

The Thoughtlessness of Modern Thought

CONCERNING THE IDEAS OF
CIVILIZATION, CULTURE,
SCIENCE AND PROGRESS

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY CONFERENCES
FALL SESSION, 1933

DELIVERED BY
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"Nemo vos seducat inanibus verbis"
(EPH. v., 6)

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106185 *Foreword*

The Conferences which are here given in print were meant to be no more than a popular, though critical, exposition addressed to the general public, of the ideas therein treated, and not an exhaustive analysis nor a detailed historical survey of the same subjects. The limits of time set for the public conferences precluded a fuller treatment. A closer enquiry, however, into the origin, nature and historical verification of the ideas of Civilization, Culture, Science, Progress and kindred topics, is made in the lectures given in course in the Graduate Department of History at Fordham University.

It were neglect of clear duty on my part did I omit to make thankful acknowledgment for valuable counsel given, to the Very Reverend President of the University, Father Aloysius J. Hogan, S.J., by whose direction these Conferences are published.

D. Z.

Introduction

The Fordham University Conferences were inaugurated during the Lenten Season of 1929. Since that time the University has sponsored these Conferences twice a year, namely, the Spring Session and the Fall Session.

Topics of real importance in the various fields of thought have been chosen as the subjects for these University Conferences.

These instructive Conferences have grown to be one of the outstanding spiritual and intellectual features of the scholastic year at Fordham University. Greater interest has been shown at each succeeding Conference, and the steadily increasing attendance attests their popularity.

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First Conference

MODERN THOUGHT'S CONCEPTION
OF CIVILIZATION*

My dear Friends:

I feel quite confident of your assent when I say that exact thinking is a laborious and oftentimes even a painful process. I feel equally assured of your agreement when I further state that most people will easily relinquish the task of thinking matters out for themselves if there is some one else who will think for them. That, at least, is a condition of things we all note in the social world in which we actually live, move, and have our being; and I point out the prevailing fact in no spirit of cynicism or censure, though I do so in a spirit of challenge.

The fact is, my good Friends, that we are passing through a thoughtless period which we may aptly describe as the Deluge of Print. For forty days and forty nights and longer, the novelist, the journalist, the poet, the pamphleteer, the lecturer, every manner of scribbler, and, not least among them, the university professor, have given the printer's devil no rest or pause, and day and night pour down the inky cataracts to deluge us with print and yet more print.

And lording it over the inky waters there hovers the god of the Deluge, the genius of the Flood, that thing which calls itself the Modern Mind or Modern Thought; that deity which has appointed unto itself the high prerogative of doing all thinking for all men on all matters, especially on those very matters which touch life and death, and which men

*Delivered in Fordham University Church, Sunday, November 5, 1933.

should be thinking out for themselves by the reason which the Creator has given them, and by the conscience through which He speaks to them. But unhappily enough it has come to pass that the printed assertion ten thousand times repeated has stampeded many heads out of their own thoughts, has robbed many vital words in our language of their true meanings, and debased the solid gold into an inflated verbal currency that passes for thought and yet, if the truth must be told, is empty of thought.

From these adulterated verbal coins I have chosen four which I propose to examine and test with you each Sunday afternoon of November. You already know them: they are *Civilization*, *Culture*, *Science* and *Progress*. You will observe that they are noble, impressive and comprehensive words, words which should suggest and include all that is best in the achievements of a people. They are words which, once we have invested them with a certain meaning, we use as standards whereby to appraise the value of a person's or a people's beliefs, mode of living, ideals and accomplishments, and call such people "civilized," "cultured," "scientific," "progressive" or the reverse. We have been intellectually nourished on these words; we have grown accustomed to them and use them in a certain sense; and we have, thanks to the suggestions of Modern Thought, possibly used them out of their sense. The four Conferences that have been announced will challenge the false meaning and implications which Modern Thought has put into these important ideas, and at the same time will endeavor to bring them back to the only signification which their origin and historical realities warrant.

But let us begin by forming some clear idea of the Modern Mind and its Modern Thought. What

is this Modern Thought which speaks so authoritatively and which so many obsequiously worship to-day? Is it a definite scheme or philosophy of life that hangs together and offers a clear-cut, positive and satisfactory answer to those perennial questions which have at all times and in all places dogged the intelligences of men with the challenge, "Whence is man's life?", "What must he do with that life?", "What is the future of that life?", "How is he to know with certainty whither he is going with his life?", "Who is to guide him?"

Truth to tell, good Friends, Modern Thought has not been clear-visioned enough to state its position before the great problems of life and to answer the questions that are asked. The reason for its evasions is not far to seek, for Modern Thought is devoid of thought, if by thought we mean, as we do, the mental process by which a man seeks, until he finds, a rational accounting for what he believes, loves, does and hopes for, and that in the light of, and in accordance with, certain basic truths which are part of his nature, which are attested by his conscience and confirmed by the universal and constant testimony of normal men.

Now, the last thing that Modern Thought attempts, and in fact never arrives at, is to reason out any vital question from first principles to final conclusions, or to take account of all the data that are available for such a process. Allow me to point out briefly the traits and tricks by which you shall know Modern Thought.

In the first place, Modern Thought accepts no principles, *i.e.*, those self-evident truths which serve as the starting points for any rational procedure. And since connected thought cannot be carried on without points of connection, so-called Modern Thought cannot really think consecutively. Let us

observe it in action; let us ask Modern Thought: "Pray, noble sir, in the plenitude of your knowledge tell us, What is Truth?" Taking the question in Pilate's cynical mood, it will answer, "Why, whatever you make it!" And if we ask again, "What is morality? What is duty?" or "By what standard do you judge right from wrong?" it will make answer, "Why—it is the 'mores,' as the sociologists say, or whatever happens to be the convention or the fashion." But that this or that should or should not be done as the logical sequel from this or that moral principle is a process which Modern Thought evades, for it is thoughtless! And should we further enquire, "What is God, and what are my relations to Him?" "Has man a soul?" again the thoughtless reply will be: "Why—it is your feelings about the matter, or it is a projection of the Ego, or it is a hypothesis"—or some other such unintelligible thing!

Another trait of Modern Thought is that it lives on assumptions, *i.e.*, things taken for granted without proof or mental revision. Assumptions are of its very food and drink—and assumptions require no thought, for Modern Thought has no patience with the arduous procedure involved in the demonstration of truths. If the vital question of man's origin is under discussion, it *assumes* that men have sprung from the lower animals by evolution, or that man was originally a savage; it emphasizes all the ways in which man is like the beast, and is quite thoughtless about the ways in which man is *unlike* the beast (which latter ways happen to be the only things that really matter much about man), and then indulges in the cult of the abnormal and the animal in human nature, never to rise any higher. And if you are so bold as to ask for evidence or scientific proof, it will answer: "Thus wrote Darwin

and Huxley, or Conklin, or Osborne," or, "Go and see the plaster exhibit in the Hall of the Age of Man in the Museum of Natural History."

As for the origin of Christianity, Modern Thought will once more assume that it is but a stage of evolution from lower heathen forms of worship, and in so doing will ignore the existence of an age-long and world-wide institution which was present at its own origins and is in possession of all the evidence that history can possibly give to the contrary of Modern Thought's assumptions.

If Modern Thought turns to history, as it frequently does, it still assumes the truth of ancient allegations long ago cast upon the scrap-heap of dead ideas, and continues to babble about the Middle Ages being "dark," and about the sixteenth century revolt against religious authority as the "dawn of modern freedom," and about the "decline" of Christianity, and so on and so forth, as though no other minds had turned enquiringly into these same matters and by honest proof demonstrated the folly of these assumptions. But, then, mark that Modern Thought moves beyond the pale of objective scholarship, for it is thoughtless!

Modern Thought shirks definition. In all truth it is a giant's task to extract a clear-cut and intelligible statement of what it exactly means by the terms it uses. For a definition requires thought; it requires a close examination and analysis of the nature of the thing to be defined, an accurate discrimination between its essentials and accidentals, and a painstaking comparison of that thing with similar things in order to discern what it has in common with them, and then to pick out just that specific note which makes it the thing that it is and different from everything else. All that, I say, calls for accurate and connected reasoning, and Modern

Thought is quite unequal to the task. For it moves in a twilight of half-intelligence where it sees vague shapes and transforms them into monsters. Make the experiment of this for yourselves; if you will, take up the print of Modern Thought, some of which I shall presently indicate, and see what travesties it can make of the ideas of "dogma," "faith," "theology," "metaphysics," "God," "morality," etc., as well as of "civilization," "culture," "science" and "progress." To whatever other tortures it may subject these words, or with whatever welter of brilliant sentences it may mix them—define them it does not.

All this is the same as saying that Modern Thought is flippant, cynical, sceptical, irrational and thoughtless—no one of which is the mark of thought truly so-called. In the face of searching questions, Modern Thought is as irresponsible as Boccaccio's "Cymon," who

shunned the Church and used not much to pray,

He trudged along, unknowing what he sought,
And whistled as he went for want of thought.

It is difficult to speak of a flippant thing without oneself seeming to indulge in flippancy. Yet, were I to take Modern Thought very seriously and to define its most serious aspect, I could do no more than say that it is an attitude of mind which prefers to interpret life and judge the world not in the light of principles, tradition and authority, but according to a mood prompted by the moment and by the expediency of immediate environment—or the gravitation of man's lower nature.

In justice to Modern Thought let it be said that it is not consistent with itself, for, while it spurns authority, it will nevertheless place the blindest

reliance on any "authority" that serves its mood and temper, and this mood can, with the greatest ease, swing from the namby-pamby optimism to the murkiest pessimism. And, if besides being observant persons you are moderately well read in history, it will soon break upon your realization that, after all, there is nothing modern about this mental affliction. It is as ancient as the day when Adam and Eve maimed their souls and bodies in Paradise in a fit of independence; it is as ancient as Heraclitus, Epicurus, and the classic pagans. Its mood and their mood are essentially the same, the setting alone is different, the chief difference being that to-day the printing-press, the cinema and the radio offer the neo-paganism so many more facilities to waft itself abroad and spread the contagion of its mood.

This Modern Thought addresses itself to all grades of intelligence through a hierarchy of spokesmen. To the academic aristocracy it speaks with the language of philosophy through the mouth and pen of a John Dewey teaching teachers in our great metropolis, mystifying those who try to understand him, and presiding over sovietizing agencies, or through Professor Whitehead, bewildering his students at Harvard with *Adventures of Ideas*, or Professor Alexander vaporizing religion, or Bertrand Russell and Havelock Ellis pulverizing morals—all of them engaged in the unholy task of humanizing God, divinizing and in turn animalizing man, and in so doing extinguishing the very lamps which should guide men's feet amid the encircling gloom.

To the intellectual middle class Modern Thought speaks through such oracles as Professor Charles A. Beard and those symposia of his called *Whither Mankind* and *Toward Civilization*, and through James Harvey Robinson and his *Mind in the Mak-*

ing, and their company. To the proletariat, Modern Thought addresses itself through the scribblers of such monthlies and weeklies as the *American Mercury* and the *Nation*—H. L. Mencken and Co., or again through the “historical” fictions of H. G. Wells, Hendrik van Loon and Co., with their “Outlines” of history and “Stories” of mankind, or through such scavenging novelists as Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser and Co. And then it descends to the intellectual mud-bottom or underworld, about which we need not speak because it is unspeakable, except to say that the “intelligentsia” of Modern Thought (think of Bertrand Russell and Havelock Ellis) fertilizes it and maintains it a dismal swamp.

It is now time to turn to the idea of *civilization*. The word flows easily from the lips and pen-tip of Modern Thought. But you may wander through Modern Thought’s wilderness of print for many a day with a candle, and even then fail to discover a definition of this important idea such as will not confuse it with culture, or economic progress, or philosophy, or something else. One reason is, as I have observed, that Modern Thought shirks definition.

As a substitute for definition, Modern Thought will be satisfied with a blurred impression or with a negation, or it will slothfully lapse into such phrases as “that indefinable something” we call civilization, or into question-begging and describe civilization as “that which makes men civilized.” I beg your leave to submit some specimens. One of the exponents of Modern Thought, Sam S. Wyer, (consulting engineer, Columbus, Ohio), tells us that civilization is

a relative term covering an artificial veneer embracing a condition or state of society based on living together in close relation,

and progress in civilization

a shift from cowering fear to conquering courage.

Another exponent of Modern Thought, with the name of Clive Bell, wrote a whole book on *Civilization* only to tell us that civilization is

not respect for property rights. It is not truthfulness, cleanliness, nor chastity.

And continuing more positively, he tells his readers that a civilized man is one who has “cleansed himself from taboos,” who is “free from prudery, . . . false shame and a sense of sin.” He will not necessarily be a “good” man, but he will be “unshockable,” and if there are enough of him, a civilized age will be produced!¹

Professor John Dewey opens his recent book entitled *Philosophy and Civilization*, by asking pointedly, “What is civilization?”, but leaves the question hanging in thin air, while he talks about it as follows:

Time passes and ambiguities and complexities cannot be eliminated by definition; we can only circumvent them by begging questions.²

Further on he continues:

It follows that there is no specific difference between philosophy and its role in the history of civilization. — Discover or define the right characteristic and unique function in civilization and you have defined philosophy itself.

We may continue reading to the 334th and last page, but his “thought” leads us no further.

C. Deslisle Burns plays with the word in 324 pages covered by the title *Modern Civilization on Trial*, and after making odious comparisons between

¹*Civilization* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1928).

²New York, Minton, Balch & Co., 1931, p. 6.

modern and mediæval civilization he says by way of definition of "modern" civilization that

- (1) its most obvious characteristic is a new transport system of motor-cars and airplanes;
- (2) another is the rapid mechanization of production and standardization of tastes, and
- (3) still another, the new methods in education and government which express a change of attitude towards life and the world.¹

As one would expect, Professor Charles A. Beard weds it to the machine and takes civilization to be

that which makes the fullest possible use of human ingenuity in order to transform matter for the service of mankind, etc.

And I might go on wearying you in an attempt to find amid the flounderings of Modern Thought a concept of civilization which left your minds in possession of a clear idea with a head and tail to it, and which was more than a foggy impression.

Yet for all that, though Modern Thought can only mumble and gibber about civilization, still the implications and assumptions which it associates with the idea are sufficiently clear. Civilization, to its way of thinking, is a condition of material possessions which favors a material "high standard" of living, ministers unto comfort and pleasure and supplies all the instruments thereunto. The "civilization" of Modern Thought is essentially an economic product developed by mechanical science, as Charles Beard will emphatically tell you, and as the tame worshippers of print have grown accustomed to believe.

And now, my good Friends, I submit that such a notion of civilization is alien to its true sense. History is one long refutation of it, and hundreds of millions of intelligent men, also modern, repudiate

¹New York, Macmillan, 1931.

it, still retain the genuine meaning of the word, and are in possession of the only means that will preserve its realities against the destructive thoughtlessness of Modern Thought.

Civilization is an idea as old as man. In fact, it is a natural tendency of his social nature. To go no further back into history than the people who coined our term, the Romans used the word "*civitas*" only to designate a union of citizens, a state, or a community whose life was organized according to a code of law and order. And then they called each member of that community a "*civis*," or citizen, i.e., one abiding by law as opposed to a barbarian or a savage, who was conceived to live in a state of social disorder or social irresponsibility.

Retaining the kernel idea of "law and order," those same Romans derived from "*civitas*" the word "*civilitas*" to express thereby the rights of a citizen, and consequently a condition of society which maintained a balance between the rights and liberties of each individual and the rights and liberties of others, the result of which condition would be good order, social stability and peace, law-abidingness.

In proof of what I am stating, turn with me to some early sixth century documents which are nothing less than the letters of the famous Christian statesman and scholar, Cassiodorus, the minister of four sovereigns, the man whose single life more than any other was in contact with both the Ancient World and the Modern. Both a Roman and a Christian, Cassiodorus personifies the fusion of classic and Christian cultures and is an authentic interpreter of their language. Up and down the official correspondence which he drew up and preserved for the instruction of future generations of statesmen, the word "*civilitas*" comes into constant use. Again I beg your indulgence to quote some relevant

parts of this correspondence and leave you to judge for yourselves what men understood by civilization at that early period of history. Addressing himself to all the Jews of Genoa, King Theodoric thus admonished them:

The true mark of "*civilitas*" is the observance of law. It is that which makes life in communities possible, and separates man from the brutes. We, therefore, gladly acceded to your request that all the privileges which the foresight of antiquity conferred upon the Jewish customs shall be renewed to you, for in truth, it is our great desire that the laws of the ancients shall be kept in force to secure the reverence due to us. Everything which has been found to conduce to *civilitas* should be held fast with enduring devotion.¹

Writing to the Jews of Milan, the same ruler assures them that the benefits of *civilitas* and justice shall not be denied to them, and continues:

you on your part attempt nothing *incivile* against the rights of said Church. . . .²

In another communication the same sovereign exhorts his kinsman, Theodahat, to observe *civilitas*:

A high-born man should ever act according to well-ordered *civilitas*. Any neglect of this principle brings upon him odium, etc.³

In another document King Athalaric addresses the Count of Syracuse, charging oppressive acts against him, and says to him in part:

Let the administration of laws be preserved intact to the regular judges. . . . The true praise of the Goths is *civilitas*, i.e., law-abidingness. The more seldom the litigant is seen in your presence the greater is your renown. Do you defend the State with your arms; let the Romans plead before their own law-courts in peace. . . .⁴

¹Varix, IV., 33. Cf. Hodgkin (*The Letters of Cassiodorus*, London, 1886).

²*Ibid.*, V., 37.

³*Ibid.*, IV., 39.

⁴*Ibid.*, IX., 14.

I need quote no further from the official documents of Cassiodorus. But when we pass from these to those left us by later mediæval writers, we find that they still use the same word, extend its use and add secondary kindred meanings such as that of a "monetary fine" imposed on law-breakers, or that of a "civil case" as opposed to a criminal one. Yet they never depart from the core idea of *social order* which the expression still retains.¹

We leap the centuries and come to the eighteenth, darkened as it was by a vicious revolt against God, against reason and against tradition. In its midst arose the arch-cynic, Christ-hater and word-juggler who called himself Voltaire. And it was this man, it seems, who first gave the word "civilization" its new external form and, at the same time, so twisted its meaning as to exclude from it the suggestion of any moral and Christian principle, and to include nothing higher than intellectual cleverness, respectability and polished manners, i.e., just that artificial and local type of culture which was to be seen in the fashionable "salons" and so-called "philosophical" circles of Paris in the time of Voltaire. In this new and perverted meaning civilization was made popular and fashionable by Voltaire's devotee, Edward Gibbon, and his host of unthinking followers.

The nineteenth century brought the heyday of the mechanist, the naturalist and the materialist. He, too, took up the blessed word, stuffed it with heavy matter in keeping with his mood, and twisted it again to signify a condition of earthly well-being of which wealth, comfort and every instrument that ministered thereunto, were the essential characteristics. In the assault which materialism made

¹Charter of Louis VI., King of France, an. 1120. Cf. *Gallia Christiana*, vol. VIII., col. 321.

upon the honorable idea, it quite lost sight of those higher ingredients which alone could bind society together in the harmony of rights mutually respected and obligations faithfully fulfilled; in other words, the materialist fraternity shut their eyes to the historic realities of civilization.

The latest twentieth-century arrival is the self-styled Modern Thought, some of whose exponents I have already mentioned. With characteristic intellectual inertia, this modern mood did not think to look beyond its nose and spectacles to see what other thought there might be about the matter of civilization. Quite uncritically, it slavishly accepted what was already in the print it read, and merely continued to reprint it, only with heavier ink. It ignorantly begged the question of universality and presupposed that its votaries (or rather victims) are the mass of mankind and that those who are not are only a negligible exception.

Needless to say, this is not the case. Most living men do not shape their heads or lives according to the dictates of Modern Thought. No true Catholic does, and there are more than three hundred millions of them in the world, and more than twenty millions in this country alone. The greater part of really cultivated men outside the Catholic Church frown at it, while the average man, who goes peacefully about his daily work and leads a normally honest life, ignores it. The vast majority of men, if they do not explicitly think about civilization, go on living on the realities of it, contributing their share to its maintenance by the loyal performance of their duties towards God, themselves and their fellow-men. Were such not the case, savagery and barbarism would be our portion. Yet we cannot honestly flatter ourselves into believing that there is none of it in our midst, thanks to Modern Thought.

As a last consideration, permit me to point out who are the historic preservers both of the true meaning and of the realities of the civilization of which we all are the actual beneficiaries. Since civilization is the reign of social law issuing in social stability and in the security of life, limb and property, and a stable relation of mutual confidence and trust between man and man, it is quite obvious that such stability must rest upon an *ethical* basis, that is to say, upon the virtues of honesty, truthfulness, good-will, respect for the rights and feelings of others, self-restraint and submission to just law. It is obvious, too, and history confirms it a thousand times, that these virtues can have no stability or binding power in society so long as they rest only on the quicksand of mere external propriety and expediency. No, my good Friends, the virtues which make up a civilization require a more solid foundation than mere convenience and self-interest, and this bed-rock of civilization can only be the *moral law* accepted as an *imperative duty*—as the Will flowing from the Nature of a Divine Law-giver.

When we proceed to enquire where in history has civilization, correctly understood, exhibited its most solid and enduring reality, and what agency has most contributed to shape and maintain the social bonds which, despite the action of so many subversive forces, still keep societies together upon a relatively high plane of dignity, I shall refer the answer to any fair-minded historian. Of him we ask: When classic heathenism sank to the bottom, what institution took the decadent civilization of the Romans and, with a true understanding of its nature, purified the pagan crudities out of it and rescued men from its crushing weight?—What institution has preached the natural equality and

dignity of men and stood up in defense of slave and free-man alike?—What institution has delivered woman from the thralldom of the Roman *paterfamilias* and called interference with a child's life, before, as well as after, birth, foul murder?—What institution has so emphatically preached and sanctioned obedience to just law, and so fearlessly taught rulers to respect the rights of their subjects?—What institution has tamed the barbarian of European history and taught him how to live in social peace, and taught him the arts of peace?—What institution has so earnestly taken the ills of society to heart and provided for the poor, the orphan, the sick, the delinquent and the insane, ever solicitous to remove from the social body any diseased element that tended to disturb its stability or its civilization?—What institution has so consistently, so constantly and so trenchantly defined the rights and the obligations of employer and employed, the rights and duties of husband and wife, and fought, and still fights single-handed, for the integrity of the family, in order that social harmony might be preserved?

The historian knows the answer, and we know the answer. When Pope Pius IX indignantly condemned the eightieth proposition in his famous "Syllabus" to the effect that the Catholic Church should subscribe to the "civilization" of Modern Thought, he considered the attempt of Modern Thought to dictate to it a new and strange meaning of that word, sheer impudence. In the document, *Jamdudum cernimus*, which explains his repudiation of the intruder, Pius IX well explained the difference between the civilization of history and that of Modern Thought. And so likewise did Pope Leo XIII in two other immortal documents, the *Inscrutabili* (1878) and the *Immortale Dei* (1885),

challenge its impertinence and remind men of the institution that preserved civilization in its true meaning and its realities.

Civilization is a household word of Catholic Christianity. For many centuries has the Catholic Church had civilization in its keeping, and it should know its meaning. The great representatives of Christ's Christianity are perfectly at home with the term when, warning the world of the evils affecting modern society, they declare in the words of Leo XIII:

It is perfectly clear and evident, that the very notion of civilization is a fiction of the brain, if it rest not on the abiding principles of truth and the unchanging laws of virtue and justice, and if unfeigned love knit not together the wills of men and gently control the interchange and character of their mutual service. . . .

Undoubtedly that cannot be by any means accounted the perfection of civilized life which sets all legitimate authority at defiance; nor can that be regarded as liberty which, shamefully and by the vilest means spreading false principles, and freely indulging the sensual gratification of lustful desires, claims impunity for all crime and misdemeanor, and thwarts the goodly influence of the worthiest citizens of whatever class.¹

As long ago as 1865, Monsignor Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, vindicating the Syllabus of Pius IX in a famous pamphlet, chided the insolence of Modern Thought and its attempt to corrupt the word civilization in these terms:

You speak to us of progress, liberalism and civilization, just as if we were savages, and did not know the meaning of the words. But these grand words, which you take out of their proper sense, it is we who taught them to you, and have given you the real meaning of them and the realities they represent.

¹Encyclical *Inscrutabili*, April 21, 1878.

Every one of these words has and will have, forever, a thoroughly Christian signification; and on the day when that sense perishes all sincere liberalism, all real civilization, will perish also.¹

All this is appreciated by modern thought that is truly thoughtful. Professor Irving Babbitt is well known to thoughtful readers, and, unenlightened as he is in certain matters, is nevertheless enlightened enough to pillory spurious Modern Thought and its poor contribution to civilization, when he declares in his *Democracy and Leadership* that

under certain conditions that are already in sight, the Catholic Church may perhaps be the only institution left in the Occident that can be counted upon to uphold civilized standards.² (Italics ours)

We can remove the cautious "perhaps" from Professor Babbitt's declaration and say in the light of history and present facts, that the Catholic Church is the only institution that is able to uphold civilized standards because it knows what civilization essentially is and has been "its nurse, its mistress, and its mother."

¹"*La convention du 15 septembre et l'Encyclique du 8 décembre 1864.*"
Jan. 26, 1865.

²New York, Houghton, Mifflin, 1924.

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Second Conference

MODERN THOUGHT'S CONCEPTION OF CULTURE*

My dear Friends:

In last Sunday's Conference we made an attempt to clear away the smoky confusion which the jargon of Modern Thought has cast around the idea of Civilization. Throwing upon that idea the light of its historical origins and of its realities, as well as the thought of that long-lived institution which has been its faithful nurse and foster-mother, we saw Civilization to be not the fool's paradise of wealth and material comfort, but a condition of society stabilized by the observance of a code of justice, truth and honesty, and enabling men to carry out the purpose of their earthly life in security and peace.

To-day we return in order to discuss the idea of *Culture*, and to strive to rescue another honorable word from the intellectual banditry of the Modern Mind. I may begin by pointing out that the term in question is one of those verbal symbols which carries with it the magic power of suggesting the character and quality of a whole generation or historical period. Thus the sixteenth century summed up its uppermost desires and aspirations, or at least the aspirations of those who spoke loudest, in the word "Reform." The eighteenth century struck off its ideals and illusions in the word "Reason," such as it was understood, to which men paid divine honors, and before which the French Revolution made its prostrations. The nineteenth century hitched its restless and unsatisfied longings to the word "Progress" (of which we shall have more to say in our closing Conference), and to the word

*Delivered Sunday, November 12, 1933.

"Liberty"—words whose truth passed through the strange vicissitudes of being denied by philosophers, while it was acclaimed by politicians, defended by the press, and glorified in a thousand forms by the artist. Finally, we pause at this already well advanced stage of the twentieth century and stand perplexed to find the *one* word which would best hit off in a few syllables the complexity of sentiments and diverse preoccupations that keep so many modern minds inconclusively astir.

It is unquestionable, however, that the word *Culture* is one which finds a responsive echo in most minds, and is certainly the tag which Modern Thought thoughtlessly pins on most things it touches. Men love and seek culture; they labor to spread culture; they are constantly founding centres for the expansion and elevation of culture. Frequently enough culture is pointed out to be the loftiest aspiration of human longing and the fountain of all good, both for individuals and for nations. Neither politics nor sociology nor morality nor religion, we are told, can operate, much less progress, except under the high patronage of Modern Culture.

Our oracles of print talk of inferior and superior cultures, of Oriental and Occidental cultures, of Christian and non-Christian cultures, of Greek-Latin cultures, of mediæval and modern cultures, of rising and declining cultures, of stationary and progressive cultures—even of cultures of savage and cultures of civilized peoples. And in these divisions and classifications of culture the differences are often so many, and apparently so profound, that it seems well-nigh impossible to find one common element that could serve as a basis for a definition such as would fit all cultures. And yet, it would seem that an idea so universal in scope, so

rich in good for man, should be within the reach of every intelligence and carry on its very face such features as would make it easily recognized and understood by everyone, without risk of deception or confusion.

Alas, good Friends, how far different is the truth of the matter! For, the moment we attempt to form an exact notion of culture in the light—or the darkness—of what Modern Thought has to say about it, we stand confronted by a prodigious task. We find ourselves holding in our hands a hopelessly entangled mesh in which so many diverse strands of theory and opinion interlace, intertwist and criss-cross in a thousand directions, that one must needs possess a strength of mind truly heroic to be able to hold his wits from reeling and from despair.

I really wish to be just and fair to Modern Thought. I have no mind to accuse it of anything it has not said. I, therefore, beg that you cease listening to me for a moment and lend your ears to Modern Thought as it presents its view of culture in its own words. The exponent now speaking is Harvey N. Davis, who sets forth his notions in the XV chapter of Professor Beard's symposium, where he says:

Spirit and culture are difficult to define. The spirit . . . of a man is an *intangible something* that spurs him on to eager activity . . . it is *that something* that distinguished the self-reliant leader from the plodding follower. . . . (Italics ours)

Culture is that which makes a man feel unembarrassed and at home wherever and with whomsoever he finds himself.(?!). One of the ingredients of culture is poise and self-possession. Another is responsiveness to ideas . . . to beauty. . . . A third ingredient of culture is tolerance. . . . And there are doubtless other ingredients of culture that the reader will add for himself, etc. . . .¹

¹Whitber *Mankind* (New York, Longmans, Green, 1930).

Count Keyserling declares culture to be
that form of life considered as direct expression of
the spirit

(no more nor less!)

John Cowper Powys wrote an entire book on *The Meaning of Culture*, and discourses thus on culture:

To be a cultured person is to be a person with some kind of original philosophy. . . .

The cultured person takes the dogmatic authorities of modern science and traditional religion with a considerable pinch of salt. . . . The last word (about culture) is with a certain free poetic humanism that uses science and religion for its own purposes and is not dominated by either. . . .

Under certain conditions culture actually becomes a substitute for religion. . . .

The whole purpose and end of culture is a thrilling happiness of a particular sort—of the sort, in fact, that is caused by a response to life made by a harmony of the intellect, the imagination and the senses. . . .

What we are here defining, therefore, as the true nature of culture is nothing less than a substitute for religion where the absence of faith in a modern person's being has rendered religion unattainable, etc. . . .¹

To Floyd N. House, culture consists of
the habits of individuals and the customs of groups.²

Professor Ellwood holds that
the essence of culture is invention or achievement.³

For Professor Max Scheler, culture is the "humanization" of man, or a process of "self-deification." Robert Douglas Bowden, head of the Department of Social Sciences, Youngstown College in Ohio, begins one of his chapters, "Religion and Culture," with the statement:

¹New York, W. W. Norton Co., 1929.

²*Range of Social Theory* (New York, Henry Holt, 1929).

³*Cultural Evolution*, pp. 55 ff.

In any attempt to assess the present status of culture in the United States one is at once halted for lack of a definition of culture,¹

and then flounders on with half-truths for twenty more pages without coming to a clear-cut definition of the important word.

I might go on indefinitely with the talk of Modern Thought, further showing how, for some, culture is essentially "positive knowledge," while others think that there can be much scientific knowledge and little culture; how some, again, see culture to be the ability to practice a profession, while others see in professionalism the very negation of culture; how some conceive culture as something fixed and stable, while others conceive it in perpetual process of evolution, unceasingly transforming its reality, its nature and its very concept. But in the whole welter of Modern Thought one thing is very clear, and that is its *confusion*, particularly the confusion of the idea of culture with the idea of civilization and the tarring of both with the same brush, namely, the brush of materialism and sensual naturalism.

What are we then to do amid this Donnybrook Fair and Bedlam of "thought" uncontrolled by principle, historical reality or authority, and at sixes and sevens with itself about the idea of culture? Are we to follow the example of Professor James Harvey Robinson, when he experienced the difficulty of defining history, and with him "find solace and intellectual repose in surrendering all attempts to define" culture?

Good Friends, I propose a more rational and at the same time a more honorable procedure. Chesterton remarks that there are two ways of getting

¹*In Defense of To-morrow*, p. 70 f. (New York, Macmillan, 1931).

home—and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk around the whole world until we come back to the same place. I suggest, therefore, that we first look and see what lies under our noses. There we find that there *is* a thought worthy of the name; a thought that is clear and definite; a thought that has been long at work on the subject of culture as well as on most other vital subjects; a thought that has been long in touch with realities; a thought that the Modern Mind, being very old-fashioned, strangely ignores. Has Modern Thought, let me ask, never heard of St. Augustine or of St. Thomas? Or has it not even heard of living, and very modern, young men, I may call them, whose minds are keen, move in history, are guided by principles and anchored to facts? Has Modern Thought really never heard of Christopher Dawson or of Jacques Maritain or of Peter Wust or Karl Adam, Cyril Martindale, Ronald Knox, Hilaire Belloc, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, and a score of others? If it has not, then it must be talking in its sleep!

Looking again under our noses we find that there is a Catholic or universal institution—the same institution that so well understands civilization because it has dealt with and upheld its realities for so many centuries. And this same institution also understands the nature of culture just because it understands the nature of man, his whence, his way and his whither. And then there is the structure of the word “culture” itself, which already begins by telling us something quite definite about the essence of culture.

The word “culture” of itself tells us that it is derived from the Latin “*colo, colere*,” used to designate the cultivation of the soil and first applied to agriculture, *i.e.*, the care, the proper disposition and preparation of the soil so that it might produce a

more perfect and abundant crop and a more luxuriant and fruitful plant; and then, the care of the trees, the watering, pruning and protection of them against harmful elements, so that they might produce bigger and richer and more plentiful fruit.

Transferred to the varied activity of man which makes up human life, culture continued to mean the training and the proper use of each of his faculties of body and soul, the refining and the perfecting of them. Thus, the informing of the intelligence with true knowledge and the training of it for accurate thinking; the ordering and disciplining of the will for good action; the purifying and the ennobling of the emotions; the controlling and regulating of the passions; the nurturing and the protection of the physical organism; the correcting and refining of the manner of our external behavior so as to adjust each individual to the demands and obligations of social life; in a word, whatever goes to fashion the ideal of a perfect man in the complex relations of his exterior and interior life also goes into the formation of culture and furnishes the ingredients of culture.

In reality, the idea of culture conceived as a certain perfection of the human faculties manifesting itself in various ways may be discerned, though confusedly, at the bottom of all the divergent conceptions of those who have expressed themselves on the subject of culture, including the exponents of Modern Thought. But there, generally speaking, is the idea left undefined and obscured by sundry false assumptions invariably tinged with matter and with a misunderstanding of the nature and destiny of man.

We must, therefore, pursue the analysis further and observe that we begin to falsify the concept of culture the moment we falsify the concept of man

and misunderstand the true function of his faculties and their mutual co-ordination.

Now, man is an organic unit; his body and soul form one substantial and personal composite; and all the faculties of soul and body—intelligence, will, memory, imagination, senses and bodily organs, are so made and co-ordinated as to serve the same ultimate purpose, *viz., the perfection and well-being of the whole man.* Each faculty has its proper object to operate upon, its appointed sphere and rank in a hierarchy of functional powers, disposed by nature in such an order that the lower faculties subserve the higher and are not to go beyond the bounds set by reason—no more than wheat is meant to grow on bare rock, or a polar bear to live at the equator.

All this means that human culture is true to its name when the activities of the will are in harmony with the activities of the intelligence; when the activities of the senses do not overpoise the controls of reason; when industry, art, etc., for example, are regulated by truth, moral rectitude, and so forth.

I may now bring all these considerations into focus, and say that culture in its truest and widest meaning essentially consists in the *training and perfecting of the human faculties by their sustained application, each upon its legitimate object, in balanced harmony with one another, and in the measure that conforms with man's dignity and highest good.*

Thus correctly conceived, we understand how culture will have as many aspects as there are human powers and human needs and desires. So there is the phase of culture that serves the necessities and conveniences of life, which we may call the utilitarian part of culture, and is tangible in the

form of industry and the technical arts; then there is that phase of it which furnishes the embellishments, or, if you will, the luxuries of life, and which we may call ornamental or fine culture, the kind of culture we commonly think of in ordinary parlance.

Furthermore, we may look at culture in the aspects that correspond to the various faculties engaged in its production, and speak of *mental culture*, as tangibly seen in works of philosophy and science; or of the culture of the will along the lines of moral principle, as seen in the practice of goodness and virtue; or of the cultivation of the imagination, taste and appreciation of the beautiful, issuing in the fine arts and called by all *aesthetic culture*; or even of the proper care and exercise of the body for the sake of health and grace of movement, which we designate as *physical culture*, and so on with the rest of the faculties.

From the analysis we have made, we should also be able to perceive the difference between *culture* and its kin idea *civilization*, and talk intelligently about the one and the other, avoiding the confusion and dark understandings of Modern Thought.

Keeping in view that civilization is essentially the prevalence of social peace resting on the moral virtues of justice, truthfulness and honesty, enforced by a code of law and manners to which we may all appeal to put a check on the impulses of passion and savagery, we understand how culture belongs to civilization "materially" and not "formally," as the Scholastics would say; and how, in fact, a certain minimum of culture is presupposed before civilization can begin its work. There must, for instance, be enough of *mental culture* to make the formulation of a code of laws possible; enough *moral culture* to insure the observance of that code; and suf-

ficient technical or *industrial culture* to enable men to provide for the necessities of life.

But whether men live in tents or caves or palaces or twentieth-century apartments, whether they walk or ride in ox-carts or in fast automobiles or fly, whether they wear the latest ingenuities of sartorial art or whether they wear gunnybags and palm leaves, whether they have sciences and arts or whether they have not—they may still be *civilized* as long as they live in peace and honesty. They may be civilized without culture, or they may be cultured without civilization. And this is true of individuals as it is also of nations.

All these externals are the usual concomitants of civilization; in varying degrees they are inseparably bound up with civilization; and in fact we commonly qualify a civilization by the kind of culture that accompanies it. But then, it is a confusion of thought, which the so-called Modern Mind has not avoided, to identify the one with the other.

On the other hand, once a state of civilization has been established, social stability and peace will invariably favor a higher development of culture, so that while an elementary state of culture may be considered as the *cause* of civilization, a higher kind of culture may and does usually issue as the *effect* of civilization. And so, by a beneficial mutual action and reaction, a higher culture, provided it is harmoniously balanced, will repay civilization by lending its support and becoming in its turn a cause of higher civilization, and producing a cultured civilization in the best sense of the word.

And now I return to Modern Thought and its thoughtless treatment of culture. Generally speaking, Modern Thought has missed the essentials of both culture and civilization, confusing the two ideas just as you or I, looking at two adjacent bushes

through the deepening twilight, might mistake them for one cow. More than that, and in perfect keeping with its mood, Modern Thought has fixed its blurred gaze on physical culture or technical culture, which in reality lie only at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy, and ignored the two aspects that lend balance and truth, goodness and beauty to all other phases of culture, produce a cultural civilization, achieve the perfection of a truly-cultured man on earth, and prepare him for the happy perfection of life eternal. For the harmonious improvement of man's life implies standards of value or basic points of co-ordination, since the progressive perfection of a thing means nothing more nor less than approximation to an ideal which serves as the central point of direction.

This leads us to ask two very important questions which Modern Thought has been too thoughtless to ask and still more thoughtless to answer. What factors in history have served more than any others as powerful inspirations in the development of every phase of culture? And what agency or institution has set up the highest ideal and ever urged men to strive for its attainment with all the faculties of their being, so that even if they ate or drank or played or slept, they were to do so in accordance with a perfect pattern?

We need not go far afield to seek the answer. History, and the observation of all the facts before our eyes, give us that answer, and the answer is: It is religion that has inspired the most perfect efforts in all spheres of human activity, and it is a *fixed standard of morality* that has maintained the most perfect harmony of those spheres. These two impulses have ever supplied the cohesive force which unifies a society and a culture. For the *moral law*, divinely sanctioned, is a thing which

claims man's totality and the whole range of his thoughts, words and actions—while civilization only grips that part of a man which comes to the surface in civil and social life. A society which has lost its religion and its morals becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture. A civilization without religion or morals is no more a culture than a corpse is a body. A corpse retains for a while the external organization it received from the departed soul before it falls prey to putrefaction; so a culture may hold together, for a time, by the virtue of an organization and social habits inherited from the religion which built it up and gave it life. But unless religion return into it in order to give it life and move its limbs, that culture will dissolve and decay, leaving its dry bones in tragic chapters of history.

The last question we ask is: What historic institution has from its beginnings and constantly without pause or fear held up the controls of a balanced culture teaching men "Seek first the kingdom of God and its justice and all these things will be added unto you"? What institution, with a full understanding of the terms it uses, and with a vision sharp enough to distinguish surfaces from depths, has ever had the courage to call apparently cultured men who practice secret injustices and fraud, savages, and the uncultured but honest poor, civilized? What institution has, through the course of its long history, ever urged men to keep their culture in balance by seeking truth and goodness first and everything else afterwards; to model their fine arts upon the highest patterns of Beauty, and their manners upon the best traditions of fine sentiment and charity, so that neither crafts nor artist's instrument nor merchant's greed nor evil custom might introduce discord or sour the sweetness of life?

Leo XIII summarizes many volumes of history in the opening references of his Encyclical *Immortale Dei*, of November 1, 1885, where he declares that the Catholic Church

has for her immediate and natural purpose the saving of souls. . . . Yet in regard to things temporal she is the source of benefits as manifold and as great as if the chief end of her existence were to ensure the prosperity of our earthly life. And in truth, wherever the Church has set her foot, she has straightway changed the face of things, and has attamped the moral tone of the people with a new civilization, and with virtues before unknown. All nations which have yielded to her sway have become eminent for their culture, their sense of justice, and the glory of their high deeds.

And in very deed, the temples, the schools, the literature, the social life based upon her principles, constitute a harmonious symphony wherein the faculties of man operate in concert, and, at the same time, raise a protest against art or science offending morals, commerce or pleasure debasing art as well as morals, and against any branch of human activity that clashes with faith or reason. Should you, therefore, seek an authentic idea of culture, enquire of that historic institution and she will reveal to you the true meaning of culture and all its secrets.

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Third Conference

MODERN THOUGHT'S CONCEPTION
OF SCIENCE*

My dear Friends:

If I made myself clear in our two previous discussions on the subjects of Civilization and Culture, you will have understood that, notwithstanding their intimate relationships and compenetrations, civilization and culture are two ideas essentially distinct. Civilization means a unification of men into a social life that is stabilized by a just code of law and custom such as will protect its subjects from savage impulse and self-interest, while a *civilized* man is one who conforms to that code by dealing fairly with his fellow-men. Culture, on the other hand, is accessory to a state of civilization and is concerned with the utilities and adornments of social life. It, therefore, means the harmonious development of the individual in virtue and knowledge, in skill and art, in taste and manners; and we should accordingly call a man *cultured* when he possesses these accomplishments in a fair degree or appreciates them in others.

It should be noted, moreover, that culture in general is not a simple, but a complex reality having as many phases as there are fields of human activity. Each of these phases, or each kind of culture, in a given person may move forward in perfect step with every other kind of culture or it may even move backward in the opposite direction. We shall then see culture at war with itself. Thus, it is possible (and history as well as experience attest it many times) for technical culture to progress while intel-

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lectual culture and art lag behind, or for industry to run ahead while honest dealing and moral behavior decline towards savagery. The learned boors, for instance, whom you and I may know, the rich vulgarians, the virtuous ignoramuses, the polished criminals, the university of magnificent buildings that teaches falsehood and saps morals, and the nation of many schools, many laws and many banks, but also of many jails and many criminals, are all concrete illustrations of how civilization can be at odds with culture, and of how one kind of culture can be at loggerheads with another kind of culture, so long as the central controls of a true religion and of a consistent moral standard do not bear upon every action to maintain the harmony of the spheres. Modern Thought has not been gifted with sufficient discernment to see these essentials and distinctions, but still it will prattle about "civilization" and "culture" as though they were the same material thing.

This afternoon we shall turn our attention to Science. The word should command respect, and, in fact, it always did until Modern Thought put its own conceits into the mouth of the honorable thing and made it talk like an idiot. Without pausing for reflection, without seeking the counsel of wiser heads as to what science might really be and as to what it can really do, the Modern Mind raised a shrine in the midst of its intellectual wilderness, set up a mechanical idol therein, bedecked it with robes of tinsel upon which it embroidered the formulas of its own superstitions, and then sent out the trumpeters to bid every man "who thought himself intelligent," to come and worship, and every dog to cease barking. It claimed every virtue for the goddess Science—material science, of course. Science would solve all riddles and settle all problems on the

surface of the earth and under the earth; it would explain the origin and end of all things; it would adjust political and economic affairs; it would simplify sociological and educational matters—why, it would even prescribe a religious creed and a code of morals, or, better still, would make these inconveniences quite unnecessary.

As evidence of Modern Thought's claims for science have you not read John Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*, or Andrew White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, books which formed more than one generation of intellectuals in all the universities of this country? Have you not read H. G. Wells' "scientific" Utopias and his *Outlines of History*, or heard Harry Elmer Barnes shouting his *Twilight of Christianity* from the housetops and from the columns of the *World-Telegram*? And did you not really read Mencken's *Treatise on the Gods*, or go to college and hear Professor John Dewey discoursing on the omnipotence of technical science and its methods, or even go to church on Park Avenue and Riverside Drive, sometimes, and hear the Science of Modern Thought preached from the pulpits that call themselves Christian? If not, listen to a few specimens now.

Echoing the obsolete philosophy of Auguste Comte and the more primitive religious philosophy of Draper and White, Professor Dewey declares: that

the method we term "scientific" forms for the modern man . . . the sole dependable means of disclosing the realities of existence. It is the sole authentic mode of revelation. It is the "author of the revolution in the content of religion and morals."¹

¹Forum, March, 1930.

The Reverend John Haynes Holmes preaches from the Community Church pulpit on Park Avenue and 34th Street thus:

When science has done its work . . . the churches will be open daily as clinics of healing, schools of culture, and agencies of reform. . . . Into the pulpits and before the forums of these churches will come men and women who can speak with authority—experts in science, art, literature, psychology, politics, public health and public morals.¹

Harry Elmer Barnes, who taught innocent girls at Smith College, advertises more accomplishments for Modern Science in effusions such as these:

The conventional orthodox view of Jesus as the literal "only begotten Son of God" . . . is undermined as certainly and as completely by the progress of natural science, as is the Hebrew God, Yahweh.²

If the Ten Commandments are to be obeyed to-day, it should only be when their precepts and advice may be proved to square with the best natural science of the present time, for the Ten Commandments were drawn up in an early stage of civilization which was devoid of our present knowledge.³

Modern psychology has made it perfectly clear that man has no inherent necessity for a feeling of divine support.⁴

This same "modern psychology"

has at last explained such hitherto mystical concepts as the dependance upon God, religious conversion and a sense of sin to be only "wishful thinking."⁵

¹October 28, 1910.

²Forum, April, 1929.

³Current History, March, 1929.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Contemporary astro-physics . . . completely repudiates the cosmological outlook of the Holy Scripture.¹

All in all, to be abreast of Modern Science, the intelligent man will have to surrender four essentials, according to this oracle:

the reality and deity of the Biblical God; the uniqueness and divinity of Jesus and His special relevance to contemporary religion; the belief in immortality; and the hope of establishing a conception of God that is compatible with modern science.²

Professor Stanley Hall lays down Albert Wiggam's *New Decalogue of Science*³

with a feeling that biology is the basis of a new decalogue as important and as authentic as the old one.

And what Modern Science does with its new psychology and its new biology it will also do with its chemistry. For have not Doctors Blood and Kallen "demonstrated" to their own satisfaction that the experience of the religious mystic of communion with God can be produced by nitrous-oxide anæsthesia or by the excessive alkalinity of the blood? Doctor Horace Kallen, if you would know, made experiments which reported a "complete confirmation" of Doctor Blood's contention. Says Doctor Kallen:

I tried nitrous oxide and I did experience, as Blood did, in the interval between recovery of consciousness and complete unconsciousness, a presence moving, ineffable and beyond words to describe.⁴

And other drugs are known to Modern Science which will produce similar reactions.

Now, good Friends, let us be serious. Is there any other conceivable illusion, ineffable or horrible

¹Current History, March, 1929.

²Ibid.

³New York, Bobbs-Merrill, 1923.

⁴Why Religion? (New York, Boni-Liveright, 1927).

beyond words to describe, that drugs and a generous cup could not produce? In reality, the protagonist of Modern Science speaks like a drunken Bacchus when he advances similar experiences as "scientific proof" that God is non-existent apart from man, and that man's restless longing for Him is merely the effect of certain chemical reactions.

Bertrand Russell and his company of "unmoralists" and "impuritans" will establish domestic happiness for all by the aid of the modern science of Eugenics. By these he will remove the inconvenience of husband and wife being mutually faithful, and will introduce, instead of a "bi-parental," a purely "maternal family" wherein the State will take over the rôle of the father. I shall spare both you and myself the nauseous discomfort of leading you through the Augean stables of such hucksters of Modern Thought and Modern Science as Doctor Freud or Doctor Watson of Behaviourist—or "Mis-Behaviourist"—notoriety, not to speak of Havelock Ellis and Margaret Sanger, who seal with the approval of Modern Science such perversions of nature as frustration of birth, companionate marriage, and even sex-promiscuity, and decorate with glittering names the bestialities that caused God to kill Onan, Lot to leave Sodom, and even the very pagan Augustus Cæsar to brand them as capital crimes. These foul birds of night dispense a "scientific" poison which weakens and degrades the minds and souls of readers who abound to-day, and who supply the "science" of Modern Thought with the larger part of its audience. I mean the mob of readers produced by modern mass-education unguided, as it unfortunately is, by any religious or moral principle, and uncorrected by the best traditions of civilization and culture. This mob of readers are the victims of a mighty intellectual famine

that blights the whole province of Modern Thought and makes of it a veritable Sahara.

Amid the roaring of its nonsense, may we beg leave of Modern Science to call our souls our own and do a bit of thinking for ourselves by asking the very simple and child-like question: What precisely is Science? Is it some superhuman Being—a goddess sent to men by immortal Jove, a creator who presided at the origins of the world and of man? Is it an infallible oracle identical with the university professor and with every charlatan who sees fit to swindle intelligences in its name? In the world of realities, good Friends, this deity is nowhere to be found; it exists only in the murky mists of Modern Thought. For clear intellects have always understood science to be the offspring of man's little mind, and, at its best, to be the sum of human knowledge of things seen in connection with their causes—*cognitio rerum per causas*. So Aristotle defined it long ago, and, notwithstanding the impositions of Modern Thought, right-thinking men still conceive it as an activity of the human mind, subject to all its weaknesses and limitations, and not anything above it. The mind comes first, science comes after.

And, if we are to understand what science really is in its purest and most universal sense, what is its character, function and mission, then we must conceive it to be: (a) *the certain knowledge of a body of truths or conclusions (b) arrived at through the compelling evidence of their causes and principles, and (c) organically correlated in such a way that each truth or fact hangs logically together with every truth or fact of that same body, and does not contradict any truth or conclusion in any other body of certain knowledge*. That is science, since truth is *one*, and what is true in one branch of

knowledge cannot be made false by the truth of any other branch, any more than the evidence of the right eye in a normally-sighted person looking at the same object can contradict the evidence of his left eye.

Science must be such if it means anything intelligible, whatever be the subject to which it turns its enquiring gaze: whether that subject be the properties and the elements of matter, or the nature and operations of the soul; whether it be the constitution of the heavenly bodies and their influence upon the earth, or the nature of the Heavenly Father and His will with regard to man. The aim of true science is to set in order in our minds the facts of experience and the truths of Revelation, together with the suprasensible truths we derive therefrom, to the end that men may apply them with greater security to the conduct of their lives and thereby maintain a stable civilization and develop a finer culture. Once we have grasped these essentials of the idea of science, many things about it, which are hopelessly jumbled in the Modern Mind, will stand out in clear relief.

It is merely stating the obvious to say that the first earmark of scientific knowledge is its certitude. A fact or a truth can then, and only then, be said to be *scientifically* known, when it is so firmly established by proof from observation or deduction that the opposite cannot be rationally entertained. This certitude or firmness of conviction may rest on the immutable essence of things, or it may have for its warrant the regular behavior of the actually existing universe and of its single parts, or even the normal conduct of a free human being. But, whatever be the evidential motive, there must be verified truth before we can begin to speak of science.

Modern Thought, however, in all its talk and

print about science, is singularly muddled on this point. It confuses, without seeming to be aware of the confusion, uncertain with certain knowledge, theory with verified results, the mere activity of research with the net gains of research, the apparatus of investigation, instruments and laboratories, with the truths or facts which the apparatus is meant to be only a means of discovering. But, good Friends, let us have enough respect for truth to understand that uncertain knowledge is not science; that theory, hypotheses and opinions are not science, however plausible they may be; that mere observation, no matter how industrious, is not science, and that laboratories, spectroscopes and telescopes do not in themselves constitute science. These may, indeed, be valuable as the *auxiliaries* and the *means* of gaining knowledge, but they are not the pure gold of certified truth.

With this in mind, we are now better able to appreciate how much disorder Modern Thought has brought into the peaceful home of science. It takes hypotheses, before it has discovered anything, and calls them "facts" (think of the theory of man's animal evolution); it takes mere research and calls it "science"; it takes the machinery of research and calls that "science" too; it misapplies the devices of discovery and calls even that "science," and in so doing indulges its emotions and prejudices at the expense of truth and reason.

But Modern Thought has done worse than that. With the blindness of a mole burrowing through the muddy subsoil in search for worms, Modern Science sees only brute matter and makes matter undistinguishable from the *knowledge* of matter, so that mind and matter become the same essential thing with only a difference of degree. For that you have Bertrand Russell's word where he declares:

My own feeling is that there is not a sharp line but a difference in degree (between the two): an oyster is less mental than a man, but not wholly un-mental.¹

And that is the "feeling" common to every member of the pseudo-scientific guild, who, perverting language according to their "feeling," have kidnapped in most high-handed fashion, the innocent word science, forced it to submit to their material purposes and so cramped its meaning as to make it signify only physical or natural science; while they will only call that "scientific" which is ponderable and submits to their measurements.

But as for that vaster world of sublimer truths that lies beyond the sense of touch, the knowledge of Divine things, the immaterial and immortal part of human nature, the eternal and immutable causes which rule the world of human thought and action—why, says Modern Thought, no scientifically-minded person could give it serious consideration! Did more colossal folly ever mock the intelligence of man! We may not wonder, therefore, when even such a misguided intelligence as that of Anatole France can voice ironic contempt for Modern Science and say that "the sciences are beneficent—they prevent men from thinking." And, if I may speak in allegory, do we not intensely regret that when Martin Luther flung his ink-pot at the devil, he should have missed him and allowed the father of lies, to whom the apostate monk opened the wilderness of private judgment, freedom enough to cut the minds of men loose from the anchorage of Faith and Reason and plunge them into the Babel of Modern Thought and its Modern Science?

In view of the unwarranted restrictions which this Modern Thought has put upon its "science," it

¹*An Outline of Philosophy* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1927).

is high time to challenge the reckless use of that word and insist that the true and systematic knowledge of God is also science, and that the true and ordered knowledge of how man should conduct himself in the multiple relations of his life is as much, and more, of a science than his knowledge of the Earth's distance from Neptune or the knowledge of how best to use the products of nature—or defeat their purposes.

So far I have spoken of Modern Science with special reference to what Modern Thought professes or pretends to understand by that word. But while I was thus speaking I by no means forgot that there is a modern science—and a natural science, too,—which is as honorable as it has been beneficial to men. For whether we speak of physics or chemistry or biology or astronomy, or of any other natural science, every honest man recognizes that they have, one and all, added incalculably to man's knowledge of the physical universe and have given him a control over space, heights and depths, and over the elements of matter, that has served mankind most usefully and conferred upon it many blessings. Nor did I forget that there is a throng of modern scientists who deserve that title by every right and who have no part with Modern Thought. These are men of balanced judgment and upright motives. They seek the truth, and just because they do so, they are the first to avow, on the one hand, the narrow field that belongs to each physical science and, on the other, the comparatively broad and more significant field that belongs to the science of man and to the science of God.

These are men who, like true scientists to the manner born, are humble as they stand in view of that vast world of spiritual facts and values which physical science can neither touch nor measure.

They see with accurate vision that, after they have made all their measurements and have had all their say about the phenomena of nature, they have only *described* and not explained. They quite understand that, on final analysis, all their "laws" of physics, chemistry or astrophysics are only formulas which merely indicate *how* things happen, but not *why* they happen. They know full well that they only "grasp the tune, but not the player." They know that they have little to say about the essences and origins of things, but can merely elucidate certain relations between them. They are fully aware that the conclusions of physical science are not statements of absolute truth, but only tentative approaches or gropings towards reality. Above all, they are wide-awake to the fact that to take one science, especially physical science, and make that the guide and interpreter to every other science, is an egregious fallacy. And they also realize that while to-day we know more facts of nature and have better instruments of observation than had Aristotle or Saint Thomas, yet our interpretations of them need not be better.

Realizing all this, Professor Gilbert Lewis confesses that the scientist

does not seek the ultimate but the proximate. He does not speak of the last analysis, but rather of the next approximation.¹

Equally modest in his claims for science is Professor Robert Millikan, when he declares that

the map of science is still a great blank sheet with only here and there a dot to show what has been charted. . . . If Sir James Jeans prefers to hold one view and I another no one can say us nay. The one thing of which you may be quite sure is that neither of us knows anything about it.²

¹*The Anatomy of Science* (Yale University Press, 1926).

²Presidential Address before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Cleveland, December 29, 1930.

Professor J. Arthur Thomson, of Aberdeen, pronounces the so-called conflict between science and religion a false antithesis and bids science to remain at home, saying:

We must learn to render unto Science the tribute that is its due; and to God the things that are HIS. . . . Science aims at describing co-existences and consequences as tersely . . . and consistently as possible; and the so-called "explanations" that science gives do not amount to more than saying something like this: . . . "This interesting fitness in the bird's wing is a good instance of the outcome of long-continued Variation and Selection."¹

And Sir Arthur Eddington does not believe that the dignity of man depends upon his mass and velocity, and hence suggests that man cannot be explained by the formulas of physical science, nor man's origin by the theory of Evolution:

"Materialism and determinism," says he, "those household gods of nineteenth century science . . . which believed that the world could be explained in mechanical and biological concepts must be discarded by modern science. . . . This must be done to make room for a spiritual conception of the universe and man's place in it, with religion supplementing that part of the picture which science must acknowledge itself unable to paint."²

Dr. Arthur Compton, Nobel prize winner, sees far beyond his scientific apparatus when he avows that:

Evidence points to the existence of a Beginner, a Creator of the Universe. . . . A physicist's studies and experiments lead him to believe this Creator to be an intelligent Creator. . . . From a biological point of view, the study of life causes one to conclude that there is an intelligence back of all earthly things leading to a definite end and conclusion. . . . The intelligent God has an interest in and

¹*Science and Religion*, ch. I. (New York, Scribner, 1927).

²Radio address, London, November 23, 1930.

relation to man. . . . If there be an intelligent God, it is reasonable to assume that He would be interested in creating a being intelligent like Himself.¹

How much more satisfyingly scientific does not all this sound in comparison with the silly chirping of the "scientists" we were listening to a moment ago!

But hear yet another great scientist who puts his finger not on a theory, nor a descriptive formula, but on the very explaining cause of all natural phenomena. It is Doctor Willis R. Whitney, Director of Research in the General Electric Company. Asked to explain what supports a magnet floating in space above another magnet, he answered:

What supports it? Sir Oliver Lodge says it is the all-pervading ether. But Einstein denies that there is any ether. Which is right? I say that the magnet floats in space *by the Will of God!* And no man can give me a more precise answer.²

Asked again how the beam of light from a star finally reaches the optic nerve and is seen after traveling hundreds of years, Doctor Whitney made reply:

How does it do that? We have our corpuscular theory of light, our wave theory and now our quantum theory, but they are just educated guesses. About as good an explanation as any is to say that light travels *by the Will of God.*³

And he adds:

The best scientists have to recognize that they are just kindergarten fellows playing with mysteries—our ancestors were, and our descendants will be. . . . No scientific concept can stand still. All is in motion. The Will of God, the law which we discover but cannot understand or explain, that alone is final.⁴

¹Address to businessmen at Oak Park, Chicago, May 21, 1930.

²*New York Times*, November 2, 1930.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

Let us honor the science which speaks with so much truth, dignity and humility. Let us honor, too, the venerable institution of history that has given to science its surest orientation. That institution which presided at the beginnings of Western civilization and culture, guided their infant steps, taught them their language and furnished their best patterns, has also loved nature, and you may see that love written large in the color, stone and symbol of every mediæval cathedral, in the bestiaries, and in the illuminations of her manuscripts. And while it is not her special mission to explore the secrets of the physical world, she has nevertheless ever rejoiced at the achievements of genuine science, and she has kept it from going mad with the madness of Modern Thought by holding aloft the beacon lights of the higher truths which are beyond the range of natural science and which the thoughtful scientists we have just heard gladly and humbly acknowledge. And when an occasional one of them does, with pardonable naïvete, announce to the world, as though it were a startling discovery, that science points to God or to the immortality of the soul, the old Church smiles with a placid and indulgent smile and quietly says: "My child, have I not *always* told you so; have you forgotten the 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth . . . and life everlasting. Amen?'"

By the experience of centuries the historic Church knows too well that mere science has no power to give meaning to life or spiritual value to human conduct, nor to lend beauty and nobility to sacrifice, suffering and charity; that science alone will not inspire men to shun evil and do good, nor furnish them with the arms necessary for carrying on the combat against the embattled forces of sin and of easy morals. Knowing all this, therefore,

she has never ceased to caution the scientist against making of his science a substitute for virtue, lest it only give men more power and means of indulging the downward gravitations of their nature. For in her long history she knew of those who fixed their gaze so intently on exact measurement that they substituted measurement for cause, and in so doing dulled their brains, lost their spiritual sight, and even the lofty use of reason. Above all, that knowing Mother has unremittingly striven to save her scientists and all other scientists from dying the death of the fool who died in the laboratory saying in his heart "There is no God!" She has taught them to be wiser than that and to look above, to take their bearings from the truths of Heaven and, like Saint Anselm, *to believe that they might understand.*

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*Fourth Conference*MODERN THOUGHT'S CONCEPTION
OF PROGRESS*

My dear Friends:

I may sum up the substance of our two last discussions on culture and its various aspects, by comparing culture to a chariot drawn by many steeds. If each steed obeys the control of an intelligent charioteer, keeps its place abreast of its companion-steeds and an even pace with them, not darting ahead nor lagging behind nor swerving aside, but moving straight onward to the appointed goal, all is well and the race will be won, or, at least, the goal will be attained. But if the charioteer lose his head and control of his animals, causing each to bolt off in its own direction independently of the others and of the goal, we are sure to witness a disastrous stampede. A spectacle very much like a stampede is what we actually behold in the arena of culture the moment that Modern Thought mounts the chariot as charioteer, seizes the reins without knowing the temper of his horses, forthwith loses his head and runs both horses and chariot amuck. Thus has science also met misfortune under the misguidance of charioteer Modern Thought. It broke its traces, lost its companions and direction, and is even now careering in our midst like a mad animal. And so has every other branch of culture done which tore itself loose from the intelligent and firm control of true morality and religion.

In this our closing Conference of the Fall Session, we shall consider how Modern Thought has dealt with the idea of Progress. In the voluminous liter-

*Delivered Sunday, November 26, 1933.

ature of Modern Thought, Progress is represented as an ideal of powerful attraction. It is conceived as the most potent of the ideas that rule the "modern" world. It is assumed to be the animating and controlling idea of Western civilization, and particularly of American civilization. "Our progressive age," "the march of progress," "the law of progress," "democracy and progress," "liberty and progress," "culture and progress," "science and progress" and a thousand such, are the stereotyped phrases that one meets and hears at every turn, indicating the popular acceptance of Progress as an unquestioned fact. With that verbal tag Modern Thought adorns all its pet feelings, its beloved theories, its favorite practices, nay, its darling vices. Men and institutions that fit its mood are "progressive"; whoever and whatever does not, is, of course, "unprogressive." It is the magic wand, the mere waving of which settles all things one way or another. The word can make irrationality respectable, and it can make immorality moral. And all this Modern Thought can do with the greatest abandon, because so little of its thinking is bound to any fixed principle of thought, or to the common consent of men, or even to experience or the facts of history. Verily, it is "free" thought—free from itself!

Good Friends, I protest that I shall neither invent nor caricature Modern Thought's conception of Progress. I shall set it before you as seriously and faithfully as its most credited exponents present it. And of these exponents I shall choose only those who by their profession and attainments are best qualified to speak of it with all the authority which Modern Thought acknowledges in them.

In 1920 John Bagnall Bury, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University, pub-

lished a volume in which he enquires into the origin and growth of the idea of Progress.¹ The celebrated professor concludes that the idea is, in the main, a modern and novel conception to be credited to the modern mind when it began to be enlightened with the "Enlightenment" of the eighteenth century. The idea was unknown to the Hebrew prophets, he maintains; in fact, the word "progress" never occurs in the Bible; while early Christianity and the Middle Ages had little notion of it, because the people of those benighted periods believed that Providence settled all things and that men had only to submit to it and not bother much about the future, especially since that would soon come and the Lord would take care of it. And so men did little progressing in those religious days.

In our own day, this doctrine of indefinite progress "in some desirable direction" is assumed as a first principle by which all facts of history are to be interpreted, and is moreover tightly linked up with the idea of materialistic evolution. And so the theory is that

everywhere in the world of dead matter and of living matter and in the whole province of human life, there is a gradual growth and change. Nothing is definite or permanent—nothing absolute. Hitherto uninterrupted evolution, and hereafter restless development, especially in the greatest goods belonging to human life, thought, philosophy, and especially religion.

Looking backwards, this system explains the present as an emergence from the past, ascribing an sufficient cause of this growth merely an innate tendency in all things to improve. And looking forwards, the theory predicts for the future an essential change in all things to more perfect forms

¹*The Idea of Progress* (New York, Macmillan, 1920).

which, in their turn, will evolve into still newer and better products.

To complete this idea of evolutionary progress, its protagonists set it floating on the butterfly wings of subjectivism with its relativity of truth, maintaining that all ideas, especially moral and religious truths, are no longer the representation of things existing in actual reality, but a creation of the subject, of his inner experience and feeling. Hence every age must proceed to new thought of its own, the assumption being that there is a "law of progress" operating with iron necessity, and that "nature's verdict is that the newer is always the better." Accordingly, the rank and file of our academic sociologists take universal necessary progress as an unquestioned fact, and look upon it as their main task to furnish a theory of social progress such as will enable them to shape the policies of society with a view to future improvement.

But the moment we begin to look for a clear, specific definition of what is meant by this present-day idea of Progress as we find it spread over all the print of Modern Thought, our brains literally begin to swim. Professors Park and Burgess of the University of Chicago find "no general agreement in regard to the meaning of the term"; in fact, they explicitly declare that for "progress in general there is no definition." And the reason they give is that every generation has its own notions of the values of life and every generation has to have its own interpretation of the facts of life. Moreover, in our attempts to determine what is good or bad in order to discover a standard of progress, we must leave morals, as far as possible, out of discussion, because they raise "entangling difficulties" (and presumably "alliances" with religion). And besides, the goodness or badness of anything is not absolute,

but only relative to the current form of civilization.¹

Professor Frederick Lumley, of Ohio State University, sums up the answer of Modern Thought to the question "What is Progress?" by saying that in the last analysis it amounts to this: "We do not know where we are going, but we are on the way."² Nevertheless, the irrational conviction still remains that the world as a whole is proceeding onward indefinitely to greater and greater perfection. This onward triumphant march to the Land of Nowhere is seen by the disciples of Darwin and Spencer to proceed by way of organic evolution; but according to the racial theorists, Francis Galton, Madison Grant and their company, Eugenics is the sole way of progress, which in reality means the way of the "Nordics," for when at last the Nordics emerge victorious in their struggle with the "Sudics"—that will be tangible progress. Accordingly, the chief concern of society must be to preserve the germ plasm of the Nordic race in order to insure this desired advancement of the world!

The ideologists, on the other hand, discern progress in mental and spiritual freedom, so-called, and in the accumulation of knowledge and of educational opportunity; while the medically-minded section of Modern Thought guarantees progress in health and longevity. Thus declares one of them, Doctor Norman Bridges:

The average length of life is the one and only one sure index of whether the world is growing better . . . it is the inexorable measuring-rod of the real social progress that can be told in figures.³

Here a simple child would ask: "But, please, Sir, if

¹Introduction to the Science of Sociology (Chicago University Press, 1930).

²Principles of Sociology (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1928).

³American Journal of Sociology, vol. 20, p. 449.

people live longer, but live more miserably, is that progress?"

John Dewey, of philosophic fame, places progress in the safe-keeping of the "scientific method"; and economists commit it to the accumulation of sufficient wealth and material goods, and to the entire banishment of poverty. We know how well they have done the job! Others again look upon progress as a ceaseless house-cleaning of the present from the relics of the past. Again hear Professor Lumley:

We can and do take our stand upon the *solid ground of change—endless change*. (Italics ours) For our purposes we need not enquire whether this change is perpetual mechanical recombination of fixed elements in social life, or the work of a personal Creator. . . . There is in either case enough freedom for each individual to exercise his influence, since he is now doing it. This "enough present freedom" may be an illusion—in the last analysis. But appearance or reality, we can get a starting point here.¹

Hence, if Progress is absolutely necessary and the law of progress has an absolutely universal domain, the things we call foundations and principles, whether in the order of knowledge or in the order of moral life, must absolutely change like everything else! And thus, acrobatically standing on the "solid ground of endless change" and of "appearance or reality," Professor Lumley ventures on a definition of Progress, which is:

a complex, a whole, a massive super-organic movement of man to make the most, for himself and for all generations to come, of the earth which is his erstwhile home.²

Stating it negatively, the same Professor, holds Progress to be

¹Lumley, op. c.
²*ibid.*

the absence of ill-health, of infertility, of fear, of ignorance, of poverty, of over-reliance on cosmic powers (which of course means God).¹

Stating it positively, social Progress is an accelerating human movement toward co-operative conquest of the resources of our physical world and a universal sharing of the goods gained, together with what all this implies by the way of skill, enterprise, sympathy, imagination and intelligence.²

Stated in terms of means, Progress is "enlightenment" and a "universal education" of the kind which enlarges the imagination.

But what of the *end* or goal of Progress, without which it is silly to speak of progress? Professor Lumley will again tell us:

One test of progress is the *ridding of our minds of the idea of an end*. (Italics ours) We are gradually learning that there is no necessary or predetermined end toward which the human family must move. Rather there are ends, plenty of them. Progress is more and more seen to be movement in search of worth-while ends, of ends which will not cloy or disappoint.³

But the uncertainty of whither Progress is going to land us has its consolations for Professor Lumley, for he observes:

To realize that the criteria of progress are relative is very disappointing from one point of view. But it is most satisfactory from another; it leaves the way open ahead indefinitely; it leaves the way open for us to define progress for ourselves.⁴

Such is the havoc which the modern myth of "Progress" can work in the minds of intelligent men. And yet such and similar, but scarcely more, is Modern Thought's idea of progress. On hearing Professor Lumley's bewildering illogicalities, I can

¹Lumley, op. c.
²*ibid.*

³*ibid.*
⁴*ibid.*

picture in imagination one of the pupils of Thomas Aquinas leaping from his mediæval grave in open-eyed amazement and holding his head with mental pain as he strains to find sense or reason in such flummery as "the solid ground of endless change," "get a starting point from a possible illusion," "the test of progress is ridding our minds of ends," "each man define progress for himself," etc. Recovering his breath and despairing of being able to grasp any meaning in the bavardage he has just heard, I hear the thirteenth-century scholar of the University of Paris thus address Modern Thought: "Modern Thought, you speak in riddles! In the name of Truth and intellectual probity, I bid you define progress! Do so without contradiction or ambiguity, without evasion or question-begging. Present a definition that is clearer than the thing defined and that does not confuse the idea of progress with any other idea. I observe that your mind has not been trained in accurate thinking; I shall, therefore, suggest to you the elements for a true definition of Progress.

"Remember that ideas must begin from facts; remember, too, that the progress in question has reference to man as man, and not to man as you fancy him to have been in 'prehistory' or imagine that he will evolve into in the future. We are dealing with man as we certainly know him to have been in authentic history and such as you and I know him to be to-day under our very eyes—a free rational being whose intellect and will are his highest and distinctive faculties and whose highest good is supreme truth and goodness.

"Note, further, Modern Thought, that the progress I bid you to define must not only fit man as man, but must be verifiable in *each individual* man that has ever lived or ever will live, and within the

span of each man's lifetime. Avoid the vague abstraction 'humanity,' for humanity is made up of individual men and has no existence apart from individual men. Mark, again, Modern Thought, that your definition of human progress is no definition worth considering, unless you also determine a standard of progress that is constant, universal and independent of the conditions of any particular time or place. Above all, mark well and understand that you cannot begin to speak of progress before you make three points definite and certain: (1) the starting point, (2) the goal or end to be attained, and (3) the way between both. If you miss any one of these points of orientation, you cannot read the compass of human history, and you know not whether you are coming or going, progressing or retrogressing. One thing more, Modern Thought, and I have done: confuse not essentials with accidentals, nor the primary objective of progress with the secondary or intermediate objectives, nor bundle together in one vague image the permanent with the transitory; or, to be more specific, let your definition of progress clearly point out the goal which will put men in possession not merely of all the comforts and enjoyments of the body, which you know it never does, but will bring contentment and genuine happiness to the soul. Proceed, Modern Thought, define progress!"

From such logical rigor and exacting precision Modern Thought will find only one escape, if it does not change its mental ways, and that escape, I fear, is not a very honorable one. It is to deny reason's postulates and history's facts. It is to deny that man was always man; that man has a soul; that there can be any certitude about a starting point, a way and a goal. It is to deny that the material enjoyments of life are anything different from the

abiding happiness of man. It is to deny that there is an eternal hereafter. As a last desperate resort, it is to flippantly evade the questions it will not answer and play on his challenger its usual unworthy trick of saying, "Oh, you are a Scholastic and must be quibbling!" And so poor Modern Thought will love its darkness, will hug its comforts, will cling to its contradictions, will glory in its "ceaseless changes"—and continue to talk to itself about "Progress," like an idiot.

May I now, kind listeners, suggest for your intellectual solace, that there *is* in fact a real progress, a progress verified in the lives of men; a progress that does start from a definite point known with certainty, continues along an equally well-known and guaranteed course, and ends at a surely-determined goal? And may I further suggest that this entire course of progress, from start to finish, has *always* been understood by men and verified within the life-span of countless human beings? And may I finally remind you that this idea of progress, far from having been lost in the course of the centuries only to be discovered by Modern Thought, has ever been the treasured possession of a highly intellectual institution—the same which exhibits so penetrating and practical an understanding of civilization, culture, and science; and that the idea of progress has been most thoroughly analyzed by the intellect of that institution, most clearly defined, and unremittingly applied to human life under the unseeing eyes of Modern Thought?

I may, then, pause to say that human progress, in its essential, universal and verifiable meaning, has from time immemorial always been conceived to be *the growth of man's life towards the perfection of his end*, or, to put it more specifically, the *increasing conformity of man's faculties, his mind and will*

in particular, with the primary end of his existence, which is the possession of the highest Truth and Good, and also the standard of all his actions and the essence of his ultimate and permanent happiness. Every change, therefore, which leads a man towards this perfection marks progress; every change that leads him away from it marks retrogression. This applies both to individual men and to social groups, as well as to those attainments which constitute true civilization and culture. Hence, a man who grows in wealth and bodily comfort, but is spiritually and morally bankrupt, is not really progressing, since he is not moving towards the True and the Good which will make him happy and, therefore, perfect. Similarly, a nation which grows in banks, factories, bridges, radios and all the externals of a utilitarian culture, but at the same time witnesses the rise of crime and criminals and gigantic frauds because it is sinking in morals and spiritual ideals, cannot be said to be progressing in the best sense of the word; in fact, that nation is declining.

Progress, then, can be truly predicated of men, when there is verifiable in fact, and not in theory, a change for the better in all the planes of their activity and especially in those planes which touch the marrow of the human soul, bringing peace to it and compensation for the trouble of living. But this peace of soul is not to be thought of except it rests on the firm conviction that a man has reached or is approaching a definitely known end, which in the last analysis is the doing of God's will. That, and no other, is the measure and standard of true and historic progress, and that is the idea of progress which is expressed in the simple words of the answers given to the first questions of the Penny Catechism, where it is asked: "Who made you?"

and answered, "God made me"; "Why did God make you?" "God made me to know, love and serve Him in this world in order to be forever happy with Him in the next."

The basic difficulty which materialistic theorists on Progress have not successfully met has been that of finding a standard or a common measure which remains constant amid all the varying accidentals of time and place. All their standards and goals have been material health and wealth and comfort, and material standards satisfy only the lesser purposes of man's nature and that but partially and imperfectly. Plainly, then, in order to understand and properly estimate the value of things, or the significance of human events in terms of progress, we must have a norm other than the shifting one set by the accidents of particular situations. In other words, we must distinguish the essential from the precarious signs of progress, particularly when the precarious is very voluminous, noisy and imposing. If this be so, the fixed norm by which we are to estimate aright any civilization or the progress of any man, is the dignity and worth of human nature as a creature of an intelligent God and as destined to return to God.

In this human nature there is a constant factor and also a variable factor which allows of progressive perfection. The historically verifiable constant factor is the substantial human compound of body and rational soul. The variable factor is the faculties with which man is endowed, which are the direct sources of his activities, which differ from man to man in power and flexibility, and which are susceptible of being indefinitely perfected by their proper education and by their constant application to their proper object. This constant human nature, therefore, exercising its indefinitely per-

fectible faculties upon their proper object and in accordance with the natural law of their being, is orientated and gravitates towards its last end or goal which is the ultimate measure of progress, fructifies in a good life now and in eternal happiness hereafter.

By this standard a civilization stands high and is truly progressive, when it co-ordinates the essential aspirations of the individual and of collective life; when it realizes an adequate measure of temporal welfare; when it rests on a normal organization of the family, the state and other social groups; when it allows full development to a harmoniously balanced culture; above all, when its morality and religion foster men's ideals, sentiments and emotions, giving the freest opportunity to individual virtue and social justice.

From these considerations we also infer that real progress is essentially conservative of the gains made by it, and essentially positive. Ceaseless change without consolidation of gains made, just passing from one position to another, is the very negation of progress. For progress does not consist in ever abandoning the old and advancing to the new, progress devouring progress, humanity in perpetual chase of its own tail. Progress is made possible only by retaining the basis established and then advancing therefrom—"vetera novis augere." It is continuance in growth and permanence of identity.

It would be waste of time for me to remind you, good Friends, that material progress of itself contributes very little either to the perfection of the higher man or to his earthly happiness, since experience too well proves that concupiscence is limitless and that human needs grow faster than the means of satisfying them. What is more important to note is that this purely material progress—good, of

course, in its own order, but definitely of a low order—puts civilization face to face with a distinct danger, and that, except it be held in balance and proportion by spiritual progress, it throws human life off its hinges and places in its hands more effective means of mischief—a fact which we need no extraordinary powers of observation in order to verify. Yet, even when pursued in due subordination to higher ends, the quest of the conveniences of life never attains its goal in any man's lifetime, since that pursuit will not cease till there is no more room for invention and discovery, no more worlds to conquer in the matter of the comforts of life. But it is a proof of the genuine character of the higher and essential progress of man, *viz.*, a morally good life, that it may be achieved within the duration of each man's lifetime. That essential goal, therefore, was as much within each man's reach when the human race was fifty years old, as now—Anno Domini 1933. This is progress for all—the progress of common sense.

When Modern Thought tells us that it is impossible to fix a goal of progress attainable by all because there is no agreement as to a standard of values about what is good, better, and best, we simply say to Modern Thought: "Good sir, you have not sufficiently studied the thoughts and ways of men. You have mistaken abnormalities for normalities, exceptions for rules, perversions for observances. The ideas and the words 'good,' 'bad,' 'virtuous,' 'wicked,' 'just' and 'unjust' occur in every language under the sun, written or unwritten, ancient or modern. The mandates of the Decalogue are the law of nature written in the hearts of all men, and all men have progressed the surer and the faster, the closer they came to its perfect observance. Furthermore, Modern Thought, you

thoughtlessly ignore the Revelation of Scripture. Read that book with open mind. It will clarify your notions about the good and the bad, and, in consequence, reveal to you the goal of progress."

And we might also, good Friends, remind Modern Thought that there is an ancient and very wise institution all around us. It covers the world. It has the experience of twenty centuries. It has dealt most intimately with men—all kinds of men, women and children, cultured and uncultured, civilized and savage, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, in good health and on beds of pain. She has heard the last words of dying men, looked deeply into their thoughts, explored their consciences, and still does. She knows, as no other institution does, exactly what men think about the difference between good and evil, and about the standard by which they judge progress or its opposite.

When Professor Bury and Modern Thought with him assert that the idea of Progress is quite a modern notion, we are sure that they can only be speaking of their own particular notion (although we do not as yet really know what that may be), or, what is more probable, that they have not read and quoted all that the ancients have said about the matter. And, as for the word "progress" not occurring in their literature, may I make the simple observation that it makes exceedingly little difference what is the peculiar color of the tag marking an object provided that the object is there. The number of a house does not make the house, nor does its absence remove the house. The Hebrew prophets and the Christian writers professionally dealt with the true progress of man and described that reality in many ways, even though they did not use Modern Thought's verbal symbol for it.

Who, on reading the Old Testament with intel-

ligence, can fail to be impressed with the meaning of the panorama unfolded from the first to the last page of the Sacred Books, wherein we see the origin, the unity, the destiny of the human race so clearly laid bare! What can the prophets have meant when they represented Divine Wisdom as giving the whole life of man unity of direction and a goal despite the aberrations and wickedness of men, and when they appointed as the ultimate end of man the realization of the Kingdom of God by means of the religious-moral perfection of humanity, and pointed out, furthermore, that the favor of God depends altogether on personal and social righteousness?

And what can Christ have meant when He enjoined upon men to "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all other things you need shall be added unto you"? Or, when He asked, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" What did Christ have in mind when He taught that the Kingdom of Heaven, the goal of man's progress, is to grow in the lives of men as a mustard seed grows into a tree, or as the seed which falling on good ground brings forth fruit a thirty-fold, a sixty-fold and a hundred-fold? And could Modern Thought have possibly missed the import of Christ's most dynamic command, "Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect?" True Christianity, taking from Christ's own^x hand the luminous torch that lights the way to the goal of progress, has taught, and still teaches, that with the help of God, man may improve himself without limit in this world, and that from it he may pass on to the still greater and unending and unchanging happiness of Life Everlasting.

We lose our breath in amazement when Modern

Thought demands of us to accept its verdict to the effect that the men of the Middle Ages had small idea of Progress, because they left everything to Providence, and, absorbed in the expectation of life to come, made little effort to improve their condition on earth. Here we must beseech Modern Thought to abandon its old dodge of quoting at us only as much as seems to plead its poor cause and of omitting the larger portion that belies its assumptions.

Kind Friends, time does not permit me to quote the texts, but in what I have said by way of a definition of the idea of progress, I have done not a jot more than to set before you, imperfectly enough, the very idea of progress which any one, who is free from his own peculiar theory, may gather from the thought of early Christianity and of the Middle Ages, from an intelligent study of the Gospels, of Saint Augustine's *City of God*, especially the twenty-fourth chapter of the twenty-second book, of the *Commonitorium* of Vincent of Lerins, of the *Mirror of Instruction* or the *Speculum Doctrinale* of Vincent of Beauvais, of the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, and from a wide study of history. It is the only idea of progress which the common sense of mankind understands, and it is also the idea of progress which even the modern man begins to understand the moment he looks about him and witnesses hunger amid plenty, poverty in the midst of wealth, cruel suffering in the midst of inventions, murder and rapine in the midst of law, madness in the midst of speed, despairing unhappiness in the midst of revelry.

Modern Thought needs sorely to go to school, and to a school of clear thinking. I can recommend no better school than that whose special and traditional study is that of Progress; a school which

has been divinely commissioned to teach all men; the school which is in touch with Heaven and earth; which sees the universe in its grand totality, and man in the perspective of his origin and of his end; the school which understands man so well because she takes him as God made him and not as man deforms him; the school which is certain of the point where man begins his march in life and of the point where that march ends, and is equally sure of the way which joins both points; the school, finally, which is able to tell every man, at any stage of his journey, whether he is going forwards or backwards.

With a clear knowledge, therefore, of all these essentials, the old wise teacher and friend reveals to every man the entire length of the course to be run; she points out to him the glorious summit to be gained; then she puts him on the sure way with her blessing, and, with the assuring tone of the voices that sent Joan of Arc on to her mission, she bids every man, "Go, child of God, go!"

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