

Viewed in the light of any age the works of St. Thomas Aquinas deserve all admiration but they derive additional value from the time in which they were written.

The 13th century saw the culmination of Catholic philosophy. It must not however be thought that this perfection was attained suddenly and without great effort. During preceding centuries dialectics and metaphysics had been studied with an eagerness and zeal that excluded other important branches of learning. Men knew little history and paid slight attention to the cultivation of letters. The intellect was abnormally developed while the imagination and other faculties were neglected. Nor was the really splendid strength of the intellect rightly employed. Instead of attempting to discover the nature of things, which is true science and the proper object of the intellect, men frequently busied themselves with sophistries and subtilities all the more dangerous from their close association wrongly given them with the Faith. Roscelin, Gilbert de la Poit e, and Abelard were all famous scholars and skilled dialecticians. Each of them introduced or gave his support to some pernicious error or grave heresy. Roscelin was foremost in the defence of Nominalism ; Gilbert erred grievously concerning the Divinity ; Amaury declared that God is matter and that matter is God : Abelard, so learned, so able in debate and so eloquent, would follow no guide but reason. To all remonstrances he had but one reply : "My road is not the road of custom but of genius" These men were all able exponents of the liberalism and the rationalism which characterizes so much the present thought rejecting as it does authority and staking everything on reason. They professed to know all things except the *Nescio*, "I do not know", of St. Bernard. Their doctrine was : "Let us reason, subtilize, apply our systems to all sorts of questions. Let reason be our rule and guide without which progress is impossible". In no instance has reason given better proof of her inability to avoid error in the pursuit of knowledge unless guided and supported by authority. This rationalistic school of free thought has always existed, and, I dare say, will exist so long as the intellect of man continues to be exercised. Its activity and aggressiveness are remarkable. There is neither shade nor walk of life that has not felt its influence.