

A detailed oil painting of a woman with long, wavy red hair, wearing a green robe with a purple cape and a leopard-print skirt. She is holding a golden chalice with a flame and looking upwards with an expression of awe or magic. The background is a dark, ornate interior with various magical artifacts and a large, patterned tapestry.

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**THE MAGIC OF
THE MIDDLE AGES**

VIKTOR RYDBERG

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1. The Cosmic Philosophy Of The Middle Ages, And Its Historical Development

INTRODUCTORY.

It was the belief of Europe during the Middle Ages, that our globe was the centre of the universe.

The earth, itself fixed and immovable, was encompassed by ten heavens successively encircling one another, and all of these except the highest in constant rotation about their centre.

This highest and immovable heaven, enveloping all the others and constituting the boundary between created things and the void, infinite space beyond, is the Empyrean, the heaven of fire, named also by the Platonizing philosophers the world of archetypes. Here “in a light which no one can enter,” God in triune majesty is sitting on his throne, while the tones of harmony from the nine revolving heavens beneath ascend to him, like a hymn of glory from the universe to its Creator.

Next in order below the Empyrean is the heaven of crystal, or the sphere of the *first movable* (*primum mobile*). Beneath this revolves the heaven of fixed stars, which, formed from the most subtile elements in the universe, are devoid of weight. If now an angel were imagined to descend from this heaven straight to earth,—the centre, where the coarsest particles of creation are collected,—he would still sink through seven vaulted spaces, which form the planetary world. In the first of these remaining heavens is found the planet Saturn, in the second Jupiter, in the third Mars; to the fourth and middle heaven belongs the Sun, queen of the planets, while in the remaining three are the paths of Venus, Mercury, and finally the moon, measuring time with its waning and increasing disk. Beneath this heaven of the moon is the enveloping atmosphere of the earth, and earth itself with its lands and seas.

There are four prime elements in the structure of the universe: fire, air, water and earth. Every thing existing in the material world is a peculiar compound of these elements, and possesses as such an energy of its own; but matter in itself is devoid of quality and force. All power is spiritual, and flows from a spiritual source,—from God, and is communicated to the earth and the heavens above the earth and all things in them, by spiritual agents, personal but bodiless. These beings fill the universe. Even the prime elements derive their energy from them. They are called intelligences or angels; and the *primum mobile* as well as the heaven of fixed stars is held in motion by them. The planets are guided in their orbits by angels. “All the energies of plants, metals, stones and all other objects, are derived from those intelligences whom God has ordained to be the guardians and leaders of his works.”¹ “God, as the source and end of all power, lends the seal of ideas to his ministering spirits, who, faithfully executing his divine will, stamp with a vital energy all things committed to their care.”²

No inevitable causation is admitted. Every thing is produced by the will of God, and upheld by it. The laws of nature are nothing but the precepts in accordance with which the angels execute their charge. They obey from love and fear; but should they in a refractory spirit transgress the given commandments, or cease their activity, which they have the power to do,

¹ Henricus Cornelius Agrippa ab Nettesheim: “De occulta Philosophia.”—I., xiii.

² Henricus Cornelius Agrippa ab Nettesheim: “De occulta Philosophia.”—I., xiii.

then the order of nature would be changed, and the great mechanism of the universe fall asunder, unless God saw fit to interpose. "Sometimes God suspends their agency, and is himself the immediate actor everywhere; or he gives unusual commandments to his angels, and then their operations are called miracles."³

A knowledge of the nature of things is consequently in the main a knowledge of the angels. Their innumerable hosts form nine choirs or orders, divided into three hierarchies, corresponding to the three worlds: the empyreal, that of the revolving heavens, and the terrestrial. The orders of Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones which constitute the first hierarchy, are nearest God. They surround his throne like a train of attendants, rejoice in the light of his countenance, feel the abundant inspiration of his wisdom, love and power, and chant eternal praises to his glory. The order of the Thrones, which is the lowest in this empyreal hierarchy, proclaims God's will to the middle hierarchy, to which is given the rule of the movable heavens. It is the order of Dominion which thus receives the commands of God; that of Power, which guides the stars and planets in their orbits, and brings to pass all other celestial phenomena, carries them into execution, while a third of Empire wards off every thing which could interfere with their accomplishment. The third and lowest hierarchy, embracing the orders of Principalities, Archangels and Angels, holds supremacy over terrestrial things. Principalities, as the name implies, are the guardian spirits of nations and kingdoms; Archangels protect religion, and bear the prayers of saints on high to the throne of God; Angels, finally, have the care of every mortal, and impart to beasts, plants, stones and metals their peculiar nature. Together these hierarchies and orders form a continuous chain of intermingling activities, and thus the structure of the universe resembles a Jacob's ladder, upon which

"Celestial powers, mounting and descending,
Their golden buckets ceaseless interchange."

All terrestrial things are images of the celestial; and all celestial have their archetypes in the Empyrean. Things on earth are composed of the coarsest of all matter; things in the surrounding heavens of a finer substance, accessible to the influence of intelligences. Archetypes are immaterial; and as such may be filled without resistance with spiritual forces, and give of their plenitude to their corresponding effigies in the worlds of stars and planets. These again through their rays send forth of the abundance of their power to those objects on earth by which they are represented. Every thing on earth is consequently not only under the guidance of its own angel, but also under the influence of stars, planets, and archetypes. The universe is a vast lyre whose strings, struck no matter where, are sure to vibrate throughout their length.

It was for man that God called forth the four elements from nothing by his fiat, and it was for man that he fashioned this wonderful earth from those elements in six days. Man is the crown of creation, its master-piece, and within the narrow limits of his nature an epitome of all things existing,—a microcosm, and the image of the supreme God himself.

But since man, as a microcosm, must partake also of the coarsest matter, his dwelling-place could not be within the Empyrean, but must be fixed on earth. In order that it might be worthy to receive him, it was adorned with all the beauty of a paradise, and angels gazed from heaven with delight upon its vales and mountains, its lakes and groves, which in changing lights and shadows shone now with the purple of morning, now with the gold of the sun, and again with the silver of the moon. And this place of habitation explains symbolically by its very position the destiny of man and his place in the kingdom of God; for wherever he

³ *Ibidem.*

wanders, the zenith still lingers over his head, and all the revolving heavens have his habitation for their centre. The dance of the stars is but a fête in honor of him, the sun and moon exist but to shine upon his pathway and fill his heart with gladness.

The first human beings lived in this their paradise in a state of highest happiness. Their will was undepraved; their understanding filled with the immediate light of intuition. Often when the angel of the sun sank with his gleaming orb towards the horizon and “day was growing cool,” God himself descended from his Empyrean to wander under the lovely trees of paradise, in the company of his favored ones.

The world was an unbroken harmony. There was, to be sure, a contrast between spirit and matter, but as yet none between good and evil. It was not long to remain thus.

Lucifer, that is the Light-bringer, or Morning Star, was the highest of all angels, the prince of seraphim, the favorite of the Creator, and in purity, majesty and power inferior only to the Holy Trinity. Pride and envy took possession, it is not known how, of this mighty spirit. He conceived the plan of overthrowing the power of God, and seating himself upon the throne of Omnipotence. Angels of all orders were won over to his treason. At the first beck of the reckless spirit numberless intelligences from the lower heavens and from earth assailed the Empyrean and joined themselves to the rebellious seraphim, cherubim and thrones who had flocked to the standard of revolt. In heaven raged a mighty contest, the vicissitudes of which are covered by the veil of mystery. St. John, however, in his Book of Revelation, lifts a single fold of it, and shows us Michael at the head of the legions of God battling against Lucifer. The contest ended with the overthrow of the rebel and his followers. The beautiful Morning Star fell from heaven.⁴ Christ beheld the once faithful seraph hurled from its ramparts like a thunder-bolt from the clouds.⁵

The conquered was not annihilated. Calm in the consciousness of omnipotence, God inscrutably determined that Lucifer, changed by his rebellion into a spirit wholly evil, should enjoy liberty of action within certain limits. The activity of the fallen spirit consists in desperate and incessant warfare against God; and he gains in the beginning a victory of immeasurable consequence. He tempts man, and brings him under his dominion. Humanity, as well as the beautiful earth which is its abode, is under the curse of God.

The world is no longer an unbroken harmony, a moral unity. It is divided forever into two antagonistic kingdoms, those of Good and Evil. That God so wills, and permits the inevitable consequences, is confirmed by an immediate change in the structure of the universe. Death is sent forth commissioned to destroy all life. Hell opens its jaws in the once peaceful realms of earth's bosom, and is filled with a fire which burns every thing, but consumes nothing.

The battle-field is the whole creation except the spaces of the Empyrean; for into its pure domain nothing corrupt can enter. Lucifer still adheres to his claims upon its throne, and in every thing seeks to imitate God. The fallen seraphim, cherubim and thrones constitute his princely retinue and his council of war. The rebel intelligences of the middle hierarchy, now transformed into demons, still love to rove among the same stars and planets which were once confided to their care, and war against the good angels who now guide the movements of the heavens. Other demons float upon the atmosphere, causing storm and thunder, hail and snow, drouth and awful omens (whence it is said the devil is a prince who controls the

⁴ This passage, directed against the ruler of Assyria, was already interpreted by the early fathers as having reference to Satan. Thus Lucifer, the Latin translation for Morning Star, came to be a name for the prince of darkness.

⁵ Luke x. 18.

weather). Others again fill the earth; its seas, lakes, fountains and rivers; its woods, groves, meadows and mountains. They pervade the elements; they are everywhere.

Man, the chief occasion of the strife, is in a sad condition. The bodily pains and sufferings which the earth since its curse heaps upon the path that successive generations, all partakers of Adam's sin, must tread, are as nothing compared with the perils which on all sides assail and threaten their immortal souls. And how can these dangers be averted? Each mortal is indeed followed from his birth by a guardian angel; but how can his promptings be distinguished from those that issue from the thousand hidden agents of the Evil. Lucifer can transform himself into an angel of light, his demons can entice with a voice which counterfeits that of God and conscience. Man's will has no power to resist these temptations; it is depraved by the fall. Reason gives no guidance; darkened on account of man's apostasy, it degenerates, if left to itself, into a Satanic instrument of heresy and error. Feeling is in subjection to matter, which, already from the beginning opposed to spirit, shares the curse. Is it then to be wondered at that the career of man, beginning with conception in a sinful womb, has for its end, behind the portals of death, the eternal torments of a hell? All these myriads of souls created by God and clothed in garments of clay,—all these microcosms, each of which is a master-piece, the glory of creation, a being of infinite value, form, link by link, a chain extending from that nothingness out of which God has created them, to that abyss in which, after a brief life on earth, they must be tormented through countless ages, despairing and cursing their Creator.

Lucifer triumphs. His kingdom increases; but the poor mortal has no right to complain. The vessel must not blame the potter. When man looks into his own heart he discovers a sinfulness and depravity as infinite as are his punishments. However severe the law of the universe appears, it still bears the impress of divine justice.

It is, therefore, but an act of pure grace, when God determines the salvation of mankind. The Church, prepared for by the election of the Jewish people, and founded by Jesus Christ the Son of God, who offered himself for crucifixion to atone for the sins of men, has grown up and disseminated its influences throughout regions where once demons, the gods of the heathen, possessed temples, idols and altars. The Church is the magic circle within which alone is salvation possible (*Extra ecclesiam nullus salus*). Within her walls the Son of God offers himself daily as a sacrifice for the transgressions of humanity; the Communion wine is by a miracle changed into his blood, and the bread into his flesh, which, eaten by the members of the Church, promote their growth in holiness and their power of resistance to the Tempter. The Church is one body, animated by the Holy Spirit of God; and thus one member compensated by surplus of virtue for the deficiencies of another. Holy men, resigning all sensual delights, and devoting their lives to the practice of penance and severities, the contemplation of spiritual things, and doing good, accumulate thereby a wealth of supererogatory works, which, deposited in the treasury of the Church, enables her to compound for the sins of less self-denying members. With liberal hand she grants remission of sins not to the living merely, but also to the dead. Thus the race of men may breathe more freely, and the multitude attach themselves again to the transient joys and pleasures of a wretched life on earth; and when a mortal plucks the flowers of pleasure which bloom in this vale of sorrows, he need not fear so much its hidden poison, for the remedy is near at hand. The knight in the castle yonder on the summit of the crag, or the burgher beneath him in the valley, may without scruple take a wife, rear children and live in conviviality according to his means; the happy student may sing and realize his "*Gaudeamus igitur*"; the undaunted soldier may seek a recompense for the hardships of his campaign by a merry life in taverns and in women's company; even the followers of Mary Magdalene, sinning in expectation of grace, may obtain at the feet of the Church the same absolution which was given to their model at

the feet of Jesus, provided only that, grateful for the mercy of Christ, who has made them members of his Church, they venerate it as their mother, partake of its sacraments, and seek its aid. The continually increasing number of cloisters, the homes of rigorous self-denial, uninterrupted penance, and mysterious contemplation, is a guarantee of the inexhaustibleness of those works of supererogation which the Church possesses. In these cloisters young maidens, who have consecrated themselves to Christ after a spiritual embrace for which the most intense impulses of their nature have been suppressed, yearn away their lives. Here in prayer and toil the pious recluse spends his days and nights. Those men also who, going forth barefooted, covered with coarse mantles, and wearing ropes about their waists, devote themselves like the apostles to poverty and the preaching of the gospel, who receive charity at the door of the layman, giving him in exchange the food of the word of God,—these all issue from the same cloisters.

Thus is the Church a mole against the tide of Sin. The Christian has some reason to exclaim: “O hell, where is thy victory?” for although the place of torment is continually filled with lost spirits, there are thousands upon thousands of ransomed souls that wing their flight to the Empyrean,—whether immediately or by the way of Purgatory. First among the beatified who mingling with angels surround the throne of God, are those called saints. Their intercession is more efficacious even than that of seraphim, and their power in the contest against the demons surpasses that of cherubim. Therefore kingdoms, communities, orders, corporations and guilds, yea, even lawless and disreputable professions (so needing grace and intercession more than others) have their patron saints. The individual finally is protected by the saint in whose name he has been baptized.

The Church is the kingdom of God on earth; her ecclesiastical hierarchy is an image of the heavenly; her highest ruler, the Pope, is God’s vicar. Her destiny, which is extension over the whole earth so as to include all lands and nations within her magic circle, could not be realized unless she possessed the power to command the kings and armies of Christendom. It is evident, moreover, that spiritual power is above secular: the former protects the soul, the latter the body only. They stand related to one another as spirit is related to matter. Therefore it must be the Pope who shall invest with the highest secular dignity,—that of the Roman Cæsars. He is the feudal lord of the emperors, as the emperor is, or should be, of the kings, dukes and free cities. Were it not thus,—if the various rulers were independent of the guardians of religion,—then woe to the great mass of their subjects! To be sure these multitudes are placed on earth to be disciplined by humanity and obedience; they have indeed no rights upon which they may insist, since they stand outside the pale of freedom; but, on the other hand, the oppression exercised upon them would have no limit unless the Church, who is the common mother of all, reminded those in authority of their duty to love and cherish the lowly: indeed, all social order would crumble into dust, did not a higher power than that dependent upon the sword compel the stronger to fulfil those vows to protect the weaker which he made in the presence of the Holy Trinity. For the only existing rights are those of privilege and investiture, founded absolutely upon sealed stipulations.

According to the doctrines of the Church, which are the only key to salvation, man has received as a gift what he never could have attained by science,—a knowledge of the highest truths. Possessed of this knowledge he must no longer allow himself to be tempted by the devil to engage in efforts to penetrate the mysteries of the universe with nothing to aid him but his darkened intellect; for such attempts generally end in error and apostasy. Still the allurements are strong because the highest truths, when clothed in the garb of human conceptions, sometimes appear self-contradictory and absurd. They must therefore be submitted, not to the decisions of reason, but the arbitration of faith. Faith alone is able to penetrate and apprehend them. The doctrines which the Church, assisted by the Holy Spirit,

promulgates, since they alone are true, offer to the believing investigator a mine of infinite treasures. There is consequently possible within the Church a system of philosophy, provided that its processes, always postulating the infallibility of the dogmas, be confined to devout analysis and humble contemplation of religious tenets. For such a purpose the adherent of the scholastic philosophy may employ the Aristotelian dialectics as he chooses, and wield the lever of syllogism at his pleasure. Even within the pale of orthodoxy there may arise many an *if* and *but*, many a *pro* and *contra*. The scholastic reasoner has to prove but the most probable; the infallible Pope and his synods sanction the true deductions and refute the errors which, when recanted, are forgiven. It is best for the inquirer to found his researches on the propositions laid down by the early fathers of the Church; for thus succeeding generations will build on foundations laid for them by their predecessors long before. Inasmuch as they all follow the same dialectic method of analysis and synthesis, so that the whole subject is pervaded and its masses grouped into architectural order by these processes, there is reared on the basis of the dogma a philosophical superstructure, resembling those cupolas with which the skilful masters of masonry amaze our eyes.

The world grows worse. The Church can pardon sin, but can not hinder its increase. Every generation inherits from the preceding a burden of evil dispositions, habits and examples, which it lays in its turn still heavier on the shoulders of posterity. Every son has better reason for sighing than his father. "Happy those who died ere beholding the light of day! who tasted death ere the experience of life!"⁶ The hosts of Satan assail the Church on every side. From his tower the watchman of Zion looks out over the world, and beholds the billows of history, now lashed fiercely by the demons, roll against the rock upon which Christ has built his temple. With great difficulty the cross-adorned hosts of Europe repel the invasion of the Saracens, whose coming has been prefigured by pestilences and portents. The emblem of the Church is an ark tossed about on a stormy sea amid a tempest of rain and lightning. History is a spiritual comedy, enacted on a stage of which the broad foreground, like that of the mysteries, is a *theatrum diabolorum*; while in the narrow background the Church of God, like a beleaguered citadel, points its pinnacles above the turmoil towards the gloomy sky, from which its defenders expect Jesus and his angels to come to their relief.

But before this relief arrives, iniquity shall have reached its height. It is at work already within the sacred precincts of the Church itself. It is with greater difficulty that God's vicar subdues the inner than the outer enemies. On the one hand many a man believes that he has found in his own reason and conscience leading truths, which he arrays, without any authority outside of himself, against those commandments which have come from above, and the divine origin of which is confirmed by the faith of a hundred generations. He places himself in an attitude of opposition to the common faith. Thus originate the heresies,—those cancers on the body of the congregation which must be cured by the iron, when salves will not restore, and by fire when the iron is ineffective. On the other hand men are so overpowered by their passions that they abandon the God who rebukes them, and become the bondsmen of another god who shows them favor. Pride, fettered by obscure descent, and keen appetite for pleasure chained from gratification by penury and privation, shake their shackles in despair, and finally call the Morning Star of old to their assistance. The archfiend promises pleasures without stint, and power without limitation. The poor mortal for dread of the pains which afflict his body is urged on to his destruction. His body formed from the dust of the accursed earth, and always a centre of sensual desires, is abandoned by God a prey to the assaults of the devil. "Here somebody loses an eye, somebody there a hand; one falls into the fire and is burned to death, one into the water and is drowned; another climbs a ladder and breaks his

⁶ "De Contemptu Mundi sive de Miseria Humanæ Conditionis," a little book written about 1200, by the afterwards Pope Innocent III.

neck, another again stumbles on the even ground and breaks a leg. All such unforeseen accidents, occurring daily, are but the devil's thumps and strokes which he inflicts upon us from sheerest malice."⁷ Still more: the demon is able to take possession so thoroughly of the human body that he becomes, as it were, its second soul, moves its limbs, utters blasphemies with its tongue at which even their fiendish author can not but tremble. But though the God-fearing man, like pious Job, is benefited by such afflictions, and although prayer is a powerful refuge, still there is a continually growing number of those who, driven by cowardly dread of the might of the Prince of Evil, seek their safety in a league with him; so much the more as he lends them a partial control of the elements, and thus a means of employment and of doing harm to others. Thus the dire pestilence of sorcery multiplies its victims; and in the black hours of midnight hundreds of thousands who bear the name of Christian, on mountains and in deserts perform clandestine rites in honor of their Satanic master. Time ripens for the advent of Antichrist, for the Day of Judgment and the final conflagration.

In the flames of this last day the revolving heavens and the earth are destroyed. Motion, activity, strife, history,—all are at an end. The Empyrean and Hell alone remain, as the antipodal extremes of the former universe. This conflagration is not a universal purifier, annihilating what has no existence in itself.⁸ It only separates forever the gold from the dross. The kingdom of the devil continues to exist, and its prey is its own for evermore. But it exists thus only because an eternal existence means an eternal punishment for its ruler as well as for his subjects. From the new heavens and the new earth which the fiat of God has created to be the dwelling-place of those who have escaped destruction, these ransomed spirits perceive the gnashing of teeth and lamentation of their doomed brethren, and look down upon their tortures and misery, not with compassion but with joy, because they recognize in their punishment the vindication of divine justice; not with pain but delight, because the sight of their wretchedness doubles their own felicity. From the depths of that gulf of misery ascend without ceasing, to the Empyrean, cries of despair, blasphemies of defiance, and curses of rage, yet do they not disturb the hymns which saints and angels sing ever around the throne of God and of the Lamb; they only intensify the solemnity of the worship.⁹

Such in its chief features was the cosmic philosophy of the Middle Ages; not abstractly considered, but such as existed in reality during many centuries among Christian people,

⁷ The words of Luther, who, in addition to his dualistic belief, was a genuine son of this same Middle Age, though the destroyer of its autocratic faith.

⁸ As such,—as perishable and unreal, are all evil things regarded by an unknown author in the Middle Ages. In his beautiful opusculum "Deutsche Theologie," he says among other things: "Now some one may ask, 'Since we must love every thing, must we also love sin?' The answer is, no; for when we say every thing, we only mean every thing that is good. Every thing that exists is good by virtue of its existence. The devil is good in so far as he exists. In this sense, there is nothing evil in existence. But it is a sin to wish, desire or love any thing else than God. Now all things are essentially in God, and more essentially in God than in themselves; therefore are they all good in their real essence."—The little work from which the above is quoted, is the expression of a deep and pious soul, struggling to master the dualism which fettered his age. It is remarkable that Luther was not more strongly influenced by its spirit, although he confesses that "Next to the Bible and St. Augustine I have found no book from which I have learned more."

⁹ See the work "Summa Theologica" (supplementum ad tertiam partem, quæst. 94) by the most prominent and most influential among the theologians of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas. It is there said: "Ut beatitudo sanctorum eis magis complaceat et de ea uberiores gratias Deo agant, datur eis ut pœnam impiorum perfecte videant.... Beati, qui erunt in gloria, nullam compassionem ad damnatos habebunt.... Sancti de pœnis impiorum gaudebunt, considerando in eis divinæ justitiæ ordinem et suam liberationem de qua gaudebunt."—With this may be compared the following execrable effusion of another theologian: "Beati cœlites non tantum non cognatorum sed nec parentum sempiternis suppliciis ad ullam miserationem flectentur. Imo vero lætabuntur justi, cum viderint vindictam; manus lavabunt in sanguine peccatorum."

guiding their thoughts, imagination and feelings, and governing their actions. Remains of it are still apparent in the systems of existing sects, though incompatible with the new philosophy which the human mind has been laboring to unfold. Ever since the intellect of Christendom began to free itself in the sixteenth century from faith by authority, the influence of the old views upon the various forms which life takes on, has been gradually declining.

Many of those characteristics which so strangely contrast the state of society in the Middle Ages with the preceding Hellenic and the subsequent modern European civilizations, have their origin in different theories of the universe. It is not mere chance that we encounter, on the one hand, in the history of Greece, so many harmonious forms with repose and tranquil joy depicted in every lineament of their countenance, and on the other, in that of the Middle Ages, so many beings buried in deepest gloom or exalted in frenzied rapture, dripping with blood from self-inflicted wounds, or glowing with the fever of mystic emotion—not a mere chance that the former age loves those serene forms and immortalizes them in its heroic galleries, while the latter worships its eccentric figures and describes them in its legends as saintly models. It is not a mere accident that the art of Greece mirrors a beautiful humanity, while that of the Middle Ages loves to dwell upon monstrosities and throws itself between the extremes of awful earnestness and wild burlesque; not an accident only that the science of the Greek is rational—that he discovers the categories in Logic, and rears a most perfect structure of rigid demonstration in his Geometry, while the science of the Middle Ages on the contrary is *magic*,—is a doctrine of correspondencies, Astrology, Alchemy, and Sorcery.

To the Greek the universe was a harmonious unity. The law of reason, veiled under the name of fate, ruled the gods themselves. The variegated events of the myth lay far away in the distance; they did not even warp the imagination of the poet, when he occupied himself with them; still less the faith of the multitude, and least of all the investigations of the thinker. The uninterrupted sequence of events invited to contemplation, which could be indulged in the more readily, as no one pretended to have received as a gift a complete system of revealed truth, and the more freely, as no authority forced the individual to choose between such a system and perdition. In general no doubt was entertained concerning the ability of Reason to penetrate to the inner essence of things, since no knowledge of the fall of man, which annihilated this ability, had reached the Greeks. In regard to knowledge the Greek consequently built on evidence and inner authority. The same was the case in regard to morality. They were convinced that those impulses which promoted the happiness of domestic life, were good; and that those which did not counteract it were at least justified; and thus they enjoyed with moderation the gifts of nature, without suspicion that the bountiful giver was accursed. The ideal of wisdom which they had framed, was based on their inner experience, whether it had the joyous features of Epicurus, the severer lineaments of Zeno, or the mild and resigned expression of Epictetus; and when they exerted themselves to realize it in their lives, they always proceeded upon the supposition that this would be possible by a daily strengthening of the will. The exertion put forth by the Greeks to attain to purity and virtue was, as it were, a system of gymnastics for developing the muscles of the brain. The same power and self-confidence were displayed in these endeavors as in the palaestra. Sighs and anguish were strangers to this kind of reformatory effort. Yet was it not altogether fruitless. The old adage that God helps those who help themselves can be here applied. That it developed great, powerful, and noble natures was so undeniable that even one of the Christian fathers, upon considering their achievements, began to doubt if his way of attaining perfection was really the only one, until he succeeded in convincing himself that “The virtues of the Gentiles are shining vices.” The harmonious personality of the Greek and the rationality of Grecian science depended on the unity, the harmony of their cosmic

views—upon this, that they conceived of the whole as a unity in its diversity, not as an irreconcilable disunion of two absolutely antagonistic principles.

If, on the contrary, the highest ruling power in nature is an arbitrary divine caprice, if the world which lies open before mankind is ruled by another's purely fortuitous decrees, themselves interfered with continually by hostile influences from an infernal kingdom; if, moreover, this struggle rages not merely in the external world, but also in the very core of human nature, vitiating her reason, feelings and will, so to employ them without her agency as means to her exaltation or perdition, then is there indeed no causality to be sought for, and consequently no field anywhere for scientific investigation. Were there even any such thing as science, it would lie far beyond the powers of man, since reason, a mere plaything for demoniac powers, can not be trusted. Neither has his personality any longer its centre of gravity within itself. Then is man in excessive need of such an institution of deliverance as the Church, which teaches him what the divine authority has arbitrarily decided to be good or evil; while the supernatural means of grace, the sacraments, afford him power of resisting evil, and absolve him from his failings. In this way external authority supplants the inner, which is torn up by the roots. That ideal of human perfection which is possible under such conditions, and which actually arises because the native activity of the mind constantly endeavors to bring all accepted notions into union, places itself on the doctrine of authority as its foundation, and accepts its supernatural character. That the ideal of the Middle Ages is ascetic and its science magical, is directly consequent upon its dualistic conception of the universe and of its peculiar nature.

The dualism of the Middle Ages was derived from Persia. It is the essential idea of the Zoroastrian doctrine, which finally, after a long struggle against the unitarian notions of the Greeks, penetrates the Occident and completely conquers it. This victorious combat of the Orient against Europe is the sum of history between Cyrus and Constantine. The external events which fill those centuries obtain their true significance when within and behind them one perceives the struggle between the two conflicting systems of ideas. Like concealed chess-players they move their unconscious champions against each other on the board of history.

When Cyrus sends home the Jewish prisoners from the rivers of Babylon to the mountains of Jerusalem, he gains for dualism that important flank-position on the Mediterranean the significance of which is shown centuries after in the progress of the battle. The "Adversary" (Satan) who sometimes appears in the most recent portions of the Old Testament, written under Persian influence, and plays a continually widening role in the Rabbinical literature, is the Judaized Ahriman; the demoniacs who in the time of Christ abounded in Palestine testify that the demon-belief of Persian dualism had penetrated into the imagination and feeling of the Jews, and there borne fruit. By the side of this peaceful conquest the great war-drama between Greece and Persia is enacted. Although this is not recognizedly a religious war, it is nevertheless Ormuzd and Ahriman who are repelled at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea, it is the Grecian unitarianism which is saved in these battles to develop itself, for a season undisturbed, into a radiant and beautiful culture. As has been shown already, magic, and belief upon authority, are the necessary consequences of a dualistic religion; the restriction and annihilation of free personality are equally necessary consequences of belief by authority. Can any one regarding the conflict which raged on the field of Marathon, fail to recognize the clash of two spiritual opposites, two different systems of ideas, when he sees the bands of Greeks, drawn from their agorai (places for political discussion) and gymnasiums, advance cheerfully and garlanded, but without depreciating the danger, to meet the innumerable hosts of the Orient driven on by the scourge of their leaders? On the one side, a fully developed free personality, which has its origin in a harmonious conception of nature, on the other, blind

submission to external force. On the one side, liberty, on the other, despotism. One may add by the help of a logical conclusion, though this may seem more removed,—on the one side rationality, on the other magic.

Strengthened thus by victory Europe goes to seek the enemy in his own country. Alexander conquers Asia. But the new Achilles is fettered in the chains of his own slave. For while Greek culture is spreading over the surface of the conquered countries, the Oriental spirit advances beneath it in a contrary direction. The waves of the two ideal currents are partly mingled. In the libraries of Alexandria and Pergamus the literatures of the Orient and of the Occident flow together; in their halls meet the sages of the East and West; in their doctrinal systems Zoroaster and Plato, fancy and speculation, magic and rationalism are blended in the most extraordinary way. The victory of Alexander was that of the warrior, and not that of sober Aristotle's pupil. The Judaico-Alexandrian philosophy blooms, and gnosticism,—that monstrous bastard of specifically different cosmical systems, is already begotten, when Christianity springs up in Palestine, and unites itself with the Jewish dualism derived from Zoroaster, and thus proceeds to conquer the world by the weapons of belief.

In the mean time Rome has extended and established its empire. The nationalities included in it have been mingled together; their various gods have been carried into the same Pantheon; and their ideas have been brought face to face. The universal empire, to maintain its existence, has been forced to centralize itself into a despotism of the Oriental type, the free forms of state have perished, philosophical skepticism and eudemonism have abolished among the cultured classes the inherited notions of religion. All this, with its accompaniments of moral depravity and material necessity, have prepared the soil of the Occident for receiving the seed of the new religion. Emptiness and misery make the difference between ideality and reality, between good and evil, all the more perceptible even to unitarian nations. Dualism thus prepared for in the realms of thought and feeling, spreads in Christian form with irresistible force over the Roman provinces. Innumerable masses of the poor and oppressed devote themselves to the “philosophy of the Barbarians and the Orient” (as a Greek thinker called Christianity) because they recognize in it their own experience of life, and have full assurance in their hope of relief.

The Hellenico-Roman paganism offers a fruitless resistance. The persecutions on the part of the state only hasten the spread of Christianity. What the state can not do, perhaps the Hellenic culture and philosophy may do. These, once mutually hostile, are reconciled in the face of common danger. The dying lamp of antiquity flares and brightens when pure hearts and profound minds, otherwise despising the myths as superstition, now grasp them as symbols of higher truths. Philosophy goes forth, in the form of Neoplatonism.

But Neoplatonism has itself apostatized from the rational and unitarian. Plotinus and Ammonius Saccas try in vain to restore it. It only unwittingly helps its adversary, especially when, to gain the masses, it consents to compete with him in miracles. Jamblichus and others practice secret arts in order to outrival the Christian magi, and they glorify Pythagoras and Appollonius of Tyana as fit to rank with Jesus of Nazareth in miraculous gifts. By this they only contribute to the spread of magic and the principles of dualism. The current of Oriental notions proceeds all the more rapidly on its course of triumph.

Christian dualism already feels itself strong enough to battle not only against its declared enemies, but also those Occidental elements of culture which in its beginnings it had received into its bosom and which had procured its entrance among the more intelligent classes. It feels instinctively that even the school of thought which has sprung up within the Church is far too unitarian and rationalistic to be tolerated in the long run. Such men as Clemens of Alexandria and Origen, who are struck by what is external and imperishable in Christianity,

and know how to separate this from its dualistic form, fight a tragical battle for the union of belief and thought. Admitting that Christ is all in all, the immediate power and wisdom of God, they nevertheless wish to save the Hellenic philosophy from the destruction which a fanaticism, revelling in the certainty and all-sufficiency of revelation, directs against every expression of an occidental culture, whether in national life, or art, or science. They point out that philosophy, if it can do nothing else that is good, can furnish rational weapons against those who assail faith, and that it can and ought to be the “real wall of defence about the vineyard.” Their argument is without effect. Philosophy is of the devil: yea, everything true and good in life and doctrine which heathendom has possessed, is declared by one of the fathers to be the imposture of Satan (*ingenia diaboli quædam de divinis affectandis*); and faith is so far independent of thought that it is better to say “I believe *because* it is improbable, absurd, impossible.”¹⁰ In vain the dying Clemens exclaims: “Even if philosophy were of the devil, Satan could deceive men only in the garb of an angel of light: he must allure men by the appearance of truth, by the intermixture of truth and falsehood; we ought therefore to seek and recognize the truth from whatever source it come.... And even this gift to the pagans can have been theirs only by the will of God, and must consequently be included in the divine plan of educating humanity.... If sin and disorder are attributable to the devil, how absurd to make him the author and giver of so good a thing as philosophy!... God gave the Law to the Jews, and philosophy to the Gentiles, only to prepare for the coming of Christ.” Such are the words that ring out the last dying echo of Hellenic culture and humanity! It is not a mere accident that with philosophy Clemens and Origen also sought to save the unitarian principles in so far as to reject the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell, and maintain that the devil will finally become good, and God be all in all. But such a view could not command attention at a time when Christianity, only because it was not sharply and consistently dualistic, felt itself endangered by that wholly consistent and thorough-going dualism which under the name of Manicheism once more advanced against Europe from the Persian border. Although Manicheism seemed to incur defeat, nevertheless one of its former adherents, Augustine, infused its spirit into the Church. During the century which followed him the Germanic migration destroyed, along with the last schools, the last vestiges of Græco-Romaic culture. The Barbarians were persuaded to receive baptism, often by means of pomp and deceit; their divinities, as formerly the denizens of Olympus, were degraded to evil demons. Every thing antecedent to their union with the Church or disconnected with it,—the old experiences and traditions of these converted nations,—all was condemned and referred to the world of evil. The dominion of Oriental dualism in Europe was absolutely established, and the long night of the Dark Ages had set in. Six centuries separate Proclus, the last Neoplatonician of any note, and Augustine the last of the Fathers educated in philosophy, from Anselm the founder of scholasticism! Between them lies an expanse in which Gregory the Great and Scotus Erigena are almost the only stars, and these by no means of the first magnitude. “There are deserts in time, as well as space,” says Bacon.

When again a feeble attempt at scientific activity was possible, the monkish scholar was happy enough to possess a few maculated leaves of Aristotle, obtained, but not directly, from the Arabs. Upon these leaves he read with amazement and admiration the method for a logical investigation. It was, for the rest, Hermes Trismegistus, Dionysius Areopagita (the translation of Scotus Erigena), and other such mystical works from unknown hands, with here and there touches of Neoplatonism which had been inserted by the dreamy scholiast when in need of material for rounding out the cosmology, the principles of which he had found in the dogmas of the Church.

¹⁰ Tertullian.

As a matter of course the Dark Ages could not perceive, still less admit, the intimate relation existing between its cosmic views and those of Zoroaster; but still a dim suspicion of it can be detected. The learned men of the Middle Ages ascribed to Zoroaster the founding of the magical sciences. Sprenger (author of *Malleus Malificarum*, of which fatal work hereafter), Remigius, Jean Bodin, Delrio, and several other jurists and theologians, who have acquired a sad notoriety as judges of witch-trials, in their writings ascribe the origin of witchcraft to Zoroaster.

The dualistic notion was not modified after entering Christianity, but intensified. The religion of Zoroaster, which presupposes a good first principle,¹¹ allows the evil which has in time arisen, in the course of time to disappear; and it ends with the doctrine which shines out faintly even in the New Testament, of the final “restoration of all things” (ἀποκατάστασις πάντων), and in consequence reduces evil to something merely phenomenal. In the doctrines of the Church, however, as they were established through the influence of Augustine, the Manicheian, evil, though arisen in time, is made eternal. This difference is of great practical significance and explains why dualism did not bear the same terrible fruits in its home in the Orient as in the Occident. The awful separation and contrast with which the *divina comedia* of the Middle Ages ends,—the wails and curses that arise from hell to intensify the bliss of the redeemed,—form a conception so revolting that it could not be incorporated with thought and feeling without rendering them savage. Compassion, benevolence, love,—those qualities through which man feels a kinship with the divine, lose their significance and are despoiled of their eternal seal, when they are found no longer in his Maker except as limited or rather suspended by the action of another quality which the pious man will force himself to call justice, but which an irrepressible voice from the innermost recesses of his soul calls cruelty. To this must be added a further important consideration. The servant of Ormuzd is no more the property of the devil than the earth he treads upon. To be sure he is surrounded on every side by the treachery of Ahriman and all the demons, but this only because he is called and already endowed with power to be the champion of the Good upon the earth. It is as such that he is placed in the tumult of the battle. The power for good once imparted to him, and constantly renewed through prayer, is withal also his own; he may use it without losing himself in the perplexing question where liberty ceases and grace begins. Every one adhering to the doctrine of light stands on his own feet. This is true of every servant of Ormuzd; Zoroaster has made in this respect no distinction between priest and layman. Even belief upon authority, in itself an encroachment upon free personality, preserves for it in this form of religion a free and inviolable arena.

In the Church of the Middle Ages the case is different, and it cannot be presented better than in the following words of the Neo-Lutheran Vilmar, when he would preserve absolutely to the clergy “the power to keep the congregation together by the word, the sacraments and ecclesiastical authority, the power to cleave the head of sin with a single word, the power to descend into a soul in which the enemy has spread the gloom of insanity and force the defiant knees of the maniac to bend and his frenzied fists to fold in prayer, yea, the power [here we have the climax, which is rather tame after the foregoing] to descend into a soul in which the ancient enemy has established his abode, and there fight the insolent giant from the realms of darkness face to face and eye to eye. All this”—continues Vilmar, himself not unlike a frantic conjurer wishing to summon the ghost of the Dark Ages from its grave—“all this is not in the power of the congregation nor of the ministry, who are not endowed with the requisite authority, commission, mandate and power. The congregation (*i. e.*, the laymen) is not able to look into the furious eyes of the devil; for what is prophesied of the last days, that even the

¹¹ This has been denied in so far as the original teachings of Zoroaster are concerned, but is confirmed by a passage in Aristotle (*Metaphys.*, I., xiv., c. 4).

elect, were it possible, should be seduced, applies with greater force to the especial apparition of Satan in this world: before it the congregation is scattered like flakes of snow, not seduced but terrified to death. Only we (the clergy) are unterrified and fearless; for he who has rejected the prince of this world has placed us before the awful serpent-eye of the arch-fiend, before his blasphemous and scornful mouth, before his infernally distorted face.”¹² These words from the pen of a fanatical dualist of our own time well represent, as indicated above, the commonly received views of the Middle Ages; and it is not therefore to be wondered at that the mediæval generations, surrendering personality, threw themselves precipitately, in order to be saved, into the arms of the magical institution of deliverance. The phenomena which are delineated in the following pages will not seem so arbitrary and strange after this introductory glance at the middle-age philosophy, as they might otherwise at first sight. Even they are a product of an inner necessity. Were it possible—and deplorable attempts are not wanting—to revive in the thoughts, feelings and imagination of humanity the dogmas of mediæval times, we should then witness a partial re-enactment of their terrible scenes. To depict them has not only a purely historic interest, but a cautionary and practical as well.

¹² A. F. Ch. Vilmar: “Theologie der Thatsachen wider die Theologie der Rhetorik” (Marburg, 1857).

2. The Magic Of The Church

Magic is the harbinger of Science. In the history of human development, the dim perception precedes the clear, and the dominion of imagination that of reason. Before the latter could take upon itself the laborious task of connecting together by its own laws the facts of external and internal experience,—before there was any philosophy or natural science, imagination was bestirring itself in the creation of magic.

Like science, magic in its original form is based upon the principle that all things existing are concatenated. Science searches for the links of union both deductively and inductively; magic, seeking its support in the external resemblances between existing things,¹³ and in a vague assurance of the power of the will and of words, establishes this connection freely by means of arbitrary associations between incongruous objects. Man engaged in a struggle for physical existence, aims in it less at theoretical *knowing* than at practical *being able*. The knowledge of mysteries will furnish means of becoming acceptable to his God, inaccessible to injurious influences, and master of his present and future existence and destiny.

The magical usages which exist among every people, present an almost infinite variety of forms. In the end, however, they can all be reduced to a single type.

Daily experience has taught that there exists between every cause and its effect a certain proportionate amount of force. Now since the effect aimed at in resorting to magic is of an extraordinary nature, the means which the magical art prescribes must possess extraordinary efficacy, such as reason can predict for it neither *a priori* nor by inductive reasoning. Furthermore, experience teaches us that will, as a mere inert desire, not yet expressed in action, does not attain its goal. Magical power therefore can not be sought for in the mere will as such, but action, that working of the senses which the will employs as a means, in which it reveals itself, must be added, whether the force of this sense-means, as the original magic supposes, depends on its mystical but necessary connection with its corresponding object in a higher sphere (for example, the connection between the metals and the planets), or as in the Church-magic, on an arbitrary decision of God, ordaining that a given means, employed as prescribed by him, shall produce an effect inconceivable by reason. In all employment of magic enter consequently, first, the subjective spiritual factor,—the will (in the language of the Church, faith); secondly, the sensuous means,—the fetich, the amulet, the holy water, the host, the formula of exorcism, the ceremony, etc.; and thirdly, the incomprehensible (“supernatural”) power which this means, appropriated by the will (or faith), possesses in the magical act.

A belief in magic is found among all nations. With those of unitarian views it was destined to be forced more and more into the background by the growth of speculation and natural science. With them there was also but one form of magic, although those in possession of its secret were considered able to exercise it for a useful or an injurious purpose alike. Only among nations holding dualistic views do we meet with magic in two forms: with the priests a *white* and a *black*,—the former as the good gift of Ormuzd, the latter as the evil gift of Ahriman; with the Christians of the Middle Ages a *celestial* magic and a *diabolical*,—the former a privilege of the Church and conferred by God as a weapon to aid in the conquest of Satan; the latter an infernal art to further unbelief and wickedness. Under a unitarian theory magic is only a preparation for natural philosophy and gradually gives place to it, until it is

¹³ Thus, for instance, the red lustre of copper was supposed to indicate that it was connected with Mars, which shines with a reddish light.

confined to the lowest classes as a relic of a past stage of development. The dualistic religious systems, on the contrary, blend in an intimate union with magic, give to it the same universally and eternally valid power which they ascribe to themselves, and place it on their own throne in the form of a divine and sacramental secret. Only thus can faith in magic stamp whole ages and periods of culture with its peculiar seal; only thus—after its separation into celestial and diabolical, and in that causal relation to the temporal or eternal weal or woe of man in which it is placed—does it become possessed of an absolute sovereignty over the imagination and emotions of a people.

Our consideration of the middle-age magic may commence with a description of the celestial or privileged magic, that is to say, *that of the Church*; in order that we may proceed in natural order to the ill-reputed magic of the *learned* (astrology, alchemy, sorcery), and the persecuted *popular* magic (in which the Church saw the really diabolical form); and end with an account of the terrible catastrophe which was caused by the contest which raged between them.

It is not the fault of the writer if the reader finds in the magic of the Church a caricature of what is holy, in which the comical element is overbalanced by the repulsive. The more objective the representation is to be made, the more unpleasant its features become. We will, then, be brief.

Like a thoughtful mother the Church cherishes and cares for man, and surrounds him from the cradle to the grave with its safeguards of magic. Shortly after the birth of a child the priest must be ready to sprinkle it with holy water, which by prayer and conjuration has been purified from the pollution of the demons inhabiting even this element. For the feeble being begotten in sin and by nature Lucifer's property, without the grace of baptism, would be eternally lost to heaven, and eternally doomed to the torments of hell.¹⁴

Therefore more than one conscientious servant of the Church essayed to devise some means by which the saving water might be brought in contact with the child before it saw the light. Still this precautionary measure never became officially adopted. The efficacy of the baptismal water exceeds that of the pool Bethesda, which removed only bodily infirmities. Baptism saves millions of souls from hell. Foreseeing this the devil, filled with evil devices, had determined, already before the rise of Christianity, to debase and scorn this sacrament by making, in anticipation, a copy of it in the Mithras mysteries instituted by him, which insolently imitate in other respects the mysteries of the Church.

In baptism other means, consecrated by the priest, co-operate with the water: viz., the oil, the spittle (which the priest after baptism lets fall upon the child, and the efficacy of which is derived from Mark vii. 33), the salt, the milk and the honey.¹⁵ Besides, there are the sign of the cross and the conjuration, which drive the tempter out of the child and prepare room for the Holy Ghost. With these magic ceremonies the child is received into the Church and from thenceforth becomes a sharer in the protection which it gives against the evil.

¹⁴ "Non baptisatis parvulis nemo promittat inter damnationem regnumque cœlorum quietis vel felicitatis cujuslibet atque ubilibet quasi medium locum; hoc enim eis etiam hæresis Pelagiana promisit" (Augustinus: De Anima et Ejus Origine, l. I., c. ix). In one of his letters Augustine declares that even if the parents hurry to the priest, and he likewise hasten to baptize the child, but find it dead before it has obtained the sacrament, it is nevertheless then doomed to be eternally tormented with the damned, and to blaspheme the name of God.

¹⁵ All these are found, in connection with baptism, in heathen mysteries.

Baptismal, or holy water, when drunk by the sick and infirm, heals and strengthens; if sprinkled upon the fields promotes fertility, or given to the domestic animals, affords them protection against witchcraft.

As baptism is the first saving and sanctifying sacrament offered to man, so the unction with holy oil which is administered to the dying, is the last. Between them the eucharist is a perennial source of power and sanctification,—the eucharist in which “Bread and wine, placed upon the altar, after performed consecration, are God’s true flesh and blood, which flesh perceptibly to the senses (*sensualiter*) is touched by the hands of the priest and masticated by the teeth of the believer.”¹⁶ When the priest has pronounced the formula of transformation, he elevates the host,¹⁷ now no longer bread but the body of Christ, the congregation kneels and the ringing of bells proclaims to the neighborhood that the greatest of all the works of magic is accomplished. Eaten by the faithful, the flesh of Christ enters into their own flesh and blood and wonderfully strengthens both soul and body.¹⁸ Heretics in Arras who believed that righteousness was necessary to salvation and doubted the doctrine of transubstantiation, were converted as soon as Bishop Gerhard told them that, in the time of Gregory the Great, the consecrated bread had taken, before a doubting woman, the shape of Christ’s bleeding finger. A pious hermit who began to be afflicted by the same doubt, regained his faith when at the Communion he saw an angel apply the knife to an infant Jesus, at the very moment the priest broke the bread. There is much in the legends and chronicles about Jews who having secretly procured the host, and, to be revenged upon Christ, proceeding to pierce it with a knife, saw the blood stream forth in abundance; sometimes, indeed, a beautiful bleeding boy suddenly revealing himself. Such stories being freely circulated, led to severe persecutions (as in Namur, 1320).¹⁹

If the eucharist is a partaking of food which strengthens the faithful in their struggle against sin, the sign of the cross is to be considered as his sword, and the sacred amulet as his armor. The cross is the sign in which the Christian shall conquer. [*“In hoc signo vinces.”*] With it he must commence every act; with it he repels every attack of the demons. “He who wishes to

¹⁶ Extract from the formula given at the council of Rome, a. d. 1059, to Berengar of Tours, to which he was forced to swear under penalty of death.

¹⁷ The wafer substituted in the twelfth century for bread was called the host.

¹⁸ The discovery made in our days by the Danish theologian Martensens that the food obtained in the Supper of our Lord is not for the soul only, but also for the body,—for the nourishment of our ascension-body, is not really new; the pagan initiated into the Mithras mysteries was taught that the consecrated bread and wine, being assimilated into his flesh and blood, gave immortality to his corporeal being. Like presuppositions produce in different times like ideas.

An important question in the Middle Ages and one which had been already argued with great heat from the time of Petrus Lombardus until the seventeenth century, is propounded as follows: Has a rat which has eaten of the host thereby partaken of Christ’s body? In connection with this it was further asked: How is a rat which has eaten of Christ’s body to be treated,—ought it to be killed or honored? Ought the sacrament to be venerated even in the stomach of the rat? If some of the consecrated bread is found in the stomach of a rat, is it a duty to eat it? What must be done if immediately after partaking of the sacrament one is attacked by vomiting? When a rat can eat the host, can not the devil also do it?—One of the last products of these important investigations is a book published in Tübingen in 1593, entitled: “*Mus exenteratus, hoc est tractatus valde magistralis super quaestione quadam theologica spinosa et multum subtili,*” etc.

¹⁹ During the period of political reaction in 1815, when Schlegel and de Maistre praised the Middle Ages as man’s era of bliss, and Görres sought to restore to credence during the “state period of enlightenment” all the forgotten ghost and vampire stories, the clergy of Brussels were celebrating with processions and other solemnities the anniversary of this persecution of the Jews in Namur.

At the synod in a. d. 1099 a proclamation was issued forbidding priests to enter into any servile relations with laymen, because it were shameful if the most holy hands which prepared the flesh and blood of Almighty God should serve the unconsecrated laity. The famous orator Bourdaloue requested that greater homage should be paid to the priest than to the holy Virgin, because God had been incarnated in her bosom only once, but was in the hands of the priest daily, as often as the mass was read.

be convinced concerning this,” says St. Athanasius, “needs only to make the sign of the cross, which has become so ridiculous to the pagans, before the mocking delusions of the demons, the deceits of the oracles and the magi; and immediately he shall see the devil flee, the oracles confounded and all magic and sorcery revenged.” The amulets employed by the Church are various: medals bearing the image of Mary, consecrated images, especially the so-called lambs of God²⁰ (agnus Dei), the manufacture and sale of which a papal bull of 1471 reserves for the head of the Roman Church. If these bring the clergy immense sums of money, they also possess great power. They protect against dangers from fire or water, against storm and hail, sickness and witchcraft.²¹ Along with the amulets the so-called conception-billets, which the Carmelite monks sell for a small sum, are of manifold use. These billets are made of consecrated paper, and heal, if swallowed, diseases natural and supernatural; laid in a cradle guard the child against witchcraft; buried in the corner of a field protect it against bad weather and destructive insects. Conception-billets are put under the thresholds of houses and barns, are attached to beer casks and butter dishes to avert sorcery. They are fabricated by the monks according to an authenticated formulary which, as characteristic and comparatively brief, deserves citation:—

“I conjure thee, paper (or parchment), thou which servest the needs of humanity, servest as the depository of God’s wonderful deeds and holy laws, as also according to divine command the marriage contract between Tobias and Sarah was written upon thee, the Scriptures saying: They took paper and signed their marriage covenant. Through thee, O paper, hath also the devil been conquered by the angel. I adjure thee by God, the Lord of the universe (sign of the cross!), the Son (sign of the cross!), and the Holy Ghost (sign of the cross!), who spreads out the heavens as a parchment on which he describes as with divine characters his magnificence. Bless (sign of the cross!), O God, sanctify (sign of the cross!) this paper that so it may frustrate the work of the Devil!”

“He who upon his person carries this paper written with holy words, or affixes it to a house, shall be freed from the visitations of Satan through him who cometh to judge the quick and dead.”

²⁰ The oldest Christian art in which the dying spirit of antiquity yet reveals itself, represented Jesus as a shepherd youth carrying a lamb upon his bosom. Many a one could only turn away sadly from the beaming world of Olympus to the new Christian ideal, and when they must needs so do, they would fain transfer to the new “*puer redemptor*” the mild beauty of the former youthful mediator, Dionysus Zagreus. In the hymns, still preserved to us, of Synesius, who combined in one person the bishop and the Greek who still longs for wisdom and beauty (doubtless known to many of our readers by Kingsley’s novel of Hypatia), this sadness is in wonderful harmony with Christian devotion. With the ruin of the antique world, this longing as well as the capability of satisfying it ceased. The material symbol obtained thereafter a more prominent place. If the Phœnicians and Canaanites represented their god corporeally as the powerful steer, the Christians chose the patient and inoffensive lamb as the type of theirs. The Council of Constantinople in a. d. 692 confirmed this lamb-symbol. As Aaron had made a golden calf, Pope Sergius III. procured a lamb to be made of gold and ivory. All who rebelled against its worship were treated as disorderly and heretical. In the time of Charlemagne one of them, Bishop Claudius of Turin, from whom the Waldenses derive their origin, complained: “*Isti perversorum dogmatum auctores agnos vivos volunt vorare et in pariete pictos adorare.*”

²¹ Pope Urban Vitus presented an *agnus Dei* to the Byzantine Emperor. An accompanying note described its wonderful powers in the following monkish-Latin hexameters:—

*Balsamus et munda cera cum chrismatis unda
Conficiunt agnum, quod munus do tibi magnum
Fonte velut natum per mystica sanctificatum.
Fulgura desursum depellit, et omne malignum
Peccatum frangit, ut Christi sanguis et angit.
Prægnans servatur, simul et partus liberatur.
Dona refert dignis, virtutem destruit ignis.
Portatus munde de fluctibus eripit undæ.*

“Let us pray.

“Mighty and resistless God, the God of vengeance, God of our fathers, who hast revealed through Moses and the prophets the books of thy ancient covenant and many secrets of thy kindness, and didst cause the Gospel of thy Son to be written by the evangelists and apostles, bless (sign of the cross!) and sanctify (sign of the cross!) this paper that thy mercy may be made known unto whatsoever soul shall bear with him this sacred thing and these holy letters; and that all persecutions against him from the devil and by the storms of Satanic witchcraft may be frustrated through Christ our Lord. Amen.

“(The paper to be sprinkled with holy water.)”

With the amulets and these conception-billets belong also in the armory of the Church, the wonder-working relics, and images of the saints. God has ordained graciously that the Church shall not give up its battle against the powers of sin for want of weapons. Its offensive and defensive appliances are manifold. Its warriors, the priests, are like knights encased in mail from head to foot, and armed with lance, sword, dagger and morning star. Almost every district has its treasure of relics, which, preserved in shrines and exhibited on solemn occasions to the pious people, constitutes its palladium, impedes or prevents the attack of hostile forces, and assuages or averts the ravages of plagues. Not only corporeal relics of saints and martyrs, but also every thing they may have touched during their lifetime, yea, even the very dew-drops upon their graves, are a terror to the fiends and a means of spiritual and bodily strength unto the faithful. The miraculous properties of the images are recounted in a hundred legends. By the direct agency of divine power, there exists uninterruptedly between them and the persons they represent a mystical relation. Upon this St. Hieronymus throws some light when he exclaims against Vigilantius, who had blindly opposed the worship of images: “You dare prescribe laws to God! You presume to put the apostles in chains so that they are kept even to the Day of Judgment in their prison, and are denied the privilege of being with their Lord, although it is written that they shall be with Him wherever they go! If the Lamb is omnipresent, we must believe that those who are with the Lamb are omnipresent also. If the devils and the demons rove through the world and by their inconceivable rapidity of motion are present everywhere, should then the martyrs, after shedding their blood, remain confined in their coffins and never be able to leave them!”

As old age and death are consequences of Adam’s fall, so are almost all ailments produced by that power over man’s corporeal nature conceded to Satan, when God pronounced his curse upon the race. So also are the remaining diseases and infirmities of man, called either rightly or wrongly natural, cured with greatest certainty by invoking the help of God. Therefore the mediator between God and men, the Church, through its servants is the only sure and only legitimate physician. [*“Operatio sanandi est in ecclesia per verba, ritus, exorcismos, aquam, salem, herbas, idque nedum contra diabolos et effectus magicos, sed et morbos omnes.”*] The priest effects cures in behalf of the Church and in the name of God by means of prayer, the laying on of hands, exorcism, relics and consecrated natural means, especially water, salt and oil. In doing this he acts as the visible delegate of an unseen higher physician, the saint ordained of God to be the healer of the sickness. For every affliction has its physician among the ranks of the saints. St. Valentine cures epilepsy, St. Gervasius rheumatic pains, St. Michael de Sanatis cancer and tumors, St. Judas coughs, St. Ovidius deafness, St. Sebastian contagious fevers and poisonous bites, St. Apollonia toothache, St. Clara and St. Lucia rheum in the eyes, and so on. The legends relate wonderful effects of the healing powers possessed by St. Damianus, St. Patrick and St. Hubert. The terrible disease of hydrophobia was cured by the last named. In the cloisters in Luxembourg named after this saint, hydrophobia was cured many years after his death by bringing the afflicted into the church during the progress of the

service, and pressing a hair from the saint's mantle into a slight incision made for the occasion in his forehead. For the benefit of those who lived far from the cloister, the so-called "Hubertus-bands" and "Hubertus-keys" were consecrated; these were applied, heated white-hot, to the wound.²² Similar curative agencies might be mentioned by hundreds.

Among all afflictions, the state of being possessed by devils occupies the most remarkable place in the annals of the Church, and is seen to have required the most powerful exorcisms for its cure. The ecclesiastical pathology declares that in this disease the devil is unhidden, while in all others he is concealed. The exorciser who is to expel the fiend appears in full priestly vesture; incense and consecrated wax tapers are lighted, all the objects surrounding the demoniac are sprinkled with holy water, the air around is purified by the pronouncement of certain formulas; then follow fervent prayers and finally the desperate and awful struggle between the demon, now convulsively distorting the limbs of his victim and uttering by his lips the most harrowing blasphemies, and the priest, who employs more and more powerful adjurations until the victory finally is his.

The secular medical art—that relying upon natural means—as either superfluous, or as strongly tainted with heresy, must be despised. Dissection, in order to investigate the structure of the human body, is presumption; it can even be asked with reason if it does not argue contempt for the doctrine of the final resurrection. The secular art of healing was consequently for a long time confined to the infidel Jews. But when princes and the opulent, weakly apprehending the insufficiency of the word, the relics and the consecrated remedies, had begun to keep physicians, the profane art of medicine became a lucrative profession, and schools for its cultivation were established under royal protection. Such is that of Salerno, which the warders of Zion can not regard without suspicion. It is a school which prescribes pedantic rules for diet, as if one's diet could protect against the attacks of the devil! The Greek pagan Hippocrates, who for a long time wandered about with Jews and Arabs, thus finds at last a settled abode within its walls,—Hippocrates who had to assert of demonianism (*morbus sacer*) itself that it is "nowise more divine, nowise more infernal, than any other disease!" When the teacher is such, what must the disciples be? The Church will not forbid absolutely the practice of medicine, since it may do some good in the case of external injury, or in time of pestilence; but she must keep strict watch over the orthodoxy of those who cultivate this art. At several councils (as at Rheims in 1131, the second Lateran in 1139, and at Tours, 1163) she has strenuously prohibited her servants from having any thing to do with this suspected profession. Experience has taught, however, not to exaggerate the dangers attending it. The secular physicians must frequently concede that such and such a sickness is caused by witchcraft, and consequently is of supernatural origin. Slanderers might allege that such a declaration is more convenient than an investigation into the causes of the disease in the natural way, and less unpleasant than acknowledging one's ignorance. But be this as it may: the concession implies a recognition of the supernaturalism of the Church, and may therefore be rather recommended than reprehended.

"It is," says Thomas Aquinas, "a dogma of faith that the demons can produce wind, storms, and rain of fire from heaven. The atmosphere is a battle-field between angels and devils. The latter work the constant injury of man, the former his melioration; and the consequence is that changeableness of weather which threatens to frustrate the hopes of husbandry. And when Lucifer is able to bestow even upon man—on sorcerers and wizards—the power to destroy the fields, the vineyards and dwellings of man by rain, hail and lightning, is it to be wondered at if the Church, which is man's protection against the devil, and whose especial calling it is

²² As late as 1784 a statute was issued by Carl Theodor, Elector of Pfalz, referring to the magic power of St. Hubert-relics, and forbidding the employment of "worldly" remedies against the bite of mad dogs.

to fight him, should in this sphere also be his counterpoise, and should seek from the treasury of its divine power, means adequate to frustrate his atmospheric mischiefs? To these means belong the church bells, provided they have been duly consecrated and baptized. The aspiring steeples around which cluster the low dwellings of men, are to be likened, when the bells in them are ringing, to the hen spreading its protecting wings over its chickens; for the tones of the consecrated metal repel the demons and avert storm and lightning” (“*Vivos voco, mortuos plango, sulphura frango*,” a common inscription on church bells). Tillers of the soil who desire especial protection from the Church for their harvests, pay it tithes for a blessing. During protracted drought the priests make intercession and inaugurate rain-processions, in which images of the Virgin are borne into the fields, which are sprinkled with holy water while the weather-collect is chanted.²³ If the fields are visited by hurtful insects, the Church has remedies against them also. It commands them in the name of God to depart, and if they do not obey, a regular process is instituted against them, which ends in their exemplary punishment; for they are excommunicated by the Church. Such processes were very frequently resorted to in the Middle Ages, and a couple of such instances will be cited.

In the year 1474, the may-bug committed great depredations in the neighborhood of Berne. When the authorities of the city had sought relief from the bishop of Lausanne, Benoit de Montferrand, against this scourge, he determined to issue a letter of excommunication, which was solemnly read by a priest in the churchyard of Berne. “Thou irrational, imperfect creature, thou may-bug,” thus the letter commenced, “thou whose kind was never enclosed in Noah’s ark! in the name of my gracious lord, the bishop of Lausanne, by the power of the glorified Trinity through the merits of Jesus Christ, and by the obedience you owe the Holy Church, I command you may-bugs, all in common and each one in particular, to depart from all places where nourishment for men and cattle germinates and grows.” The letter ends with a summons to the insects, to present themselves on the sixth day thereafter, if they do not disappear before that time, at one o’clock, p. m., at Wivelsburg, and assume the responsibility before the court of the gracious lord of Lausanne. This letter was likewise read from the pulpit while the congregation, kneeling, repeated “three Paternosters and three Ave Marias.” Arrangements were made beforehand for a legal trial with strict attention to all professional forms. Among these was of course that the accused should have a lawyer. But when no advocate in Berne would consent to appear in behalf of the insects, the bishop devised the plan of summoning from hell the shade of an infamous lawyer named Perrodet, who had died a few years previously, and of directing him to plead the cause of the may-bugs with the same diligence he had so often displayed in his lifetime in defence of vile clients. But in spite of many summons, neither Perrodet nor his clients deigned to appear. After the expiration of the time fixed for beginning the defence, and when certain doubts concerning the proper form of procedure had been removed, the episcopal tribunal finally gave its verdict, which was excommunication in the name of the Holy Trinity, “to you, accursed vermin, that are called may-bugs, and which can not even be counted among the animals.” The government ordered the authorities of the afflicted district to report concerning the good effects of the excommunication; “But,” a chronicle of the time complains, “no effect was observed, because of our sins.”

Since any neglect of legal forms was thought to deprive a judgment of its magical as well as legal power, the most scrupulous care was exercised in the conduct of these

²³ In the year 1240 a large rain-procession was held in Lüttich. Three times repeated it failed of all effect, “because in the supplication of all saints God’s mother had been forgotten.” In a new procession “*Salve regina*” was therefore sung, and the rain immediately came down with such violence that the devout procession was dispersed.—The clergy sometimes, in order to produce rain, would lead a donkey before the gate of the church, hang the litany about his neck, put a wafer in his mouth, and then bury the animal alive.

frequently recurring processes against may-bugs, grasshoppers, cabbage-worms, field-rats and other noxious vermin. There is yet extant a detailed and luminous document by the learned Bartholomeus Chassanæus (born 1480), in which the question if, and how, such pests should be proceeded against in the courts is carefully considered: whether they should appear personally or by deputy; whether they are subject to a spiritual or a secular tribunal, and if the penalty of excommunication can be applied to them. He proves on many grounds that the jurisdiction to which they are accountable is the spiritual, and that they may properly be excommunicated. Still the question of jurisdiction remained unsettled, and a civil prosecution of the field-rats in Tyrol, 1519-20, proves among other things that a secular tribunal sometimes considered itself justified in deciding such suits. The peasant Simon Fliss appeared before William of Hasslingen, judge in Glurns and Mals (Ober-In-valley), as plaintiff against the field-rats which were committing great depredations in his parish. The court then appointed Hans Grinebner, a citizen of Glurns, to be the advocate of the accused, and furnished him, before witnesses, with the requisite commission. Thereupon the plaintiff chose as his advocate Schwarz Minig, and obtained from the tribunal upon demand a warrant of authority for him likewise. On the day of trial, the Wednesday after St. Philip's and St. James's day, many witnesses were examined, establishing that the rats had caused great destruction. Schwarz Minig then made his final plea that the noxious animals should be charged to withdraw from mischief, as otherwise the people of Stilf could not pay the annual tithes to their high patron. Grinebner, counsel for the defence, could not and would not make exception to the testimony, but tried to convince the court that his clients "enjoyed a certain right of usufruct which could hardly be denied them." If the court were of another opinion and considered it best to eject them, he yet hoped they would first be granted another place where they could support themselves. Besides there should be given them at their departure a sufficient escort to protect them against their enemies, whether cat, dog, or other adversaries; and he also hoped that, if any of the rats were pregnant, time might be allowed them to be delivered and afterwards depart in safety with their progeny. The decision was rendered in the following terms: "After accusation and defence, after statement and contradiction, and after due consideration of all that pertains to justice, it is by this sentence determined that those noxious animals which are called field-rats must, within two weeks after the promulgation of this judgment, depart and forever remain far aloof from the fields and the meadows of Stilf. But if one or several of the animals are pregnant, or unable on account of their youth to follow, then shall they enjoy during further two weeks safety and protection from every body, and after these two weeks depart."

We can form some impression of the immense power of prayer and exorcism when we consider that the influence of the will and the idea expressed in the word co-operate in them with the power of the word itself as a mere form. For the material word, the sound caught by the ear, the formula, as such, exercises a magical effect without one's knowing its meaning. The mass of the people with their ignorance of the official language of the Church and of learning, would be badly off if those "Paternosters" and "Ave Marias," committed to memory without understanding them, should be spiritually ineffectual,—if the Latin mass to which the congregation listens should be wanting in edifying and sanctifying power because it is not comprehended. The formularies of the Church established at different times and for various purposes are for this reason of high importance and must be followed conscientiously.²⁴ A

²⁴ Especially was the Church of the Middle Ages rich in awful formularies of malediction, testifying to an enormous brutalization of thought and feeling. A single specimen of these formularies will be more than sufficient to illustrate:—

"By the might, power and authority of God, the Almighty Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost and in the name of the Holy Virgin the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the holy angels, archangels, St. Michael and St. John the Baptist, in the name of the holy apostle Peter and all the apostles, in the name of the holy Stephen and

single proof of their extraordinary power may be instanced here. In the year 1532 the devil brought into the heavens a huge comet, which threatened earth and man with drought and pestilence; but the pope solemnly banished the forbidding omen,—and behold! in a short time it disappeared, having day by day diminished through the power of the papal anathema. What a holy word may avail by virtue of its sound (*flatus vocis*) alone, is indicated in the legend of the tame starling, which was saved from the claws of the hawk just at the moment its death-agony had forced from it the words it had learned to repeat “Ave Maria.”

Upon the power of the word as its foundation, rests the papal custom of consecrating bread, wine, oil, salt, tapers, water, bells, fields, meadows, houses, standards and weapons. “With such abuses, such superstition, and diabolical arts was the priesthood filled during papal ascendancy”—thus complains an old Protestant theologian who had an eye to that surplus of magic which the Catholic Church possessed over and above that of the Lutheran, but who was blind to the common welfare—“and therefore such things are in vogue even among common men. What was the chief thing in the mass if not the wonder-working words of blessing, when the priest pronounced the four words or the six syllables ‘*Hoc est corpus meum*’ (this is my body) over the bread, breathed upon it, and made the sign of the cross three times over it, pretending that the bread was thereby converted into the flesh of Christ? In the same way he transformed the wine in the chalice into the blood of Christ, though no such power is given to syllables and words. He bound the Holy Ghost in the water, the salt, the oil, the tapers, the spices, the stone, wood or earth, when he consecrated churches, altars, churchyards, when he blessed the meat, the eggs, and the like, and when on Easter Eve he consecrated the fire that it should do no damage (though I, God save me, have found out that our village was utterly consumed four days after such consecration), when he baptized and sanctified bells that their ringing might dispel evil influences, quiet tempests, and the like.”

The organization of monasteries is to be regarded as the defensive system of the Church, guarding and protecting the territory it has conquered from the devil. As the Mongolian on his irruption into Europe found innumerable steeps crowned with strongly fortified castles, the very number of which deterred from any attempt at siege, so Satan and his hosts find the Christian world strewn with spiritual strongholds, each of which encloses an arsenal filled with mighty weapons for offensive as well as defensive warfare. Every monastery has its master magician, who sells *agni Dei*, conception-billets, magic incense, salt and tapers which have been consecrated on Candlemas Day, palms consecrated on Palm Sunday, flowers besprinkled with holy water on Ascension Day, and many other appliances belonging to the great magical apparatus of the Church.

This consecrated enginery being so various and complete, it might have been expected that the people would be content, and seek no further expedients than these constantly at hand.

all the holy martyrs, and St. Adalgunda and all the holy virgins, and of all the saints in heaven and on earth to whom power is given to bind and loose,—we curse, execrate and exclude from the mother Church through the bond of malediction (here follows the name of the persons). May their children be orphaned; may they be cursed upon the field, cursed in the city, in the forest, in their houses and barns, in their chamber and their bed, in the town-hall, in the village, on land and sea; may they be cursed in the church, in the churchyard, in the court-room, on the public square and in war; whether they be talking, sleeping, waking, eating or drinking, whether they be going or resting, or doing any other thing, let them be accursed in soul and body, reason and all their senses: cursed be their progeny, cursed be the fruit of their land, cursed be all their limbs, head, nose, mouth, teeth, throat, eyes, and eyelashes, brain, larynx, tongue, breast, lungs, liver, legs, and arms, skin and hair; cursed be every thing living and moving in them from head to foot, etc. I conjure thee, Lucifer, and all your crew, by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, by the incarnation and birth of Christ; I conjure thee by the power and the virtue of all saints, that thou never leave them in quiet, night or day, until thou have brought them to ruin, destroyed them by water, or led them to the gallows, or caused them to be torn by wild beasts, or their throat to be cut by enemies, or their bodies to be destroyed by fire,” etc., etc.

But, alas! a people's magic of infernal origin is abroad, and rampant by the side of the holy magic of the Church; and by it Satan tempts the careless, the curious and the irresolute. Even many priests are tainted with it. The holy Boniface, and many popes and monkish chroniclers after him, bitterly lament that the lower clergy compound love-potions and practice divinatory arts, using even the holy appurtenances of the Church, as the host, to fortify the efficacy of their diabolical charms.

Since the Church tries to reduce all conditions of life to harmony with itself, it naturally follows that it sets its seal also to human jurisprudence. The ordeals which it has found employed by some of the nations it has converted, exactly suit its system. It receives them, consequently, as resting on a right idea,²⁵ makes them what they were not before, a common practice, and gives detailed rules concerning the chants, prayers, conjurations and masses with which they should be accompanied. When a person under accusation or suspicion is to undergo the ordeal by water, for example, the priest is to lead him to the church, and cause him kneeling to pronounce three formulas in which God is implored for protection. Then follow mass and the holy communion. When the accused receives the wafer the priest says: "Be this flesh of our Lord thy test to-day." Then in solemn procession the throng of witnesses repair to the spot where the test is to take place. The priest conjures the water, expelling the demons common to this element, and commands it to be an obedient instrument of God for revealing innocence or crime. The accused is dressed in clean garments, kisses the cross and the gospel, recites a Paternoster and makes the sign of the cross. Then (in the ordeal by hot water) his hand is held in a boiling cauldron: or he is thrown with his hands pinioned and a rope about his waist, into a river. If he does not then sink, his guilt is proved. The ordeal by fire consists in walking over glowing coals, or carrying red-hot iron, or in being dragged through flames clad in a shirt saturated with wax. By the test of fire the genuineness of relics is also sometimes tested. When in a. d. 1010 some monks who had returned from Jerusalem exhibited the towel with which the disciples had wiped the feet of Christ, some doubts of its genuine character were raised, but were all removed by this test. One of the most common of all ordeals is the duel.

God, invoked by the servants of the Church, keeps his protecting hand over innocence. Every doubt of this truth argues faint-heartedness bordering on atheism. This thought lies at the foundation not only of the different kinds of ordeals, but also of the torture, which, constantly extended and intensified under the auspices of the Church, was a form of trial sparing the judge much labor, and leading to the goal more surely than the collation of testimony, which, besides being irksome, hardly ever brings full assurance. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego felt no pain in the fiery furnace. God gives to innocence upon the rack, if not insensibility to pain, at least strength to endure it. But even the arch-fiend, to a certain extent, can protect his subjects. In the case of heretics and witches it is therefore needful to resort to the intensest torture; to exhaust, so to speak, to the last drop, the springs of pain in human nerves, under the hand of skilled tormentors. If then the instruments of torture are previously conjured and sanctified by the priest, and if he stands at the side of the accused ready to interrupt with constant question the diabolic formulas of alleviation which undoubtedly the sufferer murmurs inwardly, then a candid and reliable confession may reasonably be expected, in spite of all efforts to the contrary by the devil. In the "Witch-hammer" (*Malleus Malificarum*) the ecclesiastical and magical plan of justice celebrates its triumph. This work, bearing the sanction of the pope, contains full directions for the judge presiding in witch-trials. It is, in fact, a hammer which crushes whatever it falls upon. The judge who carefully follows these

²⁵ A biblical ground for ordeals was found in Numbers v. 12-28.

directions may be confident that Satan himself can not save any one who is under accusation; only God and his holy angels can rescue him, by direct miracle, from death in the flames.²⁶

He who finds a judicial system which appeals constantly to the intercession of God of questionable value, may consider that the history of the Church, the experiences of its saints and servants are a succession of divine miracles. God is not chary of his miracles when recognized, and the servants of the Church are in possession of the apostolic power and mandate to perform them.

Another question is, how are the divine miracles to be distinguished from the infernal? All attempts of the acutest scholastics to establish a rule of definite separation for these two kinds of miracles have failed. They are revealed under identical forms, and even the moral perceptions can detect no difference, since Satan is able to transform himself into an angel of light. Reason must also acknowledge its incapacity even in this respect, and rely on the Holy Ghost ever active in the Church and especially in its head. The power of divine truth and inspiration which was poured out upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, has been transmitted like a magnetic stream from Peter, the first bishop of Rome, to his successors by the laying on of hands, and is in a certain measure imparted, by the sacrament of ordination, to every member of the clerical hierarchy.

The survey of the magic of the Church which has been presented above, ought perhaps to be completed, not by pursuing the tedious path which lies before us through continued description of ecclesiastical customs and opinion, but by simply formulating the general truth: *Every symbol, every external token, to which is attributed an independent power for sanctification and an immediate moral influence, is Magic.* May the Protestant reader, for whom we are here writing, examine with this maxim in how far the Reformation, which aims to restore to internal authority—the reason and free-will of the individual—its rights, has succeeded in its task. Luther and Calvin assailed many magical usages, and pruned many branches from the tree of dualism, but still allowed its vigorous trunk to remain unscathed. But a dualistic religious system must, on account of the unreasonable cosmical theory on which it rests, sooner or later attack again the inner authority and make itself the sole and absolute external one. It must of necessity degenerate to a statuary fetichism or fall before a complete unitarian reformation. Our day witnesses the conflict between these opposite ideas. On the one side, the belief in a personal spiritual adversary of mankind, preached to the masses from a thousand pulpits, hangs suspended like a sword of Damocles over the head of civilization; on the other side, philosophy and the science of nature diffuse a rational and unitarian theory of the universe and human existence through a constantly enlarging circle. To him who wishes to take part in this all-important struggle, we would commend these words of the noble Bunsen:²⁷ “Wherever in religion, or state, or civilization, in art or science, the inner is developed more strenuously, and the spiritual earnestly sought after, be it with more or less transformation of what is existing, there progress is at hand; for from the inner, life comes to the external, from the centre to the circumference. There is also the way which leads to life. There new paths are opened to the soul, and genius lifts its wings with divine assurance. If this is true, the contrary must take place wherever the external life is more and more exalted, where the token supersedes more and more the essence, the symbol and the external work the inner act and conscience, where the superficialities is taken for the content, the

²⁶ The “Witch-hammer” will be more fully described hereafter. The student of history should not neglect this volume, which is the ripest fruit of Catholic dualism, and clearly shows the results to which it tends.

²⁷ “Gott in der Geschichte,” III.

outer monotony for life's uniformity, and appearances for truth. There a luckless future is in waiting, whatever be the aspect of the present."

3. The Magic Of The Learned

We find ourselves in a dismal labyrinth of narrow, winding streets, now and then issuing into some open space before a guild-hall or a church. The objects which meet our gaze in this strange city do not solicit pause or reflection; for we have seen essentially the same type of homes and humanity in many another city which we have wandered through in our search for the stone of wisdom. We therefore continue on our way. The buildings of the university are said to be in the neighborhood, and we turn the corner to the right, and again to the left, until we come upon it. The lecture-hour approaches. Professors draped in stiff mantles and wearing the scholastic cap on their supremely wise foreheads, wend their way to the temples of knowledge at the portals of which flocks of students wait. We recognize their various and familiar types: the new-matriculated look as usual, their cheeks still retaining the glow of early youth, their hearts still humble, perhaps still held captive by the sweet delusion that the walls by which they wait are the propylæa to all the secrets of earth and heaven. Just as readily recognized are the parchment-worms, destined one day to shine as lights in the Church and in the domain of science, whether they now toil themselves pale and melancholic over their *catenæ*, their *summæ* and *sententiæ*, or bear with unfeigned self-satisfaction the precious weight of *terms* which lifts them so conspicuously above the ignorant mass of mortals. And among the throng of the first named still fresh with youth, and these already dried pedants, we find also the far-famed third class of students, adventurers assembled from all quarters under the protection of university-privileges,—those gentlemen with bearded cheek, and faces swelled by drinking and scarred by combat, with terribly long and broad swords dangling at their side,—the heroes of that never ending Iliad which the apprentices of learning and the guilds enact nightly in the darkness of the lanes, who may yet turn out some day the most pious of conventual priors, the gravest doctors and the very severest burgomasters in Christendom, unless before that time they meet their fate upon the gallows, or on the field of battle, or as *scholares vagantes* in the ditch or by the roadside.

Shall we enter and listen to some of these lectures which are about to be delivered? Our letter of academic membership will open the doors to us, if we desire. To the left in the vaulted hall the professor of medicine has commenced his lecture. With astonishing subtlety and penetration he discusses the highly important question, before propounded by Petrus de Abano, but not as yet fully solved,—“*an caput sit factum propter cerebrum vel oculos*” (whether the head was formed for the sake of the brain or the eyes). To the right the professor of theology leads us into one of the dim mysteries of the Church by ventilating the question what Peter would have done with the bread and wine, had he distributed the elements while the body of Christ in unchanged reality was yet hanging on the cross.²⁸ A little farther on in this mouldy vault we find the workshop of philosophy, where a master in the art of abstract reasoning deduces the distinction between *universalia ante rem* and *universalia in re*. In yonder furthest room a jurisconsult expounds a passage in the pandects.—Or perhaps you would rather not choose at all? You smile sadly. Alas! like myself you have good reason for complaining with Faust:—

I have, alas! Philosophy,
Med'cine, and Jurisprudence too,
And to my cost Theology,
With ardent labor studied through.

²⁸ Yet in the days of Erasmus of Rotterdam the theologians were making great ado over this knotty problem.

And here I stand, with all my lore,
 Poor fool, no wiser than before.

and if you add like him,

Hence have I now applied myself to magic,

we shall bring back to our minds the object of our burning desires, the hope which cheers us that finally the veil will be torn from the face of the Isis-image, and that we shall behold the unspeakable face to face, even though her looks burn us to ashes. Let us turn our back upon this tragi-comic seat of learning, where, as everywhere else, hoary-headed fools are teaching young chicken-heads to admire nonsense, and young eagle-souls to despair of knowledge. It is not far hence direct—as direct as the winding lanes permit—to that great magician who has taken up his abode in this city. At the feet of that master let us seat ourselves. We shall there slake our burning thirst with at least a few drops of that knowledge which through by-gone ages has been flowing in a subterranean channel, though from the same sources as the streams of Paradise. And if we are disappointed there,—well, then *you*, if you so choose, can quench your longing for truth in the whirlpool of pleasure and adventure. *I* shall go into a monastery, seek the narrowest of its cells, watch, pray, scourge forth my blood in streams; or I shall go to India, sit down upon the ground and stare at the tip of my nose,—stare at it and never cease, year out and year in, until all consciousness is extinguished. Agreed, then, is it not?....

We are arrived in the very loneliest quarter of the town, and the most dreary limits of the quarter, where old crumbling houses group themselves in inextricable confusion along the city wall, and from their gable windows fix their vacant, hypochondriacal looks upon the open fields beyond. A tower, crowning the wall of the fort upon this side, now serves the great scientist as an observatory and dwelling, given him by the burgomaster and the council of the city. He was for a long time private physician to the Queen of France, but has now retired to this lonely place from the pleasures, the distinctions, and the dangers of life at court, in order to devote himself quietly to research and study. He has a protector in the prince-archbishop resident in the city; and as the professor of theology has certified at the request of this same prince-bishop to his strict orthodoxy, the city authorities thought to persuade him to receive the honorable and lucrative position of town-astrologer, not heeding the assertion of the monks that he was a wizard, and that his black spaniel was in reality none other than the devil himself.

A magician never suffers himself to be interrupted in his labors, whether engaged in contemplating the nature of spirits, in watching the heavens, or in the elaboration of the *quinta essentia*, the final essence, with his crucibles. Oh! what world-wide hopes, what solemn emotions, what inexpressible tension of soul must accompany these investigations! Gold, which rules the world, here falls from the tree of knowledge as a fruit over-ripe into the bosom of the master. And what is gold with all the power it possesses, and all the enjoyment it commands, compared with the ability to control heaven and earth and the spirits of hell, compared with the capacity to summon by the means of lustrations, seals, characters and exorcisms the angels hovering in the higher spheres, or tame to obedience the demons which fill the immensity of space? And what again is this power compared with the pure celestial knowledge to which magic delivers the key? a knowledge as much transcending the wisdom of angels as the son's place in his father's house is superior to a servant's! Perchance the magician at this very moment is deeply absorbed in some investigation, and within a hair's breadth of the revelation of some new and dazzling truth. Let us consider before we venture to ask admittance. Let us pause a moment before this iron-bound door, and recover our breath.

Ye men of science in this nineteenth century, how miserable you would be had you not once for all determined to limit your hopes to a minimum! To die when you have gleaned and contributed but a single straw to the harvest of science, is the fate to which you subject yourselves. The one among you who has brought to notice a hitherto unknown snail or flower, deems himself not to have lived in vain. To have discovered a formula under which a group of phenomena can be arranged, is already a triumph. This resignation which makes each one among you, even the greatest, only an insignificant detail-worker upon the immense labor whose completion you contemplate at an infinite remove, and the very outlines of which you ignore,—this resignation is sublime, though supremely painful to the aspiring soul. The individual laborer for his part abstains from all hope of seeing the whole truth, and works for his generation and futurity. Even the philosopher who undertakes to explain the framework of the macrocosm, does not see in his system a final solution of the “problem of cosmical explanation,” but only a link in the long chain of development. He foresees the fall of his theories, satisfied, perhaps, if the traces of his error keep his successor on a straighter path. It is the race and not the individual which works in your work; which continues it when you have grown weary and been forgotten. It is a collective activity like that of ants and bees. But the magician stands alone! To be sure he receives what the past may offer,—but only to enclose himself with this treasure, and improve it by the immense wealth of his own mind. He believes in this immensity. He believes that the powers of all the generations are stored up in the bosom of the individual, and he hopes to accomplish alone what you faint-heartedly leave to the multitude of incalculable centuries!

We knocked upon the door ponderous with its bolts of iron. It opened as by an unseen hand. No servant interposed either welcome or remonstrance as we mounted the dark spiral stairs. Unannounced we entered the hall of the great magician. Along the arched ceiling of the rooms whose green lead-fastened window panes admitted but a scanty light, floated a fragrant vapor from the cell in the extreme background, where we could see the magician himself clad in a snow-white mantle reaching to his feet, and standing solemnly beside an incense-altar. Upon his head he wore a diadem on which was engraved the unspeakable name, *Tetragrammaton*, and in his hand he held a metallic plate which, as we soon learned, was made of electrum and signed with the signatures of coming centuries.

We paused and stammered a word of excuse for the interruption we had caused him. A smile of satisfaction broke upon his face when he had momentarily surveyed us, and he bade us welcome.

“You are the very persons whose arrival I have been expecting, and whom it has cost me much trouble to summon,” he said. “You are the spirits of the nineteenth century, conjured to appear before a man of the fifteenth. You are called from the ante-chambers where the souls of the unborn await their entrance upon earth. But the images of the century to which your future mortal life belongs dwell in the depths of your consciousness. These images you shall show me. It is for this that I have summoned you, for I wish to cast a glance into the future.”

I was seized with a strange, almost horrid feeling. I now remembered that I and my companions had transported ourselves, by the use of means which stirs up the entire reproductive forces of the imagination, from the actual nineteenth century, back to the long-past fifteenth, that we might see it live before our eyes, not in dis severed traits as a past age is wont to be preserved in books, but in the completeness of its own multi-formity. Who was right, the magician or myself? Which was the one only seemingly living, he or I? At what hour did the hand on the clock of time point at that moment? Granted that time is absolutely nothing but a conceptual form without independent reality; as long as I live in time I believe

in its ordered course, and do not wish to see its golden thread entangled. I did not wish that the spirit which I had summoned should be my master and degrade me to a product of his own imagination. I summoned courage and exclaimed:—

“We have wandered through many cities, great magician, to find you. We finally stand in this your sanctuary. We see these gloomy Gothic arches over our heads; we see your venerable figure before us; we behold these folios and strange instruments which surround you; we look out through these windows and behold on one side towers and house-tops, on the other fields, meadows and the huts of serfs, and yonder in the distance the castle of a knight who is suspected of night-attacks upon the trains of the merchants as they approach the city. All these things stand real and present before our eyes: but, nevertheless, great magician, it is all, yourself included, a product of *our* magic, of the power of our own imagination, not of *your* magic. It is in order to make some acquaintance with the latter that we are come. It is not we who are to answer your questions, but you ours.”

The magician smiled. He persisted in his view, and I in mine. The contested question could not be decided, and it was laid aside. But along with my consciousness of belonging to a period of critical activity, my doubts had awakened—my vivid hope a moment ago of finding in magic the key of all secrets, was fast fading away.

I looked around in this home of the magician. On his writing-desk lay a parchment on which he had commenced to write down the horoscope of the following year. Beside the desk was a celestial globe with figures painted in various colors. In a window looking towards the south hung an astrolabe, to whose alidade a long telescope (of course without lenses) was attached. The book-case contained a not inconsiderable number of folios: Versio Vulgata, some volumes of the fathers, Virgil, Dionysius Areopagita, Ptolemy, the hymns of Orpheus, Hermes Trismegistus, Jamblichus, Pliny’s Natural History, a large number of works partly in Arabic upon astrology and alchemy, also a few Hebrew manuscripts, and so on. These and other such things were to be found in his observatory, which was also his studio and sleeping-room. Next to the observatory was the alchemical laboratory with a strangely appointed oven filled with singular instruments reminding me again of Faust’s complaint:—

*Ihr Instrumente freilich spottet mein,
Mit Rad und Kämmen, Walz und Bügel.
Ich stand am Thor, ihr solltet Schlüssel sein;
Zwar euer Bart ist kraus, doch hebt Ihr nicht die Riegel.*

While we lingered here our host informed us that for the present he had suspended his experiments in alchemy. He hoped to find his *quinta essentia* by a shorter process than the combination of substances and distillation, which had exhausted already so many investigators and led so few to success. He acknowledged that he had himself advanced no farther in the art of the adepts than the extraction from “philosophic earth” mixed with “philosophic water” of just so much, and no more, gold than he had employed at the beginning of the experiment.²⁹ In spite of this, however, he worked daily before his oven, melting and purifying such metals as he needed for his planet-medallions, amulets and magical rings, and above all in preparing that effective alloy which is called electrum.

From his laboratory our host conducted us into two other apartments with arched ceilings, forming a sort of museum of most extraordinary curiosities,—skeletons and dried limbs of various animals: fishes, birds, lizards, frogs, snakes, etc.; herbs and differently colored stones; whole and broken swords; nails extracted from coffins and gallows; flasks containing I know

²⁹ This confession Cornelius Agrippa makes in his “Occult Philosophy.” Theophrastus Paracelsus and others were less modest.

not what,—all arranged in groups under the signs of the different planets. We beheld before us the wonderful and rich apparatus of practical magic arranged according to rules of which we were entirely ignorant,—rules which we had vainly sought in all the treatises of modern times upon the occult sciences of the Middle Ages, rules which might perhaps contain the simple principles underlying their confusion.

Evening was drawing on. The sun was sinking behind the western hills. It was beginning to grow dark among the arches where the great magician had imprisoned himself among dead and withered relics,—fragments broken from the great and living world without. We returned to his observatory. He opened a window and contemplated with dreamy glances the stars which were kindling one after another in the heavens. The twilight is a favorable time for conversation of the kind for which we had been preparing ourselves. We were soon settled in comfortable, roomy arm-chairs and discoursing earnestly,—we, the man of the fifteenth century, and the unborn souls of the nineteenth, whom he had summoned that he might look into the future, and who now used him to look back into the past. He spoke to us of his science....

“My knowledge is not of myself. Far, far away behind these hills, behind the snowy summits of the Alps, behind the mountains of the ‘farthest-dwelling Garamantes,’ on nameless heights which disappear among the clouds, the temple of truth was built long ago over the fountain from which life flows. That this temple is demolished we well know; only the first human pair has wandered through its sacred halls. But he who desires, who yearns and has patience, can sit down by the margin of the stream of Time and grasp and draw ashore some of the cedar-beams from the ruined temple drifting upon the billows, and from the form of the fragments may determine the structure of the whole. All wisdom has its roots in the past, and the farther we penetrate antiquity, the richer the remains we find of a highest human wisdom. What is Albertus Magnus with his profound knowledge in comparison with the angelic wisdom of Dionysius Areopagita, and what is the latter compared with that of the prophet who denounced his woes over Nineveh and Babylon? And yet these divinely commissioned men would gladly have been taught by the seventy elders who were allowed with Moses to approach the mountain where God chose to reveal himself, there receiving the mystic knowledge of the Cabala. On Sinai, however, God’s secret was veiled in clouds, lightnings and terror; Moses himself was permitted to see him only ‘from behind’—did not obtain a morning-knowledge (a knowledge *a priori*, an analogy-seeking pupil of Schelling would have called it), but an evening-knowledge (knowledge *a posteriori*, he would have added). The morning-knowledge was shown only to the man of the dawn of time and was extinguished at the first sin. From that time every successive generation has deteriorated from its predecessor:

“*“Aetas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiore,”*

and with the darkness of sin reason is plunged into constantly blacker depths. The individual seeker after truth may gain enlightenment, but for himself alone, not for humanity. Therefore a magician confines the wisdom he acquires to his own bosom, or imparts it to a single pupil, or buries it under obscure expressions which he commits to parchment; but he neither can nor will impart it without reserve to humanity whose path appears to lead downward into a constantly deeper night.

“Even the theologians speak of the pristine wisdom,—the theologians with whom we, who practice the occult science, agree far more than the simple and suspicious among them think. What remained, in the time of Noah, of pristine wisdom was saved with him in the ark. His

first-born obtained as his portion the fairest wisdom. Prophecy, the Cabala, and the Gospel belong to the sons of Shem, the Jews. But even Ham and Japhet were not left destitute. It was the priest of the sons of Ham that guarded the secrets of Isis,—secrets before which even we Christians must bow in the dust; for the Old Testament does not hesitate to exalt the wisdom of the Egyptians and recognize Moses as a pupil from their school. Hermes Trismegistus was an Egyptian, and we magicians who know that he transmuted whatever he chose into gold and precious stones, are not astonished when the apostle Paul speaks of the treasures of Egypt, or at what travellers relate of its pyramids and other giant works, or when Pliny estimates the number of its cities at twenty thousand, or when Marcellinus is amazed at the immense treasures which Cambyzes carried away from it, for all this was a creation of the art of Hermes Trismegistus.³⁰ Even the portion of the children of Japhet was not insignificant. It was divided between the treasury of Zoroaster and that of the Eleusinian mysteries. Some coins of this treasure fell into the hands of Plato and Aristotle and have from them come into the possession of Porphyrius, Jamblichus, and the theosophists and scholastics. It is this diffused illumination—that of the Bible (its inner, secret meaning) the Cabala and fragments of Egyptian, Persian and Grecian wisdom—which are collected and united in the magic of learning. These are the ancestors of my science. Has it not a pedigree more noble than that of any royal family?

“I heard you mention something about the necessity for a science of investigation without presupposition. Would you then really presume to be the judge of all that past generations have thought, believed and transmitted as a sacred inheritance to those that follow? Do you not shrink before the idea that human hunger for truth must have been satisfied from Adam to our own days by nothing but illusions? that you are the children and children’s children of mere idiots who have fixed their hopes, their faith, and their convictions on baseless falsehoods? Put your godless plan of investigation to the test! Do it openly, and the theologians will burn you! Do it in secret, and you will finally crave the stake as a liberator from the terrible void such a science would leave in your own soul! No, the magician believes just as devoutly as the theologian. Only in the mellow twilight of faith can he undertake those operations whose success is a confirmation of the truth of his faith. Or do you require stronger corroboration of the genuineness of his tenets than what I find when I read in these stars which wander silently past my window, the fates of men, and see these fates accomplished; when, with the potency of magical means, I summon angels, and demons, and the souls of dead and unborn men to reveal themselves before my eyes, and they appear?

“I confess that our science, if it is looked at only on the surface, resembles a variegated carpet with artfully interwoven threads; but as only a limited number of manipulations is required to produce the most remarkable texture, so it is also but a few simple thoughts which support all the doctrines and products of magic.

“That the universe is a triple harmony, as the Godhead is a Trinity, you are aware. We live in the elemental world; over our head the celestial space, with its various spheres, revolves; and above this, finally, God is enthroned in the purely spiritual world of ideas. The unhappy scientists of your century have in their narrow prejudice separated these worlds from one another (but by crowding together the celestial and the elementary). Your so-called students of nature investigate only the elementary world, and your so-called philosophers only the ideal; but the former with all their delving in the various forms of matter, never reach the realm of the spiritual, but are rather led to disavow its existence; and the latter can never from

³⁰ Thus reasoned, as late as the middle of the sixteenth century, Borrichius (Olaf Borch), who was professor in chemistry at the University of Copenhagen and wrote a book upon the wisdom of the Egyptian Hermes.

the dim world of ideas summon up the concrete wealth of nature. In vain your students of nature imagine that in physiology, or your philosophers that in anthropology, they shall find the transition from one world to the other. We magicians, on the contrary, study these worlds as a unit. We find them combined by two mighty bonds: those of correspondence and causality. All things in the elementary world have their antitype in the celestial, and all celestial things have their corresponding ideas. These correspondences are strung from above downwards as strings on the harp of the universe, and on that harp the causalities move up and down like the fingers of a player. While your students of nature seek the chains of causality in only one direction, the horizontal, that which runs through things on the same level, that which connects things in one and the same elementary world; we, the students of magic, search with still greater diligence those perpendicular chains of causality which run through and combine corresponding objects in the three worlds. Our manner of investigating this perpendicular series resembles your method of examining the horizontal but slightly, if at all. What unnecessary trouble your induction causes you! You wish to investigate the nature of some manifestation of force, for instance; you analyze it with great painstaking into different factors, you strive to isolate each of these factors and to cause them to act each its own part, to find out what each has contributed to the common expression of force. We meet with no such hindrances. A secret tradition has presented to us our perpendicular lines of causality almost entire, and we are able to fill up the lacunæ of this tradition by an investigation which is not impeded with any great difficulties. This investigation relies on the resemblances of things, for this similarity is derived from a correspondence, and causality is interwoven with correspondence. Thus, for instance, we judge from the resemblance between the splendor of gold and that of the sun that gold has its celestial correspondence in that luminary, and sustains to it a causal relation. Another example: the two-horned beetle bears a causal relation to the moon, which at its increase and wane is also two-horned; and if there were any doubt of this intimate relation between them, it must vanish when we learn that the beetle hides its eggs in the earth for the space of twenty-eight days, or just so long time as is required for the moon to pass through the Zodiac, but digs them up again on the twenty-ninth, when the moon is in conjunction with the Sun.³¹ Do not smile at this method of investigation! Beware of repeating the mistake which ‘common sense’ is so prone to make in seeing absurdities in truths which happen to be beyond its horizon? Our method is founded on the idea that there is nothing casual in nature. To be sure we accept a divine arbitrament, but by no means a natural fortuity. Not even the slightest similarity between existing objects is a meaningless accident! Not even the slightest stroke in the figures by which we fix our words and thoughts in writing is without deep significance. Every thing in the work of nature and of man has its cause and its effect. We can not make a gesture, nor say a word, without imparting vibrations to the whole universe, upward and downward,—vibrations which may be strong or feeble, perceptible or imperceptible. This principle runs through the whole of our cosmical system, and this thought must be true even for you analyzers.

“Before explaining more fully the magical use of our series of correspondence and causality, I wish to show you a couple of them. I shall choose the simplest, but at the same time the most important. I commence with

The Scale of the Holy Tetrad.

From which is found the Correspondences to the Four Elements.

יהוה - God’s name (Jehovah) in four letters.

The World of Archetypes and Bliss.

³¹ Agrippa: “De Occulta Philosophia,” 1. I., c. 24.

The four triplicities of the celestial hierarchy.

Seraphim,
Cherubim,
Thrones.

Dominions,
Powers,
Empires.

Principalities,
Archangels,
Angels.

Saints,
Martyrs,
Confessors.

Four angels, guardians of the four card. points.

Michael.

Raphael.

Gabriel.

Uriel.

Angels presiding over the elements.

Seraph.

Cherub.

Tharsis.

Ariel.

The Celestial World.

The four triplicities of the Zodiac.

Aries,
Leo,
Sagittarius.

Gemini,
Libra,
Aquarius.

Cancer,
Scorpio,
Pisces.

Taurus,
Virgo,
Capra.

The stars and planets as related to the elements.

Mars,
Sun.

Jupiter,
Venus.

Saturn,
Mercury.

Fixed Stars,
Moon.

Four qualities of the celestial elements.

Light.

Transparency.

Activity.

Firmness.

The Elementary World.

The four elements.

Fire.

Air.

Water.

Earth.

The four qualities of the elements.

Warmth.

Humidity.

Coldness.

Aridity.

The four seasons.

Summer.

Spring.

Winter.

Autumn.

The four card points.

East.

West.

North.

South.

Four kinds of mixed bodies.

Animals.

Herbs.

Metals.

Stones.

Four kinds of animals.

Walking.

Flying.

Swimming.

Crawling.

The parts of the plants as related to the elements.

Germ.

Flower.

Leaves.

Root.

Metals corresponding to the elements.

Gold, Iron.

Copper, Tin.

Quicksilver.

Lead, Silver.

Stones corresponding to the elements.

Shining and Burning.

Light and Transparent.

Clear and Hard.

Heavy and Opaque.

Four principles of judging.

Faith.

Science.

Opinion.

Experience.

Temperaments.

Choleric.

Sanguinic.

Phlegmatic.

Melancholic.

Princes of the evil spirits raging in the elements.

Samael.

Azazael.

Azael.

Mehazael.

The demons presiding over the four card. points.

Oriens.

Paymon.

Egyn.

Amaimon.

“Here you see one of the nets which magic has stretched from the Empyrean down into the abyss. For each of the sacred numbers there is a separate scale of the same kind: ‘The universe,’ says Pythagoras, ‘is founded upon numbers,’ and Boethius asserts that ‘Every thing created in the beginning of time was formed according to the relations of certain numbers, which were lying as types in the mind of the Creator.’ It is consequently a settled fact with us that numbers contain greater and more effective forces than material things; for the former are not a mixture of substances, but may, as purely formal entities, stand in immediate connection with the ideas of divine reason. This is recognized also by the fathers: by Hieronymus, Augustine, Ambrosius, Athanasius, Bede, and others, and underlies these words in the book of Revelation: ‘Let him who hath understanding count the number of the beast.’ Those varied and relatively discordant objects which form a unity in the same world, are arranged side by side in the scale; whereas those things which in different groups or different worlds correspond to one another, form the ascending and descending series.

“Do not forget that correspondence also implies reciprocal activity! Thus, for instance, the letter γ in the holy name of God indicates a power which is infused into the successive orders of Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones, and which is imparted through them to the constellations Leo and Sagittarius, and to the two wandering luminaries Mars and the Sun. These angels and stars all pour down into the elementary world the abundance of their power, which produces there fire and heat, and the germs of animal organisms, and kindles in man reason and faith, in order to meet finally in the lowest region, its opposites: cold, destruction, irrationality, unbelief, represented by the names of fallen angel-princes. I will now show you another table which is an introduction to the study of Astrology and treats more in detail of certain parts of the preceding, showing how things in the elementary world and microcosm are subject to the planets. In showing this to you I will remind you of the verse:

‘Astra regunt hominem; sed regit astra Deus.’
(The stars guide man; but God guides the stars.)

Elements

Moon: Earth, Water.

Mercury: Water.

Venus: Air, Water.

Sun: Fire.

Mars: Fire.

Jupiter: Air.

Saturn: Earth, Water.

Microcosmos

Moon: White juices.

Mercury: Mixed juices.

Venus: Slimy juices.

Sun: Blood and vital power.

Mars: Acid juices.

Jupiter: Vegetative juices.

Saturn: Gall.

Animals

Moon: Sociable and changeable.

Mercury: Cunning and rapid.

Venus: Beautiful with strong sexual instinct

Sun: Bold and courageous.

Mars: Beasts of prey.

Jupiter: Sagacious and gentle.

Saturn: Crawling and nocturnal.

Plants

Moon: Selenotrope, Palm, Hyssop, Rosemary, etc.

Mercury: Little short leaves and many colored flowers.

Venus: Spices and fruit-trees.

Sun: Pine, Laurel, Vine, Heliotrope, Lotus, etc.

Mars: Burning, poisonous, and stinging.

Jupiter: Oak, Beech, Poplar, Cereals, etc.

Saturn: Cypress and those of a gloomy aspect or foul odor.

Metals

Moon: Quicksilver, Tin, Bismuth.

Mercury: Silver

Venus: Silver

Sun: Gold

Mars: Iron and sulphuric metals.

Jupiter: Gold, Silver, Tin

Saturn: Lead

Stones

Moon: All white stones and pearls.

Mercury: Many colored.

Venus: Carnelian, Lazuli, etc.

Sun: Topaz, Ruby, Carbuncle, etc

Mars: Diamond, Jasper, Amethyst, Magnet

Jupiter: Green and air-colored.

Saturn: Onyx and all brown clays.

“The value of these, as of many other tables, will be clear to you when I now pronounce the first practical principle of magic:—

“As the Creator of the universe diffuses upon us, by angels, stars, elements, animals, plants, metals and stones, the powers of his omnipotence, so also the magician, by collecting those objects in the elemental world which bear a relation of mutual activity to the same entity (an angel or a planet) in the higher worlds, and by combining their powers according to scientific rules, and intensifying them by means of sacred and religious ceremonies, is able to influence this higher being and attract to himself its powers.

“This principle sufficiently explains why I have collected around me all the strange things you here see. Here, for instance, is a plate of lead on which is engraved the symbol of a planet; and beside it a leaden flask containing gall. If I now take a piece of fine onyx marked with the same planet-symbol, and this dried cypress-branch, and add to them the skin of a snake and the feather of an owl, you will need but to look into one of the tables given you to find that I have only collected various things in the elementary world which bear a relation of mutual activity to Saturn; and, if rightly combined, can attract both the powers of that planet, and of the angels with which it is connected.

“The greatest effect of magic—at the same time its triumph, and the criterion of its truth—is a successful incantation. Shall we perform one? If we go through all the necessary preparations, we shall have a bird’s-eye view of the whole secret science. Only certain alchemists have a still greater end in view; they aspire to produce in the retort man himself,—nay, the whole world. You men of the nineteenth century know only by reputation of our attempts to produce an *homunculus*, and a *perpetuum mobile naturæ*. Could you only count the drops of perspiration these efforts have wrung from us! There is something enchanting, something overpowering, in alchemy. It is gigantic in its aims, and in its depths dwells a thought which is terrible, because it threatens to crush that very cosmic philosophy on which our faith is founded. We occupy ourselves with the elements, until the idea steals upon us that every thing is dependent on them; that every thing, Creator and created, is included in them; that every thing arises by necessity and passes away by necessity. If you can only collect in the crucible those elements and life-germs which were stirring in chaos, then you can also produce, in the crucible, the six days of creation, and find the spirit which formed the universe. I have abandoned alchemy only to escape this thought; but a parchment will, sealed with seven seals, and hidden in the most secret corner of my vaults, contains the remarkable experiences I have had when experimenting for the *perpetuum mobile* and *homunculus*.³²

³² We have found in a “*Magia Divina*” the following directions for accomplishing a *perpetuum mobile naturæ*, the efficacy of which we leave for the reader to decide.

“During the twelve nights after Christmas 1½ measures of dew are collected from fruit-trees, and preserved well enclosed. In the month of March dew is again collected from both fruit-trees and meadows and is preserved in another phial. Dew collected in May is poured in a third and rain of a thunderstorm during the summer in a fourth. Thereupon the contents of the four phials are mixed and one measure of it is poured into a great transparent glass retort where, well covered, it must remain a month until it becomes foul. Put it then over fire and subject to heat of the second degree. When sufficiently distilled a substance thick as honey is left. In this residue are poured four grains of astral tincture. The mixture is exposed to a heat of the first degree, by which it is converted into a thick, jet-black lump which again is dissolved, forming below an ink-like fluid, and above a vapor, in which many colors and figures are seen. These soon disappear, and every thing is changed into water, which begins to turn green, and green palaces, constantly enlarging, and mountains and lovely pastures appear,

“But to the preparations for our conjuration! First we are met with the question: Is the hour favorable? Do the aspects oppose? Aspect is the relative position of two planets to each other. Every calendar from the centuries which lie between you and me speaks of these aspects: of the conjunction of the planets (when they are on the same meridian, and consequently separated by no angular distance); their opposition (when in a directly opposite part of the heavens); their quadrature (distance of 90°), trigon (120°), and hexagon (60°). If the blood-red Mars, or the pale Saturn stand in quadrature or in opposition to one another, or to any of the other wandering stars, this portends destruction. But to-day both these planets are harmless; the aspects are good, and Mars itself being in the first ‘face’ of its own house, is consequently even kindly disposed. Even the moon, whose assistance is needed, is in the house of a friendly star, and in a favorable quadrature to Jupiter. Here we meet consequently with no hindrances. It remains, however, on the side of Astrology to find out what planets are the regents of the present year. In other words, what planets form the first aspect of the year. Look here in my calendarium. Mars was one of them. This suits us all the better as to-day is Tuesday, Mars’ own day, and as the hour will soon be here which, on this day, he presides over absolutely.³³ It is therefore of importance that we use in our incantation the martial part

while the water is diminished more and more. When now you find that no more dew rises from the earth within the glass, take the water which you received from the distillation, mix with it a drachm of astral tincture and pour an ounce of this mixture into the glass bulb. Then every thing begins again to live and grow. Add every month an ounce of this mixture. If then the glass ball is well closed, and is not stirred, a vapor gradually arises, and is condensed into two shining stars, like the sun and the moon, and like the latter, one of these stars waxes and wanes; and all the phenomena of nature, thunder, lightning, hail, rain, snow and dew, will appear in your glass ball as in the real world around you. All this will happen if you keep the great Creator before your eyes and in your heart, and if you conceal from the wicked world this great secret.”

From the second part of Goethe’s *Faust* the reader may remember Doctor Wagner, Faust’s former *famulus*, busily engaged at the alchemic furnace in preparing a *homunculus*, an artificial man. The same “*Magia Divina*” from which we have quoted the preceding directions, allows us also to trace the secret of the learned Wagner: the art of producing “*homunculos philosophicos*.” In a retort of the most beautiful crystal glass is poured one measure of the purest May-dew, collected when the moon is crescent, and two measures of blood from a youth, or three measures from a girl. Both the boy and the girl must be hale and, “if possible,” chaste. When this mixture has fomented during a month, and been transformed into a reddish clay, the *menstruum* which is formed on the top is drawn off by means of tubes hermetically attached to the retort, gathered into a clean glass vessel, mixed with one drachm animal tincture, and the mixture is again poured into the retort where it is kept during a month in gentle heat. A sort of bladder will have then formed which is soon gradually covered with an organic net of little veins and nerves. Sprinkled every fourth week with the *menstruum* above quoted, the bladder grows during four months. When now you notice a peeping sound and movements of vitality in the glass, look into it and you will discover to your joy and amazement a most beautiful pair, a boy and a girl, which you can contemplate with heart-felt admiration for this lovely work of nature, though their height is but six inches. They move and walk about in the glass, where in the midst there is a tree growing with all kinds of pleasant fruits. If now you pour into the retort every month, two grains of animal tincture, you can keep them alive six whole years. When one year old they can inform you of many secrets of nature. They are benevolent in their disposition, and obey you in every thing. But at the end of the sixth year you will find that this beautiful pair who have eaten hitherto of all kinds of fruit, except those growing on the tree which sprang up in the midst of the retort, now begin to eat also the fruit of that. Then a vapor is found in the retort, which grows denser, assumes a blood-red color and emits flashes. The two *homunculi* are terrified, and try to hide themselves. Finally every thing around them is parched, they die, and the whole is changed into a fuming mass. If the glass is not very large and strong it explodes, causing great damage.

³³ The days bear yet, in many languages, the names of the planets which were assigned to them in gray antiquity by Astrology.

Sunday, dies Solis, is the day of the Sun.

Monday, dies Lunæ, is the day of the Moon.

Tuesday, dies Martis, is the day of Mars, *i. e.*, Tiw.

Wednesday, dies Mercurii, is the day of Mercury.

Thursday, dies Jovis, is the day of Jupiter, *i. e.*, Thor.

Friday, dies Veneris, is the day of Venus, *i. e.*, Freja.

Saturday, dies Saturni, is the day of Saturn.

of my magical apparatus. Among the elements fire is martial. We shall therefore kindle a fire upon this altar. Among the planets, the thorny, poisonous and nettle-like are martial. We shall therefore feed this fire with dry twigs and rose-bushes. Among the animals the ferocious and bold are connected with the blood-red star. Here you see three belts of lion's hide fringed with the teeth of tigers, leopards and bears, and provided with clasps of iron, because iron is the martial metal. Let us fasten those belts, when the time has arrived, about our waists. Among the stones the diamond, amethyst, jasper and magnet are martial. I show you here three diadems which, though of pure iron, sparkle with these stones, and are furnished with the signs and signatures of our planet. Here you have three iron staves marked with the same signs: we must bear them in our hands. These breast-plates studded with amethysts, whose Hebrew inscriptions and characters refer to the same stars, we must wear over our hearts on the outside of the white clothing which we shall put on before our incantation begins. Here again you will notice three diamond rings: we shall wear them on our middle finger during the solemn and awful moment for which we are preparing. These two bells we place on the table; one of a reddish alloy and furnished with iron rings, summons the martial spirit hither, the other made of *electrum magicum* (i. e., a proportional alloy of all metals with some astral tincture added), serves to call celestial reserve-forces of all kinds, if needed. Further, we require these breast-plates and these rings of electrum, which do not bear the name of any planet, but the glorious and blessed name of God himself, as a protection for the conjurers against the conjured spirit. Who he is we shall soon find. Observe here, further, a terrible arsenal which is also necessary for our purpose. Mars is the star of war, murder and passion. The demons of Mars have a corresponding nature, and there exists between them and the tools by which their work on earth is accomplished, a power of attraction. Therefore we have here this heavy sword with which the magic circle is to be drawn; we therefore place in rows these skulls and bones which have been collected in places of execution, these nails, extracted from gallows, these daggers, knives and axes rusty with stains of blood. We must not forget the incense which was kindled on the altar shortly before the first citation. There is a different kind of incense for every planet and its demons. That appropriate for Mars is composed of euphorbia, bdellium, ammoniac, magnet, sulphur, brains of a raven, human blood and the blood of a *black cat*.³⁴ It is highly important that the quality of this incense should be genuine. I might quote what Porphyrius says upon this point; but confine myself to pointing out that it has an influence on the conjurer as well as upon surrounding objects. It saturates both the air and the breast of the conjurer with substances that are connected with

The original names seem to have been introduced by the Romans during the later period of the republic. That the idea is derived from Egypt is shown by a passage in Dion Cassius [l. XLIII., c. 26; compare E. Roth, "Geschichte unserer abendländischen Philosophie," I., pag. 211]. The question when and how they were introduced by our forefathers will perhaps remain forever a matter only of conjecture. It has caused astonishment that the order in which the days were named after the planets, though the same with all nations, is not the order in which they were supposed to be placed in the universe (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon). This riddle is solved by the passage in Dion Cassius referred to, in a manner such that the astrological origin of this nomenclature must be undoubted. He relates, namely, that the Egyptians devoted every one of the twenty-four hours to a certain planet. The first hour of the first week-day (Saturday) was given to the uppermost planet, Saturn, the second to Jupiter, the third to Mars and so on, according to the order of the planets. The 24th hour of Saturday consequently fell also to Mars, and the first hour of the succeeding day to the Sun, by which that day was therefore named Sunday. The 24th hour of Sunday falls according to the same calculation to Mercury, and the first hour of Monday to the Moon; and so on. The astrological distribution of the hours between the planets according to their successive order in the heavens thus explains the apparent disorder which occurs in the week. In the magical works by Cornelius Agrippa, Peter de Albano and others, of which the author has availed himself, tables concerning the distribution of the hours are found. These writers have collected from all quarters, and not least from Ptolemy and the Alexandrians, materials for their magical apparatus.

³⁴ The prescriptions for these perfumes are found in Cornelius Agrippa's "Occulta Philosophia," I. I., c. 44.

the planet and its demons. It draws down the conjured being and intoxicates him, as it were, with divine influences, which act on his mind and imagination. As a matter of course we must prepare besides, such implements as are needed in every incantation without bearing any relation to any certain planet. To them belong amulets inscribed with the names of seraphs, cherubs and thrones, and with sentences from the Bible and the sacred books of Zoroaster. To them belong further the magical candlestick of electrum with seven branches, every branch bearing the sign of a planet; and above all the pentagrams, those figures with fine points which no demon can overstep. We shall place the latter as a line of fortification around the magic circle, and we must be sure that no one of the points is broken. Inside the circle between the table, the seven-armed candlestick and the incense-altar there is room for the tripod with the bowl of holy water and the sprinkler.

“Having thus made the necessary preparations for our feast, let us think of the guest who is to be invited.

“The air of the evening is cool. I close the window, move my study lamp to this table, and ask you to be seated around it. We must consult concerning the invitation, in which we must follow the directions given in this cabalistic manuscript.

“You have found from the table I first showed you that it is the orders of Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones which are related by a reciprocal activity to Mars. But these three orders constitute the highest celestial hierarchy, which remain constantly in the presence of God and must not be summoned hither even if we were able to do so. We may only implore their assistance. The orders of Dominions, Powers and Empires are the only intelligences connected with the stars. Among them we must address ourselves to the spirits of Mars, since Mars is the regent of this year, this day and of the intended incantation. The choice between the *good* and the *evil* spirits ruled by Mars is still open; but since it is not our purpose to invoke by supplication but to compel by conjuration, we must choose the wicked. This is no sin: it is only danger. It gives joy to the good angels to see the power of God’s image over their adversaries. But we can not force the whole host of Mars’ demons to appear in our circle. We must select *one only* among their legion and this one must be well chosen. It is therefore necessary to know his name, for with spirits, far more than men and terrestrial things, the name implies the essence and the qualities of the named. The Cabala teaches us the infinite significance of words and names. It proclaims and demonstrates the mysteries which dwell in all the holy names of God; it reveals to us the mysteries in the appellations of angels; it shows us that even the names of men are intimately related to the place in creation and the temporal destiny of those who bear them. Even names of material things show, though less distinctly, a connection between the sound and the thing itself or its nature. Who can hear, for instance, the words *wind*, or *swing*, without perceiving in the very sound something airy or oscillating? Who can hear *stand*, and *strong*, without perception of something stable and firm?

“Let us hasten to find the name of the demon who is to be summoned. Astrology as well as the Cabala gives various methods for this purpose.³⁵ Let us choose the simplest, which is perhaps also the most efficient.

“I must commence our work by pointing out the significance of number 72. To this number correspond the seventy-two languages, the seventy-two elders of the synagogue, the seventy-two interpreters of the Old Testament and the seventy-two disciples of our Lord. This number is also closely connected with the sacred number twelve. If the twelve signs of the Zodiac are divided into six parts, we obtain the seventy-two so-called celestial quinarities, into which the

³⁵ They are found in Agrippa’s “Occulta Philosophia,” I. III. cc. 25, 26, 27, 28.

seventy-two mystical names of God, his '*schemhamphoras*,' infuse their power and which are each of them presided over by an angel-prince. The same number also corresponds to the joints of the human frame; and there are many other correspondences.

"Well, while the Cabalists were searching out the sacred inner meaning of the Bible; while they proceeded slowly, starting with the 'In the beginning,' and stopping at every word, every letter, and found in every word and every letter a mine of secrets,³⁶ they finally, after the lapse of centuries, came as far as to the 19th verse in the 14th chapter of Exodus, commencing: 'And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel arose.' The cabalistical rule which says wherever, in the Bible, an angel is spoken of, there is also the name of an angel hidden among the Hebrew letters of the verse, admonished them to pause and consider. They had at first no idea of the extraordinary discovery they were now on the point of making. But their attention was attracted by the fact that there were seventy-two letters in the verse (in the Hebrew text). Still more surprised were they when they found that even the following verse, the 20th, contained exactly seventy-two letters; and then surprise grew into awe when even the 21st verse showed the same number. In the Bible there is no fortuity: a great secret was hidden here. Finally, by placing the three verses, letter by letter (the middle verse written from left to right, the others conversely), above one another, God's seventy-two mystical names '*schemhamphoras*' each consisting of three letters, from the three verses, was discovered. These names, provided with the suffix *el* or *jah*, are also the names of the seventy-two quinary angels, of which God has said that his name is in them.

"Here in this cabalistic manuscript these names are preserved. Let us select one of them at random. My eye happens to fall upon *Mizrael* first. We will take that. This high name of an angel which we may not invoke, will give us the key to the name of the demon which is to appear presently. Here is the table that will help us. The three root-consonants of the word *Mizra(el)* correspond to three others in the planet Mars, which contain the name—let us pronounce it silently, let us merely whisper it, for it is the name of the desired demon—*Tekfael*!³⁷

"The sum of the numerical value of the letters in this name is 488. A remarkable number, every figure reminding us of the mystical *four*, of the elements and of their correspondences! We shall commune with one of the mightiest and most terrible among the demons. On the waxen tablet with an iron frame, I now inscribe the name of the demon, adding the number 488, and these peculiar strokes which make up his signature. Time does not allow me to tell you now the rules by which the signature is formed from the name.³⁸

³⁶ Many pages could be filled with subtle speculations over the word *Bereshit*, the first word in the Old Testament. That the sensual world is only a secondary world, a reflex of the ideal world, the Cabalists proved by showing that Holy Writ commences not with the first but with the second letter of the Alphabet, namely ב (b), which in its form is half a square [found in the number of the world], and therefore signifies an accomplished separation between spirit and matter, between good and evil. By a transposition of the letters in *Bereshit*, in accordance with the method of the Cabala, two other words are obtained which mean "in the first Tishri," showing that the world had been created in the month of Tishri (September). The sum of the numerical value of the letters in the word *Bereshit* equals the sum of the numerical value of the letters in two words which mean "He created by the law,"—a proof that the law is the instrumental cause of the world. Further, *Bereshit* can be divided so as to form two words meaning "He created six" (six days, six millenniums, the six extensions of universal space, etc.); or, "He created a ram," which was, according to the Hebrew Cabalists, the same ram that was sacrificed instead of Isaac, and the Christians add, the same "Lamb of God" which gave itself a sacrifice for man.

³⁷ The table from which the author has amused himself in extracting, according to the rules, this name, is found in "Occulta Philosophia," I. III. c. 26.

³⁸ Agrippa's book gives the subtle rules for finding the "signs" or the signatures of the demons.—The reader must remember the part played by the "signs" of microcosmos and the earth-spirit in Goethe's *Faust*.

“The preparations are now completed, it only remains to order the apparatus, and to array ourselves. When we have put our implements in order, consecrated the room, cleansed ourselves by a bath, put on the white robe, wrapped a red mantle around (for red is the color of Mars), buckled the girdle of Mars about our waists, assumed the diadem, the breast-plates and the rings, I kindle on the altar my magical light, and the fire for incense, and draw the magical circle. Then an intense prayer for the protection of God, then the incantation.

“Here is the conjuration-book, the so-called Conjurer of Hell. I open at the page on which the martial incantations begin. The book is placed within the circle. When needed, I grasp it with the left hand; I hold the staff with my right.”...

The Gothic room in which the incantation was to take place, presented a strange and at the same time solemn and awful aspect. The magician had arranged with practiced hand the things before mentioned. The skulls, the bones of men and beasts, the murderous weapons and the martial essence-flasks, the various and indescribable fragments from all the kingdoms of nature formed, nearest to the walls, different figures, triangles, squares and pentagons. Red drapery was hung over the naked walls. In the midst of the room and inside the circularly arranged pentagram were the fire and incense-altar with holy water. On a table in the rear, but partly within the circle, the magical lights were burning, and diffused an uncertain whitish-yellow light over the objects. Near the candlestick were the two bells. We were arrayed in our garments. The face of my companion was pale as death: probably mine also.

“Courage, fortitude! ... or you are lost!” whispered the magician, whose eye beamed with a dark, solemn determination, and whose every feature expressed at this moment a terrible resolution.

These were his last words before the incantation. We were allowed to answer nothing. I tried to be courageous, but my soul was shaken by a dreadful expectation. The prayer and religious ceremonies which we had performed after the bath and change of dress, had not diminished but only intensified this feeling.

The night wind shook the windows hidden behind the heavy draperies. It seemed as if ghosts from another world had been lurking behind the gently waving curtains.

Even the skulls appeared to me to bode from their sunken, vacant eyes, the arrival of something appalling. One of them attracted my attention for a long time, or rather exercised on me the same influence which the eye of the rattle-snake is said to have upon the bird which he approaches to devour. I noticed in the eye a metallic lustre. It was the gleam of the light reflected from a martial stone fastened in the skull.

In the mean time the magician had seized the blood-stained sword, and drew, murmuring a prayer the while, a threefold magical circle around the pentagram. Between the circumferences he wrote the names of the angels of the year, the season, the day and the hour. Towards the east he made the sign of *Alpha*, towards the west of *Omega*. Then he divided the circle by a cross into four fields. He assigned two of them, those behind him, to me and my companions. They were large enough to kneel upon. We were strictly enjoined not to leave them, not to allow even a fold of our mantles to wave outside the circle. Forgetfulness in this respect would cost us our lives. The magician put aside his sword in a triangle outside of the circle. He sprinkled himself and us with holy water, read formularies over the incense and the thorn twigs, and kindled them. This was the sign for us to give ourselves to prayer. We must not cease praying until we had heard the first word of the incantation. The incense spread, as it were, a dim transparent veil over the room. Here and there it was condensed into strange figures: now human, now fantastic animal shapes arose against the vaulted wall and sank again.

There must have been something narcotical in those vapory clouds. I looked at them in a half dreaming state while my lips repeated inaudibly the enjoined prayers.

I was aroused from this condition by the first word of the incantation which struck my soul like a thunder-bolt, and awakened me to full consciousness of my position and of the significance of the hour. The blood in my veins seemed changed to ice.

The magician stood before me, tall, erect and commanding. He had taken the incantation-book and now read from it with a hollow voice the first citation, which begins with a long formulary invoking the different mystical names of God.

I can not repeat the quotation. The highest and the lowest, the divine and the infernal, that for whose sacredness we feel an irrepressible reverence and that for whose impiety we experience the deepest horror, were united here in the most solemn and the most terrible words that human tongue has ever stammered. Now first I began to form an idea of the power of words.

The name of the demon was not yet uttered. The nearer the moment for its pronunciation approached, the deeper became the voice of the magician. Now came the formula of invocation, and now—resounded the name *Tekfael*.

It appeared as if a thousand-fold but whispering echo from the vault above, from the corners of the room, from all the skulls and from the very incantation-book itself, repeated that name.

The magician became silent, the incense was condensed and assumed a reddish tint which gradually became more and more diffused. We seemed to hear the thunder rolling, at first from a distance, then nearer, finally over our heads. It was as if the tower had been shaken and the vault over our heads been rent. My knees trembled. Suddenly a flash of lightning shot through the red mass. The magician extended his staff, as if he had wished to stop it. He raised his voice anew, strong and powerful amidst the continued peals of thunder. The smoke grew thin again; from its wreaths there appeared before the magician in the immediate vicinity of the circle, and at the opposite end of his staff, a dim apparition, a figure whose first aspect bereft me of my reason. I felt as if I had fallen to the floor,—as if I had been lost....

I awakened with the perspiration of agony on my forehead, but fortunately in my own bed and in the nineteenth century. The view from my window is cheerful and enlivening. I see a river which bears proud ships, quays swarming with men, and broad streets with houses in a graceful and light *renaissance* style. I lived again in the present which pleased me the best, next to dreaming of the future....

They strove for something great, however, those learned magicians of the Middle Ages. Theirs was a mighty imaginative creation. It lies in ruins never to arise again; but the crumbled *debris* testify to the belief in an all-embracing human power and knowledge.

These learned magicians were likewise restless Faust-natures, as distinct from the usual type of the learned of their time as Faust from the pedantic *gloss*-proud, unaspiring milk-sop Wagner. While they paid their tribute of weakness to tradition, and formed their system on received dicta, it was among them that presentiments of the future began to stir, and a longing for a clearer light than that with which the scholastics and doctors *angelici et seraphici* felt themselves well contented. When the study of ancient Greece was recommencing, when the dawn of the *renaissance* appeared, it was these enthusiastic natures, still groping among the dreams of magic art, that first began to awake and think. It was a feeling of the insufficiency of the ruling theology and scholasticism which had driven them into the temple of “secret philosophy.” Since its pillars were brought from diverse spheres of culture, distrust and fear

of magic had become more universal than directly ecclesiastical; they had drunk as deeply from profane tradition as from Christian, considering them both to flow from the same divine source: their writers quote Porphyrius by the side of John, and the pretender Hermes by the side of Paul. The courage with which they tried to burst open the portals of the spirit-world served them afterwards when from the shores of their childhood's belief they were to venture out on the ocean of thought. Campanella, Vanini, Giordano Bruno, and Cardanus stand on the dividing line between dogmatico-fantastical magic and a philosophy in the sense of the old Greeks and of modern times. If already previously some magicians of the old type had died from persecution, it was not to be wondered at that such "atheists" as Vanini and Bruno must now ascend the pile.

The occult sciences of the Middle Ages with their origin not from paradise and Noah's ark, as believed by their adherents, but from an ancient Oriental culture and with their power over even the strongest and most independent souls that could arise under the influence of a Church which levels all thought, may properly remind those who are willing to forget it, of a sad but incontestable truth: That humanity may embrace during the course of many and long centuries with the most candid faith, and construct with immense labor into a system, dogmas which have been received without questioning, and which contain more of the false than of the true, the great antiquity of which does not give them more claim for validity than is possessed by the error which arose yesterday and vanished to-day. No special divine influence has saved or will save the generations from inheriting the errors less than the acquired truths of their predecessors—no other divine influence, I should say, than the impulse we feel to think for ourselves in order to attain to clearness.

4. The Magic Of The People And The Struggle Of The Church Against It

Wherever religious thought divides the empire of the world and humanity into two absolutely opposed powers, a good and an evil, there it also distinguishes two kinds of magic: the divine and the infernal. So with the Persians who knew a white and a black magic. So also in the Middle Ages of Christianity. The Greeks, on the contrary, knew nothing of this distinction. The world being to them a harmonious whole, both in moral and physical respects, magic was with them only a means of finding out and using the secret powers in the harmonious cosmos; and the wonder-worker who could not be thought of as deriving his powers from an evil source, was undoubtedly a favorite of the gods and an equal with the heroes, not unworthy of statues and temples, if he used his art for the benefit of humanity. For the rest, magical speculation was with the Greeks more and more pushed aside by philosophy,—by scepticism and rational investigation, until on account of the nearer contact between Europe and Asia, after the death of Alexander, it began again to exercise its influence, and finally celebrated its triumph in that dualistic form of religion which by the name of Christianity took possession of the Occident.

The struggle which the spirit of orientalism waged on its march through Europe, first against the Hellenic paganism, and then against the Christian paganism which had penetrated into the Church itself, has been briefly sketched above. When Christianity had spread later among the Germanic and Slavic nations, there arose a new process of attraction and repulsion between it and the natural religions of the barbarians, the elements of which were partly blended with it and partly repelled by it. The gods were transformed into devils, but their attributes and the festivities in their honor were transferred to the saints. Pope Gregory the Great ordained that the pagan festivities should be changed only gradually to Christian, and that they were to be imitated in many respects.³⁹

In the time of Boniface there were many Christian priests in Germany who sacrificed to Thor and baptized in the name of Jesus at the same time. Of especial influence on the rapid spread of Christianity was the maxim of Gregory not to be particular in the choice of proselytes, because hope was to be placed in the better generations of the future. To be allowed to attend divine service, and to be buried in the churchyard, it was only necessary to have the benediction of the priest. Gifts to the Church, pilgrimages, self-scourgings, repeating of prayers in Latin, opened the gates of heaven to the proselytes easier than virtue and bravery those of Valhall to the heathen. For the rest the pagan could enter the community of the Church while retaining his whole circle of ideas. The Church did not deny, but it confirmed, the real existence of every thing which had been the object of his faith, but it treated these objects in accordance with its dualistic scheme, sometimes elevating them to the plane of sanctity, and again degrading them to something diabolical. Thus, for instance, it changed the elementary spirits—which the Celts and Germans believed in—from good or morally

³⁹ Since they (the newly converted Anglo-Saxons) are accustomed to slaughter many oxen and horses in their feasts to the honor of the devils (their ancient gods) it is necessary to allow this custom to remain, but based upon another principle. Thus there must likewise be celebrated on the feast days of the Church and of the Holy Martyrs whose relics are kept in the churches built in heathen sacrificial groves, a perfectly similar festival, by enclosing a place with green trees and preparing a religious banquet. Still the animals must not be sacrificed to Satan's honor, but slaughtered to the praise of God and for the sake of food, for which the Giver of all good gifts must be thanked.

indifferent natural beings into fallen angels, envying man his heavenly inheritance; and if a thinking heathen could before accept or reject the existence of such beings at his pleasure, it now, when he had become a proselyte, became a matter of eternal bliss to believe in them. There was no superstitious idea gross enough not to receive the signet of the Church; nay, the grosser it was, the more likely was it to be appropriated. Even so cultured an intellect as Augustine, the most prominent of the fathers and authors of his time, declared it to be “insolent” to doubt the existence of fauns, satyrs and other demoniac beings which lie in wait for women, have intercourse with them and children by them.⁴⁰ Thus was laid the foundation of that immense labyrinth of superstition in the darkness of which humanity has groped during the thousand years of the Middle Ages.

In the rupture between the Church and the natural religion of the northern peoples we find, in a certain sense, the same spectacle repeated which we have seen in the struggle between the Christian and the Greco-Roman culture. If the Neoplatonicians held up their Appolonius of Tyana as a type of the Christian sorcerers, Celts, Germans and Northmen had also their soothsayers endowed with supernatural powers whom the Christian missionaries must excel in the power of working miracles, if they would gain consideration for the new religion. There are many accounts of bishops and priests who have worn gloves of fire, walked on white-hot iron, and so forth, before the eyes of the astonished heathen. If the miracles worked by the apostles of Christianity had their source in divine agencies, then those performed by its opponents must have their origin in the assistance of the devil. Already here the white magic stood opposed to the black magic, the immediate and supernatural power of God in His agents to the devil: and if the chief significance of the Church was to be an institution for deliverance from the devil; if all her magical usages from the sacrament to the amulet were so many weapons against his attacks; if the pagan religions which had succumbed to Christianity were nothing but varied kinds of the same *devil-worship*, and their priests, seers and physicians but tools of Satan; then it was natural for all traditions from the pagan time which the Church had not transformed and appropriated should be banished within the pale of devil-worship, and partly also that every act to which supernatural effects were ascribed, but which was not performed by a Christian priest, or in the name of Jesus, should be referred to a black magic, partly in fine that the possibility of an immediate co-operation, a conscious league between the devil and men should be elevated to a dogma.

A struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan, between church and paganism, which is carried on with the weapons of miracles by two directly opposed human representatives of these principles, was a theme which must by necessity urge the power of creative imagination into activity, and we find also in one of the oldest monuments of Christian literature⁴¹ a tale of this character. It is Simon Peter, the rock on which the Church is built, who fights there against Simon the magician of Samaria, mentioned in the Acts. When the cities of Asia Minor had witnessed their emulation in miracle-working, the decisive battle was fought out to the end in Rome. In the presence of the assembled people, Simon the magician attempts an ascension into heaven, but falls and breaks his legs because Simon Peter had commanded the evil spirits who were carrying the magician towards the sky to let him drop. This fable appears still further embellished in later ecclesiastical authors. It is soon accompanied by others, such as that of Cyprianus, Theophilus, Militaris, Heliodorus, and

⁴⁰ “*Creberrima fama est multique se expertos vel ab eis qui experti essent, de quorum fide dubitandum non est, audisse confirmant, silvanos et faunos, quos incubos vocant, improbos sæpe exstitisse mulieribus et earum appetisse ac peregissee concubitum, et quosdam dæmones, quos Dusios Galli nuncupant, hanc assidue immunditiam et tentare et efficere plures talesque asseverant, ut hoc negare impudentiæ videatur.*” (De civitate Dei. lib. 15, cap. 23).

⁴¹ “*Recognitiones divi Clementis ad Jacob,*” lib. II.

many others, who from love of earthly glory abjure Christ and enter into solemn covenants with the devil. In the biography of the holy Basilus, archbishop of Cæsarea and Cappadocia (he was a contemporary of the apostate emperor Julian), there is a story of a young man who had obtained from a heathen sorcerer a letter of recommendation to Satan. When the young man, according to the precept of the magician, had gone to a heathen grave and there taken out the letter, he was suddenly taken up and borne to the place where Satan, surrounded by his angels, sat on a throne. The youth abjured in writing his baptism and swore allegiance to his new master. But after some time the apostate repented and confessed to the holy Basilus what he had done. The bishop prayed for him forty days. When at length the day had come that Satan according to the compact should bear away his victim, the bishop had the young man placed in the midst of his congregation. Satan arrived: a battle between him and the bishop followed—a battle which was carried on with the people stretching forth their hands imploring God for assistance, and was ended when the compact fell from the claws of the fiend, and was torn by the bishop. The before-mentioned Theophilus had likewise pawned his soul to the devil, but the contract was restored to him after urgent supplication, by the holy Virgin, after which, warned by his experience, he led a holy life, and became Saint Theophilus before he closed his eyes. These early legends of compacts between the devil and men end, as we see, with the sinner's salvation; not so the later. If we now remember that it was one of the dogmas proclaimed by the Church that all magical and miraculous arts not performed by the priests in the name of Jesus were wrought by the devil; that he gives his adherents power over nature and that the demons as "*incubi*" and "*succubi*" seek and obtain carnal intercourse with human beings,⁴² we discover already in the ideas of the first Christian centuries the elements of the sorcery of the Middle Ages. And when we read further the accusations which the first Christian sects hurled against one another,—when we learn that the party which was raised by the Council of Nice to the orthodox position accused the Gnostics, Marcionites and Arians of devil-worship, confederacy with Satan and sorcery, we meet already here that union of heresy and sorcery by which the Church of the Middle Ages acquired such a fearful weapon against dissenters,—a union which must not be looked upon as a mere casual invention of wickedness and theological hatred, but as the necessary consequence of the whole dualistic theory of morals, as the necessary fruit of the belief in devils.

A long time must have been required for the festivals common to the natural religions of Europe to become extinct or be remodelled into Christian form. The external practices by which religious ideas obtain a sensuous expression, possess generally more tenacious power of existence than the ideas themselves, and continue in existence when these have disappeared, as the shell after the death of the nautilus. In certain religions of natural development adoration of the sun and the moon are the most important. Among the Celtic, Germanic and Slavic tribes, as before among Hebrews and Phœnicians, these divinities of the light were adored by kindling fires, by sacrifices and banquets on mountains and in groves, especially at the time of the vernal equinox (Easter), at the beginning of May (Valpurge's night), and on the night of the summer solstice. From the fact that traces of the custom still exist in our own day, though its original significance is lost, we can all the more safely

⁴² This view is expressed already in Henoch's book and in the writings of the Rabbi. Like them even the fathers interpreted the "Sons of God" mentioned in Genesis who "were fascinated by the daughters of men" as fallen angels. Thus Cyrillus, Anthenagoras, Irenæus, Lactantius, Turtullianus, and others. We have just instanced above a quotation from Augustine. The Greek mythology with its amours between gods and men was destined to give support to this superstition.—Luther, who could not free himself from the superstition of his time, tells us often in his "Tischreden" that the devil can beget children by connection with human beings. "Es ist wahrlich ein gräulich, schrecklich Exempel," he says in one place, "dass der Teufel kann die Leute plagen, dass er auch kinder zeuget."

assume that it continued to exist without interruption, openly at first, then in secret, retaining its significance, in spite of the efforts of spiritual and profane authorities to extirpate it, and assuming more and more in the popular mind that character of devil-worship with which the Church has branded these reminiscences, from heathen times. And when finally it ceased entirely, or was changed into seasons of popular festivity which had no dangerous suggestiveness even in the eyes of the Church, still the remembrance of the demoniacal festivals of mountain and grove must have been inherited from generation to generation, and then it was but another step to believe that they still continued and were participated in by persons who practiced magical arts, and had been invested with the suspicious wisdom of the ancient valas and druids—the female seers and physicians of the pagans. That the notion of the Witches’ Sabbath, which was celebrated on the night before the first of May, and of the paschal journey of the witches to Blokulla have this historical origin is very probable. The ecclesiastical literature from the first half of the Middle Ages does not leave us without significant hints apparently corroborating this opinion. St. Egidius, who died in 659 a. d., speaks frequently against the *fire-worship*, practiced during midsummer nights, which as inherited from pagan forefathers was accompanied with dancing, and against the invocation of the sun and moon (which he calls “the demons Hercules and Diana”), and against worshipping in groves and by trees, springs and crossroads. The apostle of the Allemans, St. Firminus, who died in 754 a. d., preaches against the same customs, and especially dwells on the pertinacity with which old women adhere to the infernal festivals with their magical songs and dances. Modern authors on the subject in question speak of a *synodal decree* which is said to date back to the council of Ancyra in 314 a. d., and which enjoins the bishops especially to watch the godless women who, deceived by the delusions of the demons, imagine that they traverse in the night, in the company of Diana and Herodias and riding on certain animals, wide tracts of country, and are required to assemble for a certain number of nights by the command of their mistress. But although this synodal decree is spurious and belongs to a far later period and a different locality (it is referred to for the first time in the ninth century, in a work composed by the Abbot Regino⁴³), it is old enough to deserve our attention here. To the decree is appended a number of questions which the bishops must put to such women in confession. Among them are the following, which connect immediately the witch-journey with heathen traditions:—

“Have you followed the practice inherited from the heathen of considering the course of the stars, the moon and the eclipses of the new moon? And have you imagined that by the exclamation ‘Conquer, moon’ (*vince, Luna*), you could reproduce its light? When you wished to pray, have you resorted to other places than the church, as, for instance, to springs, stones, trees or crossroads? Have you there kindled fires and sacrificed bread or aught else?”

John of Salisbury, who died a. d. 1182, writes of women who, led by a “night-queen,” assemble and celebrate banquets at which they most relish children stolen from their cradles. He still supposed that this may not really be a fact, but only demoniacal illusions, phantasmagorical tricks played by the devil, and empty dreams, especially as such things happen among women, and not among men, who possess a stronger reason. The same view of the case is held by William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris (died a. d. 1248). But already during the life of this prelate the belief in the reality of witch-feasts was sanctioned by the authority of Pope Gregory IX., and every doubt in regard to it was declared to be heresy.

At the same time the connection between heresy and witchcraft was revived and confirmed by the Church, so that all heretics were to be considered as the sworn subjects of the devil,

⁴³ Reginonis libri duo de synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis. The work was republished in Leipzig in the year 1840.

and initiated into sorcery, even though not all sorcerers and witches were necessarily heretics. The Church at this time threatened by several newly arisen sects, had recourse to every expedient to uphold its hierarchy and the unity of confession. In the year 1223 Gregory IX. promulgated a letter which exhorted to a crusade against the Stedingshs, a sect which had spread themselves in Friesland and Lower Saxony. He accused them of worshipping and having secret communion with the prince of darkness. According to the papal edict the Stedingshs considered the devil as the real and the good deity, expelled by the other and the evil from heaven, but returning thither in the fulness of time, when the usurper on account of his extreme tyranny, cruelty and injustice had made himself hated by the race of men and had finally become convinced of his own incapability and powerlessness. In truth if such a belief had sprung up it would not have been strange. Everywhere the power and the influence of the devil was seen, but nowhere God's, if not in the bloody and terrible laws and oppressive social system which were declared by spiritual and profane authorities to be divine. The very theory by which the Church sought to save for God his attribute of omnipotence—the theory of consent, according to which the devil exercises such power only by God's permission—this very theory was suited to augment the confusion and the terror. “Never,” says Bunsen,⁴⁴ “has there been a time when a divine and universal government was so much despaired of as in the Middle Ages.” Bunsen inclines to the view of the French historian Michelet, that from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, after the Waldenses and Albigenses in France had been exterminated by Romish persecution, and the lower classes had been reduced to serfs, a religion of despair, a real Satanic *cultus* sprang up, and that the Witches' Sabbath was in fact founded upon nightly congregations, in which thousands of brutalized men driven by misery and oppression gathered themselves together in order to worship the devil and invoke his aid. But there exists no absolutely certain historical fact to prove that such meetings have really taken place. We consider it more probable, as pointed out above, that the Witches' Sabbath was as it were the lingering twilight, constantly deepening, and constantly painted in more monstrous colors, after the day of the degraded festivals in the religion of nature,—an incubus of imagination which oppressed the bosom of humanity buried in a world of dreams; and that nothing more than the belief in its reality, which the Church sanctioned, was necessary to produce the phenomena we describe. The Waldenses and the Albigenses were treated like the Stedingshs. “Let the judges know,” writes an inquisitor, “that the sorcerers, the witches and the devil-workers are almost all Waldenses. The Waldenses are by profession, essentially and formally, devil-workers; and though not all conjurers, still conjuration and Waldenseism have much in common.” The highest authorities of the Church constantly nourished that awe of the devil and his tools which filled the mind, and they could do it without scruple, being themselves seized by the same terror. Thus John XXII. promulgated, a. d. 1303, two letters, in which he complains that he himself, not less than countless numbers of his sheep, was in danger of his life by the arts of sorcerers who could send devils into mirrors and rings, and make away with men by their words alone. He mentions especially that his enemies have sought to kill him by piercing dolls which they had baptized with his name by needles, invoking the aid of the devil. It is needless to point out what influence such proclamations from Christ's vicar, the infallible head of the Church, would exercise over the common mind. The dualistic philosophy ripened more and more until that terrible crisis which broke out in the fifteenth century. That crisis was preceded by the trial of the Templars and by several great but local witch-processes, with subsequent executions, until finally, Dec. 5th, 1484, the bull of Pope Innocent VIII., “Ad forturan rei memoriam,” appeared. This bull with its companion, the “Witch-hammer” (*Malleus Malificarum*), composed by the monk and inquisitor Sprenger, brought the evil to its climax.

⁴⁴ “Gott in der Geschichte,” III.

Hell was no longer a mere product of the imagination: we see it established on earth in dread reality and stretching its dominion over all Christendom.

Our space does not allow us to reproduce in a literal translation this bull of Pope Innocent, written in barbarous Latin worthy of its subject.⁴⁵ We must, however, give some account of its contents. “The serf of God’s serfs” begins by testifying the care which as the guardian of souls he must exercise in promoting the growth of the Catholic faith and driving the infamy of heresy far from the proximity of the faithful. “But,” he continues, “it is not without profound grief that I have learned recently that persons of both sexes, forgetting their own eternal welfare and erring from the Catholic faith, mix with devils, with *incubi* and *succubi*, and injure by witch songs, conjurations and other shameful practices, revelries, and crimes, the unborn children of women, the young of animals, the harvests of the fields, the grapes of the vineyards and the fruit of the trees; that they also destroy, suffocate and annihilate men, women, sheep and cattle, vineyards, orchards, meadows, and the like; visit men, women, cattle and other animals with internal and external pains and sickness; prevent men from procreation and women from conception, and render them entirely unfit for their mutual duties, and cause them to recant, besides, with sacrilegious lips, the very faith which they have received in baptism.”... The pope therefore appoints his beloved sons, the professors of theology Henry Institor and Jacob Sprenger, to be prime inquisitors with absolute power over all districts which are contaminated with those diseases; and since he knows that there are persons who are not ashamed to insist upon their perverse assertion that such crimes are only imaginary, and should not be punished, he threatens them, whatever be their position or dignity, with the severest punishments, in case they dare to counteract in any way the inquisitors, or interfere in behalf of the accused. Finally, he proclaims that no appeal from the tribunals of the inquisitors to other courts, not even to the pope himself, will be allowed. The inquisitors and their assistants are invested with unlimited power over life and death, and are exhorted to fulfil their commission with zeal and severity.

The bull contains no further indications as to how the judges should proceed in the trial of witches. The “Witch-hammer” was allowed to establish its own norm of procedure. It is of importance here to give a résumé of the contents of this book, since it became a juridical authority which was followed in all countries, even in the Protestant, until after the beginning of the eighteenth century. The spirit of the time can not be better characterized than by this book; in no clearer or more tangible way can it be shown whither supernatural ideas in cosmic philosophy will lead, and how they finally will destroy reason, morality, human feeling, and change the world into a mad-house.

The book to which the bull of Pope Innocent and a diploma from the emperor Maximilian serve as a commendatory introduction, begins with an apology intended to show that its author does not introduce any thing novel and untried, but that its theories are entirely founded upon the Scriptures. To prove this he quotes passages from the Old and New Testaments, from the fathers, the decrees of the councils, the canonical letters, from the writings of Thomas Aquinas, Damianus and others. The devil, says the “Witch-hammer,” has no power indeed to suspend natural laws, but the Bible shows incontestably that God has vouchsafed him a wide dominion over the natural powers of corporeal things. Witness only the history of Job, and the temptation of Jesus in the desert. Further, the existence of the many demoniacs spoken of in the New Testament proves that Satan can dwell in man and use the human body as his implement. “But,” says the “Witch-hammer,” constantly aiming to deduce all its conclusions ostensibly according to logic, “there must be no confusion between demoniacs and witches. The existence of the former does not prove the existence of the latter;

⁴⁵ It is found complete in its original form in Horst’s “Demonomagie,” II.

this must be demonstrated in a different way. And this is the proof: The devil as a spiritual being is not capable of a real corporeal contact. He must therefore make use of an instrument to which he imparts his power; for every bodily effect is produced by contact. These instruments are the sorcerers and the witches. It being then incontestable on the one side that the power of the devil is great, and on the other that he can accomplish nothing without the aid of sorcerers and witches, the necessary conclusion is that these must exist. This conclusion is for the rest most decisively confirmed by the Bible. Moses ordains that witches should be put to death, a command which would be entirely superfluous if witches had not existed. He who asserts that there are no witches must therefore rightly be accounted a heretic.”

The “Witch-hammer” then broaches the question, why it is that women are especially addicted to sorcery, and answers it as follows: The holy fathers have often said that there are three things which have no moderation in good or evil: *the tongue*, *a priest*, and *a woman*. Concerning woman this is evident. All ages have made complaints against her. The wise Solomon, who was himself tempted to idolatry by women, has often in his writings given the feminine sex a sad, but true, testimonial; and the holy Chrysostom says: “What is woman but an enemy of friendship, an unavoidable punishment, a necessary coil, a natural temptation, a desirable affliction, a constantly flowing source of tears, a wicked work of nature covered with a shining varnish?” Already had the first woman entered into a sort of compact with the devil; should not then her daughters do it also? The very word *femina* (woman) means *one wanting in faith*; for *fe* means “faith,” and *minus* “less.”⁴⁶ Since she was formed of a crooked rib, her entire spiritual nature has been distorted and inclined more towards sin than virtue. If we here compare the words of Seneca, “Woman either loves or hates; there is no third possibility,” it is easy to see that when she does not love God she must resort to the opposite extreme and hate him. It is thus clear why women especially are addicted to the practice of sorcery.⁴⁷

It might now be asked: How is it possible that God permits sorcery? The “Witch-hammer” answers that God has allowed, without any detriment to his perfections, the fall of angels and of our first parents; and as he formerly sanctioned persecutions against the Christians, that the glory of the martyr might be increased, so he also now permits sorcery that the faith of the just may be the more manifest.

The crime of the witches exceeds all other. They unite in one person the heretic, the apostate, and the murderer. The “Witch-hammer” proves that they are worse than the devil himself, for he has fallen once for all, and Christ has not suffered for him. The devil sins therefore only against the Creator, but the witch both against the Creator and the Redeemer.

It is with these and similar questions that the first part of the “Witch-hammer” is occupied. The second part, describing the various kinds and effects of witchcraft and the celebration of the Witches’ Sabbath is prefaced with an account of the power of witches. They produce hail, thunder and storms whenever they wish; they fly through the air from one place to another; they can make themselves insensible on the rack; they often subdue the judge’s mind by charms, and *confuse him through compassion*; they deprive men and animals of reproductive power; they can see the absent, and predict coming events; they can fill, at their pleasure, human hearts with relentless hatred and passionate love; they destroy the foetus in the womb,

⁴⁶ Many etymologies as profound occur in the “Witch-hammer.” The word *diabolus* (devil) is derived from *duo*, “two,” and *bolus*, “morsel,” which is thus explained, that the devil fishes at the same time after two morsels, the soul and the body.

⁴⁷ This deduction, replete with indecencies which can not be handled, occupies thirty-three pages of the “Witch-hammer.” It pretends to be very convincing. It has also sent women by hundreds of thousands to death.

cause miscarriages, change themselves and others into cats and were-wolfs; nay, they are able to enchant and kill men and beasts by their very looks. Their strongest passion is to eat the flesh of children; still they eat only unchristened children: if at any time a baptized child is taken by them, it happens by special divine concession.

Their compact with the devil is of two kinds: either a solemn one entered into with all formalities, or a mere private contract. The former is concluded as follows: The witches assemble upon a day set apart by the devil. He appears in the assembly, exhorts them to faithfulness, and promises them glory, happiness and long life, and orders the older witches to introduce the novices whom he puts to the test and causes to take the oath of allegiance; whereupon he teaches them to prepare from the limbs of new-born babes witch-potions and witch-salves, and presents them with a powder, instructing them how it is to be used to the injury of men and beasts.⁴⁸ When then the novice has renewed the ceremony of allegiance on the next Witch Sabbath she is a genuine witch. The children needed for the witches' kettles and the sabbath banquets are obtained as follows: The victims are killed by looks or by the above-mentioned powder, when they lie in their cradle or in bed with their mothers. Simple people will then believe that they have died from some natural cause,—from sickness or suffocation. Then when buried the witches steal them from the grave. It has happened that judges have opened, after similar confessions, the grave and found the child in it; but in such cases the judge must consider that the devil is a great taskmaster who may have cheated the eyes of the servants of justice, in order to protect his servants, and in such a case the confession of the witch (forced from her by torture) should prove more than the easily deluded vision of the judge. [What a triumph of supernaturalistic argumentation!]

The witch accomplishes her aerial voyages, says the "Witch-hammer," by smearing a vessel, a broom and a rake, a broomstick and a piece of linen, with the witch-salve; then rising she moves forth through the air, visible or invisible, according to her choice. The "Witch-hammer" reminds those who doubt these air-voyages, of Matt. iv. 5, where it is related how the devil carried Jesus up through the air to the pinnacle of the temple.

We now proceed to the third part of the "Witch-hammer," the criminal law of the witch-courts, which gives instructions how "sorcerers, witches and heretics are to be tried before spiritual as well as civil tribunals."

In regard to preliminary forms of procedure, the "Witch-hammer" lays down first, "That the trial may commence without any previous accusation, and on the strength of a simple report that witches are found somewhere; for it is the duty of the judge in a case fraught with many dangers to the soul, not to wait for an informer or accuser, but, *ex officio*, to institute immediate inquiry." When an inquisitor comes to a city or a village, he must exhort every body by means of proclamations nailed to the doors of churches and town-halls, and by threats of excommunication and punishment, to give information of all persons in any way suspected of the least connection with the practice of witchcraft, or otherwise of bad repute. The informers may be rewarded if the inquisitor thinks it well, by the blessing of the

⁴⁸ To give the reader a clearer idea of the really diabolical blindness and brutality which characterizes the terrible book we are giving an account of, we quote the following statement from the "Witch-hammer," p. 223: "We (the inquisitors Sprenger and his colleagues) find that of all women that we have condemned to the flames very few have voluntarily done harm by sorcery. They have generally been forced by the devil to do it. After having confessed every thing (on the rack) they generally attempt suicide before being taken to the stake. It is the devil who tempts them thus, for he is afraid that by repentance and confession they will receive the pardon of God. If this wily trick is not successful, and if they are prevented from destroying themselves, he knows how to rob them of the chance of grace by other means, namely, by smiting them with fury, madness or sudden death!"—Behold a sample of how theological arguments founded on superior natural influences can be used!

Church, and with money. A box to receive the statements of such informers as wish to be unknown should be placed in the Church.

Two or three witnesses are sufficient to prove guilt. In case so many do not present themselves, then the judge may take means to find and summon them, and force them to tell the truth under oath. He has also the right to examine witnesses previous to the actual trial. As for the qualifications necessary to appear as witnesses, the “Witch-hammer” declares that the excommunicate, accomplices, outlawed, runaway and dissolute women are irreproachable witnesses in cases where the faith is involved. A witch is allowed to testify against a witch, wife against husband, husband against wife, children against parents and so on, but if the testimonies of accomplices or relatives are to the advantage of the accused, then they are of no validity; *for blood is of course thicker than water*, and one raven does not willingly pick out the eyes of another.

The “Witch-hammer” allows an accused to have an advocate, but adds: “If the counsellor defends his suspected client too warmly, it is right and reasonable that he should be considered as far more criminal than the sorcerer or the witch herself; that is to say, as the protector of witches and heretics, he is more dangerous than the sorcerer. He should be looked upon with suspicion in the same degree as he makes a zealous defence.” But a trial may be difficult enough without being clogged and hampered by a cunning advocate. In order to confuse such a one and ensnare the accused, it is necessary, says the “Witch-hammer,” that a judge should remember the words of the apostle, “*Being crafty I caught you with guile,*” and show himself crafty. The “Witch-hammer” informs the judge of five “honest and apostolical tricks” (these are the very words of the book); one of them consists in embodying in the copy of the proceedings which is given to the defending lawyer, a number of facts that have not occurred in the trial, and in mixing the names of the witnesses. “By that means the accused and their lawyer may be so confused that they nowise know who has said any thing, or what has been said.”

Among the questions to be put to a person under accusation, the “Witch-hammer” recommends a number, the quality of which may be appreciated by reading the following examples: “Do you know that people hold you to be a witch? Why have you been observed upon the precincts of N. N.? Why have you touched N. N.’s child (or cow)? How did it happen that the child (or the cow) soon after fell sick? What was your business outside of your house when the storm broke forth? How can you explain that your cow yields three times as much milk as the cows of others?”

Sprenger’s work gives a detailed account of the treatment to which a person who is accused of sorcery and handed over to the judge must be subjected. Before the trial the accused must be put on the rack in order that his mind may be inclined to confession. Some, rather than confess their guilt, allow themselves to be torn asunder limb by limb; they are “the worst witches,” and their endurance is explained by the supposition “that the devil hardens them against their tortures.” Others who have been less faithful to him he abandons, and are thus easily induced to confess. “If no confession has been wrung from the witch during the first day”—we quote the “Witch-hammer” literally—“the torture is to be continued the second and the third day. The civil law forbids, to be sure, to *repeat* the torture, when no proof has been adduced, but it may be *continued*.”

The judge should therefore use the following formula: “We ordain that the torture shall be *continued* (not *repeated*) to-morrow.”

The second day the instruments of torture are to be exhibited to the accused, and an attending priest shall read the following adjuration: “I adjure thee, N. N., in the name of the Holy

Trinity, by the bitter tears of Jesus Christ which he shed upon the cross ... by the tears of God's saints and elect which they have shed over the world ... that, if thou art innocent, thou pour forth immediately abundant tears; but, if thou art guilty, no tears at all. In the name of God our Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The person thus adjured seldom weeps. But if this should occur, the judge should see that it be not saliva or some other fluid that moistens the eye of the witch. The witch must be led into the court-room backwards, that the judge may see her before she sees him. Otherwise she may enchant him and move him to criminal compassion.

Before the examination of witnesses, the accused must be stripped of all her clothing and have all the hair on her body shaved off, and her limbs must be carefully examined to ascertain if they bear marks, for the devil marks his own. It must be further ascertained by pricking with a needle if any part of the body is devoid of feeling, for that is a sure sign of a witch. Still the absence of such a sign nowise proves innocence.

If the witch can not be made to confess by any means, then the judge must send her to a distant prison. The janitor, some friend and chaste women are to be persuaded to visit the prisoner, and promise to help her to escape, if she will only inform them of some of her arts. In this way, remarks the author of the "Witch-hammer," many a one has been ensnared by us.

We conclude here our account of Sprenger's dreadful book. The reader has contemplated sufficiently this fruit on the tree of the devil.—It may fill us with loathing to consider it, but its teachings are instructive. May we know the tree from the fruit, and may we tear it up with its roots—with those roots yet so abundantly watered by men who know not what they are doing. The fires which the bull of Pope Innocent kindled all over Europe, threw their weird light far into the times which have been called the modern,—far in the eighteenth century. To count these victims of the stake would be impossible. It is, however, sometimes attempted in our days; archives are searched through and discoveries are made which surpass every anticipation. The victims amount to millions.

No age was spared. Children were brought to the stake with their mothers. A silent, gloomy presentiment seized every community when the proclamation on the church doors announced that the inquisitor had arrived. All work in the shops and fields ceased, and all the evil passions flared up into greater activity. He who had an open enemy, or suspected secret envy, knew beforehand that he was lost. It was considered better to anticipate than to be anticipated in denouncing; and the tribunal had hardly commenced its activity, ere it was overcrowded with informers. "When they had commenced in one place to burn witches," says an author of the seventeenth century, "more were found in proportion as they were burned." In various communities in Germany and France *all* the women were sent to the stake. In many instances it went so far that princes and potentates were forced, from fear of seeing their subjects exterminated, to stay by *authoritative command* the madness of the inquisitors. Greed brought fuel to the flames which superstition and hatred kindled. We will quote but one example from the history of the Scotch witch-processes. A man named Hopkins who was sent to the gallows, convicted of murder, confessed there that he had brought two hundred women to the stake, and for a recompense of twenty shillings each,—a sum with which the judge rewarded him.

And there was heard in all Europe for many centuries not a single voice raised in the effort to stay the murder with weapons of reason or religion! If there was any who did not share the madness of his time, fear paralyzed his tongue, and learning and religion, far from impeding the evil, had yoked themselves to its triumphal ear. With the Bible in their hands, the theologians sanctioned these barbarous proceedings, and the learned defended them with

reasons drawn from the fathers and with subtle argumentation. The Protestant theologians vied with the Catholic in learning. Even Luther and the first reformers did not check, but promoted, the belief in devils. If paganism had been described by the fathers as Satan's work and empire, Luther referred the preceding life of the Church from the beginning of papacy to the same sphere, and changed the whole history of humankind to a diabolical drama. The struggle between the Reformation and Catholicism contributed in still another way to intensify the faith in devils. The religious contest stirred the mind of the age in its innermost depths. Many who occupied middle ground between the reforming preacher on the one hand and the Catholic priest on the other, were hesitating between the old and the new, and many consciences which had already embraced the new were agitated by uneasiness and doubt. The Catholic divine saw in these doubts the beginning of the victory over Satanic error; the Protestant theologian declared the same doubts to be inspired by the originator of papacy, the devil. We can appreciate this state of things by reading Luther's "Tischreden." Men terrified, for instance, by a dream or a strange noise in the night (nothing more than this was required for such an effect) hurried to their pastor to lay their troubles before him. They were then informed, on the one hand, that the dream or the voice was caused by the devil, to whom their apostacy had bound them over, or, on the other, that Satan was trying to frighten them back into the errors which they had abandoned. In both cases the archfiend was the agent. "He was in the castle of the knight, the palaces of the mighty, the libraries of the learned, on every page of the Bible, in the churches, in the halls of justice, in the lawyer's chambers, in the laboratories of physicians and naturalists, in cottages, farmyards, stalls,—everywhere."⁴⁹

He was indeed everywhere, and Christendom had become a hell. "The belief in the devil," says a British author,⁵⁰ speaking upon this subject, "had had the effect, that all rational knowledge had disappeared, that all sound philosophy was denounced, that the morality of the people was poisoned and humanity sunk in a whirlpool of folly, godlessness and brutality. All classes were carried away by this whirlpool. The God of nature and Revelation had no longer the reins of the world in his hand. The powers of hell and darkness, born of a diseased imagination, reigned upon the earth."

Throwing its gloomy shadow even into the eighteenth century, it was, however, during the Middle Ages that the belief in sorcery sent down its deep and mighty roots. This is not to be wondered at. The men of the Middle Ages lived less in the real than in a world of magic, in a world resembling more the paintings of "Helvetes-Breughels" than the descriptions of Armidas isle. The air was saturated with demoniacal vapors. The popular literature consisted of legends of saints and stories about the devil. The Church, the general asylum against the devil, saw and taught the people to see everywhere the play of evil powers which must be conquered by magical practices, and amidst Ahriman and his hosts who had now established themselves in the Occident, and as heirs to the horns and tails of Pans and fauns, a crowd of native spirits moved; imps, giants, trolls, forest-spirits, elves and hobgoblins in and on the earth; nicks, river-sprites in the water, fiends in the air, and salamanders in the fire. And to these elementary spirits were added a whole fauna of monsters, such as dragons, griffins, were-wolves, witch-kine, Thor's-swine, and so on. But this does not conclude the review: spectres, ghosts, vampires, spirits causing the nightmare, and so on,—supernatural beings derived from the human world, but of dimmer outlines than the preceding,—conclude the motley procession. The mandrake has a place in it also. This being deserves a few lines here, inasmuch as it has now faded from the popular superstitions.

⁴⁹ Horst: "Demonomagie," I.

⁵⁰ Colquhoun.

The mandragora or alrun.⁵¹ is originally a very rare herb which can hardly be found except below the gallows where a pure youth has been hanged.⁵² He who seeks the herb should know that its lower part has the shape of a human being, and that its upper part consists of broad leaves and yellow flowers. When it is torn from the soil it sighs, shrieks and moans so piteously, that he who hears it must die. To find it one should go out before sunrise on a Friday morning, after having filled his ears carefully with cotton, wax or pitch, and bring with him a black dog without one white hair. The sign of the cross must be made three times over the mandrake, and the soil dug up carefully all around it, so that it be attached only by the fine rootlets. It is then tied by a string to the tail of the dog and he is attracted forward by a piece of bread. The dog pulls the plant out of the earth, but falls dead, struck by the terrible shriek of the mandragora. It is then brought home, washed in red wine, wrapped in red and white silk, laid in a shrine, washed again every Friday, and dressed in a white frock. The mandragora reveals hidden things and future events, and procures for the owner the friendship of all men. A silver coin deposited with it in the evening is doubled in the morning. Still the coin must not be too large in size. If you buy the mandragora it remains with you, throw it wherever you will, until you sell it again. If you keep it till your death you must depart with it to hell. But it can be sold only for a lower price than it was bought. Therefore is he who has bought it with the smallest existing coin, irretrievably lost.

The being called mandragora was, as we see, a kind of “*Spiritus familiaris*.” But it appeared in still another form. It happened that adventurers represented themselves as mandragoras, and on account of this mystical origin had gained success at court, having first been spiritually made human by Christian baptism. But they lost by baptism their wonder-working power, greatly to their own and others’ pecuniary disadvantage. Still greater was the number of those adventurers during the Middle Ages who asserted themselves or others to be the bastards of devils and human beings. But if they led a blameless life, evincing a firm belief in the dogmas of the Church, the danger of such a pedigree was not greater than the honor. The son of a fallen angel did not need to bend his head before a man of noble birth.

In the demoniacal fauna of the Middle Ages the were-wolf plays too important a role to be passed over in silence. He was the terror of rural districts. Were-wolves are men who change themselves for a time into wolves, and then rove about hunting for children. The belief in the were-wolf is very ancient. Antique authors speak of it as a superstition among the Scythians, and among shepherds and peasants in the eastern provinces.⁵³ Then the change was considered to result from certain herbs growing in Pontus; in the Middle Ages it was the devil who wrapped a wolf’s hide around the witch or the enchanted person. Even this belief was embraced and proclaimed by Augustine. Augustine,—the same father who declared that he would not believe the gospel if the authority of the Church did not exhort him to do so,—found it worthy of a Sadducean or a pagan philosopher alone to deny the existence of so well-

⁵¹ Μῆλα Μανδραγόρου (in Hebrew *dudaim*) is in the Septuagint a name for the love-apples with which Leah regaled her husband (Gen. xxx. 14). Pliny speaks of the mandragora as a poisonous herb, dangerous to dig; now already Columella knows the mandragora as a half-human being—“*semihomo mandragoras*.”

⁵² Man sagt: wenn ein Erbdieb, dem, wie den Ziguenern das Stehlen angeboren ist, oder dessen Mutter, als sie mit ihm schwanger ging, gestohlen, oder doch gross Gelüsten dazu gehabt—nach Einigen; auch ein Unschuldiger, welcher in der Tortur sich für einen Dieb bekennt—und der ein reiner Junggeselle ist, gehängt wird, und das Wasser lässt, oder sein Same auf die Erde fällt, so wächst an solchem Ort der Alraun.—“Nork: Sitten und Gebräuche der Deutschen und ihrer Nachbarvölker.”

⁵³ So Propertius and Plinius. Virgil (eclog. VIII.) makes a shepherd sing:

Has herbas, atque hæc Ponto mihi lecta venena,
Ipse dedit Mæris: nascuntur plurima Ponto.
His ego sæpe lupum fieri, et se condere selvis
Mærim ... vidi.

known a phenomenon as the were-wolf. The emperor Sigismund had the question investigated “scientifically” in his presence by theologians, and they came to the general agreement that the were-wolf is “a positive and constant fact”; for the existence of the devil being accepted, there is no reason to deny that of the were-wolf, supported as it is by the authority of the fathers of the Church and by general experience.⁵⁴ This “general experience” finally became, like the belief in sorcery, a raging mental disease, an epidemic (“*insana zoanthropica*”) infecting whole districts in various parts of Europe and sending many insane persons who had confessed before the courts their imagined sin, to the place of execution.⁵⁵

Nearly related to this lycanthropy is the more horrible vampirism. The vampires, according to the belief of the Middle Ages, are disembodied souls which clothe themselves again in their buried bodies, steal at night into houses, and suck from the nipple of the sleeping all their blood. He who is thus bereft of the vital fluid is in his turn changed into a vampire and visits preferably his own relatives. If the corpse of a person suspected of vampirism is dug up, and its stomach pressed, an abundance of fresh blood flows from the mouth. The corpse is well preserved. The belief in vampires has likewise produced a kind of psychical pestilence which yet in the eighteenth century spread terror in the Austrian provinces.⁵⁶

If sorcery was an imaginary people’s magic, there existed also a real, and it consisted in an infinite variety of usages, observances and rules for all conditions of life. Not to speak of the astrologers’ extensive hand-written calendars, which pointed out which constellations, seasons and days are auspicious for bathing, bleeding, hair-cutting, shaving, house-building, wooing, engaging servants, setting out on travels and so on, there existed among the people an incredibly large mass of rules for living which any body that would avoid the constant danger of bringing misfortune on himself and his family, must know.

From waking up in the morning to going asleep at night, such maxims were to be observed: putting the wrong foot first out of bed in the morning was as sure to be followed by annoyances in the course of the day as a neglect to place the shoes with the heels toward the bed at night was certain to cause the visit of ghosts or evil dreams. When children are born, no one must go out or in, or open the door without bringing fire with him, that the trolls may not find their way in and exchange the child; and no one entering must say a word before he has touched the fire. For the same reason the child, while unchristened, must be watched carefully every night, and a fire must be kept constantly burning on the hearth. Before the christening a child must not be moved from one room to another without putting steel beside it. If two boys are baptized on the same occasion, that one who obtains his name and blessing first will be best endowed both bodily and mentally. On the day of christening the mother should avoid handling an axe, knife or other cutting instruments, otherwise the child will some time be murdered. If the floor under a cradle is swept, the child will be bereft of its sleep. If the cradle is moved while the child is not in it, the child becomes peevish. When a child yawns, the sign of the cross must be made over its mouth, and the words “Jesus, God’s son!” added; otherwise the devil will then enter into it. If a child looks out through the window or looks in a mirror at night, it will fall sick. Children punished on Sunday become disobedient; but a child whipped on Good Friday before sunset, will become obedient and

⁵⁴ Melancthon, who firmly believed in the were-wolf, reasoned in the same way.

⁵⁵ As late as 1804 a vagabond named Maréchal was accused by the peasants in Longueville as a sorcerer and were-wolf. At his trial the mysterious were-wolf excursions were resolved into thieving rambles, and Maréchal was condemned for burglary to the galleys.

⁵⁶ During the restauration in 1815, when all the dead rose in their sepulchres, the famous *von Görres* sought to revive the belief in vampirism. He has written about it a work of mighty learning, wherein he discourses profusely of the “vegetative” sources of the body, which he asserts continue their activity after death, and thus enable the soul of the deceased to reoccupy and for a while reoperate its old machinery.

well-behaved. If the child walks about in one shoe, the mother will have a sore back. If a child walks or runs backwards, it drives its parents so many steps into hell. A child eating and reading at the same time gets a bad memory. If a suitor's first gift to his betrothed consists of shoes, she will be unfaithful, if of stockings, she will be jealous. Nuptials on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays are unfortunate. If a bridal procession comes to a stop for any reason, the married pair will meet with dissensions. If the marriage-ring is too small, misfortune is in store. Of the bridal pair, that one dies first who first kneels down or rises from kneeling. Those who hold the canopy must not change hands or touch the bride's crown, for that prognosticates misfortune and ennui. If in going out an old woman or one carrying water is met, the room should be re-entered. When the table is set, the bread must be laid upon it immediately. Bread must never be placed with the upper crust down. Great care must be taken to remove all substances separated from the body, as hair, nails, blood; they must be buried in the soil so as not to come in contact with diseased persons, or fall into the hands of witches.

We have selected the preceding observances and rules as examples of those thousands of precepts for all conditions of life which have been collected by investigations in this field from the mouths of the people. A full collection would require a large volume. In all of them is seen a servile fear of mysterious evil influences, lurking on all sides, and whose power or impotency as regards man nowise depends on his morality, but only on the way in which he observes certain ethically indifferent acts. Many of them seem to have arisen only by faulty application of the theory of causality; others depend on a symbolical method of contemplating nature. What a difference between this popular wisdom and that stored up in the gnomes of the Greeks or in the heathen Havamal! Part of the former may be likewise an heirloom, but how exuberantly these superstitions grew during the centuries of ripe and glaring belief in personified evil; how deeply they struck root among the people, while Havamal has been saved from the flood of time only by the hand of the student!

Among the superstitions are to be counted the magical prognosis of diseases and death. Many were the tokens of the approaching skeleton-figure with his scythe and glass. They were heard in the cawing of crows and ravens, in the howling of dogs, in the chirping of the cricket, and the regular ticking of the wood-worm concealed in the wall. If the horse of a priest riding to visit a sick person in his parish lowered its head upon arriving at a house, if a gnat was caught gnawing any clothing, if a light suddenly went out, if an image fell down, if a glass or a mirror was broken, it indicated an approaching death in the house. To determine the fate of a sick person, a piece of bread of which he had eaten was laid in a dark corner, and its change of color was observed; or a piece of fat with which the soles of the sick had been smeared was offered to a dog, or a stone was lifted to see if any thing was concealed beneath it. If the bread became dark, or if the dog refused to eat what was offered him, or if there was no living thing under the stone, then the sick person was considered incurable, and nothing could be hoped even from the inherited medical skill of the wise old men and women. The exercise of this skill consisted in the use, along with "reading" and conjurations, partly of herbs of more or less known efficiency, and partly also, as it appears, of magnetic forces, resorted to mechanically without reflection.

The medical art inherited among the people from generation to generation is a subject which none but a clear-sighted and unprejudiced scientist of the medical profession can treat, and which has been left hitherto without that investigation which the subject undoubtedly deserves, at least from a historical point of view. There was, at the end of the Middle Ages, among the devotees of the Galenic art a man of genius who, despairing to find in the folios of the medical scholastics any traces of truth, abandoned the lecture-room and went forth into the world without in order, as he himself said, to read the book of nature and learn something

of that medical instinct with which God, as he believed, must have endowed men as well as animals, and which must find a true expression only in the people living in immediate reciprocity with nature. This man was Paracelsus. He who despised and overwhelmed with mockery the coryphæi of his days in the medical faculties, did not disdain to listen to “the experience of peasants, old women, night-wanderers, and vagabonds,” and the magnetical system which he constructed “by the illumination of nature’s light, and not by the lamp-flare of an apothecary’s shop,” rest in all probability on the general principles which he found in the plurality of sympathetic cures practiced among the people. In the “reading” by which these cures were accompanied, Paracelsus saw rightly nothing but a subjective moment, and means of making faith and imagination the allies of the physician. A mass of these conjuration-formulæ in different diseases have been collected and published in various countries of Europe. They offer the reader little or nothing of interest.⁵⁷

A very common usage during the Middle Ages was to measure the sick person, at one time to cure him, at another to find out if the disease was decreasing or increasing. Another means was to drag him through a hole. Sick children were pulled through holes dug in the earth or through a cleft cherry-tree. Sick sheep were forced to creep through the cleft of an oak, and so on. Another remedy against many kinds of sufferings was the binding of a thread or a band which had been read over, around the neck or some limb of the sick. Connected with this is the tying of witch-knots, used only with evil intent. Bands of different colors and material⁵⁸ were required for these. They were buried near the dwelling of the person to be injured. It was thought that by this means any limb or bodily power of an enemy could be impaired. A French jurist and witch-judge, Pierre Delancre, complains that in his days there were few married couples in France whose happiness had not been marred by this means; young men hardly dared to marry from fear of it. Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, advised, as a remedy against this influence, a diligent use of the sacraments. In French rituals church-prayers against the effects of witch-knots are prescribed. Hardly less universally was it the custom to make dolls of rags, dough, wax or clay, baptize them with the name of the hated person, put them in the fire or pierce them with needles, and bury them under the threshold of that individual, all in order to inflict sufferings on him.⁵⁹ Diseases could also be transferred

⁵⁷ Some of the popular forms of conjuration are in Latin, though corrupted so as to be almost beyond recognition. A couple of restored examples may be given. This is the formula against bloody-flux:

Sanguis mane in venis

Sicut Christus in pœnis,

Sanguis mane fixus

Sicut Christus fuit crucifixus.

Against fever:

Deus vos solvet sambuco, panem et sal ego vobis adduco, febrem tertianam et quotidianam accipite vos, qui nolo eam.

Against epilepsy:

Melchior, Balthaser, portans hæc nomina Caspar,

Solvitur e morbo Domini pietate caduco.

Perpetret et ternas defunctis psallere missas.

Barachun. Barachagim. Destrue. Subalgat

⁵⁸ Compare Virgil, Ecl. VIII:

Terna tibi hæc primum triplici diversa colore

Licia circumdo....

Necte tribus nodis ternos, Amarylli, colores:

Necte, Amarylli, modo: et Veneris, dic, vincula necto.

⁵⁹ Compare same eclogue:

Limus ut hic durescit, et hæc ut cera liquescit

Uno eodemque igni: sic nostro Daphnis amore.

to dolls by reading certain formulæ, and placing them in some inaccessible place, or in running water.

Not only against diseases, but also against the dangers of fire and war, against ill-luck in love or chase, on voyages and the like, magical remedies were freely resorted to by the people. The “Witch-hammer” complains bitterly against the criminal practice of the soldiers in mutilating crucifixes in order to harden themselves against the sword and bullets. The executioner in Passau gained, during the Thirty Years’ War, a wide reputation for his skill in hardening the human frame, which he did by means of scraps of paper with cabalistic figures (Passauer Henkers-Zettel), which were eaten. The belief that hunters procured, by means of conjurations, “free-arrows” and “free-bullets” was very common. The “Witch-hammer” accuses various potentates of having in their pay “diabolical archers” who hit their mark from a long distance without aiming. It was customary at fires to throw into the flames so-called shields of David,—plates with two intersecting triangles and the motto “Agla” (the initials of four Hebrew words meaning: “Thou art strong eternally, O Lord!”) and “*consummatum est.*” As late as in the middle of the last century the magistrate of Leipzig ordered that such plates should be laid up in the rathhaus to be used in case of fires. In Catholic countries the clergy took the employment of magical appliances against fires into their own hands; processions singing and bearing relics went around the burning house three times, and if this had no salutary effect, it was a sure sign that God had allowed the devil to wield the consuming element unto destruction.

The extent of this treatise does not allow a detailed exposition of the many divinatory arts which had their adepts among the people. The Church preaching mightily against those arts and representing them as devices of the devil, the father of lies and founder of oracles, did not, however, deny, but could confirm by biblical quotation, their power to unveil futurity.

Every thing that we have here described was to the Church black magic: all mystical practices among the people, whether resorted to for good or evil purposes, to heal or cure, were looked upon as implying contempt for the divine magic of the Church itself, and also a league with the devil, if not a formal one, at any rate a “*pactum implicitum.*” It was therefore the possessors of the traditional popular art of healing who were first sent to the stake wherever the inquisition commenced its trials. But no terrorism could eradicate the popular magic so long as the persecutors themselves believed in its efficiency, and fought only for a consecrated superstition against its outlawed counterfeit. The struggle against the superstition of the Church as well as of the people, was reserved for another time and for another theory of the universe and of morals.

The so-called wandering scholastics (*scholastici vagantes, scholares erratici*) formed a kind of connecting link between the magic of the learned and that of the common people. They were ruined and adventurous students, priests and monks who wandered about in the rural districts of most of the European states, especially Germany, representing themselves as treasure-diggers, selling “*spiritus familiares,*” amulets, love-potions, and life-elixirs, conjuring spirits, divining by the stars, and healing men and cattle. These adventurers were associated in a regular guild, and had like other vagrant tradesmen, their lodgings and hospitals in the cities. They were dreaded competitors of the witch-fathers of the cloisters, were several times excommunicated by the Church, and seem to have nearly disappeared when the witch-trials commenced in earnest. It is to a person of that kind that the Faust-

legend is attached. It reflects the popular opinions concerning the power of learned magicians..⁶⁰

The same period which saw the bull of Innocentius promulgated, and the belief in devils culminate in the witch-processes, gave birth to the *renaissance*. This saviour came to the world in the hour of its intensest need. The Hellenic spirit, born again from the study of classic literature and classic art, was a new Messiah putting his heel on the head of the old serpent and saving humanity from the power of death and of the devil. The people sitting in darkness illumined only by the lurid flames kindled by the inquisition saw a great light and stretched their hands towards the new dawn. The study of the ancients had an immense influence, all the more as the actual world was so different from the antique world. The exhumed monuments of Hellas revealed other state systems than the feudal of the Middle Ages,—states which were organizations, not mere mechanical conglomerates of conquerors and conquered, and were founded upon a nobler basis than given or assumed privileges. These monuments revealed an independent search for truth which had placed itself above tradition—a novel spectacle to the people of the Middle Ages!

They revealed an art in which harmony reigned between spirit and nature, between the higher life and sensuousness, between the relative opposites which the Middle Ages had conceived as absolute, placing them against one another in a struggle which wrecked beauty and morality.

They revealed large symmetrical characters as free from the asceticism of the Middle Ages as from the wild sensuality of that time. All these ideas, hailed with enthusiasm, could not but transform the appearance of the world. They overthrew the darkness of the Middle Ages, put the devil and hell to flight, and drove them into that lumber-corner of the spiritual kingdom where they are at present, but from which, at any political reaction, they peer out eagerly watching whether they may not once more bring the great wide world into their power.

But they shall scarcely succeed in this, as long as freedom of thought and scientific independence are guarded as the foremost conditions of the spiritual health of mankind; and they shall utterly fail when an all-extended intelligence has taught the people that the premises of the devil-dogma, if they could be again inoculated into the popular mind, would show anew the same results which have been depicted above, and lead us back to the terrible times of the inquisition and the burning of witches. This, no doubt, even the orthodox defenders of belief in an impersonated evil principle do not desire; but they do not observe that history acts more consistently than they, and cures general errors only by making long generations draw from them the last consequences and suffer their full effect.

THE END

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⁶⁰ The Faust-legend, formed during the time of the Reformation, sought at first to employ one of the heroes of the learned magic, Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, as its chief character; but a biography of him, published by his pupil, Wierus, having dispelled the fantastical halo enveloping his personality, the creative desire sought a more obscure object which it could transform according to its bizarre imaginations.

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