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OLD PRINCIPLES AND NEW PROBLEMS

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IN THE STUDY of at least some of the important problems of society there is a needed and welcome return to sanity.

In the first place, ideas concerning the culture of primitive man have undergone radical change. The old evolutionary doctrine that man obtained his culture and perfected his mental, moral and religious life by painful ascent from a brute-like condition, has been shattered to splinters. In the words of a leading American anthropologist, Dr. Robert H. Lowie, this discountenanced philosophy "now graces the refuse heaps of anthropology." Dr. Berthold Laufer, curator of the Asiatic Division of the Field Museum of Chicago, refers to the doctrine of "cultural evolution" as "The most inane, sterile, and pernicious theory ever conceived in the history of science."¹

Turning from anthropology to sociology we find the return to sanity is not so well marked though there is some promise of better days. Certain leading writers are disheartened by the arid speculations of what passes for sociology in the schools. They ask: Can we not arrive at more well-balanced theories of group behavior and social progress? The welter of opinion in which the "theory of instincts" (and they must be reckoned with in any theory of social life) now finds itself, is proof of the barrenness of much sociologic writing today.

(1) *American Anthropologist*, n. s. Vo. XX, 1918, p. 90.

But this condition can certainly be remedied. The learned Dominican, Fr. Albert Maria Weiss, in his volumes "Die Sociale Frage" points out how modern social science cut itself off from many fertile principles of investigation when it abandoned the philosophy of the schools. He shows this more especially in treating of some of the fallacies that have crept into modern political philosophy, in discussing a just wage, the relations between capital and labor, and the evils following in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, and now firmly entrenched in the competitive system of industry. Nor is there lack of other examples to show how ancient scholastic teaching contained in germ the remedy for modern social ills.

What is more often repeated today by writers on applied sociology and by social workers than the warning that we must put down three evils if we want to pave the way to social progress? These three sources of social misery are pestilence, famine, and war. It is said we are fighting them by preventive medicine, by organized relief work and by movements for international conciliation respectively. Without doubt we are doing good work in these three directions.

But we should not forget that centuries ago the great Mother Church prayed daily for the removal of these great plagues. There is in the Litany of the Saints this invoca-