

Popes Sylvester the Second and Gregory the Seventh, had been involved in the wide calumny. In the same way in which the vulgar confounded the eminent learning and knowledge which had appeared in recent times, with skill in dark supernatural arts, they converted into wizards all the best-known names in the rolls of fame; as Aristotle, Solomon, Joseph, Pythagoras; and, finally, the poet Virgil was a powerful and skilful necromancer, and this fancy was exemplified by many strange stories of his achievements and practices.

The various results of the tendency of the human mind to mysticism, which we have here noticed, form prominent features in the intellectual character of the world, for a long course of centuries. The theosophy and theurgy of the Neoplatonists, the mystical arithmetic of the Pythagoreans and their successors, the predictions of the astrologers, the pretences of alchemy and magic, represent, not unfairly, the general character and disposition of men's thoughts, with reference to philosophy and science. That there were stronger minds, which threw off in a greater or less degree this train of delusive and unsubstantial ideas, is true; as, on the other hand, Mysticism, among the vulgar or the foolish, often went to an extent of extravagance and superstition, of which I have not attempted to convey any conception. The lesson which the preceding survey teaches us is, that during the Stationary Period, Mysticism, in its various forms, was a leading character, both of the common mind, and of the speculations of the most intelligent and profound reasoners; and that this Mysticism was the opposite of that habit of thought which we have stated Science to require; namely, clear Ideas, distinctly employed to connect well-ascertained Facts; inasmuch as the Ideas in which it dealt were vague and unstable, and the temper in which they were contemplated was an urgent and aspiring enthusiasm, which could not submit to a calm conference with experience upon even terms. The fervor of thought in some degree supplied the place of reason in producing belief; but opinions so obtained had no enduring value; they did not exhibit a permanent record of old truths, nor a firm foundation for new. Experience collected her stores in vain, or ceased to collect them, when she had only to pour them into the flimsy folds of the lap of Mysticism; who was, in truth, so much absorbed in looking for the treasures which were to fall from the skies, that she heeded little how scantily she obtained, or how loosely she held, such riches as might be found near her.