

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

faith of religion — are not infrequently confounded, so that we must point out their fundamental difference. Religious faith means always belief in a miracle, and as such is in hopeless contradiction with the natural faith of reason. In opposition to reason it postulates supernatural agencies, and, therefore, may be justly called superstition. The essential difference of this superstition from rational faith lies in the fact that it assumes supernatural forces and phenomena, which are unknown and inadmissible to science, and which are the outcome of illusion and fancy; moreover, superstition contradicts the well-known laws of nature, and is therefore *irrational*.

Owing to the great progress of ethnology during the century, we have learned a vast quantity of different kinds and practices of superstition, as they still survive in uncivilized races. When they are compared with each other and with the mythological notion of earlier ages, a manifold analogy is discovered, frequently a common origin, and eventually one simple source for them all. This is found in the "demand of causality in reason," in the search for an explanation of obscure phenomena by the discovery of a cause. That applies particularly to such phenomena as threaten us with danger and excite fear, like thunder and lightning, earthquakes, eclipses, etc. The demand for a causal explanation of such phenomena is found in uncivilized races of the lowest grade, transmitted from their primate ancestors by heredity. It is even found in many other vertebrates. When a dog barks at the full moon, or at a ringing bell, of which it sees the hammer moving, or at a flag that flutters in the breeze, it expresses not only fear, but also the mysterious impulse to learn the cause of the obscure phenomenon.