great capacity for science but was allowed no opportunity to do more than write down what he had learned in the school of Arab science at Oxford. He had no influence and no successors.

Albert, or Albert the Great, on the contrary, was a Dominican monk but of noble family and could not be pushed about like a poor Franciscan friar. The only sort of muzzle the church could put on him was to make him a bishop, when his zeal for science evaporated. It is generally held that before that he had made some personal research in botany but otherwise most of his science was the sort of stuff of which I have given many samples. Occasionally he rejected the more absurd stories - he denied, for instance, that birds are formed from trees by spontaneous generation and live on sap - but admitted such weird nonsense as that you could raise a whirlwind by dropping a certain salve into a spring, that both good and bad spirits (and witches) flew through the upper air, that they caused storms, that thunderbolts are formed in clouds that contain a good deal of mud baked by the sun, and so on. A special absurdity of his was to attempt to explain things by the verbiage of Aristotle which was introduced into Europe by the Arabs. In other words, he selected the weakest point of the Arab philosophers, the cult of Aristotle, and helped to enthrone his authority, with disastrous consequences to science, in the universities of Europe. For instance, what we call fossils had by this time become familiar. To the Fathers they were the bones of victims of the flood. Albert grandly explained - and some such explanation held the field and blocked geological explanation for centuries - that they were just oddities formed in the rocks by a "formative" or a "lapidific" force. Albert in turn had no successors and no influence on the development of science. Two friars had attempted to kindle an interest in science. The church at once closed upon their monastic bodies and forbade them to pay attention to science.

THOMAS AQUINAS

But we will pay more attention to Thomas Aquinas (1227-74), not only because Catholics insist that this is the great oracle for all time but also because he wrote on many different subjects and we need not here confine ourselves to statements that are absurd in science. Friar Thomas - he was a Dominican monk, a man of such monstrous belly they had to cut a semicircular piece out of the table to accommodate it - came from South Italy, while Sicilian-Arabian science was well known and the memory of the great skeptic Frederic II was still fresh. He had a smattering of such knowledge before he settled in Paris, and for a time he was a pupil of Albert. But there was not the palest shadow of skepticism about Thomas. He swallowed every article and detail of medieval theology as you swallow an oyster, gave them, with the help of what he understood to be Aristotle's philosophy - it was late in life when he got a fair translation - the severe and pretentious form they still have, and made an organic whole of that pseudo-scientific form of religion which we call theology.

His absurdities in that field I do not propose to notice. To his wondering age he made angels and devils seem as natural as butterflies and beetles. Eternal punishment, he showed, was so logical a punishment of sin that God could not do otherwise. God is infinite: therefore the guilt of sin is infinite: therefore the punishment must be endless. The stream of verbiage flowed out with the smoothness of Lippmann's essays or Winchell's assurances. The incarnation and blood atonement were as natural as a snowfall. Miracles, the resurrection, the application of fire to damned souls, the nature of the eternal joy of paradise, etc., he took in his stride. He swallowed to the last full stop the whole mendacious history that the Church had forged for itself since Peter; and all the crudely forged documents on which it based its temporal as well as spiritual power. The trinity was as easy as arithmetic. He was, the Catholic submits, the greatest genius that ever lived and could have made our Edisons and Einsteins look like fools.
All this meant that Aquinas fastened on the mind of Europe with bonds of iron, until the blacksmith Luther came along, those claims of Power which the Popes had gradually fabricated. The spiritual power is the sun and the temporal or civil power the moon, so there was no question as to which was superior. He had not the slightest shade of doubt about the serene justice of the vile actions of Innocent III (Massacre of the Albigensians, foundation of the Inquisition, treachery to Frederic II, etc.) in his own century. Burning men for heresy was as just as the rules of chess.

"It is much graver to corrupt the soul than to corrupt the coinage, which serves only to meet the needs of the body. Hence if coining and other crimes are justly punished by death by secular princes how much more ground there is not only to excommunicate heretics but to put them to death.

"The spiritual life is better than the corporal. But we put to death murderers who take the life of the body so we are all the more bound to kill heretics who take away the spiritual life of man... It is just that the secular courts should put them to death and confiscate their property even though they do not corrupt others, because they blaspheme against God and observe a false faith. It is more necessary to punish them than traitors or coiners...

"On no account shall the church allow infidels to have power over the faithful or to be set above them in any way... The church is above the state... kings must be subject to priests."

These arguments are still used in the Public Law (kept in Latin, of course) of the churches, as reprinted in the 20th century and taught to selected priests, including Americans, from all over the world in the Papal University and American Catholic apologists lie about it. Aquinas was unquestionably a man of gifted mind but, quite honestly, he used his intellectual power to give the most impressive form and, apparently, a massive foundation of reason and morality to the gross imposture and fabric of forgery that the Popes of the Middle Ages built up. This is the real Aquinas that American priests and foreign refugee Catholics like Maritain urge upon the American public as one of the greatest thinkers of all time and a fit oracle for today. The above sentiments are found over and over again in his works and are still the sentiments and principles of the church, reaffirmed against Mussolini as late as 1929.

It may seem curious that a mind so steeped in theology and so instinctively credulous should write, besides his enormous "Summary of Theology," a volume of philosophic argument, supposedly based upon pure reason, for God and the soul against skeptics. If you ever rend the poet Dante you will know why. A great respect for the skeptical Arab philosophers, Ibn Roshd (Averroes) and Ibn Sind (Avicenna), had spread in Christendom. But Aquinas' arguments are just the logic-chaffing of Aristotle's metaphysics further weakened to make them proof of a personal God and personal immortality in which neither Aristotle nor the Arab philosophers believed. These absurdities you may read in "Catholic philosophy" today.

More interesting is what Thomas says about social and political questions. He is as dogmatic a defender of autocratic monarchy as of the devil or the Inquisition. Some Catholics say that on the political side he merely translates Aristotle. He does not profess this but does in the main translate Aristotle - with the monstrous addition that the church is above the state - because he agrees with him. Other Catholics say that since Republicanism was unknown in Thomas' day this is quite natural. But Thomas, who surely knew well the recent history of his own church, was fully aware that the Romans had fought the Popes for 200 years to get self-government in a Roman republic and that the struggle had ended in a victory of the Popes, by treachery and violence, less than a century earlier. In any case, there was one profound difference between Aristotle's and Thomas' defense of autocracy. To Aristotle's purely utilitarian arguments Thomas added that kings got their authority from God, and that was the great bulwark of absolutism in Christendom for the next five or six centuries.

In the special work "On the Rule of Princes" and in a letter to or
short treatise written for the Duchess of Brabant Aquinas has other profoundly mischievous and reactionary sentiments. He is emphatic that woman is rightly excluded from public life. Her place is the home. He, following Augustine, justifies slavery. It is, of course entirely false that the church ever condemned slavery, but Catholics are particularly careful to suppress the fact that their supreme social and political oracles, Augustine and Aquinas, defended it. There is a book in French by the distinguished Belgian lawyer E. Crahay on "The Politics of St. Thomas Aquinas" which gives full quotations from Aquinas on these points and the exact references. The author is a Catholic, and it is "rather in sorrow than in anger" that he gives these points. He quotes:

"Those only form part of civil community who are united in a life of virtue. For if it were for the mere sake of living that men joined in a communal life, animals and slaves would be part of the civil community.

"That man is naturally a slave who has a natural aptitude to depend upon another in the sense that he cannot rule himself by his own reason, which is the gift that makes man master of himself but only by the reason of another; he is, therefore naturally the slave of another."

So far he more or less follows Aristotle's moral blunder but in other places he endorses that of Augustine and declares that slavery is, by divine appointment, one of the consequences of original sin.

He blunders just as badly in regard to another of the comprehensive crimes of the Middle Ages that church complacently sanctioned: the vile treatment of the Jews. The Duchess of Brabant (Belgium) had consulted the oracle about the morality of confiscating the property of the Jews, which was done everywhere. It is entirely just, he tells her:

"Since the Jews are according to the law sentenced to perpetual slavery for their sins the rulers of the countries in which they are found may seize their property, provided that they do not deprive them of the necessaries of life.

What a sublime concession!

I have translated the passages given here directly from Thomas' Latin words. You will know now what to think of the effrontery of propagandists who offer him as an oracle for our time. What blunders he made, incidentally, on the scientific side it is hardly necessary to tell. He endorsed all the current absurdities and fables. He knew nothing of the splendid progress the Arabs and Persians had made in astronomy, and so he not only adopted the wedding-cake idea of the universe but accepted astrology in lots of texts.

"It seems to me that there no sin in using the judgment of the stars to predict natural evils, such as stormy or good weather, health or sickness, abundance or poverty."

He endorses the superstitions of sailors, accepts the current view of comets, and approves of surgeons who consult the stars before operating. Choisnard quotes him saying:

"The heavenly bodies are the causes of what happens in this world, and experience has shown that by observing the stars we can foresee certain future events."

The Chaldeans had had a certain logic in their astrology, as they believed that a deity of specific character was associated with each planet. The whole logic was knocked out of it when you rejected the idea that Mercury, Mars, or Saturn was in the ascendant when a man was born. According to Thomas it was not these ancient deities but angels that caused the movements of the planets: I am almost tempted to say, Pushed them along their appointed paths.

In spite of the brilliant progress made by the Arabs in physics - the basis of the invention of the telescope - and chemistry Thomas clung to Aristotle's absurd theory that you understood things by supposing
that each was compounded of "matter" (not as we now take the word) and "form." Water had a form, aquosity which explained its properties, the plant a vegetative "form," the animal an animal form, and so on. Large numbers of animals were "produced by putrefaction." The forces in man - intelligence etc. - were quite independent of his structure and only to be studied by the philosopher and the theologian ...

The reader will smile when I say that, as professor of philosophy in a Catholic seminary, I was solemnly teaching this absurd matter-and-form theory 50 years ago. As far as I can discover it is still taught, and it is the "scientific" basis of the weird doctrine that in his mass the priest converts bread and wine into the real, full, living body and blood of Christ!

So we leave what the Catholic calls the greatest thinker of history. His works are a supreme example of "the dumbness of the great" in the sense in which I use the expression. They show, however, how a mind high above the average can be narcotized and stultified by Catholic doctrine, and that every writer who presses Aquinas upon the attention of the modern world must falsely represent his ideas and carry the policy of suppression to the point where it is equivalent to mendacity.'

IV LEADERS OF RENAISSANCE DAYS

[Full text follows:]  

'What we now call the Renaissance, a period (in Italy) of about 1100 to 1500 (to 1600 in France, Spain, and England), is the time when Europe was recovering the lost arts and culture of civilization. It was a period of a remarkable artistic efflorescence, which does not concern us in this book. But the splendid color of the period obviously means a great advance in the creation of wealth, and this implies the rise of a large middle class and an extensive literature. Here then, since knowledge was still scanty and even moral sentiments were perverted by theology and in many respects as rudimentary as in Aquinas, we have a happy hunting ground for absurdities. If you reflect for a moment, however, you will probably find that you can hardly name a single writer (before 1500) in whom we might look for "the dumbness of the great." If you care to look into the matter you will in fact find that apart from artists, poets, and story-writers this brightest period of the Middle Ages was singularly poor in great men; and we do not examine the work of poets and story-writers (Dante, Chaucer, Petrarch, Villon, Boccaccio, Poliziano, Ariosto, Michael Angelo, etc.) for absurdities. There were no "great Popes"; and Frederic II, who had not time to write books, was the only great ruler. In short, there was a superb amount of splendid art, a terrific ferment of life, a vast amount of literature, and mighty little thinking on serious matters. And that must seem a paradox to those who have read in our modern sophists that the school-movement of the 13th century had fully awakened the intellect of Europe.

It might seem a deeper paradox if you are aware how from 900 to 1300 the Arabs and Persians, which means quite as many people and as much territory as there were in Christian Europe, had really cultivated the mind as well as art and beauty, and had made considerable progress in every branch of science and literature. But if you know that you probably know the solution of the paradox. In a word, it is the Inquisition, the tyranny of the church over the intellect. A truthful historical picture of the period is Rembrandtesque. It blazes with color, art, adventure, and love: it is dark as hell, red-relieved by slow-burning fires, in respect of serious literature. You could paint pictures or carve statues that a modern cop would pull his hat over his eyes to remove to the crematorium. You could write verse, comedies, essays, or stories that would give our modern censors apoplexy, though they made Popes and cardinals of the time rock with laughter. But they all professed a profound respect for the assurance of Aquinas that a heretic was worse than a murderer and must be put to death.

One of those complaisant American professors who are too amiable to offend anybody, even a Catholic, explains why he slights the great Arab civilization of 900 to 1300. It was not really great, he says. It had no great painters or sculptors - he forgets that the Koran strictly forbade the painting or carving of human or animal forms - it frittered chemistry away into alchemy, astronomy into astrology, and so on. Now this is, as far as science is concerned, a correct picture, not of the Arab but the Christian civilization of the Middle Ages. Every prince, lay or clerical, had his astrologer to direct his movements or detect plots for him: but astronomy made no progress from the last Arab expert to
Copernicus. Every bishop had his alchemist to find the elixir of life or the philosopher's stone (which would turn base metals into gold) for him; but the few real chemists had to work underground. The only free science was medicine, as even the bishops and popes wanted to keep out of heaven as long as possible, but it did not even remain at the high level of which the Arabs had carried it. As a result the kind of absurdities about nature and man of which I have quoted so many had their life prolonged for a few further centuries, and what we might call the moral absurdities, or perverse opinions about standards of conduct, were worse than in Aquinas. For all its glamour of silk and gold, its beautiful buildings and glittering courts, it was in many respects (banditry, cruelty, torture, treachery, violence, and injustices) still a savage age, and the church's sex-ethic was never more blatantly defied.

But since this is a work on the absurdities of "the great" this will be a short chapter since, apart from artists, there were no great. How the old errors still dominated the mind of Europe is well shown in the popularity of a book by an English friar, Brother Bartholomew. on, as he said, "The Properties of Things." It was greatly esteemed all over Europe during the whole period; and remember that the mass of the people (or almost nine-tenths of every nation) still could not read, so that those who admired it were merchants, officials, lawyers, clerics. As a matter of fact it was a collection of the amusing blunders about nature which we have seen in older writers with hundreds of such bits of ancient wisdom as:

"The bite of the cockatrice is death to the weasel unless that animal has eaten some rue.
"When a crocodile sees a man it weeps over him [hence "crocodile tears"] and then devours him."

There is a long description of dragons, which were then (and for centuries later) as real to men as domestic cats. They are said to be perpetually at feud with elephants and have other quaint ways:

"Often four or five of them tie their tails together, rear up their heads, and fly over the sea in search of good food."

Large numbers of books about animals, or "Bestiaries," on these lines circulated in the homes of the new middle class, and they hardly went beyond the natural history of Aristotle. Besides the dragon various other fabulous beasts, such as the unicorn, the basilisk, and the griffin were implicitly believed to exist in foreign parts. In fact one story ran that a basilisk strayed into the city of Rome and several people who caught its eye fell down dead. The theologians, who had to admit that God put this fatal eye in the basilisk, added that he compelled the animal to give a loud cry to warn mortals not to look at it whenever it left its den. Animals that are well known were described with touches of wisdom from 1,000 or 2,000 years before. "The eagle" said the learned cleric Gerald of Cambrai, "lives so long that its life rivals eternity itself. It flies so high that the sun often scorches its wings." The spontaneous generation of marine animals, insects, etc., continued to be an article of faith until centuries later. The earthly origin and prophetic nature of comets also were universally believed. When one appeared in 1458 Pope Calixtus III, who was supposed to be learned, ordered "several days prayer to avert the wrath of God or if a calamity impended, turn it against the Turks rather than the Christians." The contemporary

Vatican archivist Platina says that the Pope excommunicated the comet. Others now discovered that the howling of a dog at night or the tick of the "death-watch" beetle portended death. One learned writer discovered that a safe way of prolonging life was <Joke: cp M Gardner on K Mansfield & breath of cows> to suck in the breath of a girl or young woman. It was widely discussed, and it is on record that a distinguished but aged physician retired from practice and rented rooms in a boarding school far girls.

Medicine, the one branch of "science" that was honored, was still inconceivably crude. The circulation of the blood was entirely unknown, and the promising fund of chemical discovery that the Arabs had made was so far neglected that the pharmacopeia was almost as bad as in ancient Egypt. The devil was still made responsible for disease particularly of the brain or if the patient had had nightmares, and the most noxious or filthy substances, often human excrements, were used to drive him out. Here are a few recipes:
"For nocturnal visitations of devils make a salve of these 12 herbs [calculated to give a savage a nightmare]... Put them under the altar, boil them in butter and sheep's grease, add a lot of blessed salt and strain through a cloth.

"When a devil possesses a man and controls him from within by disease a spew-drink of lupin, bishops wort, henbane, and garlic should be given. Pound them together and add holy water.

"A drink for a fiend-sick man, to be drunk out of the church bell: giltwire, avaglossum, yarrow, lupin, flower-de-luce, fennel, lichen, and losage. Work up to a drink with clear ale, sing seven masses over it, and add garlic and holy water."

There was an infinite variety of drugs - note how the profit of the clergy comes in - and nearly all of them had no more relation to the disease than to the weather. Some dispensed with drugs and simply went for the devil who caused the disease. The patient was grievously manhandled and compelled to swallow his excrements. He was abused in terms which, we are told, must not be translated today. Others hurled at the devil big Greek or other words taken from the black magic or occultism of the time or even the early Christian controversies: Tetragrammaton, Homoousion, Acheron, etc. It is piquant to imagine doctors or priests howling this rubbish at a chained lunatic 2,000 years after Aristotle. Travel greatly enriched the pharmacopeia or the profit of the druggist. Ground-up coral or dried blood of rats, bats, toads, or criminals, fibers of the hangman's rope, dried menstrual blood of a virgin - all these were on sale in Paris even in the golden age of Louis XIV in the 17th century. A dentist was known as a "tooth-breaker." The barber was the surgeon, clapping mud or hot pitch over the stump when he amputated a leg. We begin to wonder why the average expectation of life was even as much as 30 years or so. As to the amiable writers who persuade you that these folk had a jolly and virtuous time in the Middle Ages...

At one time a genius arose who discovered that God had really given indications which of the herbs and roots in nature were efficacious for this or that ailment. Blood-wood was clearly intended for the purification of the blood. Plants with yellow flowers must be intended to cure jaundice. Walnuts, with their curious resemblance to the cerebral hemispheres when the skull is removed, are the predestined cure for diseases of the brain. Liverwort, the leaves of which vaguely recall the liver in shape, are meant to cure that organ. Eyebright, which has bright spots like eyes on the leaves, is the remedy for eye-diseases. Red flannel is bound to be good for rheumatism since it has the color of blood.

At last the era of scientific drugs or "medical chemistry" arrived. The man who was chiefly instrumental in introducing it, Paracelsus, impressed his own age as the greatest master of these centuries - apart from art - and, while his record is so puzzling that modern historians of chemistry give us different estimates of him, he does seem to have had exceptional ability; though, Sir Edward Thorpe says, he "squandered his powers in dissipation." It is curious that the same thing is said of one of the greatest physicians of the Arab-Persian world, Ibn-Sina. If is true that, as Thorpe says, "during the greater part of his waking time he was more or less intoxicated," he must have been head and shoulders above his age to make such a mark on it. Experts doubt if he wrote any of the books which circulated under his name, so I will not quote from them but take a few general statements about him from Thorpe.

He was a master of the chemistry of his time and knew every element and compound that the Arabs had added to the final chemistry of the Greeks. His chief merit was that he tried to correct the degeneration of chemistry into alchemy and insisted that the proper use of it was to provide drugs for the remedy of disease. I have said that practically every prince and bishop had an alchemist to turn base metals into gold for him and discover the elixir of life or the draught that would give him perpetual youth. Thorpe shows that it was in fact in this period, not in the Arab world, that this gross perversion of science took place. "The philosopher's stone is first heard of in the 12th century," he says, and "the universal medicine and the elixir of life were the products of a later age." Professors who, to please the orthodox, say that it was the Arabs who diverted chemistry into this monstrous field of fraud and folly do not know the history of the science. This period, Thorpe says, "produced an abundant literature, mainly the work ecclesiastics," but it is simply "a long chapter in the history of human credulity... for the most part a record of self-deception, imposture, fraud." Of
seven leading names he gives five are the names of friars and one of a canon. Yet the three products that these writers professed to supply - the chemicals for turning stuff into gold, curing all diseases, and prolonging life - may, with astrology, almost be said to have obsessed the minds of the rich and noble during these four centuries. Thorpe gives a string of names of princes, generals, nobles, and prelates who had their alchemists.

Paracelsus opposed this. But he was himself an impudent character of "boundless effrontery." He was a dipsomaniac and a mystic, a fierce critic of medical traditions and an astrologer. Of the pupils and followers of the critic who probably wrote the works that bear his name Thorpe says:

"They were all zealous anti-Galenists, who professed to believe that the sum and perfection of human knowledge was to be found in the Cabala, and that the secrets of magical medicine were contained in the Apocalypse. They adopted pantheism in all its grossness; everything that exists eats, drinks, and voids excrement; even minerals and liquids assimilate food and eliminate what they do not incorporate; Sylphs inhabit the air, nympha the water, pigmies the earth, and salamanders the fire. The Laws of the Cabala were held to explain the functions of the body. The sun rules the heart, the moon the brain (hence 'lunatics'), Jupiter the liver, Saturn the spleen, Mercury the lungs, Mars the bile, Venus the kidneys. Gold was a specific against diseases of the heart; the liquor of Luna (solution of silver) cures diseases of the brain. 'The remedies,' said Paracelsus, 'are subjected to the will of the stars and directed by them. You ought, therefore, to wait until heaven is favorable before ordering a medicine.'"

Apart from art, as I have said, this man was the most influential thinker of the most brilliant period of medieval Rome: the time when, we are told, the invention of printing and the discovery of America had greatly enlarged the mind of Europe. Modern authorities are, as Hillier says in his "History of Medicine," not agreed whether he was a charlatan or a man of "brilliant intellect." His chief strength was that there was the beginning of a revolt against mere authority - against the slavery to Galen in medicine, to Aristotle in philosophy, and to the Papacy in religion - and he took the lead. He had, or tried to get, a philosophical,

you might almost say a scientific conception of the relation of man to the universe and, he felt sure that the world which caused disease also provided remedies. It was "dissatisfaction with Aristotle, who ruled the universities in this respect that drove him to the mystic and occultists."

There has been such a determined and unscrupulous effort in America in recent years to persuade people that at least by the 16th century - 1,300 years after the conversion of Constantine - Europe had become learned, and the great art of the Roman school is so well known that some readers may wonder if I have not selected as representatives of the age men whose opinions it is easy to ridicule. Read for yourself the article on the period (Renaissance) in the Encyclopedia Americana, which, to the discredit of its editors, is written by a Jesuit who chiefly wanted to do the best he could for his church. The only other "great" men, besides artists, whom he names are Valla (an erotic poet and historian who was driven into hypocritical subservience by the Popes), Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (a good mathematician muzzled by high ecclesiastical honors), and a few classical scholars or Platonist philosophers. A Protestant would add Wyclif and John Hus, but their work is purely theological. Other men whose names are familiar - Gutenberg and Columbus - were neither great men nor great men nor writers. But there is, leaving pioneers of science to a later chapter, one other whose opinions it is interesting to notice.

Bayle Calls Cardano, a contemporary of Paracelsus and like him a master of medicine, "one of the greatest geniuses of his age." He also one of the most eccentric men of his age, a fanatic for astrology, a desperate gambler, a professor of immeasurable conceit who considered himself the redeemer of the world; and he thus naively described himself in his autobiography, which we have.

In his frequent fits of depression he bit his arms and laid a whip on his buttocks; which does not seem to have been for the usual purpose as he says that he was moderate with women because the sex-act "upset my stomach." He was impotent from the age of 21 to the age of 31 because, he says he was born under an unfavorable conjunction of the planets. He claimed the power or second sight and of passing into an ecstasy whenever he wished. "It begins," he says,
"in my head, principally the cerebellum, and goes down the spine of my back." He claimed to have a guiding spirit and to be able to forecast events by marks on his nails. He wrote most extensively on astrology, with hundreds of such decisions as these:

"The Moon with the Dragon's Tail in a Nativity gives suspicion of the mother's honesty and hints that the child is not of the reputed father's begetting.

"The Moon in Aquarius or Pisces makes the Native disliked by Princes, Grandees, and the Upper Ten [somebody has here pencilled in the copy I am reading that this was the horoscope of Goethe.]

"A primary cause of men leading single lives is the combination of the Moon with Saturn in their nativity."

He was a strong believer in the influence of the mother on the child she bore; for instance, if she ate plenty of crabs while bearing, the child would like crabs. In medicine, of which he was one of the leading professors, he taught such absurdities as that to cure brain-disease you must anoint the coronal suture with a mixture of tar and honey, and he orders a diet of turtle soup, snails, barley water, and asses' milk. But the treatment of disease was still, in the middle of the century, so crude that I could fill a book with absurdities. As to the work in which Cardano explained nature to his generation, it would provide another volume of absurdities.

I said from the first that while we find a pardonable amusement in the ancient errors, since each of these men helped or tried to help the growth of knowledge and it is no merit of ours that we are wiser, we begin to have other feelings as we approach modern times. After the fine beginning of real wisdom that was made by the Ionians, Epicureans, and Alexandrians, and the further development of science and history by Arabs and Persians, we have a right to expect something better than this 2,000 years after Thales, Buddha, and Confucius. We know why we do not get it. The pace of science is necessarily much slower in its earlier stages when it has not yet developed even a moderate technique, but the Arabs, if not the Alexandrians, had begun this. It was the principles solidly established by Aquinas for the church that had arrested progress. And the stagnant and odoriferous state of the stream of knowledge was not only in regard to the interpretation of nature and man. The development of the code of conduct was just as backward, although it had reached almost its modern stage in the Maxims of Ptah-Hotep 3,000 years earlier. Law was barbarous in comparison with the Hammurabi Code of 3,000 years earlier. It was the age of the Spanish Inquisition, of savage religious wars, of the beginning of black slavery of the sordid exploitation of four-fifths of the race, of a 90 percent illiteracy in most countries, of the subjection of women. It was the last hour of the monopoly of power by the Roman Church; and it was, on the church's own code, the most immoral period in the history of Europe.'

V LUTHER AND THE REFORMERS
[Complete text scanned in:]

"The Reformation introduces a different type of absurdity and one that we do not so easily forgive. At the time when Luther diverted half of Europe from the mumbling of Masses and the windy speculations of the medieval Schoolmen to the reading of the Bible science was beginning to make progress. Anyone who knows to what height the Arabs and Persians had carried the science of the Alexandrians finds the progress appallingly slow. The Alexandrian Greeks and the Spanish Arabs had made more progress in two centuries than medieval Christendom, for all its Renaissance, made in five, though the world now had the technique and instruments that the Arabs had developed.

The Scholastic theologians, the Popes and the Aristotelic philosophers had checked the study of science to the profound loss of the race.
Astronomy and other branches of science were now advancing and, as Huxley would put it 350 years later, they came up against the notice: "No Road - By order Moses." From this time onward we get a series of blunders and absurdities, even from the pens of men of superior intellect, which we do not regard with the leniency with which we have smiled at errors in the preceding chapters. In the name of religion men not only frown upon the new way of attaining truth but they deny such truths as are attained and burn men at the stake (Giordano Bruno) or hand them over to the Inquisition (Galileo) for stating them. Protestantism, in its first phase being essentially a biblical religion, sinned heavily in this respect, though it was in Protestant lands that science was presently to make the greatest progress.

We will not search too closely the works of the skeptical Humanists, like Erasmus, who "laid the egg that Luther hatched." They were literary men - they took their name at that time from their "humane" or profane as distinct from sacred studies - and had no interest in the scrutiny of nature. Indeed it was by such works as his "Praise of Folly" and "Colloquies" that Erasmus best served the world, and one finds little to quarrel with in those entertaining works. He is, in fact, not consistent. He seems to endorse original sin and the immaculate conception of Mary when, in his commentary on the gospel of Luke, he says: "Where there is lust the fruit is unclean." This is not only out of character but he elsewhere plainly rejects the idea of original sin. No man really knows the extent of his skepticism or his religion. "It is not everybody who has the stuff of martyrs," he says, "and I believe that if trouble befell me I would imitate St. Peter." He decided to pass through life along a comfortable path and would not join the German Reformers, alleging that he did not like revolts against authority. In any case a search for absurdities in the works of Erasmus would be so unprofitable that I have not given any time to it.

Head and front of all the Reformers, idol and saint of the Protestant branch of the Christian Church, is Martin Luther, the ex-monk who first openly raised the banner of revolt against the Papacy and, aided by political conditions in Germany, did effectively found Protestantism. Since he did not profess to have any other learning than theological, and the official stupidities are sufficiently familiar in our own time to be ignored here, it may seem that there can be little in his writings to interest us; especially as he was a typical case of "glandular personality" and his crude language is apt to be just an expression of his vigorous hormones. But, as Protestants chose to thrust aside the more refined, or less boorish, Melanchthon and Zwingli and accept Luther as the figure-head of their purified version of Christianity, and they write and talk as much nonsense about him as Catholics do about Aquinas, it is worth while to devote a page to his blunders. The chief interest is that while the Reformation, in bringing the world back to the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament, is supposed to shine in him with much light and mystic favor in comparison with the sensuality of the Roman Church in Renaissance days, it is mainly Luther's moral and social crudities, vulgarity, and gross taste that offend us.

The controversy over the man was so fierce at the time and the controversialists on both sides, however pious, were so unscrupulous and indelicate that it is not easy sometimes to find the truth. A well-known Catholic writer of the time, Cajetanus, says in one of his poems that Luther was the offspring of an "incubus," or male devil, and many other of his colleagues said that he came straight from hell to poison the virtuous world - the world I described in the preceding chapter! The more "scientific" Catholics consulted the astrologers, who were as numerous and prosperous as
psychiatrists are today. Unfortunately the day and hour of Luther's birth were disputed, but this did not restrain them from pronouncing such verdicts as this:

"It appears from his horoscope that the combination of planets made him a most bitter and most profane enemy of the Christian faith ... He died without a sense of religion and his soul, steeped in guilt, sailed to hell, there to be lashed to death by the fiery whips of Alecto, Tisiphon, and Megaera (the Greek Furies) through endless ages."

We simple-minded moderns wonder why he was so punished if the planets had inexorably made him a heretic, and how a spiritual soul is whipped on its ethereal buttocks, but it is useless to look for common sense or common fairness in matters of religion. It was then common to ascribe the Reformation to the stars, but it is almost as bad of the modern Catholic writer to attribute it to "lust" when we see that the Catholic world of the time put no bridle at all on lust. But with these Catholic pleasantry we could fill a long chapter. Bishop Bossuet says that in a sermon on Christian marriage Luther, advising men who found their wives churlish in bed, said: "If the mistress will not give in, call the maid"; and that there were not five virgins over the age of 20 in any city and he did not blame the girls. Even modern Jesuits contend in their lives of Luther that he had syphilis.

I have elsewhere shown that the truth is between these Catholic libels and the Protestant eulogies. Luther commonly, in his mature years, used language which would make a modern preacher even of liberal ways blush to the roots of his hair. If you happen to have read a rare pamphlet (circulated privately) by Mark Twain giving an imaginary conversation at the court of Queen Elizabeth, you get near it. It was not far short of that or of Rabelais' language. The interest of it is that it was the custom of his age, lingering from the Middle Ages. The Pope virtually excused Rabelais from his vows for his skill in that

sort of thing, although he knew that the chief professed aim of the French writer was, to blunt the edge of Catholic hostility to the Protestants which it was the duty of every good Catholic to sharpen. Here I am concerned only with blunders and absurdities. You find them numerous enough In his Table Talk:

"Before Noah's flood the world was highly learned because men lived a long time and so attained great experience and wisdom. Now before we begin rightly to come to a true knowledge of a thing we are let down and die. God will not have that we should attain a higher knowledge of things (C L X, Hazlitt's translation)."

It seems from the note on this in Bayle's Dictionary that there was in the later Middle Ages a large literature about the immense learning of Adam and the patriarchs. Aristotle was a schoolboy in comparison with Adam; and he was as handsome as he was wise. Some of the medieval rabbis, and even the learned Maimonides, believed that Adam was a hermaphrodite, and that when the drama of life on earth is over the two sexes will again be blended in each individual. It seems more promising even than the Mohammedan paradise. Luther again says:

"Adam had more children than the three that are mentioned in the Bible...a full 200, I am persuaded. For he lived to a great, great age - 930 years. Adam and Eve entered the garden about noon and, having appetites to eat, she took the apple; thus the Fall was about 2 of the clock according to the account." (D L VIII.)

"Neither Cicera <sic; Cicero> nor Vergil nor Demosthenes is to be compared with David in point of eloquence." (D L XI.)

"When the devil intends to hurt us the loving holy angels drive him away, for the angels have long arms ... No malady comes to us from God. They all come from the devil ... I should have no compassion on witches. I would burn all of them ... The Emperor Frederic invited a necromancer to dine with him and by his knowledge of magic turned his guests into griffins."

"The whole firmament moves swiftly round ... and this is doubtless done by an angel ... If the sun and stars were composed of iron, steel, silver, or gold they would melt."
"There is no gown or garment that worse becomes a woman the desire to be wise."

"It is certain that swans sing very melodiously at their death."

He professed to be as familiar with the devil as a man is with his dog and in his work "On Private Masses" gives a long account of him and his conversations with him.

"The devil knows how to urge and apply his arguments with great force. He has a strong, deep voice, and the disputes are not transacted in long or many meditations, but in a moment the question and the answer are dispatched. I know that from this course some have been found dead in their beds at break of day. For he is able to squeeze and strangle the body, and not this only, for in these disputes he can press the soul and reduce it to such straits as in a moment to drive it out, to which extremity he has more than once reduced me. I verily believe that Emserus and Oecolampadius and other such men, struck by these fiery darts and javelins of Satan, have perished by a sudden death... I know the devil intimately, having eaten more than one bushel of salt with him. The devil much oftener sleeps with me, and lies nearer to me, than my Catherine. He used to walk with me in my bedroom. I have had him hang about my neck."

(Quoted from Bayle.)

Such was, according to some 100,000,000 educated folk in modern civilizations, the greatest man between St. Paul and Napoleon. I leave it to them to puzzle out his wide departure from the asceticism of the Bible which he imposed upon Europe, for in his mature years he glorified "the flesh" and enjoyed it so much that he saw no other use in women and called them by names that I may not repeat. But his

aberrations in regard to social questions are more relevant. He despised the workers as much as he despised clever women, philosophers, or scientists. A Protestant theologian, Dr. Betcke, has a work with the title "Luther's Social Ethic," and the learned contents may be summed up in the phrase that Luther had no social ethic. He found none in his New Testament. When the German workers, the peasants particularly, claimed that they were entitled to the justice of which the Bible spoke Luther in two famous letters told the princes and landowners to "shoot them down like mad dogs." Betcke quotes him saying

"As to the common people, Mr. Every-body, one has to be hard with them and see that they do their work and that under the threat of the sword and the law they comply with the observances of piety; just as you chain up wild beasts so as to get a peaceful life. Secular authority has to see to it that God is honored and feared."

He owed the success of the Reformation to the princes, who, since their emperor at that time was a foreigner, were comparatively easily induced to rebel. But it worth noting that Luther excused himself from taking any interest in social or political reform on the ground that the New Testament did not direct him to do so.

The errors in natural history or physiology of which I have given so many specimens are amusing but intelligible. The age of real scientific method had not yet arrived. But so many folk insist that the science had been enriched and irradiated by the Christian religion that the moral blunders of Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther have a more important place in any collection of absurdities. And if this was the mind of Luther we will not linger over the other Reformers. The sour asceticism, in fact savagery - when we think of the burning of a good man like Servetus for denying the myth of the Trinity - of Calvin I decline to discuss, and the writings of the more liberal and more accomplished Zwingli and Melanchthon are almost entirely theological. One absurdity that was common to the Reformers and directly due to their bibliolatry was that they persisted in the old idea of the earth being the center of the universe. Luther had said in reference to the Copernican theory:

"People give ear to an upstart astrologer who tried to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system... This fool
(Copernicus) wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy, but Holy Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun, not the earth, to stand still... We know on the authority of Moses that longer ago than 6,000 years this world did not exist."

We are not surprised to find the hard-boiled Calvin asking:

"Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Scriptures?"

But even Melanchthon, who is counted the most liberal and cultivated of the Reformers, wrote:

"The eyes are witnesses that the heavens revolve in the space of 24 hours. But certain men, either from the love of novelty or to make a display of ingenuity, have concluded that the earth moves ... It is a lack of honesty and decency to assert such ideas."

He fixes the date of creation at 3963 B.C. and, of course, incidentally echoes all the blunders about nature that, as we saw, have come down from the age of Aristotle. What is worse, he emphatically endorses such mischievous superstitions as astrology, witchcraft, diabolical possession, and all practices and gossip connected with them. Dr. Hartfelds has given us a special essay on "The Superstition of Philip Melanchthon" and given ample evidence on these points.

In a "Declamation on the Dignity of Astrology" he sets out to prove that its teaching is not only true but beneficial to the human race. He says:

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"I not only find usefulness in the art, as I perceive in medicine and other matters, but it is more important that when I behold this marvellous correspondence of the heavenly bodies with things here below, the order and harmony remind me that the world is not due to chance but ruled by divinity ... I do not think that any man is so superstitious that he will deny that the observation of the stars helps the physician."

With the devil he is almost as familiar as Luther, though he does not claim as much personal experience. Dreams, to which he paid the most serious attention, constantly describing his dreams to his friends, are often due to the devil. They are of four classes: natural, prognostic of future events, divine, and diabolical. In somnambulism it is the devil who is alive.

"Satan leads sleeping persons out of their bedroom to steep and dangerous places, and if the angels do not guard them they are killed."

He accepts stories of such things and of possession and black magic with extraordinary credulity, but I need not reproduce them. "God," he says, "has given the devil and the sorcerer power over men." He knows one of these sorcerers whom the devil took on his back and flew up to an immense height. And so on. It would be tiresome to reproduce his stories.

If this was, under biblical influence, the frame of mind of the most cultivated of the Reformers we need not consider any of the others. I pass on rather to certain opinions of the early Jesuits though they did not appear until later in the century. Life was too strenuous for them to notice the tears of the crocodile or the immodest habits of the beaver, the solidity of the firmament and revolutions of the sun, and frivolities of that nature. On the other hand their profound discoveries in philosophy and theology interest no man today outside the stuffy atmosphere of a Catholic university. What calls for a word is the claim, now repeated on all sides in America, that those great early theologians, Cardinal
Bellarmine and Father Suarez, gave the world, and the fathers of the American Revolution, the ideas of freedom and democracy.

The reader will get an amusing light on this claim if he will examine Catholic American literature in its chronological order. Forty years ago Catholics put their world-scholarship into a most expensive Catholic Encyclopedia. It, of course, has an orthodox article on Suarez, the supposed inspirer of modern democracy, and it does not make any claim whatever that he did this. It gives 13 points as characteristic of his thought. They are such things as "the principle of individuation by the proper concrete entity of beings," "the pure potentiality of matter," "the singular is the object of direct intellectual cognition," and so on. I doubt if the modern world would take the trouble to think out whether these things are absurd or not. Thirty Years later appeared that generally admirable work, The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, with an article on Suarez by a Catholic professor, and he says that in his Defense of the Catholic Faith the Jesuit lays down that the authority of a government "depends upon the consent of the governed" and that sovereignty is "given by God to the people."

He is candid enough to remind the reader that this work of the Jesuit is a reply to a work in which the English King James I defended the divine right of Kings; and that gives you the correct slant on the whole business. When, in the 14th century, Marsiglio of Padua, one of the most learned of the Italians, argued for "the sovereignty of the people" or the replacing of the royal authority of the Popes in Italy by a republic, he was a heretic and an outcast. But a number of the kings of Europe were now Protestants, and the Jesuits were conspiring everywhere to get rid of them. So they now discover that a King does not hold power by a divine commission but from the people or by "natural right," so the people - in the case of Protestant kings - have every right to get rid of them. It was part of the Jesuit conspiracy against Protestant powers. The Vatican recognized it as such and continued to the second half of the 19th century to encourage Catholic kings to assert that they ruled by divine right and to rebuke the removal of kings, as at the French Revolution, as sacrilege.

The whole thing is, in fact, a typical scholastic juggling with words, and the suggestion that men like Jefferson were influenced by it is ludicrous. According to Catholic theology, then and now, "divine right" (or law) is of two kinds: natural and positive. The amoral <sic> law (apart from the Bible) is, for instance, "natural," but since God is the author of Nature it is also divine. If you read German you can follow the whole rigmarole of Suarez's argument in Dr. H. Bommer's "Staatstheorie des Franz Suarez." It starts from Adam and his progeny. When his descendants became numerous enough to form communities the "mystic political body" appointed its authorities. Even Catholics had never suggested that in ancient or pagan times Kings ruled by divine right, and the Jesuit craftily avoids noticing that in Christian times it was supposed to be the consecration by the church that made a king's person sacred. His argument compels him to say that "all men are born free" but don't imagine for a moment that the American and French Revolutions borrowed a phrase from the Jesuit. It would follow that he must condemn slavery, and this he refused to do. Men are born equal in nature as God created it, but - here he expressly refers to St. Augustine - the sins of men perverted it and slavery is "a consequence of sin" (as St Augustine does say in his "City of God").

As to that other and brighter ornament of early Jesuitry, Cardinal Bellarmine - in getting authorization for the Society the founder had sworn that members would never accept dignities - the man who engineered the first condemnation of Galileo, he trimmed like - well, like a Jesuit. He did talk like Suarez about the sovereignty (under God) of the people, but when the Jesuits who in England conspired against Elizabeth appealed to his authority he disowned it. He wrote:

"Disobedience to rulers, is a far worse sin than the abuse of powers on the part of the ruler."

He maintained - so did Suarez - all the principles on which Catholic intolerance is based. A king is bound to protect religion, and, as there is only one true religion, he is bound to suppress all attacks on it:

"Civil authorities must lend their arm to the church to suppress heretical writings and punish obstinate heretics."
There must be no toleration of non-Catholics in a Catholic state, for "freedom of religion leads to the ruin of the people," but Protestant kings must not persecute Catholics, and Catholic kings are bound to fight heretical kings (as the King of Spain was driven against England). Both his writings and those of Suarez are full of the moral monstrosities to which the teaching of Aquinas leads, and the recent "discovery" that the leaders of the American Revolution were inspired by them is on a par with the discovery that King Solomon of Judea knew all about uranium and atomic energy.'

VI  PIONEERS OF THE MODERN AGE

In spite of this heavier theological tyranny of the 16th century modern thought was stirring in the womb of Europe. Historians generally say that what they call Modern Times began in the middle of the 16th century but there is little ground for saying it. In fact, when we remember that the development of printing, the spirited exploration of the globe, the Reformation, and the Copernican discovery occurred on the preceding century (1450-1550) <sic> and no great innovations like these occurred between 1550 and 1750 the division of chronological periods seems absurd. You might say that there was the brilliant flowering of the Elizabethan age. Not only, however was this almost purely literary, but it was almost confined to one century. A lamentable decay began in Spain and Italy, France and Germany were almost paralyzed by the ferocious wars of Catholic and Protestant, and promising civilizations like that of Bohemia were ruined. Hence, passing over the great poets, dramatists, and artists generally, to whom we do not look for intellectual absurdities, there were not many great men of interest to examine from our present angle.'

[JEAN BODIN follows, not scanned in; three pages, much of it on witches, & J M Robertson on him.]

[MONTAIGNE]

[BACON]

VII  ABERRATIONS OF EARLY SCIENCE

[COPERNICUS]

... vented, but we must set them against the undue glorification of Copernicus as one of the "great Catholic scientists." He had not the pure scientific spirit. He repeatedly warns his readers that we must not depart from the teaching of antiquity unless we are compelled by strong evidence.

TYCHO BRAHE

The first really great astronomer, in the sense of relying upon personal and assiduous observation, after the Arabs-was Tycho Brahe the Dane, a Protestant (1546-1601). He made a number of discoveries, such as that, contrary to the prevailing belief, comets do not arise from the earth (as fiery exhalations). But he was totally wrong about the solar system. Instead of developing the main theory advocated by Copernicus he adopted a clumsy compromise between it and the Ptolemaic system. He made the earth stationary with the sun and moon circling round it, while the other planets revolved round the sun and the spheres of fixed stars revolved round the whole. Many astronomers believe that it was out of fear of the church - as I said, the Reformers rejected Copernicanism as scornfully as the Popes did - that Brahe restored the earth to its central position while others consider that he had not the intellectual power to master his material, but Eissles shows in a recent work "The Royal Art of Astrology," that he found that astrological forecasts were impossible unless the earth was fixed and central; and Tycho Brahe believed in astrology as firmly as any Pope.

KEPLER
Brahe had left behind a large and chaotic mass of recorded observations, and it was largely on the strength of these that his pupil Kepler, a more brilliant thinker, worked out the true scheme, on broad lines, of the solar system and laid the first foundation of modern astronomy. But he was, like his master, repeatedly led astray by his mysticism. At first he believed that in a universe of such beauty and harmony - it was the time of the ghastly Thirty Years War! - the path of a planet round the sun must be a circle (the perfect figure). Observations compelled him to change to ellipses, but his mysticism moved him to connect the movements of the heavenly bodies with musical intervals in a completely fantastic theory. The ex-monk Giordano Bruno had adopted the view of the Ionian Greeks that the stars were vast bodies at great distances from the earth; that, in fact, the universe consisted of an infinite number of such bodies in some sort of eternal evolution. Kepler quotes and rejects, clearly under religious influence, this theory of the stars. He, in fact, wasted a good deal of his time in computing and writing a book on "The True Year in Which Christ was Born."

GALILEO

Galileo, who was primarily a physicist though his conflicts with the Church have made him best known as an astronomer, came next. From the discovery of a Dutch optician that two spectacle-lenses placed together in a certain position would magnify distant objects he constructed the first real telescope and lifted his science to a higher plane, besides himself making many discoveries. One of his chief services was to establish for all time the central position of the sun, in spite of the fact that in his old age and under the threats of the Roman Inquisition he insincerely disavowed that view. Apart from this, however, he made many serious blunders. He refused to admit Tycho Brahe's theory of comets and encouraged the world in the fantastic view that they were exhalations from the earth. He ignored Kepler's greatest discovery - that of the laws of the solar system - and clearly from conceit, took no notice of the discoveries of several other scientific rivals. It is necessary to point out these defects if we take any notice of the blunders of pioneers, though Galileo's work was so great and his fate so tragic that no one cares to criticize him.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON

Greatest genius of all these pioneers of science was Sir Isaac Newton (1660-1726), yet no great scientist since the Middle Ages was diverted by his religious views into so many absurdities. It is often said in extenuation that he drifted into his Bible-founded absurdities in his old age, but the British Dictionary of National Biography explains that "his theological writings were begun at an early period of his life," and that at the age of 30 he was counted an "excellent divine." Whether these studies led him into a rejection of the Trinity, as there is good reason to believe, they certainly had results that astonish us in the case of so great a genius. A divine not far removed from his age says of him:

"This truly great and good man applied himself with the utmost attention to the study of the holy scriptures and considered the several parts of them with uncommon exactness; particularly as to the years of time and the series of prophecies and events relating to the Messiah ... he proved that the prophecy in Daniel's work was an express prophecy of the coming of the Messiah." This will be to most folk a new conception of the famous mathematician and one of the greatest scientists of all time, but the work survives, and I have read it, in which he solemnly records his fantastic conclusions ("Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel"). Of all the prophets, he says. "Daniel is the most distinct in order of time and easiest to be understood." We know today, of course, that the work is a late and clumsy forgery, and there never was a prophet Daniel. Speaking of Nature as "the world natural" and history as "the world politic," he says: "Accordingly the whole world natural, consisting of the heavens and the earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and the things in that world signify the analogous thrones and dignities and those who enjoy them, and the earth, with the things therein, the inferior people, and the lowest parts of the earth called Hades or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them." There is no need to quote the fantastic things to which this line of reasoning conducted the great scientist.

Another outcome of this adulteration of his thoughts with mysticism was a pseudo-historical book based upon the Old Testament and a rich collection of legends and fables, which he called "The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms." Here is a sample:

"Melchisedech was a priest of the Most High God and Abraham solemnly bowed to him, which he would scarce have done had they not been of one and the same religion."
Which must have surprised the divines. The Egyptians, whose civilization began, he says, about 1200 B.C., "boasted that it was thousands of years older than the world, and that Ammon, Osiris, Bacchus, and Hercules were Kings of theirs." The Greeks were contemporaries of the Egyptians, and the Argonauts were the sons of Bacchus. Isis was a Greek woman, taken by the Egyptians when they conquered Greece. In short, this product of the studies of a genius is a clotted mass of nonsense.

When the eccentricities of smaller, though in their day esteemed gifted, many chapters could be filled. The zeal for science and defiance of authority and tradition were quickening the brains of men where the Great War of Catholics and Protestants had not laid the earth waste or the Inquisition did not put its bloody penalties on free thinking. Leonardo da Vinci had correctly guessed the meaning of fossils but the old ideas prevailed. Even the great anatomist Fallopio said that they were just concretions that were due to putrefaction in the rocks. Tycho Brahe's theory of comets fared little better. The whole learned world was at one time agitated over a theory that there were men living on the earth before Adam, but this monstrous supposition was buried under mounds of scorn and, in the old medieval manner the marvellous wisdom and power of Adam were again discussed. A new theory of volcanoes - that the fires were due to beds of coal with sulphur burning between - got wide attention, and a "powder of sympathy" which cured wounds if you applied it to the sword that had caused them, or even to rags taken from the wound, was widely treasured. But the list of superstitions of even the 17th century would be lengthy, and we will here again confine ourselves to "the dumbness of the great."

SIR WILLIAM HARVEY

A great figure in medicine was Sir William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood. Aristotle's idea was that the food was converted into blood in the liver and proceeded into the veins from the heart, and that the arteries had nothing to do with the blood so there was no circulation. This, with few modifications, was the received doctrine in medicine and surgery until the 17th century. Indeed a writer of the time says that when Harvey, a distinguished physician, announced his discovery, "he fell mightily in his practice and it was believed by the vulgar that he was crackbrained and all physicians were against him." As Harvey could not, from lack of the microscope, know anything about the capillaries, the fine hair-like vessels which enable the blood to pass from the arteries to the veins <sic>, he could not explain the circulation but he established the fact. In connection with his second great discovery, however, he started some new and serious errors. The origin and embryonic development of an animal remained little better understood than it had been after Aristotle's work on the subject, and it was still universally believed that whole classes of the lower animals - worms, marine; organisms, insects, etc. - were produced, without any parents, from the action of the sun on slime and muck. Harvey got from the royal forests 12 does that had been with the buck, and he dissected them one after the other, at intervals, in order to study the development of the embryo. He concluded that "every living thing comes from an egg," which began the reaction against the age-old superstition of spontaneous generation, but as he could not possibly prove this in the reputed cases of spontaneous generation, that belief lasted even in science until the middle of the 19th century. But as the embryo is too minute to be seen with the naked eye in the earliest stages, or so minute that it is easily missed, he concluded that the male's spermatic fluid does not reach the womb but emits a vapor which stimulates the womb to secrete an egg. It would be a long time before the advance of the microscope enabled scientific men to discover the ovum and the spermatozoon, and still longer before the early embryonic process was even broadly understood. A philosopher of the 17th century, Malebranche won the attention of all Europe for his theory that the ovum is an infinitesimally small man which merely grows larger and larger in the womb: so small that Mother Eve contained in her ovaries the whole future race in miniature.

DESCARTES

The French philosopher Descartes (1596-1650) was one of the most original and most brilliant thinkers of his age in physics, mathematics, and metaphysics, and he paid the usual penalty of pioneering by stumbling into many errors. In the case of able men whose blunders I quote at this period one must remember the environment. Not only was the art of discovering truth in your inner consciousness or in the intangible ether (metaphysics) decaying and men were beginning to look at Nature in a new fashion but the appalling clash of Catholic and Protestant convulsed all Europe. Descartes pursued his studies during the Thirty Years War and became himself a soldier. But the conflict of opinions
obsessed his mind, and he proposed to find a new method and a new basis for attaining certainty. He chose as the
criterion of truth clearness of vision, practically intuition, and mathematics as the basis of a new structure of
knowledge. His famous starting point after sweeping aside all received opinions and authority, "I think therefore I
exist," was soon known all over Europe and is widely known today. But it is a fallacy, and the method of establishing it
is fallacious. Even modern psychology labors hard to explain this "I" or personality, and all that Descartes was justified
in claiming on his own criterion was that "thought (or thinking) exists." The criterion was bad because, for instance,
the mystic will tell you that the clearest idea in his mind is the reality of God. Applying his method to the existence of
God and the distinction between a material (or "extended" or measurable) body and a spiritual ("unextended" or not
measurable) entity easily - much too easily - gave Descartes back his religious beliefs. As a matter of fact, he had never
really parted with them, and they profoundly influenced his choice of a method which was supposed to guide him in his
search. Descartes rendered a service in his sharp distinction between the material and the spiritual, for every attempt of
a modern thinker to define them differently fails or is hopelessly vague, but his whole philosophy is unsound and it to
some extent spoiled his services to science. His explanation of physical movement was fantastic. Bodies do not move
because they are pushed but from something in their own nature:
"A body that you see rise and fall as if it were seeking its soul comes to rest when it reaches its proper place
because it is reunited with its form."
I should note, however, that he took up the ancient Greek idea, adopted by Giordano Bruno, of the evolution of worlds
and gave a suggestive (naturally inaccurate) theory of the evolution of the solar system. In biology or physiology he
again rendered a great service and made notable blunders. Cardano had said that the whole of nature was animated.
Descartes was the first since the Greek Materialists to reject the idea that there was an immaterial principle even in the
plant and the animal. A witty French lady of the time illustrated it by saying that according to M. Descartes a machine
which we call a dog mounts a machine which we call a bitch and presently there is a little machine which we call a
puppy. Seriously, it was a considerable service to drive the immaterial out of the whole universe except man and claim
that all organic life below the level of thought is mechanical. The bolder French thinkers of the next century, rejecting
his arbitrary criterion of truth, went on logically to drive the spirit from its last citadel, the pineal body, in which
Descartes had located the soul. He allowed, of course, that the purely animal functions of even the human body were
mechanical, though he blundered a lot about them. For instance, he denied that the circulation is due to "the expansion
of the blood caused by the heat of the heart." He accepted too, the old idea that "animal spirits" in the nerves convey
impressions or sensations to the body in the center of the brain and a number of other crude ideas. But perhaps his
service in extending the realm of Materialism as far as the very threshold of consciousness outweighs all these.

PIERRE GASSENDI

His contemporary Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655), who was not only a Catholic (though suspected and persecuted) like
Descartes but a .... etc

[PASCAL]

VIII THE GREAT MODERN PHILOSOPHERS
[Complete text scanned in:]

HOBBES

I have already shown how Descartes' attempt to create a philosophy distorted his gift for physical speculation, as we
find in his brilliant, necessarily crude, attempt to account for the origin of the solar system and his firm belief that all
life below the level of thought is purely mechanical. His British contemporary Hobbes (1588-1679) is mode apt to be
classed amongst the philosophers. Of purely metaphysical speculation, it is true, he knew little and cared less. He is
best remembered as a political thinker, and as such he blundered heroically. The Renaissance or revival of classical
literature had led to much study of Plato in England, and many had learned from him to cherish the idea of a republic.
This had not a little to do with the Civil War, at the close of which Englishmen had the proud distinction of being the
first nation in modern times to cut off the head of a king. In this troubled time fell the philosophizing of Hobbes. He
was a man of such ability that he had begun to study Latin and Greek at the age of 6, and he was only 13 when he
translated the great Greek tragedy "Medea" into Latin verse. He was a man of prodigious learning, and he conceived
the idea of organizing all knowledge in a three-volume system of, broadly, physical science, human science (or
psychology), and practical science (sociology).

In physical science he just reproduced the errors of his age, but he tentatively broke new ground in psychology and
prepared the way for the revolutionary theory that all man's knowledge must begin with his sense-perceptions (or, in
modern language, presentations). Even here he was entangled in old errors. While the nerves generally conveyed to the
brain the impressions of senses got from the external world, he said, some of them went to the heart instead of the
brain, and they gave rise to a man's emotions and feelings of pleasure or pain. We may say at least for him that in
denying that there was any other source of human knowledge than the formation by the brain of "conceptions" based
entirely upon the data of sense he, in spite of his deliberate vagueness about the religious idea of mind, brought
thinking men away from mysticism and in the proper direction for research. Similarly in regard to moral ideas: he
professed religion but in some places clearly says that the good is what gives pleasure and the evil what inflicts pain.
But his most definite and worst blunder was in political philosophy. Here he was, his chief biographer says, "a
sublimely one-sided thinker." He was not only a timid man, shrinking from the troubles of his age, but by profession
the tutor of aristocratic pupils - even of Charles II In his youth - and he emphatically argued that royalty is essential to a
civilization. Political writers had already begun to speak of "the social compact." It could only be, said Hobbes, a
compact of subjects to obey the king.

JOHN LOCKE

His psychological hint was his greatest service, and John Locke, next in the line of British thinkers (1632-1704)
developed this. His greatest work was his "Essay on the Understanding," the fruit of long years spent in examining and
analyzing his mind. It may justly be called one of the foundations of modern psychology. You might, in fact, say that
just as the astronomers were making an intelligible cosmos out of the weird conception of the universe that had hitherto
ruled men's minds, Locke began the work of making an intelligible system of the mind. But, like Hobbes, he was often
diverted by the pressure of religion. His famous saying, "There is nothing in the intellect that did not reach it through
the senses" - mystics thought they were clever in adding "except the intellect itself," but Locke had allowed for that -
led logically to a denial of all intuition, moral or intellectual, yet he speaks at times of our "intuitive knowledge," and
he completely failed on the ethical side. Christianity alone, he said, could provide some of our moral sentiments.
Ethical systems before Christ were of little value. Speaking of the idea of working out a naturalistic theory and code of
moral, he says: "It would seem from the little that has hitherto been done in it that it is too hard a task for unassisted
reason to establish morality in all its parts, at least for the common people, and the Gospel contains so perfect a body of ethics
that reason may be excused from that inquiry." He insists that for any morality at all there must be freedom of the will,
and that for "common people" to be moral they must continue to believe in heaven and hell. But his references to the
common people do not mean that he shared the political philosophy of Hobbes. He interpreted the "social compact"
more reasonably and concluded that the body of the citizens were free to adopt a republican form of government.

In the case of these two British thinkers we have a perception of sound and important principles which would, with
full recognition of their debt to Locke, be boldly developed by British and French thinkers of the 18th century, but they
are driven into absurdities of principle and fact by the religious pressure of the times. It was worse with contemporaries of Locke on the continent of Europe whose names are included in histories of philosophy. Particularly absurd - so absurd that one wonders why it aroused so much interest and survives at all in modern literature - was the system of the French thinker, a priest, Malebranche. It is sometimes described as "the system of Descartes modified by the teaching of St. Augustine." Descartes' theories were so widely defended yet so bitterly assailed by the Jesuits that this priest; felt that he must bring them into harmony with Christian teaching. In sharply defining matter as "extended substance" (measurable) and spirit as unextended Descartes had made more acute than ever the difficulty of understanding how, in man, one could act upon the other. They do not, Malebranche said. The mind does not even perceive matter as Hobbes and Locke had contended. All movement in matter comes from God, and he causes a corresponding movement in the mind. In fact, matter cannot even act on matter. To put it in a more familiar form than the priest would, his view was that when you are playing billiards and you smack the white against the red it is not this shock that makes the second ball roll over the table. All movement is from God. A clap of thunder is not the cause of the sensation you have. It is only the "occasion" of your sensation, A German doodlebug did not destroy a building. We just see the two events together or in close sequence because we see everything in the divine-mind. This fantastic creed, called Occasionalism, is still treated quite respectfully in manuals of the history of philosophy.

**SPINOZA**

Naturally it leads logically to the belief that God and nature are one reality, as the contemporary Spinoza taught and, be it said, Malebranche, as an orthodox priest, flatly denied. I will not include Spinoza's Pantheism amongst our absurdities, though to call it, as is customary, "a sublime conception" is certainly an absurdity. As in the case of the immensely greater intellect of Goethe and with all respect to that intellect, Pantheism (which was well known in ancient Greece for the same reason) became from the time of Spinoza an area of refuge for skeptics who for one reason or other dreaded to be called Atheists. Today they have the more respectable refuge of Agnosticism. But I need not point out the absurdities of the system. Spinoza adopted Descartes' definition of matter and spirit, which makes them flatly contradictory of each other and irreconcilable yet made material nature and the spiritual God one being. Philosophical verbiage might seem to get over this difficulty but when you come down to earth and reflect on all its unpleasant features - wars, poverty, cruelty, sewage systems, gluttony, crime, etc. - you do not seriously discuss Pantheism or its equivalent, the theory that everything that seems to have a material existence really exists only in the mind of God. I will show later that that was the real creed of two men who were idolized in our modern religious world for years, Sir. James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington. In fact,

modern historians of philosophy who do not even mention D'Alembert, Diderot, and Helvetius, devote 12 pages to Spinoza, eight to Berkeley (the chief representative of the all-in-the-mind-of-God theory) and eight to Leibnitz. So the Rationalist Benn's "History of Modern Philosophy." Then they rebuke us Materialists for being so disrespectful to philosophy.

**LEIBNITZ**

Leibnitz (1646-1716), being contemporary with Malebranche in the period which was still discussing Descartes, was confronted with the same problem, how to bridge the gulf between spirit and matter. After all, nature is a panorama of movement a good part of is a panorama of movement a good part of which is said to be spiritual or immaterial, and the power of mind (or soul) over body was held to be as obvious a fact as gravitation or the influence on the mind of drugs or whiskey. The German philosopher Leibnitz was convinced that he had settled the problem forever; and he had one of the most powerful intellects in Europe in his day. He read Latin easily and was learning Greek at the age of 11, he entered the university at 15, and he was never a parson; he was in fact a statesman of
outstanding ability. All Europe listened - the Queen of England at the time was one of his pupils - when the oracle delivered the solution of the riddle of the universe; and it was as fantastic as that of Malebranche.

The universe does not consist of the atoms of the materialists but of infinitesimally small units which he called "monads." They were more or less like mathematical points, having no extension in space; something, in fact, like what some modern physicists call "centers of force." God is the Big Monad, and then you get all sorts down to the monads which make up a bit of matter; though this is largely an illusion or "phenomenal." The monads are all endowed with activity but they never act on each other. "The monads," he says, "have no windows by which anything can go in and out." It is not the sight of a film-star's nude thighs that opens the little valves in a good man's cheek and lets the blood flow to it or gives a feeling of pleasure to the wicked man; nor is it your excess in thinking or drinking that gives you a headache. (Leibnitz did not say this, but it is a correct application of his system.) One bunch of monads, the body, cannot have any action whatever on the soul-monad, and vice versa.

Then, you ask, what the heck... It is all explained by Pre-established Harmony. The two sets of monads, material and spiritual, may be imagined as two great clocks which were set to the same time by God on creation's morn. So if in the year 1948 you burn your fingers you have an exactly appropriate feeling in your spiritual monad. The two clocks will keep exactly the same time - your material lesion coinciding with the spiritual feeling - throughout the ages. And if you raise the difficulty that your body did not even exist on creation's morn Leibnitz has a reply. It did. We - all humans to the end of time - were packed - tiny, of course - in Mother Eve's ovary. To God all things are possible. He is a great help to apologists. What is even more surprising is that Leibnitz looked out upon the world as his philosophy made it and declared that of all possible or conceivable worlds this on which we live is the best. Since every little movement in it was predestined by the Almighty when he created it, how could it be otherwise? Germany at the time had not yet recovered from a war which in some ways was worse than our modern wars. But what are facts to a philosopher? I trust that the reader does not imagine that, because I dislike philosophy I am trying to discredit it by selecting a few obscure or not important thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries. On the contrary I choose the men who occupy most space and are accorded the greatest respect at this period in histories of philosophy. Leibnitz was, as I said, one of the greatest figures of his time. Next to him the historian of philosophy takes Bishop Berkeley, who genially explained - and was taken seriously - that there is no such thing as a material universe and so no problem of the relations of matter and spirit to worry about (and, of course, no wars, atomic bombs, poverty, syphilis, sewers, whores, drunkards, rapers, etc.) - these are just ideas in the mind of God.

DAVID HUME

They then discuss the famous Scottish scholar and historian, David Hume (1711-76), the friend of Rousseau. There is a ground of some actual interest - for glancing at his system. When the more wicked skeptics suggest that many in our time are mainly moved by a desire for respectability when they call themselves "Agnostics" instead of "Atheists," the reply is that when Professor Huxley founded Agnosticism he based it upon a solid philosophical theory, that of Hume, which prevents any but a superficial or ignorant man from calling himself an Atheist. Following up the discovery of Locke, that our real knowledge is the formation of conceptions from the messages which the sense organs send to the mind or brain, Hume made a searching inquiry into the nature of this mechanism. People - the overwhelming majority - who never give a thought to these matters have no idea of the tremendous difficulty of explaining what knowledge is and how what we call the mind can know or perceive anything outside itself. When we smile at the conclusions of these philosophers we must remember these difficulties, which the scientist passes over by assuming that our sense-presentations and ideas do represent an external world. It is still a thorny problem. Berkeley and the "idealists," concluded that we cannot get beyond the mind: that, therefore, the existence of a material world is an illusion. Hume concluded that these messages from the senses (vision, odors, tastes, touch, pain, etc.) are certainly from an external world, but that on Locke's principle that there is nothing in the intellect that did not come from the senses, we can have no certain knowledge of anything besides what the senses actually announce (color, shapes, odors, etc.) Common sense - the Scottish philosophers characteristically recognized this as an instrument of knowledge - insists that there must be realities outside the mind that cause these sensations but we can't know them. We know our "states of consciousness" -
the contents of or mind - -and nothing more. Whether there is a God corresponding to our idea of one, and so on, we have no equipment to learn.

This idealism - we know ideas only, not things or realities - is the theoretical basis of Agnosticism as it was formulated by Huxley. It seems so preposterous that a reader must ask himself how far either Hume or Huxley really believed it. On the theory a man cannot know even that he has a body, much less a soul, yet Hume was a great historian, telling his readers how realities (nations and individuals)had behaved long before his own consciousness existed. He was also one of the ablest formulators of the naturalistic theory of morality. Huxley was one of the ablest physiologists of the time, and in religious controversy he discussed what Jesus did or did not do 1,900 years ago as seriously as any realist. He said that Hume's discoveries meant that he had no power to say anything at all, positive or negative, about this idea of a God or the meaning and nature of life and so on. But he handled the arguments for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul as critically as any Atheist did, and he did more than any in his time to establish the mechanical nature of life. Modern Agnostics do not even profess to follow Hume; in fact - and I have probably met more of them than any other man - I question if one in 100 of them could tell what Hume's theory was.

Even to those of us who do realize the serious difficulty that still exists in trying to explain knowledge - in my own opinion it will not be

solved until the physiology and anatomy of the brain are enormously advanced beyond their present condition - this philosophical attempt at a solution seems to be a greater absurdity than the errors of earlier observers or thinkers about the ways of animals or the structure of the body or the universe. Yet it may be said to have dominated philosophy or all "profound" thinkers until the 20th century; and even philosophers like Bertrand Russell who are supposed to have introduced realism and sanity into philosophy do not go nearly as far as the realism of the man of science or the common man.

KANT

The next great figure in the history of philosophy after Leibnitz is Kant (1724-1804), and he was not only generally believed for a quarter of a century to have said the last word on the theory of knowledge but you find him still mentioned in our literature as if he were the Aristotle of modern times. In any history of philosophy you will find four men standing out as the most profound of all thinkers - Plato and Aristotle in ancient times and Kant and Hegel in modern times. And the chief reason is because all four were emphatic anti-materialists.

Kant was certainly a man of high intellectual power but he had just the temperament to follow the idealistic line of his predecessors. He lived a solitary, broody life - pupils of his said that during a lecture he kept his eyes on a particular button of a particular student's coat and they one day upset him by cutting it off - and, after an early stage in which he was interested in astronomy, he lived entirely in the world of his own "states of consciousness." No one now followed Descartes in his fantastic theory that the soul or mind dwelt in the pineal body - a little nut-shaped body, possibly an atrophied eye, in the center of the brain - but they almost as mischievously conceived the mind as a separate entity working through a part of the brain, and so the problem of explaining how it could know anything "outside itself" remained as acute as ever. Kant followed Hume and Locke as far as sense-impressions were concerned, except that he held that time and space are subjective "forms" into which the material of the sense-impressions was molded. His famous original work was to conclude that the reason or intelligence itself had from its own nature a number of such subjective forms, like the pigeon-holes in a businessman's desk, in which his perceptions automatically sort themselves out. Causality, for instance or the idea of cause and effect, is one of these forms. It followed that it was an illusion to imagine that we perceived causes and effects outside ourselves, and therefore all attempts to prove the existence of God by the argument for a First Cause or a chain of causes in nature is a sheer fallacy. In short, all elements of rational thought, or all mental activity above the level of sense-perception, are purely subjective. It is just the nature of mind to conceive things that way.
There were thus, according to Kant, two sorts of existence or realities: phenomena (objects of sense) and noumena (objects of thought). We could know phenomena but not noumena. I told in an earlier chapter how Aristotle distinguished two sorts of realities, accidents (shapes, colors, odors, etc.) and substances (the underlying realities); as if nature had more or less the structure of a nut with its kernel (the substance of a thing) hidden in a shell of accidents. No one except a Catholic theologian, who uses this musty old piece of metaphysics to explain the magic of converting bread and wine into the body of Christ while they continue to look, feel and taste like bread and wine, takes any notice today of this idea. But Kant's phenomena and noumena are pretty much the same thing under new names. He had so profound an influence that all through the 19th century it was commonly said that science studies phenomena and leaves the noumena to religion and philosophy. Strictly speaking it was just as much a basis for Skepticism or Agnosticism as Hume's theory was. God and all spiritual things are noumena. The mind can play ideas but cannot say whether there are realities corresponding to them.

To complete what most of us moderns would call the absurdity Kant distinguished two different faculties of reason: pure reason and practical reason. The satirical writer Richter put it in a sort of parable. Kant, he said, had an idol in his study which his old servant Lampe (taken as a representative or allegory of Demos, the people) greatly venerated. Lampe came in one morning to find that his master had broken up the idol and, to put an end to his tears, Kant had to find a way of restoring the idol. He did this by distinguishing between pure reason, which had no objective validity, and practical reason or what theologians called conscience or the moral faculty.

Here his temperament and environment counted effectively. Although he was a Prussian he had Scottish ancestry on one side and had been reared in a dour puritanical home. Probably he was impotent before he was 30. And in settling down to a study of his own rare type of moral consciousness he imagined that he was studying the moral sentiments of the race in general (of which he knew about as much as a virtuous nun does). He soon found that this practical or moral reason contained a "categorical imperative"; that is to say, it orders a man to be virtuous and rebukes certain actions, not because of consequences his act may have but absolutely. So all the attempts that had been made to found a utilitarian system of ethics, enforcing certain lines of conduct and forbidding others on social grounds, were wrong. In short the voice of conscience, or practical reason, was the voice of God; and as a sanction was clearly needed for this categorical law, man must be an immortal being who will get his reward or punishment beyond the grave, as he so often does not get it now.

HEGEL

This sophistry began the fall of the authority of Kant, and the philosophers had to try again. Passing over two - Schelling (a Pantheist) and Fichte - who are now rarely mentioned, the prophet who really inherited the mantle of Kant was Hegel. His name is familiar as one of the little ironies of this philosophical world, although he was a drastic conservative in politics and most emphatically anti-Materialist (he did not admit the existence of matter). The Bolsheviks have borrowed the terminology of his system in their Dialectical Materialism. I need not attempt to describe it. Masson said, when Hegel's chief book was translated into English, that it 'was like introducing an elephant on some Pacific Island where the inhabitants would not know which was the head and which the tail. It is enough to say here that Hegel got rid of all these difficulties about the relations of matter and mind by finding that mind alone exists and is in a process of eternal evolution. Strictly speaking, he said that the real and the ideal are the same thing, but that is just one way of putting it. He did not, of course, say, like Berkeley (or later, Eddington) that all exists in the mind of God. He just said that all existence is Mind or the Absolute (which Theists promptly called God).

SCHOPENHAUER

Then came Schopenhauer who, reacting upon the failure of intellectual schemes, declared that the fundamental reality is Will. An unconscius great force or power is working upward to the level of wisdom and civilization in the evolution of the cosmos, and countering in man's perversity such stubborn opposition that it may all end in failure. Hence his pessimism. Bernard Shaw clings pathetically in our time to this last colossal piece of sophistry in which the long line of the philosophers ended in the last century.'
'Literary men and historians continue to describe a number of thinkers of the 18th century as "the French philosophers" yet you will rarely find any reference to them in any manual of the history of philosophy. Chief amongst them were Montesquieu, Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, Diderot, Helvetius, and D'Holbach: all, says the philosopher, learned but too superficial to be called philosophers. Of their learning there is no question, for apart, from their works, some of them classics in the history of law, science, or mathematics, they wrote the greatest encyclopedia of knowledge that had yet appeared. And to say that they were superficial does not recommend the study of philosophy to us.

We saw in the last chapter how the philosophers led their followers from one cloud to another cloud, and even when in the end a philosopher like Lotze tried to select and put together the best thoughts of each he left us almost nothing of permanent value. Whereas these French writers, to whom we must add Goethe in Germany, Adam Smith and Gibbon in England, and Franklin and Jefferson in America, were pioneers in the tremendous accumulation of knowledge in the next century and did grand service in shifting the heavy burden of tradition and authority which still oppressed the mind of the race. But they were all Freethinkers in both the broad and the narrow meaning of the word, so it would not be advisable to admit that they did more for the intellectual progress of the race than the "profound" thinkers did. Some of us prefer an accurate to a profound thinker: an expert scientist to a Maritain.

For obvious reasons I could quote more errors and absurdities than ever in this century. As education spread and books multiplied, and as the work of exposing and eradicating the monstrous volume of errors (protected by a persecuting authority) proceeded slowly, the field for the absurdity-hunter becomes far larger. Some idea of the extravagance of reactionary writers will be given in the next chapter but here I must select only the greatest of the thousands of writers. I am not selecting these because they were all skeptics - three of the above were Atheists, two might be called Agnostics (the name was then simply skeptics), one a Pantheist, and four definite Deists - but taking them at their valuation in history; and it is a fact to be noted that the dozen ablest writers of the century were already Freethinkers. If you add a dozen distinguished writers of second rank - Condorcet, Turgot, Laplace (an Atheist until his work was over), Lessing, etc. - the skeptical element is still predominant.

Of course, they all made mistakes. Montesquieu; whose "Spirit of the Laws" is a classic in the history of law and democracy, made mistakes in some of his historical statements, which had not yet been checked and exposed. Voltaire, though a close student of the imperfect science of his time, made a number of blunders in physics and thought that the fossil shells discovered on the French and Swiss mountains had been dropped by the pilgrims who for centuries had passed on their way to Italy. Hume, we saw, blundered because he was tempted into the field of philosophy as well as history. Adam Smith, the founder of political economy, certainly did not strike the full economic truth at the first shot. Laplace's first serious attempt to work out mathematically a nebular theory of the origin of the solar system is entirely abandoned as impossible. I have neither the mind nor the space to examine minutely the work of these dozen great men, and those who know their high service will not scrutinize their works closely for something at which we may smile. But, to keep the proportion of this book, we will examine some of the errors of a few of them.

**BUFFON**

Buffon (1707-88) wrote a "Natural History" in 44 volumes which astonished and deeply impressed all Europe. A sour critic of the time said, it is true, that the reason for its extraordinary popularity was that the fine ladies of France were now able to read all about the sex-life of animals in elegant and easily-understood language. The truth is that it was, for the age, a monumental scientific work and a fine piece of literature. But although many sentences ("The style is the man," "Genius is patience," "This animal (the rhinoceros) is wicked: it defends itself if you attack it") are still quoted as specimens of Buffon's style, it was known after his death that he had had a large number of collaborators and many of the best pages had been written by these. On the other hand, the main work of these men was to collect stories...
of animal life from the accounts of natives and travellers, as Aristotle had done, and thousands of these had never been checked. Buffon, in fact, checked some of his own errors as he grew older. His great work was intended to be a summary of knowledge and it began with a theory of the origin of the earth. At first he had attributed all the rocks to the action of water but later he realized that the earth must at first have been incandescent and that it still has a high temperature in the interior.

I have said that Voltaire explained fossil shells as shed by pilgrims, which is an absurdity, but Buffon, though nearer to the study of these things, adopted a more absurd theory. Following a medieval idea instead of taking up that of Leonardo da Vinci, he said that these stones called fossils were just natural coagulations of matter in the rocks. On many points he ignored or rejected new discoveries, especially if they contradicted his own opinion, and often, as experts point out, merely because they had been made by his rivals. Instead of developing Descartes' idea that all life (except mental) is purely mechanical, he said:

"The forces which animate the animal are peculiar to it. It wills, acts, and determines itself."

Vitality, he said, is in each molecule of the body, and there is an infinite number of these vitalized molecules in the universe. The spermatozoa, on the other hand, which had recently been discovered, he would not admit to be alive. They were like "vinegar eels," etc.: just aggregations of the vital molecules which were shed by animal bodies, especially from their sex-organs. Many kinds of animals were in this way born by spontaneous generation. He had, on the other hand, the beginning of an idea of evolution. The jackal, wolf, and fox derived, he said, from a common ancestor; the horse had come from the zebra. He had only dim and partial glimpses of the truth, but he did emphatically oppose the teaching which was so useful to Bible-scholars, of Linnaeus, that species are fixed by the creator; he maintained that a species may change with the climate. But wherever religion seemed to be affected he was very cautious. Throughout he speaks of "the Creator" but he said later to a friend, Herault de Sechelles, who tells us this:

"I have everywhere mentioned the Creator, but you have only to omit the word and put in its place the power of nature."

Like so many distinguished men of the time who are classed as Deists, he seems to have had a more radical Skepticism.

**D'ALEMBERT**

Even the great mathematician D'Alembert, close friend of the great mathematician d'Alembert, close friend of Diderot, seems to have been far from candid when religion was involved in his statements and would have welcomed the title Agnostic if it had then been invented. He said to Diderot, "I am tempted to think that all that we see is just a phenomenon with nothing outside ourselves." He had apparently heard of Hume's philosophy. At other times he would ask: "Why does anything exist?" Once Diderot said to him:

"You're dogmatically for a thing in the morning and dogmatically against it in the afternoon."

"Yes," said D'Alembert, "and in the evening I believe neither."

It is not an impossible frame of mind in a great mathematician who looks out from his world of abstractions - so few of them do - upon the world of seething political and religious problems and contradictions, but it is also a well known form of escapism.

The hesitation - hesitation either to decide or to tell his decision - runs all through his work and is in sharp contrast to the clear precision of his mathematical work. He hesitates to accept Descarte's <sic> claim that life is mechanical, but admits that he cannot see how the immaterial can act upon the material. He sees that "morality is a consequence of the establishment of societies," but he objects that "in certain circumstances the good of the individual does not coincide with the general good." He thinks that "freedom of will must be admitted in any system of morals for if man is not free
all ideas of evil will be reduced to physical evil" - a clumsy expression for a mathematician - yet he sees the difficulty of admitting such freedom. He startles and annoys his colleagues by claiming that "the ecclesiastics of Geneva are: at the bottom Deists: they are more than tolerant." In short, he was clearly an Atheist with so much concern about the high academic and social position he had won - - he was a bastard and had spent his youth in poverty - that the paradox of his words is often not what he had in his own mind. But we must remember also that he had devoted himself above all to mathematics and mechanics. France owes him a great debt for the considerable extent to which he did identify himself with the <Note: use of 'dreaded':> dreaded Encyclopedists.

DIDEROT

Denis Diderot (1713-84), with whom he had a remarkable friendship, was in a different position. He was the son of a workingman, and the studies of his youth and even later were pursued in poverty and sacrifice. It was his monumentally learning and high character that won for him the association of academic notabilities like Buffon and d'Alembert or rich men like Helvetius and d'Holbach. He was at first a Deist with a profound admiration for the English Deist Shaftesbury, but he transferred his admiration to Bayle and abandoned all religious beliefs. Like D'Alembert, he disliked the name Atheist, but he made no secret of his absolute Skepticism; and his "Letters of the Blind" were condemned to be burned by the common executioner. He was the chief writer and dominating spirit of the Encyclopaedia, and it will be taken for granted that he repeated large numbers of the errors that still lingered in science and history. A French medical writer, Dr. S. Doublet, has recently issued a work ("Medicine in the Works of Diderot") which, while entirely sympathetic, shows this. Diderot made a serious study of anatomy, physiology, medicine, and natural history - it is only a theologian or a philosopher that can call these encyclopedists superficial - and he was the first to point out that life is a function of the tissues of the body, and he was much firmer and clearer than Buffon in advocating evolution. But he, naturally, in most matters of detail followed the fashion in medieval science. He laid great stress on "humors" and their actions. In some patients, he said - and he had spent weeks in the hospitals of Paris - the humors have "the voracity of animals, the causticity of fire." We must be careful not to "drive them back into the blood" as this is apt to cause fever. He advocated bleeding, and was often bled, but hemorrhage and diarrhea are, he said, the natural means of getting rid of humors. "Most diseases, if not all, are nervous," he said, and "every organ may be taken as a separate animal, as it has its own poison, its miasma." He believed that such diseases as scurvy, scrofula, and gout were hereditary, and that thunder aggravates diseases.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

These are inherited absurdities and count for little in the record of the great figures of the 18th century who beat a broad path for the scientific advance of the 19th. And it is the same with the two Americans, Franklin and Jefferson, whom all will admit to have been intellectually the greatest of their age and inferior to none in character. Adams said of Franklin that in his time he had a greater repute than Frederick the Great; or Voltaire. That is, perhaps, an 18th century American view, but his epoch-making discoveries in electricity alone made him famous throughout Europe as well as America. He had a genius for scientific inquiry, though his diplomatic and political career allowed him only a few years for concentrated research, and he was though he read Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish - so little acquainted with what literature already existed that he sometimes did not know whether he had made a discovery or not. Most Americans today know: only, apart from his share in public affairs, that by experimenting with kites he proved that lightning was an electrical phenomenon-in the elegant Latin epitaph of Turgot, "He stole the thunder from the heavens and the scepter from the hands of tyrants" - but modern experts hold that in linking together the various manifestations of the electric "fluid" he "made a vital contribution to the general structure of electrical theory." In a writer of such shrewd and solid judgment, convinced by his own research that the tradition of the" ages had brought; down a mass of ancient errors, we do not expect to find many illusions. On a superficial reading, these are mostly connected with religion. He remained a Deist to the end, believing in a future life and spoke so respectfully of Christ and Christianity
that today it is not uncommon for religious writers to claim that he was orthodox. "As to Jesus of Nazareth, I think his system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see," he wrote. But he elsewhere admits that he had doubts about the divinity of Christ—he clearly did not believe it—and considers that the version of his teaching now treasured in the churches is a corruption. How he knows that the original version was so sublime he never tells us. In his later years he whimsically said:

"It is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and I think it needless to busy myself with it now when I expect soon to have an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble."

Meantime, he added, "I see no harm in its being believed." It is the usual story of a social pressure that deprives his small religious creed of any value. While he was a man of fine character his sex-ideas were not at all the same as those which he called the wonderful teaching of Jesus. He had several natural children, and in France the widow of Helvetius was one of his mistresses. Those who feel confident that they would have stood out for martyrdom if they had lived in the 18th century may cast the first stone. Franklin was, both socially and scientifically, one of the grand figures of the age who led America to its true destiny.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

We should say the same of Jefferson, though in the matter of religion there was a more curious inconsistency. In Foley's "Jeffersonian Cyclopedia" the critical reader will note the poverty of the quotations under such headings as Jesus, Christ, Christianity, Churches, Immortality, Heaven, etc., but the compiler has dug out a large number of references to the Deity that would adorn the lips or the pen of an archbishop. In a letter of the year 1809, when he was over 60, we read:

"We devoutly implore assistance of Almighty God to conduct us happily through the great conflict."

There are two pages of this stuff. Yet, if you turn to the heading "Materialism," you find that Jefferson was as scornful of the idea of spirit as Zeno and most of the Greek philosophers had been. I showed this from his correspondence with Adams years ago in my Little Blue Book "Seven Infidel Presidents," but the joke here is that in this careful Jeffersonian Cyclopedia there are quotations from the same letters which plainly express his dogmatic Materialism. For instance: "To talk of immaterial existences, is to talk of nothings. To say that the human soul, angels, or God are immaterial is to say they are nothings or that there is no God, no angels, no souls."

Compare with this his remarks on transmigration in a letter to a clergyman:

"It is not for me to pronounce on the hypothesis you present of a transmigration of souls from one body to another in certain cases. The laws of nature have withheld from us the means' of physical knowledge of the country of spirits, and revelation has, for reasons unknown to us, chosen to leave us in the dark."

One suspects here a slight flavor of irony, but the innumerable references to God, the Creator of the Universe, cannot possibly be explained in that manner. Of what nature was this God of his if it was as material as Jupiter or Aphrodite?

It is impossible to read his words in that sense nor can we think Jefferson guilty of so many years of insincerity. The only solution seems to be, difficult as it is, that Jefferson was an ordinary Deist until he ceased to be President and retired from public life in 1808 and then, in his mature years, became a dogmatic Materialist and therefore Atheist. To settle this point it would require a more extensive study of his letters and writings than I can find room for here, but it would be a matter of considerable interest to modern Americans if we could prove that one of the greatest of their countrymen became an Atheist as soon as release from the labors of office gave him leisure to study religion. It is enough for me here to point out the paradox.

In other matters connected with religion we find him retailing uncritically the conventions of his age:
"There never was a more pure and sublime system of morality delivered to man than is to be found in the four Evangelists. We all agree in the obligation of the moral precepts of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in his discourses.

"I sincerely believe in the general existence of a moral instinct. I think it the brightest gem with which the human character is studded and the want of it as more degrading than the most hideous of bodily deformities. I believe that the moral sense is as much a part of our constitution as that of feeling, seeing, or hearing; as a wise Creator must have seen to be necessary in an animal destined to live in society ... Egoism in a broader sense has been presented as the source of moral action . . . ' So Helvetius, one of the best men on earth. . But it is one step short of the ultimate question."

Here we have the two phases or facets of Jefferson's mind in one passage: the high praise of Helvetius, an Atheist and Materialist, and a religious and intuitional idea of the social code of conduct. I just state the paradox and leave the solution to some future student. But there were other matters in which Jefferson idly adopted the reactionary ideas of his time. In regard to women he was as old-fashioned as Washington:

"Our good ladies, I trust, have been too wise to wrinkle their foreheads with politics. They are content to soothe and calm the minds of their husbands returning ruffled from political debate."

We will not forget that on other great social questions, such as slavery, he was, especially for a southerner, miles ahead of his generation. Unequal thinking was inevitable in what was still a raw new civilization separated by 3,000 miles of ocean from France and Britain. Jefferson, for instance, failed remarkably to foresee the near future of America when he advocated that it should restrict itself to agricultural production and leave manufacture to the Old World:

"While we have land to labor let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench or twisting a distaff ... for the general operations of manufacture let our workshops remain in England."

How in matters of science and history he repeated many errors that were still unquestioned in his time I need not show. We prefer to remember the power and sanity of intellect with which Jefferson conceived new ideals that were to put an end to man's feudal stage.

GIBBON

Goethe in Germany and Gibbon in England might be taken as the remaining great minds and guides of the 18th century, and research would not fail to find absurdities in the large body of their writings and letters. Of Gibbon I need say little as he is identified with one great historical work, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and in this magnificent pioneer work of the new history there were bound to be plenty of errors. For instance, he endorses the Christian fable that the great library of Alexandria was burned by the Arabs, whereas not only are the details of the story he accepts obviously legendary but the authority is late and worthless. Even in the famous two chapters in which he speculates on the rise of Christianity he commits serious errors; and, although these chapters have been bitterly attacked by theologians for a century, his mistakes are not of advantage to Skepticism but to Christianity. It is today the general opinion of historians that accuracy - faithfulness to the imperfect material then available - is one of the chief characteristics of his work, but, as the notes in Bury's edition show, the accepted authorities led him into many unimportant errors.

GOETHE

The genius of Goethe roamed over nearly every field of culture and it is not difficult to convict him of error and even absurdity. In science, for instance, while he more or less discovered the Glacial Period in geology and welcomed and to some extent developed the theory of evolution, he was bound to be unlucky in the course of his original speculations.
Most notable of these was his theory of color. His stay in a colony of artists roused his curiosity about color, and he believed that by his own experiments he proved that Newton's theory of color was wrong. He once said to Eckermann:

"I attach no importance to all that I have done as a poet but I do claim superiority in that I was the only man of my age to learn the true nature of color."

But his theory was, from the scientific angle, crude and leagues astray. He held that white light is simple, not compound, and that colors are due to some sort of blend of light and darkness or the passage of light through different translucent media. At the other end of the scale we are not surprised to find that he never understood the French Revolution, though the second part of "Faust" and "Wilhelm Meister" show how zealous he became for social justice and progress. He was a grand figure in a difficult age, and we do not smile if the pioneer opening up a new world loses his way now and again. That was the position of these great humanists of the 18th century.'

X LEADERS OF THE NAPOLEONIC AGE

[Full text:]'At the beginning of the present century collections of the mistakes of scientific men enjoyed a wide popularity both in the religious and the philosophical world. They were, in part, an attempt to weaken the growing public confidence in science: but partly the familiar text, that seems to give satisfaction to many folk: "You made blunders as well as we did." But there is a considerable difference between the two kinds of blunders. The scientific investigator fully admits that he has to proceed in part by guesses or hypotheses or theories. He has to interpret what he observes and, like the good detective, whose method closely resembles his, he tries one interpretation of the clues after another until he finds one that is beyond doubt or challenge. But the mistake of the theologians since the days of Copernicus and Galileo and of the philosophers during the earlier part of that period, was to reject plainly observed facts or solidly established interpretations of them in the name of the dogmatic authority of Moses or Aristotle; and this obstinacy drove them to accept the discredited blunders of a more ignorant age or to wrap themselves in contortions at which we have the right to smile.

In the Catholic world much of this continued to the 19th century even in regard to the Copernican theory, as the Vatican, with its usual stubbornness, if not ignorance, maintained its opposition until the 19th century when it was still forbidden in Catholic colleges to teach that the sun is the center of the solar system. In the 18th century a prominent English writer wrote a scornful refutation of the theory. "How," he asks, "can any man walk 200 yards to any spot if the moving superficies of the earth does carry it from him?" As late as the 30's of the 19th century we find Newman (later Cardinal) saying in a sermon delivered in Oxford University:

"Scripture says that the sun moves and the earth is stationary - and science that the earth moves and the sun is comparatively at rest. How can we determine which of these opposite statements, is the very truth till we know what motion is?"

Others, and not only Catholics, maintained the old idea that the earth was a level platform not a globe. As late as 1857 a book was published in London with the title "The Earth Not a Globe," and one of the leading provincial papers said that it "would seem to invalidate some of the most important conclusions of modern astronomy." One of the arguments was that navigators always use plot maps not globes! Although astronomy was now making rapid progress and using giant telescopes monstrous ideas found publication. In 1863 a man named Hailes, publishing a freak system, offered to bet $500,000 to $5,000 that he could prove that "the sun is a crystalline body receiving the radiance of God." We should have the same effect, he said, "if the sun should be removed and a terrestrial body of ice placed in its stead."

The flat-earth theory was soon yielded by religious folk generally. When navigators began to sail to South Africa, South America, Australia and New Zealand - round the earth, in fact - divines discovered that the Bible does not expressly say, however much it may imply, that the earth is not a globe. But almost every advance in astronomy was resisted. Giant telescopes came into use early in the 19th century, and it was discovered that many stars were double or
multiple. On this announcement one of the most select publications of the Church of England observed:

"We have forgotten the name of the Siderophil who lately discovered that the fixed stars are not single stars, but appear in the heavens, like soles in the market, in pairs. While a second astronomer, under the influence of that competition in trade which the political economists tell us is so advantageous— to the public, professes to show us, through his superior telescope, that apparently single stars are really three. Before such wondrous mandarins of science how continually must homunculi like Ourselves keep in the back-ground."

Sixty or 70 years ago this contempt of science was still as common all over America and Europe as the scorn of Communism is today. The Methodist head of the Vanderbilt University said at a Conference of his church in 1878:

"This is an age in which scientific authority, having divested itself of the habiliments that most adorn and dignify humanity walks abroad in shameless denudation."

One could quote reams of that sort of denunciation of the devilry of science until near the end of the last century. Then it became a respectable conflict of science and religion. Today religious readers are assured that there never was a conflict of science and religion. Half-informed camp-followers of science like McCabe prowled about in No Man's Land potting stray and misguided theologians.

As far as astronomy is concerned divines generally now discovered that "the heavens proclaim the glory of God" and astronomy just supplies us with spectacles to see it more clearly. It is amusing to read how the reluctance, to yield before the advance of science was particularly stubborn in regard to comets. The ancient idea was, we saw, that they were exhalations of inflammable gas from pestilential marshes, and the medieval theologians had worked out that God set them on fire to warn and to punish men, as they "shook plague and murder from their hair." Even some of the great astronomers of the century dared not attack this belief, but others did, and what we may call the war of the Comet lasted several centuries. When Halley's Comet appeared in 1682 a Fellow of the British Royal Society wrote in his diary, "Lord, fit us for whatever changes it may portend." At the time a Russian archbishop was on trial for some misdeed and, pointing to the heavens, he said to his judges: "God will sweep you all away!" Halley proved that comets had no connection with the earth, but the famous Dutch theologian, Professor Vossius, thundered: "The history of all times shows comets to be the messengers of misfortunes." The Catholic rector of a university at the time wrote:

"Comets are exhalations, hot and dry, fatty and well condensed, inflammable and kindled in the uppermost regions of the air ... the fatty sticky material of a comet may be kindled from sparks falling from any heavenly bodies or by a thunder-bolt."

He had himself, he said, seen one graze the summit of Vesuvius, and Naples would have been destroyed if it had not been protected by the blood of St. Januarius. Some Protestant divines thought this too rationalistic. A German professor wrote that the comet is "the thick smoke of human sins rising every day, every hour, every moment, full of stench and horror, before the face of God and becoming gradually so thick as to form a comet, with curled or plaited tails, which at last is kindled by the hot and fiery anger of the Supreme Heavenly Judge," One of the most learned British bishops of the 17th century said that comets are "flying hell" in which the souls of the damned are tortured. A learned British professor of the 18th century said that it was with the tail of a comet that God broke the crust of the earth and caused the Flood. The Puritans of New England were, of course, fierce against the impious attempt to rob God of his Red flags, but all over the world the old horror remained amongst the ignorant. In fact, as late as 1818 the British Gentleman's magazine, which would have shuddered at the

charge of ignorance, said that the comet of that year killed all the flies and caused a woman, to have four children at a birth. In 1910, I was in Australia when Halley's Comet re-appeared, and I found the New South Wales official
astronomer, a pious gentleman, advising folk, through the press, to remain indoors when the comet was nearest to the earth.

Meantime the advance of geology led to another of those fierce skirmishes which preceded the general battle. The Arabs and Persians had opened the avenue of geological exploration, and possibly Leonardo da Vinci had got, indirectly, from them the idea, so eccentric and so dangerous in his time, that fossils are the petrified remains of ancient animals and plants. Palissy followed Da Vinci but the idea was still so startling in the 18th century that Voltaire would not admit it. He did not, however, attribute them, as the philosophers and theologians (following Aquinas) did, to a "lapidific force" or to malformations in the rocks. He knew only of fossil shells and suggested that these (high up on the Alps) had fallen from pilgrims' hats. But field geologists were now studying the strata and realizing that the earth had been gradually formed; and his harmonized with Da Vinci's theory of fossils. But it was a darker menace than ever to the faith. Hadn't God created the earth, the plants, the animals, and man just as they are, and only about 4,000 years ago? Archbishop Ussher is credited with the 4,000 years theory, but it had been worked out, and may be worked out from biblical data by any man, by a series of divines. It was, however a far more learned British divine, Dr. Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor or Cambridge University and reputed one of its most famous scholars, who discovered that the Trinity did this stupendous work, "created heaven and earth, center and circumference, in the same instant and with clouds full of water," at 9 a.m. of the 20th of October, 4004 B.C. And this was said by one of the ablest scholars of his church when science was fairly advanced.

From the end of the 17th century divines now smelt a double emanation of sulphur from the pit. One of the most learned bishops of the time, Burnet, countered with a "Sacred Theory of the Earth" which brought into harmony with the Bible these features of nature that geologists were misrepresenting. The earth was created with a smooth surface, perfect shape, ?? most graceful and happy population of living things. The lion lay down with the lamb and even the dog hath no fleas. Then Adam sinned, and God soured the face of the earth. But again men became wicked and God had to strike once more. Underneath the shell or crust the earth had a mighty volume of water, and God "broke the foundations of the deep" - another great scholar, Whiston, said that he hit them with the tail of a comet - and out poured the waters that covered the entire earth. Naturally this drowned innumerable animals and made a hideous mess of what had been the land-surface of the earth, which it now carved into bills and valleys. Was there any wonder, Burnet asked, if you saw strata of the crust that had plainly been formed from beds of sediment often twisted out of shape, and containing masses of bones of animals at all levels? Twenty or 30 years later a Swiss theologian, Scheuchzer, brought out a book with the title "A Human Witness of the Deluge," which gave great joy, for it contained a drawing of a crushed and broken animal frame that had recently been unearthed - of a wicked man drowned in the Flood. It appears to have been a fossil giant salamander or reptile. Both books were translated into many languages, and their "sound scientific" teaching repeated by hundreds of religious writers and pamphleteers. Bones of dinosaurs and mammoths began to appear. These, of course, were the bones of the giants who lived before the Flood.

The idea was useful to theologians in marly ways. For one thing it reconciled the evil and disorder of the world with the goodness of the Creator. It was all beautiful - something like the old Persian idea of the earth as Ahura Mazda created it, before Angra Mainyu <both spellings sic> got up to his dirty tricks - at first, but when men sinned so much God was, to

his great grief, compelled to turn it into a Vale of Tears. There were, it is true, theologians who would not admit that even before the Flood the world had anything to be ashamed of. Everything was really good and providential. A Fellow of the British Royal Society, Dr. N. Grew, proved it (again from sound science). He said:

"A crane, which is scurvy meat, lays but two eggs in the year, but a pheasant and partridge, both excellent meat, lay and hatch 15 to 20 . . . If nettles sting it is:to secure an excellent medicine for children and cattle ... If the bramble hurts a man it makes all the better hedge, and if it chances to prick the owner it tears the thief. Weasels, kites, and other hurtful animals induce us to watchfulness, thistles and moles to good husbandry; lice oblige us to cleanliness in our bodies, spiders in our houses, and the moth in our clothes."
Reams of this stuff were written by pious and learned naturalists. One notices the hand of providence in the bug, as it is so apt to crawl on to your clean white collar and get caught. Others again took refuge in the ancient idea of spontaneous generation, which science still admitted. God had not specially created flies and fleas, spiders and scorpions, and so on. The Bible said that the earth "brought them forth," and Aristotle agreed with Moses. But the more congenial theory was that God made everything jolly, and "Sin" fully explained the spoiling of it all at the Flood. Granville Penn, another famous divine, said, against the geologists, that "our earth has undergone only two revolutions, the Creation and the Deluge." A British cleric, Dean Buckland, who did know geology, was called into the arena, but he was so much intimidated by the chorus of divines that a wag wrote:

Some doubts were once expressed about the Flood:
Buckland arose, and all was clear as mud.

Puerile as the idea of the Flood seems to us today - though it is given as Catholic doctrine in the Catholic Encyclopedia (1908) that there was a Flood and it destroyed the whole human race except Noah's Dating party - the fury of the battle over it raged until after the battle over it raged until after the middle of the last century. In 1860, a London publisher, Smith, well known for his dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc., announced a great Dictionary of the Bible. When the D part of it came out you were told at "Deluge" to look out for "Flood.” When the F's came out you Were referred to "Noah." The editors dare not pronounce. Ten years later we found the Assyrian tablets which showed that the story in Genesis is borrowed from an ancient Babylonian (or Sumerian) folk-story.

Meantime the battle had extended to other fields and brought out fresh floods of absurdity. One of the chief reasons for this tremendous zeal for the Flood was that on the lines of geological science the nature of the strata and the fossils opened up tremendous abysses of past time, but, as we saw, the beginning of the world was fixed at about 4000 B.C. Where was this challenge going to end? Already in 1794 Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of the more famous Charles, had claimed that man and all the animals were evolved, not created. The divines and their followers were more strident than ever. In 1802 the leading writer of France, Chateaubriand, insisted in his most famous work, "The Genius of Christianity," that God created the world 6,000 years ago just as it is today:

"It was part of the perfection and harmony of the nature that was unfolded before the eyes of men that the deserted nests of last year's birds should be seen in the trees, and that the seashore should be covered with shells which had been the abode of fish, and yet the world was quite new, and nests and shells had never been inhabited."

Another imaginative pietist suggested that the fossils were created as models of the animals - you would almost say broken toys of the deity. Gosse, a really distinguished British naturalist, wrote:

"Neither reason nor revelation will justify us in the origin of the natural system beyond 6,000 years from this day."

Rocks that show by ancient scratches that a glacier once flowed over them were no difficulty. God created them like that. When men of science talked like that you can faintly imagine what the preachers were saying. Clergy and gentry applauded the verse of the famous poet Cowper:

Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract and register by which we learn,
That he who made it and revealed its date
To Moses lied.
All this went on for a quarter of a century after Sir Charles Lyell, the great geologist and one of England's foremost scientific men at the time, had put beyond question in his classic work, "The Principles of Geology," that the earth's crust had been gradually formed during ages. The geologists, in fact, demanded more time than the astronomers. In the early years of this century, the successors of the priests who had fought under the banner "Creation, 4004 B.C." were jeering at scientists of the last century who had said that the earth could be more than 100,000,000 years old. They omitted to mention that it was a religious scientist, Lord Kelvin, who said this, and they were, of course, entirely ignorant that the Atheist Buchner, whose book, "Force and Matter," had sold by the hundred thousand had, in 1855, given estimates of the age of the earth rising to 6,000 million years!

But the scientific army was advancing on all fronts and at every step it met a shower of jibes and absurdities. Archaeologists found the remains of Stone and Metal Ages stretching over millennia before the dawn of civilization. "What," said an eminent Christian Egyptologist. "Why, Egypt laughs the idea of a rude Stone Age, a polished Stone Age, and Bronze Age, and an Iron Age, to scorn." The scientific powers drove on like slow tanks. Darwin brought out a scientific scheme of evolution. Those who followed him, said one of the leading reviews, were "under the frenzied inspiration of the inhalation of mephitic gas." The book based upon evidence patiently collected during 20 years) was "a huge imposture from beginning to end," "a jungle of fanciful assumptions," etc. One of the most fashionable bishops of the Church of England, "Soapy Sam" Wilberforce, thought that he could afford to ridicule it in a scientific gathering at Oxford (the British "Home of Lost Causes") and you may have read Huxley's crushing retort:

"If I had to choose I would prefer to be a descendent of a humble monkey rather than of a man who employs his knowledge and eloquence in misrepresenting those who are wearing out their lives in the search for truth."

The reviewer of Darwin's book in the Times said that it was "reckless and unscientific," an "utterly unsupported hypothesis." An American Methodist bishop annihilated it in a conference of his church. There were, he assured them of his own scientific knowledge, beds in the district with mingled remains of "the monk-rat, the ichthyosaurus, and the coprolite." He did not even know that coprolite means fossilized dung. A great preacher in Paris, Msgr. Segur, said:

"These infamous doctrines have for their only support the most abject passions. Their father is pride, their mother impurity their offspring revolutions. They come from hell and return thither, taking with them the gross creatures who blush not to proclaim and accept them."

As a description of the gentle Darwin and the puritan Huxley this is, as the French say, impayable. A learned French physician sent the Pope a copy of the work in which he completely demolished evolution;

but the howlers that the Pope perpetrated in his reply for a later chapter. Don't forget that Catholics, as well as their spiritual brethren the Fundamentalists, still use this language about evolution and evolutionists, they still libel Haeckel as they once libelled Darwin.'
church towers had been struck in 33 years, but the Lutheran ministers were as bad as those of New England. The Catholics were, of course, the last to yield. The tower of St. Mark's cathedral in Venice was repeatedly struck before they would protect it. In another Venetian church the authorities had stored 200,000 pounds of gunpowder. In 1767 (17 years after Franklin's discovery) it still had no conductor. It was struck and the powder fired. The explosion destroyed, with great loss of life, one-sixth of the city.

Even in innocent natural history the bishops brandished their croziers against the advancing scientific demons. The row over biblical criticism and the infallibility of the Bible often turned on ancient petty superstitions that were accepted in the sacred book. One wag wrote:

The bishops all had sworn to shed their blood
To prove 'tis true the hare doth chew the cud.
Oh, bishops, doctors, and divines beware.
Weak is the faith that hangs upon a hair.

Dragons, basilisks, and other mythical creatures had to go, but if they were mentioned in the Old Testament it was like pulling teeth. Said a German professor:

"Who would dare to deny the existence of the unicorn since Holy Scripture names him with distinct praises?"

Philology had been founded early in the last century, but stuffy old divines still held that the original language was Hebrew - in what other tongue could God have spoken to Adam in Paradise - and the Tower of Babel was the tragic theater in which the great diversity of languages began. As late as 1857 one of them wrote:

"The Hebrew is the primary stock from which all languages are derived ... Sanscrit is a dialect of Hebrew, and the manuscripts found with mummies agree precisely with the Chinese version of the Psalms of David."

Comparative religion was replacing the old idea that all religions that were not Christian were either inspired by the devil or were hopelessly stupid. The dissection of their better points now led to the modern theological theory of "progressive revelation" and a discovery of profound mystery and symbolism in the creeds of ancient Egypt. Godfrey Higgins, whose "Anacalypsis" made a great noise in the last century, wrote such rubbish as:

"The Buddhists of Upper India, of whom the Phoenician Canaanite Melchisedech was a priest, who built the Pyramids, Stonehenge, Carnak, etc. will be shown to have founded all the 66 ancient mythologies of the world which, however varied and corrupted in ancient times, were originally one and proceeded on principles sublime, beautiful, and true."

The superstition that all the world lay in darkness and the shadow of death until the coming of Christ was, in the minds of those who still opposed science, giving place to a new group of absurdities: that God had revealed himself to the race from the beginning of history, that the seers of the old world were far wiser than the scientific men and philosophers of today, that the pyramids of Egypt embodied advanced knowledge of astronomy as well as a lost art of engineering, that flea-bitten fragments of the half-civilized race like the Tibetans had a marvellous wisdom stored in their squalid monasteries, and so on.

The worst of it was that even in practical matters the lamentable biblical inheritance continued to block the lines of advance. None know better than Americans what appalling effect it had in the struggle for the abolition of slavery. It was a liberal divine who said that it would have been a good thing for the abolitionists if all the churches of America had dropped through the floor of the planet. Jesus and Paul had treated slavery as normal and legitimate human
institution. St. Augustine had explained that God had ordained it as one of the punishments of sin. Even the belief in
witchcraft, with all the terrible suffering it had entailed during 800 years, was stoutly held by divines against the
assaults in the 18th century of the great Freethinkers (Voltaire, Beccaria, etc.) The most deeply religious oracle in
Europe, John Wesley, declared that "the giving up of witchcraft is in effect the giving up of the Bible." The action of
devils was still seen everywhere. Until the end of the 18th century the insane were apt to be regarded as possessed by
the devil, who was to be driven out by scourging and forcing filth into the patient as well as by prayer. The third edition
of the Encyclopedia Britannica said, under the title of "Demoniacs": "The validity of demoniacal possession stands
upon the same evidence with the Gospel system in general."

The success of medicine in reducing the terrible volume of pain and suffering that had lain upon the race for ages was
thwarted by the pious. The Popes of the Middle Ages had hampered the progress of anatomy and fostered a most
mischievous belief in the efficacy of shrines, relics, pilgrimages, and all kinds of profitable devices, The reformers had
swept away this reliance upon miraculous cures, but Luther's morbid belief in the activity of devils had led to the
retention of the other great superstition in the way of medical progress. Great advances like inoculation and the use of
anaesthetics were resisted as furiously as the installation of lightning-conductors. Vaccination was introduced in the
18th century, and one could quote a large number of clerical denunciations of it. Small-pox, the preacher cried, was "a
judgment of God on the sins of the people" and to attempt to prevent it by inoculation was "an encroachment on the
prerogative of Jehovah." Boston preachers raised the charge of murder against a local doctor who unsuccessfully
vaccinated a patient. It was, one divine said, "an artificial way of depopulating a country."

It was about the middle of the last century when American dentist introduced the use of gas to lessen the "pain which
the race had endured for thousands of years in the removal of decayed teeth. Then the Scottish surgeon Simpson
discovered the use of chloroform. Until then the operating room of a hospital "resembled a butcher's shambles" said a
medical writer of the time:

"The patient was held down by three or four powerful arms as the surgeon boldly and rapidly did his work despite
the screams, stopping, perhaps, only roughly to abuse the patient for some agonized movement which had interfered
with his course of action. The poor wretch saw the instruments handled one by one."

And there was the usual cackle from the pulpit when surgeons wanted to mitigate this suffering. In Catholic Dublin the
opposition was long

67 sustained. It was particularly bitter against Simpson when he began to soften the pains of child-bearing. Here the Bible
plainly said that as a punishment for her invasion of the reserved orchard Eve and all her female descendants to the end
of time must bring forth children "in sorrow." Yes, said Simpson, who knew his Bible well, but the same Lord God
"caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam" when he prepared to take out one of his ribs and make a woman out of it. This
was, of course, the devil quoting scripture. The violent opposition continued.

These are just a few specimens of the absurdities with which divines were driven in opposing the Bible to the
discoveries of science; Even in social life old superstitions were either upheld or treated with tenderness. Most folk
know now, until the later Middle Ages, the Church condemned the taking of any interest on a loan as a mortal sin. It is
not generally known that Luther also called it theft, and that in spite of the immense development of business and
banking in modern times, the Catholic Church still boggled. In 1830 the Vatican again refused to disown the old
doctrine of "usury." In 1872 it replied that it was no sin to take even 8 percent of your capital. It had begun to seek the
most profitable investments for its own capital.

By that time science was taking over every province of real life which it did not encounter opposition from the clergy.
But so many educated folk recognized that science meant truth sweeping old ignorance out of its path that a deeper
rebellion arose in the religious world itself. What was called the Higher Criticism of the Bible, which drew another
shower of theological expletives, was left almost entirely to consecrated writers. Scientists and Freethinkers generally
just stood on the edge of the arena and smiled. They smiled more broadly than ever when, in the second half of the last
century, there appeared an enormous and diverting literature that purported to reconcile the teaching of science with the teaching of the Bible. To the absurdities to which this zeal gave birth I will return later.'

XII THE NEW SOCIAL ORACLES
[NOT all scanned:]
'With the 19th century the river of books that flowed over the planet became broader and deeper. The population increased rapidly after the close of the Napoleonic Wars, and with the establishment of state systems of free schools in all leading countries the number of readers rose to millions. <Note: following sentence somehow seems to typify McCabe's writing style:> Yet for many reasons it is not difficult to restrict the number of the men I choose here to illustrate, for our encouragement, the blunders of great minds. The principal writers of general interest in the last century are still read and their opinions are widely known, while scientific writers of distinction no longer hold those beliefs about nature and its animal populations or about the structure of the universe which have chiefly entertained us throughout this volume. In fact, scientists now increasingly specialize and the opinions or errors of many who were esteemed intellectual giants in their time - Agassiz, Pasteur, Helmholtz, Ricardo, Faraday, Huxley, Darwin, Le Conte, Comte, Lester F. Ward, <all sic> etc. - are not much discussed today outside the history of science which each.cultivated. I will therefore select here a few literary men of international influence who were regarded in most countries as social oracles.

For America it is obviously best to choose the leading writers of the Boston or Transcendentalist School. To the poets, political authors, historians, and scientists who make up a large part of the best American literature of the last century we do not look for the kind of blunders and eccentricities which interest us here, and the opinions of novelists are not taken seriously. The great social oracles, wielding a considerable influence until late in the century were Emerson and other New England writers who thought that they were making a new, permanent, and in-

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calculably important contribution to man's thinking. We might, in fact, dismiss even these with the remark that the fundamental blunder of the whole group is expressed in the name, the Transcendentalists, which is often used as a common label of them. It means that in forming their creed they "transcended" experience and had their mental roots in a mystic world that was reached only by a sort of intuition. Splendid as their service was in breaking the tyranny over men's minds of the older New England religion, their creed is not for us moderns; and its very mysticism prevented them from applying moral principles too closely to the collective life. Like Confucius in ancient China, they aimed. to make a make a 'gentleman' - as the translations of the Chinese classics express the ideal Confucian man - and looked to him to apply his own refinement in the conduct of life. For the realistic workers and writers of the modern world, Emersonianism is as dead as Confucianism is in China.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Emerson, on account of the charm and purity of his style, is the chief representative of the group, and illustrates the fundamental blunder of these writers who used to be regarded as America's finest guides to conduct on the higher plane. In one of his most characteristic essays, "The Over-Soul," which shows in its very title how the old puritanism and a good deal of mysticism remained when they had exorcized the devil of the fierce old theology, he says:

"The argument which is always forthcoming to silence what we conceive to be extraordinary hopes of man, namely the appeal to experience is for ever invalid and vain ... 

"Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Always our being is descending into us from we know not whence I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine. As with events, so is it with thoughts. When I watch that flowing river which out of regions I see not pours for a season its streams into me, I see that I am a pensioner: not a cause but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water, that I desire and look up and put
myself in the attitude of reception; that from some alien energy the visions come ... that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all others; that common heart of sincere conversation is the worship to which all right action is submissive: that overpowering reality which compels our tricks and talents... the Eternal One ... the Highest Law.

"We lie open on one side to the deeds of spiritual nature, to all the attributes of God. Justice we see and know: Love, Freedom, Power. These natures no man ever got above, but always they tower above us, and most in the moment when our interests tempt us to renounce them.

"If a man wants to know when the Great God speaketh he must "go into his closet and shut the door," as Jesus said. He must listen to himself, withdrawing himself from all the accents of other men's devotions ... He that finds God a sweet enveloping thought to him never courts other company. When I sit in that presence who shall overcome me?"

In "English Traits" he says:

"If religion be the doing of all good and for its sake the suffering of all evil, that divine secret has existed in England from the days of Alfred to those of Romilly, of Clarkson, and of Florence Nightingale."

I add this quotation only to show how this mysticism warps the judgment. It is a complete misconception of the character of the Middle Ages, a credulous acceptance of the Catholic version, because this suited Emerson's disposition; and the greater English figures of Emerson's own time were not Romilly - good man as he was - and certainly not Clarkson, but Owen, Bentham, Place, and Mill. But they were Atheists and made Emerson shudder. W.D. Howells, who knew, and to a great extent followed, Emerson gives in his "Literary Friends and Acquaintances" a description of him that almost alienates an admirer. He had "an extraordinary indifference and coldness to men" and he forgot events as soon as they had happened. He speaks of his "Quaker calm" and "frosty Puritanism." He thought that "the habit of plain speaking had to be zealously guarded to keep it from becoming rude speaking." He closely followed the literary movement in America but, says Howells, "I doubt if he so fully appreciated the importance of the social movement." He agreed with the anti-slavery agitation but he "had no sympathy with those who think that the man who may any moment be out of work is industrially a slave." He even gives instances of pettiness of character in Emerson's personal conduct. Howells, who gives it as a general feature of these New England moralists that they declined to apply their beautiful regard for justice to the social and industrial order, is not altogether just to Emerson. In his fine essay "Man the Reformer," which is a lecture delivered to an audience of workers in 1841, Emerson shows that he was by no means indifferent to the social struggle. A typical sentence is:

"What is man born for but to be a Reformer, a re-maker of what man has made, a renouncer of lies, a restorer of truth and good, imitating that great nature which embosoms us all, and which sleeps no moment on our old past but every hour repairs herself yielding us every morning a new day, and with every pulsation a new life?"

He was far from the temperament of an active reformer, but he knew that his ideal commanded reform.

Curiously enough, the reproach seems to have more ground when it is applied to the more practical Oliver Wendell Holmes. Not only did he, like all the others, resent any criticism of the established creeds, but he "sat in the seat of the scolder as far as Reform is concerned." He looked at the common folk "through the palings and over the broken bottles on the wall." Lowell was nearer to helping radicalism but lost all his zeal in his later years when "he had no faith in insubordination as a means of grace." Law and Order became his idols. Longfellow, who broadly belongs to the school, was much the same. They were all skeptics yet it is only from the gossipy pages of Howells' book that you learn that they did not believe in a personal God and personal immortality. It does not say much for the new Platonist idealism that it left men isolated in their own graceful comfort and indifferent to so many lies and injustices. Indeed, in
transferring the moral ideal from its Christian frame to the clouds, instead and finding a basis for it in social needs, they created a new superstition which still has an evil influence as surely as did Aristotle when he invented metaphysics.

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

If we care to do so we can find much of a different kind to censure in Abraham Lincoln. It is well known how once, in mature manhood, when his son was bitten by a dog he took him miles away to be cured by a "madstone." Hapgood shows that "to the very day of his death Lincoln never failed to believe in supernatural portents," and that "superstition, faith, and doubt were inextricably mixed up in him." It was not from political expediency only that he kept his views about religion so veiled that Christian writers still claim him. As to the other great American oracle of the last century, Walt Whitman, we hardly look to him for opinions. His fiery gospel of brotherhood did so much service that we will not quarrel with his claim that it had a mystic or "religious" basis.'

[THOMAS CARLYLE / MAZZINI / NIETZSCHE / KARL MARX / IBSEN / HERBERT SPENCER]

- [GLADSTONE:] 'I have especially criticized these writers because they were all skeptics, not reactionaries, and gave great help in breaking the fetters of the old creeds, and because their ideas are not only shared by large numbers of skeptics, but these men pose, ridiculously, as intellectually superior to Atheists and Materialists. Of the religious writers of high distinction in this period it is hardly necessary to speak, as their blunders are familiar. Let me give one illustration of how the old creeds still warped the mind. The British statesman, Gladstone, may be considered one of the ablest men of the last century who definitely belonged to the Christian fold and wrote admirably in defense of the faith. In a book, "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture" (1890), which had an immense circulation, he shows how the old ideas still prevented men of high ability and great learning, only 50 years ago, from recognizing scientific truth. He, in unconscious imitation of the pope (whom he detested) selects six modern ideas as false and damnable:

  "1. That the discoveries of science as to natural objects have slain or destroyed the assertions of the early Scriptures with respect of the origin and history of the world and of man, its principal inhabitant"

  "2. That their contents are in many cases offensive to the moral sense and humanity of an enlightened age."

  "3. That our race made its appearance in the world in a condition but one degree above that of the brute creation, and only slow and painful but continuous progress has brought its representatives to the present phase of existence."

  "4. That men have accomplished this by the exercise of their own natural powers and have never received the special teaching and authoritative guidance which is signified under the name of Divine Revelation."

  "5. That the more considerable among the different races and nations of the world have devised and established from time to time their perspective religions and in many cases accepted the promulgation of sacred books which are to be considered as essentially of the same character as the Bible."

  "6. That the books of the Bible, and especially those of the Old Testament, which purport to be the earliest are far from being contemporary with the events which they record or with the authorities to whom they are ascribed."

Such was the final position of probably the ablest and most learned lay Christian in Europe half a century ago. Into what amusing blunders Gladstone was led in defending his position—in one famous bout he fought for the literal truth of the miracle of the Gadarene swine—with Huxley I need not tell here, but I may give a specimen of the general effect of this medieval faith on his culture. He was a master of Greek literature, and in a little known work, "Juventus Mundi, or The Gods and Men of the Heroic Age" (1869) he proves that the crude religion of the early Greeks that we find in Homer had hidden meanings and was a precursor of the Christian religion." For instance he says of the trident of Poseidon (the Greek Neptune):
"With respect to the Trident, an instrument so unsuited to waters, it appears evidently to point to some tradition of the Trinity, such as may still be found in various forms of Eastern religion other than the Hebrew. It may have proceeded amongst the Phoenicians from the common source of an older tradition; and this is more probable than a direct derivation from the Hebrews."

Educated London rocked with laughter. The trident of Greek and Roman anthologies is a fish-spear raised into a symbol of the god of the sea. It is therefore particularly "suited to water."

- [SPIRITUALISM:] 'Of attempts to found new religions - Theosophy, Christian Science .. to meet the oncoming tide of Materialism I need not speak. considering the dullness of the great not the artfulness of charlatans and fanatics. But a word must be said about Spiritualism. In that debate, before 3,000 people, with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in London, I started with the sentence: "Spiritualism was born of fraud, cradled in fraud, and thrives on fraud today." Yet in the course the last century it succeeded in duping men of great intellectual distinction. In the first 10 years of its fraudulent existence it claims have captured several million followers in America, including a few judges and professors, and to have won the serious attention of men of still higher intellectual rank like Professor William James. It was then imported into Britain and later to the rest of Europe, and several men of at least great distinction in science embraced it with a credulity that seems incredible. Most important of these was Professor (later Sir) William Crookes, one of the leading chemists in Europe and the real discoverer--though he did not know it--of the electron. In the 70s of the last century a young woman adventurer of the crudest and most blatant type duped him for years. She masqueraded as the materialized form of the spirit of Katie King," and in broad daylight she sat on his knee, was weighed in his machine, and so on, yet he continued to believe in her. When, in his last years, I challenged him to say whether he still believed in her he wrote me a pitifully evasive letter. Alfred Russel Wallace, the famous naturalist and co-discoverer of Natural Selection, was another and equally astonishing dupe. Another medium, whom any person of moderate intelligence ought to have been able to expose, seduced him into literal belief. In fact, his creed warped his science that until he died he gave the greatest encouragement to the churches by flatly denying that man's mind, as well as his body, was evolved. The works of the last decade of his life are pitiful.

A German Professor Zollner, though not in the class of these two, is another distinguished scientific dupe; deluded by the cheap adventurer Sladle. Sir Oliver Lodge was another, but here we are departing far from the company of "the great." Late in the century, however, a new phase opened. The "phenomena" were pronounced to be genuine but were attributed to only "abnormal powers" of the medium. This new superstition not only men like the distinguished astronomer Flammarion but men like Professor Richet, leading French physiologist, and Professor Lombroso, greatest European criminologist, were drawn. Even the able British critic and Ibsenite William Archer was drawn into the sheep-fold, as we may call it, before he died. We must certainly not omit these men from a record of the errors and absurdities of great minds. We get no encouragement or guidance from reading the eccentric ideas about the universe and the world of life that men formed in the ancient or the medieval world. In view of the scantiness of positive knowledge we understand. But the spectacle of eminent scientific men, masters of one branch of science betraying such credulity when they stray into other fields of knowledge is a warning for all time."

XIII OUR MODERN INFAILLIBLE POPES
[76-83: Entire chapter scanned:]

"Heaven forbid that I should call any Pope in the entire series from the beginning of the 2nd century a "great" man. It is only by the excessive courtesy that historical writers now show to the Roman Church that even Gregory VII, Innocent III, Benedict XIV, and Leo XIII are paid the same homage as we more sincerely pay to the intellect of Frederick II, Voltaire, Napoleon or Goethe. But since it has suited the Catholics of modern times to declare their Popes infallible, it is amusing to run over their monstrous blunders in the very field - the sphere of social, ethical, and doctrinal questions - in which they are understood to rise high above the wisdom of a congress of geniuses. Let me, with my usual neurotic scrupulousness, be perfectly just to our Catholic neighbors. It is only in certain conditions, in
certain sharply defined utterances, that they claim infallibility for their great oracle. You may suggest that if I am sincere in my regard for justice I will confine myself to these utterances. But, alas, there are none. Nearly 80 years ago the Catholic hierarchy in more or less - we shall see the facts presently - solemn assembly at Rome declared that the Pope is infallible or cannot possibly make a mistake when he issues a declaration to his entire church on a point of faith or morals and makes it clear that he is drawing upon his prerogative of infallibility. But from that day (1870) to this no Pope has made any such declaration.

That is true, your Catholic friend will tell you, but it is also true that the declarations of the Popes always have a unique impressiveness. My professor of theology 60 years ago, who was a secret Modernist, old me that the Catholic bishops who in 1870 opposed this dogma, of infallibility - he had known a number of them - used to say, with a flippancy that shocks us, that it meant that "the Pope has the Holy Ghost in his inkpot." Now is it likely that the Holy Ghost should wait - I nearly

said hibernate - in the golden inkpot into which the Pope never dips and be completely indifferent to what blunders he makes when dipping into his other ink pots to give the world the guidance for which it pants? Curiously enough that never occurs to your Catholic neighbor. However not only he but your daily or weekly paper, which in intervals between its comic strips and its advertisements of ladies' undies talks about the Venerable Head of the greatest Church, the Holy See, the Sovereign Pontiff, and so on, tells you that there is a unique <note: cp. CIA?:> force or wisdom in all the Pope says. <note: cp. CIA?:> The Vatican has the most cosmopolitan and most costly intelligence service in the world. Its antennae reach from Hudson's Bay to Patagonia, from Boston to Auckland, And the Pope, surrounded by a cabinet of cardinals from all countries, is the one man out of 200,000,000 who has been chosen for his wisdom and virtue .... If you have read my"History of the Popes," you'll smile. But here, as I have passed the 18th century, I must confine myself to the last 10 Popes.

Ever since the French Revolution the mind of the race has boiled and seethed with questions, but after the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of feudalism, which from the angle of a humane economics means savagery, Rome thought for 30 years that the world had returned to the Middle Ages and it left the Holy Ghost out of account in choosing its Popes. It didn't matter much, as the work was done by a series of Secretaries of State, cardinals who were as memorable for their blondes and their palaces as they were for their success in money-making. There was Pope Leo (1823-9), nearly a senile wreck - though he was still able to shoot birds in the Vatican Garden - at whom the whole of Europe mocked. Then there was Pius VIII (1829-30), who was a senile wreck, shuffling, paralyzed, about the palace for a few months. Next came Gregory XVI (1830-45), a vulgar gluttonous man who for 15 years enjoyed candy, strong wine, spicy gossip, and the erotic novels of Paul de Kook, while he had 6,000 rebels against the foul condition of his kingdom tortured in his jails. And then came the man whom Catholics now call "the Venerable" Pope Pius IX; the man who bullied the bishops into declaring him infallible, but who made more blunders, in an age that seethed with problems, than any other Pope since the Reformation during his 30 years of rule.

He was elected in 1846, when Europe was boiling up for the Revolutions of 1848, and in his small-minded bewilderment he at first coquetted flutteringly with the Liberals. Revolution soon swept him from his throne and he fled from Rome. From his comfortable exile he brooded bucolically over this heaving new world, where brutal armies were now driving the people back into slavery and thousands were murdered because they wanted freedom and democracy, and the only remedy this supreme guide of the age could think of was to declare solemnly the dogma of the Immaculate Conception; which led to the extraordinary imposture, later officially blessed by the Pope, of the apparition of the Virgin at Lourdes; It is not a specimen of blunders of the great but of blunders of the little. And so he blundered for 30 years, while Europe, which he, cursed periodically, "rounded onward to the light," and the number of victims in the foul Papal jails rose to 8,000. He violently denounced the toleration of Protestantism and Bible Societies in Italy. His own Papal States were then, the British ambassador said, "the opprobrium of Europe," while Rome was described by the famous French priest Lamennais as "the foulest sewer that had ever been opened to the eye of man." He brooded over the "anarchy" of the world, which we now recognize as the birth-pangs of at least a better civilization, and with owl-like wisdom he concluded that "Liberalism" was the fetid swamp from which all the poisons and devils emanated.
So he got his Jesuits to formulate in 80 proposition these poisonous sentiments of wicked literature and advanced politics, and he drew them up solemnly in a "Syllabus" and declared them "reprobated, proscribed, and condemned." American readers of Msgr. Ryan and Fulton Sheen might be surprised that here are some of the propositions solemnly condemned by the head of their church as late as 1864:

"Philosophy must be treated without taking any account of supernatural religion.
"Every man is free to embrace and profess the religion which, judging by the light of human reason, he believes to be true.
"Men may find the way of and attain it in any religion.
"We may entertain at least a well-founded hope of the eternal salvation of all those who do not belong to the true Church of Christ.
"The best theory of civil society requires that popular schools .. and educational institutions generally ... should be freed from all ecclesiastical authority . . .
"The Church ought to be separated from the State and the State from the Church.
"It is allowable to refuse to obey and even rebel against legitimate princes (as America had done).
"By the law of nature the marriage-tie is not indissoluble.
"The Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself to and agree with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization."

His defiance of the modern age roused such ferocious enthusiasm throughout the church, such spasms of breathless admiration of his wisdom, that he began to prepare the way for the declaration of infallibility. The Vatican Council, which met in 1869 mainly to promulgate dogma, was preceded by five years of intrigue and inquiry throughout the church as to whether it was safe and advisable to launch such a monstrous doctrine, and it was the most human and most heated general council of the church for many centuries. As early as 1867 more 500 bishops were consulted. The Holy Ghost did not take a back seat; he was nowhere near the preparations for this proposition which was eventually presented to the world in his name. There was a heavy opposition and some free speech. My professor told me that gallons of iced water had to be passed round every day. But between bribery and intimidation the opposition - save for a rump which seceded and founded the Old Catholic Church - was worn down, and the dogma was declared. But Pius put away his infallible robes in camphor and continued his blundering to the end of his days. I need give only two specimens. In 1869 he heard that a girls' college in which science was taught had been opened in France. He wrote to the bishop of Montpellier (December, 22) about "the vice of an institution which prepares for social life not only good mothers of families at the height of their mission but women swollen with pride by a vain and impotent science." He went on:

"Science cannot guard them against the public dangers to which the more delicate sex is exposed . . . It is deplorable that to the various means hitherto employed to corrupt the faith of your people there is now added an institution for destroying the faith of the adolescent."

Even the Catholic papers of France resented this; as they did again when in 1874 he condemned the use of the Roman classical literature in Latin classes. In 1877 the old man learned that some wicked named Darwin had (18 years earlier) advanced a theory of evolution. His letter - again to a French bishop - is so carefully buried that a few years ago the famous Oxford scholar, Dr. Coulton, got the head of the British Museum to ask me to find it, and I had great difficulty. It runs on these lines:

"The theory would seem to need no refutation did not alienation from God and the leaning toward Materialism, due to depravity eagerly seek a support in all this tissue of fables ... In fact, pride, after rejecting the Creator of all things and proclaiming man independent, wishing him to be his own king, his own priest, and his own God - this pride goes so far as to degrade man to the level of the unreasoning brutes, perhaps even of lifeless matter ... But the corruption of the
age, the machinations of the perverse, the danger of the simple, demand that such fancies, altogether absurd as they are - since they bear the mark of sin - be refuted by true science."

After this the infallible blunderer went to his reward, and the cardinals met to elect a man who really would give guidance to an increasingly troubled world. A year or so later I was, as a boy in a Catholic school, compelled to bow in reverence before "the skull cap of Pius IX." It was probably one of thousands ordered by the Vatican, airily blessed in a heap by the Pope, and sold at $5,000 or so each over the Catholic world. But they couldn't, or didn't think it safe to, get up any miracles, so Pius is only a Half-Saint.

Then, in 1878, came Leo XIII, whom the press and literature of the world have accepted as a great Pope, a most profound counsellor of a troubled age. He was a clever and, from the literary angle, a quite accomplished man. An elderly Belgian aristocrat once told me a story of the days when as a cardinal he was stationed in Belgium. At a reception in Brussels a wicked Liberal count, introduced to him, presented his snuff-box, open, to the cardinal. On the inside of the lid a nude lady was painted. The cardinal blandly took a pinch and asked, smiling: "The countess, I suppose?" He was detested by Pius IX, of whose intelligence he must have had a fair estimate, yet he was, relatively to his age, almost as great a blunderer as Pius.

The Papacy faced two big problems. The Italians had taken Rome and the Papal States - as a matter of fact, the people had voted in a crushing majority for inclusion in the kingdom of Italy and the French had just recovered from the mood of synthetic piety into which the Communard scare of 1871 had driven them - just as the Communist scare drives them into political alliance with the Vatican today - and were quitting the Church in vast numbers. On both points the Pope blundered tragically and nearly lost Italy and France. He excommunicated the "robbers," the Italian King and statesmen, and declared himself a "prisoner" in the Vatican. I will admit that this melodramatic fiction started the great flow of gold from America to Rome, but anticlericalism captured half of Italy. Leo refused to recognize the republican government of France until it secularized the country and completely broke the power of the church. He repeatedly affronted America (which, apart from Catholics, smi

The Irish were virtually in a state of rebellion against their British rulers, and the Pope ordered the Irish to abandon their Protestant leader Parnell and their Fenian Society (1883). The Poles were as rebellious against Russia as the Irish were against England, and in the hope of getting concessions from Russia he ordered the Poles to submit (1886); and he got no more from Russia than from England.

Catholic scholars were being shamed into drawing some sort of modern veil over the rawness of their faith. Repeatedly and solemnly,
established a Biblical Commission, to tell the world the very truth about the Bible. My old-professor of theology (a secret Modernist and scandalous trimmer) was secretary of it; and it endorsed the most pitifully medieval ideas about the Bible. I heard on sound authority after Leo's death that in his last delirious hours he kept repeating: "That biblical question, that biblical Question!" As a final trial of such historical scholars as were left in the church, he, in 1894, endorsed the popular Italian belief in the "Holy House of Loreto"; a legend that after the death of Mary this cottage of hers had been brought by angels from Judea to Italy and set up at Loreto!

Ignoring or hiding all these facts, though nearly all of them are found in the semi-official life of Leo by Msgr. T. Serclaes, Catholic sophists in America like Msgr. Ryan put Leo before their readers as the most luminous moral oracle of the last century on the ground of his "great" encyclicals. I have shown elsewhere that Ryan tampers with the translation, but even as he gives them, the boast of wisdom is ridiculous and the real purpose is misrepresented. They chiefly relate to political and labor questions. Before the end of his first year Leo attacked politics. He fell fiercely on "those men who call themselves by the barbaric names of Socialists, Communists, and Nihilists," as if there were any common ground of Socialism and Nihilism. There was then little Socialism outside Germany, and the gauntlet was flung - it was really a deal with Bismarck to shift persecution from the Catholics - at the Social Democrats of Prussia. What was the result? The Catholic vote, relatively to population, fell year by year, and the Socialist vote rose rapidly.

Fifteen years later the Pope felt that he must approach the matter differently. He issued the Encyclical Rerum Novarum on labor, which Catholics have put on record as The Charter of Labor. It is one long catalogue of the Liberal opinions which Pius had branded, though they had now become platitudes. The press, other than Labor, filled columns with comment on the extraordinary fact that the Pope had declared that the worker was entitled to a "decent" or "living" wage. What a comment on his own church that it, had taken 18 centuries to discover that! But when, as Msgr. T. Serclaes tells us, the Pope, though pressed, refused to say what the living wage is - even the employer of sweated labor says that he gives it - and when Leo sourly withdrew in his later years all concessions to the workers, the world-press was silent. So is Ryan.

As to the other "great" Encyclical Immortale Dei, or "On the Christian Constitution of States," it is simply a rebuke to the French for disestablishing the church and secularizing the schools, and it is therefore in effect an insult to America. Before the end of 1878 he had started on this line:

"By a new sort of impiety that was unknown even to the pagans they set up governments without any regard for God or the order established by him. They proclaim that public authority does not derive from God but from the people."

He returned to it in an Encyclical of 1881 "On the Origin of Civil Power." Then when France became a purely secular state, he let off the fireworks of Immortale Dei. Ryan, in praising its mixture of platitudes and Scholasticism, carefully conceals one fact; that Leo insists that not merely religion, but the Roman religion, must be the foundation of states: Naturally they must be based upon true religion, and then:

"As to the question which religion is the true one, it is not difficult for any man of prudence and sincerity. There are innumerable and brilliant proofs - the truth of the prophecies, the crowd of martyrs, the prodigious speed of the spread of the faith amongst its enemies and in spite of great obstacles, the witness of the martyrs, and other arguments."

He props up with these worm-eaten myths of the Middle Ages a thesis which America rejects, and Catholic literature, skillfully, touching up the Encyclical, presents it to America as the most profound and sublime political document of the last century. ... What a pity Leo (or any other Pope) did not know that, as American Catholic writers now say, we moderns derive our idea of democracy from the Jesuit writers Suarez and Bellarmine of 300 years ago. The real reason that Popes never said so, is not, of course, because it is false, but because until 70 years ago they regarded democracy as inspired rather by the devil than by the Jesuits.
Let it not be said that I represent Leo XIII to have been a fool, any more than I represented Aristotle as a fool in describing his blunders. A man's opinions must be judged by the world-fund of knowledge in his time. These Popes shut their eyes to the new wisdom and blasphemed it. I notice them here only because not only Catholic literature but almost the entire press of America assures the public that the Vatican is a rich storehouse of wisdom and the whole world should appreciate the golden words of Popes.

The Vatican lost immensely more subjects under Leo XIII than in the time of the Reformation in spite of the fact that Leo compromised on moral principles wherever an advantage to the church was offered; and he was nearly always duped by the statesmen. At the time of his death (1903) the world was passing into the new and dangerous phase which culminated in two terrible world-wars and the monstrous load of tragedies and problems that crushes our age. And the cardinals, who got together and implored the light of the Holy Ghost, elected a man of the old Chinese mandarin type. He lived in the center of the world as if he were blind and deaf. He worked only for the church, founding Catholic Action (1905), issuing (1907) the decree Ne Temere which affronted civil powers everywhere by insisting that Catholics observe in regard to marriage provisions of the Canon Law that are against all civil law, and in the same year launching a campaign against Modernism in the church which drove out or drove into hypocrisy its best scholars. This narrow-minded Pope, Pius X, issued a gold medal (the Pope slaying the dragon of Modernism) to celebrate his victory over truth: just as a predecessor had issued a gold medal to commemorate the St. Bartholomew Massacre.

Benedict XV (1914-22) was an abler man but just as futile from the angle of world-guidance. The first World War, to the approach of which his predecessors had been completely blind, at once raged round him, and he was as helpless as any French peasant who saw bombs dropping around him. Indeed it was not long before the Italians, who were then fighting the Austrians, found and published proof that the Vatican was in communication with the enemy and was tampering with the loyalty of Catholic soldiers. Like Leo XIII he was duped by the promises of German diplomats; and like the present Pope he began to appeal for peace when it became clear that Germany could not win.

Pius XI (1922-39), who succeeded him, passed into history as the moral oracle who made the infamous compact with Mussolini for $90,000,000 and other great advantages to the church, blessed the vile design of General Franco to plunge Spain into civil war, and let the Germans and Italians perform the curtain-raiser of the second World War. He was the man who radioed over the world the poisonous call to a crusade against Atheistic Communism, on the ground of which Hitler and Mussolini, pretending that this was their sole objective, persuaded France and Britain to stand aside while Germany made its formidable preparations and German and Italian troops practiced butchery in Spain. He it was who, bringing up to date, he said, the grand encyclical of Leo XIII on labor, in a new encyclical (Quadragesimo anno) retracted such concessions as Leo seemed to make and bade Catholic workers everywhere accept the idea of a Corporate State on the Fascist model; while Msgr. Ryan was dangling before the eyes of America this gem from one of the Pope's messages:

"The Church does not desire, neither ought she to desire, to mix up without a just cause in the direction of purely civic affairs."

Ryan has proudly translated for Americans the 10 encyclicals of this wonderful moral guide of the world in one of its most dangerous and most fateful periods (1923-29). After his initial general discourse on the wickedness and blindness of the world they are as follows:

- On the Centenary of St. Francis de Sales.
- On the Centenary of Thomas Aquinas.
- On the Centenary of St. Jehosaphat.
- On the Cultural Associations set up in France.
- On the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King.
- On Catholic missions.
- On Francis of Assisi.
- On the Persecution of the Church in Mexico.
Curtain.

But long before this wooly-minded "statesman" had passed to the Bosom of Abraham, the present Pope, Pius XII, then Cardinal Pacelli, had become Secretary of State and really ruled the church. He was the chief architect of the policy that linked the Vatican with the Fascist, Nazi, and Japanese thugs, and history will probably say that he ought to have been in the dock at Nuremberg with their chief leaders. He was raised to his position in 1930. This was the year after the Vatican's Concordat with Mussolini, but this had been followed by serious friction. What Pacelli did to end this may be judged from the fact that in 1932 the King of Italy decorated him with the highest order of nobility at his disposal, and the Vatican awarded its highest honors to the King.

In the same Year the Vatican ordered the German bishops to forbid their people to oppose Hitler and so gave him his first majority. Next year Hitler rewarded (as far as he ever did reward anybody who helped him) the Vatican with a Concordat, while he slaughtered the Jews, Socialists, and Communists, and strangled democracy. In 1934, Pacelli, having established in Europe an order that was bound to eventuate in war, went to South America and induced those long-standing and bitter enemies of the church, the Liberals, to join with it and the other reactionaries and set up a Fascist regime in nearly all the republics. He passed on to the United States, won the heart of Cardinal Mundelein and others (who threw all their weight on his side in the later Papal election), and built a new pipe-line for gold from America to Rome. In 1935 he saw Mussolini brutally invade Abyssinia and the whole Italian Church flame with joy; and he said nothing. In 1936 he received General Franco at the Vatican, but, of course, we don't the burden of their private conversations. All that we know is when Franco rebelled in July the Vatican was the first foreign power to hoist his pirate flag and the Papal banner was the first foreign flag to wave over Franco's headquarters at Burgos; and from that summer to the tragic end he rejoiced in the martyrdom of the Spanish people and gave the Catholic world one grossly untruthful message after another about the nature of the struggle. And after all this blessed work for the pacification of the earth, what could the cardinals - British and American, French, Italian, German, etc. - do but declare him chosen by the Holy Ghost for the spiritual rule of the world?

Professor Salvemini (of Harvard) has proved to the satisfaction of every scholar his complicity with Mussolini. I have shown by such a heap of quotations from, mostly, Catholic sources his appalling guilt in supporting the German and the Japanese Plan that Catholics induced Washington, on the plea that little I was disturbing the grand unity of the nation in the war-effort, to suppress the chief work in which I did this; and the pious authorities of New York port attempted to close their gates against the importation from Britain of other works in which I do the same. I hope they got their gold medal blessed by the Pope. The rest of the Pope's sacred oracles - on biblical studies, on the Mystic Body of Christ on St. Cyril of Alexandria, etc. - do not interest me; nor is this the place to describe how, after the two years silence to allow the people to forget how he had backed Mussolini, Franco, Hitler, and Matsuoka, he has emerged in the different-colored robe of an ally of America and Britain in the crusade to impose democracy (which he loathes) upon the world. "Peace" is still the most tender refrain on his lips; and he is fostering the grave risk of civil war in France and Italy and supporting with all his power of intrigue the worst elements in America, Britain, and France who are working for the speedy inauguration of the third World War.

Indeed, by this time some of my readers will be wondering what the Popes are doing in this galley at all. Do I call these things dumbness? Or do I call the Popes great? But if they look back they will see that the sub-title of this book announces a record of all sorts of aberrations of "the world's outstanding leaders." If I include the moral mistakes of moralists like Emerson and Carlyle - honest mistakes in the belief that they are for the good of the race - how much more must I include these perversities of the world's greatest professional moralists? As to their "greatness," not only nine folk out of 10 but nine-tenths of the world press and literature will assure you that our Emersons and Carlyles were, as moral and social guides, pygmies in comparison with these almost-inspired oracles. You may care at least to learn in detail the stark contrast between what even the New York Times and the Herald-Tribune: to say nothing about the Chicago Tribune, and the heads of our leading universities tell you about the matter and the reality.'
... now admitted that these are rare and generally ineffective, the name is dropped. But in the study of the cause of them a real science of heredity took shape, and, as it was now found that an odd sort of skeptic, Mendel, who had become the abbot of a monastery, had discovered some of the facts - and scientists today have a laudable desire to please the church - the science took his name, Mendelism. It is now the valuable science of Genetics, and its devotees look back with embarrassment on the language their predecessors used. Nature (heredity) was everything and nurture (environment) nothing. Darwinism was "as the dodo." The churches were illuminated and their bells rang out merrily. Amateur sociologists (Bernard Shaw, etc.) took it up and said that attempts to train children were "a vile abortion." It is, Professor Karl Pearson said, settled in the fertilized ovum whether the child will be "good" or "bad." And so on. A monstrous amount of nonsense was poured out between 1910 and 1930. Those of us who, like myself, refused to be in fashion were heavily rebuked by the professors. Today it is generally acknowledged that environment and heredity are equally important factors. In the case of man, in fact, the new science of social psychology throws by far the greater stress on environment.'

- JEANS AND EDDINGTON

[Entire section scanned:]

The blunders of certain distinguished physicists and astronomers were far more mischievous. The late Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington were two of the most brilliant mathematical astronomers and physicists in Europe. I have not found that any distinguished physicist took up their ideas in America, and indeed their British colleagues often treated them severely in review of their works in Nature). It was mainly the churches that sent their publications into one edition after another, though the cold silence or acrid censures of many of their colleagues ought to have warned them that they had discovered a mare's nest. But Eddington was a devout Quaker, Jeans a member of the Church of England, and their belief that they had found a way to discredit Materialism finally and completely put blinkers on their minds. As most of my readers will know, their contention was that Materialists hold that the atoms of matter are not composed of smaller parts and would never break up into something else. I have shown repeatedly that, not only had the supposed arch-Materialist Haeckel expressly claimed in his "Riddle of the Universe" 50 years ago that an atom is a close cluster of much smaller particles of something, but that the best American manuals of physics declare this to have been the general opinion of physicists since Crookes's experiments 20 years earlier, and that Lester F. Ward gave it as "one of the two chief physical theories" in America. Ward even said that some held (in 1880) that the atom was compacted of energy.

The only other point on which these two brilliant sophists of our time agreed may not unjustly be described as an utter absurdity. In their general philosophy they fell back upon the most absurd theory of Bishop Berkeley that there are no material realities; that what we call such are only ideas in the mind of God. Whatever philosophers say of this theory
you have only to reflect that it means that there are no wars, no economic orders, no problems, etc., and that what these two erratic geniuses would consider the ugliest of things - sexual organs, license, cruelty, toilets, etc. - are ideas in the divine mind. This seems to make it incredible that they really meant what I have ascribed to them but in scientific interviews published in the chief British Sunday paper The Observer (December 21, 1930 and January 4, 1931) they expressly admitted it. Jeans piled absurdity upon absurdity when in several books he assured the religious world that it followed from the new physics that the material universe - the universe in which he did not believe - had had a beginning and had therefore been created.

After this it is not necessary to quote our philosophers. In act, no one will venture to accuse of "absurdity" such men as Dewey and Whitehead, but one can have a good deal of sympathy with the distinguished scientist (already quoted) who calls their ideas "lucuberations <sic>, hallucinations, and obsessions of the human mind." In one respect only I would venture to use the word absurdity about the works of contemporary philosophers, and this applies also to many professors of ethics, to say nothing of the great majority of the writers who invoke or discuss moral ideals. All of them rely on "intuition," and it is a medieval myth. Modern psychology, which after decades of observation and experiment, describes for us the whole "contents of the mind," as we used to say, has rejected it. Yet you will find distinguished literary men and scientists as well as philosophers and theologians appealing to or relying on it as if it were as real as memory. In the light of our present knowledge of man's brain-life it is a patent absurdity, yet no other fallacy of the old days survives so abundantly in modern literature as this does.

I can do no more in this chapter than summarize contemporary errors and absurdities with which I have dealt fully in earlier works and I confine myself still to condemnation only in cases where we have a large body of settled expert opinion to which the critic can appeal. If I were to say here what I think of much that our psychoanalysts and psychiatrists say, I might be accused of prejudice and would at least not have a generally received body of knowledge to appeal to. In regard to political, social, economic, and ethical questions in detail anything I could say about the opinions of others would have only a personal value. There is, perhaps, one point that arises from the preceding paragraph, on which one may venture to speak of absurdity. We talk of moral law every day, yet half the folk who write most eloquently about it are vague or confused as to its nature. There are, in academic works, three theories of it. It is either a Christian code of conduct, a social code, or something that "our conscience teaches us" or the mind perceives in some mystic way. Since there is no such thing as intuition, the third idea is absurd, yet it is still amazingly common amongst not only literary men and moralists but even scientific men and historians seems to haunt the mind only because it has been deeply imprinted on it by education and is maintained by our literature. The paint may seem academic but it is far otherwise. Apart from convinced Christians, this is the main ground of quarrels about sexual behavior and moral censorships.

'. their belief that they had found a way to discredit materialism.' .. Crookes.. Lester F Ward... absurd theory of Berkeley..

.. moral law.. There are.. three theories of it. It is either a Christian code of conduct, a social code, or something that "our conscience teaches us".. the third idea is absurd, yet it is still amazingly common..'

- 88: PROF ARNOLD TOYNBEE: 'In the province of history few outstanding authorities could be charged with anything like absurdity. It might seem strained even to suggest the possibility of distinguished experts making absurd statements in their own fields but I have already given several instances of authorities of the first rank in science being diverted into that unfortunate position by their religious opinions. There is at least one such instance in the historical field in our time, and the name of the historian, Professor Arnold Toynbee, seems to be in the highest regard in American universities. During his 1947 tour of those universities Professor Toynbee did not obtrude this theory of his which I have in mind, but it is sufficiently indicated in his chief work, and it is developed at length and emphatically asserted in a special lecture (the Burgess Lecture) which he gave in England to a body of Christian students.
It is the monstrous idea that since religion has gained by all collapses of civilization we should look forward at least with equanimity to the collapse of civilization in our time which so many folk predict. If I may not call that an absurdity I will call it a monstrosity of mysticism. In fact the historical statement itself, that collapses of civilization led... influence of religion, is ridiculously false in the sense in which Professor Toynbee affirms it... He is, of course, thinking of the complete capture of Europe by Christianity after the fall of Rome. It is obvious that he has a totally false idea of the quality of the religion and the character of the people of the Dark Age. Was this appalling degradation... which lasted centuries... a compensation for the destruction of Roman civilization? Similarly with other collapses (China, India, Spain, etc.) They were always followed by Dark Ages and degraded religions.'

- 89: PROF HUSKINS [Harvard historian who thought the Dark Age is 467 to 1453]

- 89: SIR RICHARD GREGORY: [McCabe says he gave a SPES lecture [prob. 1943-RW] and praised the 'age of chivalry of the 11th to the 14th centuries... noble service... Love, honor, loyalty, and piety... courtesy etc’... compared with the teaching of every leading authority on the period... the exact opposite of the truth... erotic, cruel, callous, and dishonest.' None of these 'leading authorities is named. Note: McCabe has a similar problem to Joan Robinson vis a vis economists; if historians are crap, how can you quote them with approval?]

- 90: DR GILBERT MURRAY: ‘... Ethical Society lecture... [probably 1915-RW] popular revolutions generally, in such language that he was clearly entirely ignorant of the facts. Of the European revolutions since 1798 [sic; 1789?] he said: All revolutions are full of horrors and inhumanities.

There have been about 40 such revolutions - the people winning freedom and democracy - and (clerical-royalist) counter-revolutions, directed by the clergy and royalists or dictators, more than 500,000 men, women and children lost their lives and many times that number suffered in vile jails and exile. In the actual popular revolutions - I exclude the Terror which was four or five years after the French Revolution and the Civil War in Russia that the Whites began nine months after the Soviet Revolution - less than 500 were killed, and there were no official reprisals.

Dr. Murray as a great literary professor is not an historian... There are today few professors even in history who tell the full and objective truth about Christ and early Christianity, the Middle Ages, the struggle for democracy in the 19th century or the recent history of Russia, or discuss the causes of the Second World War...’

- 90: SIR E. RAY LANKESTER ‘... a Freethinker... sent in a paper on the "unique" ethic of Jesus... a book of McCabe after months of research had shown that there was not a single unique sentiment in the New Testament... McCabe has read every Renaissance Pope document in Latin or Italian. Finishes with: 'essayists, journalists, radio spouters... oracles who dictate the opinions of the millions... Unfortunately their literary skill is such that everything they write is broadcast in the literary columns of the newspapers...']