

HERESY:
ITS UTILITY AND MORALITY

A Plea and a Justification

BY

CHARLES BRADLAUGH
[THIRD EDITION]



from Charles Bradlaugh's Theological Essays

LONDON:
FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY,
63, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1882

PRICE NINEPENCE

Rosings Digital Publications



LONDON:
PRINTED BY ANNIE BESANT AND CHARLES BRADLAUGH,
63, FLEET STREET, E.C.

HERESY

Its Utility and Morality. A Plea and a Justification

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

WHAT is heresy that it should be so heavily punished? Why is it that society will condone many offences, pardon many vicious practices, and yet have such scant mercy for the open heretic, who is treated as though he were some horrid monster to be feared, hated, and, if possible, exterminated? Most religionists, instead of endeavoring with kindly thought to provide some solution for the difficulties propounded by their heretical brethren, indiscriminately confound all inquirers in one common category of censure; their views are dismissed with ridicule as sophistical and fallacious, abused as infinitely dangerous, themselves denounced as heretics and infidels, and libelled as scoffers and Atheists. With some religionists all heretics are Atheists. With the Pope of Rome, Garibaldi and Mazzini were Atheists. With the Religious Tract Society, Voltaire and Paine were Atheists. Yet in none of the above-named cases is the allegation true. Voltaire and Paine were heretics, but both were Theists. Garibaldi and Mazzini were heretics, but neither of them was an Atheist, though the latter had given color to the description by accepting the presidency of an Atheistical society. With few exceptions, the heretics of one generation become the revered saints of a period less than twenty generations later. Lord Bacon, in his own age, was charged with Atheism, Sir Isaac Newton with Socinianism, the famous Tillotson was actually charged with Atheism, and Dr. Burnet wrote vigorously against the commonly received traditions of the fall and deluge. There are but few men of the past of whom the church boasts to-day, who have not at some time been pointed at as heretics by orthodox antagonists excited by party rancor. Heresy is in itself neither Atheism nor Theism, neither the rejection of the Church of Rome, nor of Canterbury, nor of Constantinople; heresy is not necessarily of any-ist or-ism. The heretic is one who has selected his own opinions, or whose opinions are the result of some mental effort; and he differs from others who are orthodox in this: — they hold opinions which are often only the bequest of an earlier generation unquestioningly accepted; he has escaped from the customary grooves of conventional acquiescence, and sought truth outside the channels sanctified by habit.

Men and women who are orthodox are generally so for the same reason that they are English or French — they were born in England or France, and cannot help the good or ill fortune of

their birthplace. Their orthodoxy is no higher virtue than their nationality. Men are good and true of every nation and of every faith; but there are more good and true men in nations where civilisation has made progress, and amongst faiths which have been modified by high humanising influences. Men are good not because of their orthodoxy, but in spite of it; their goodness is the outgrowth of their humanity, not of their orthodoxy. Heresy is necessary to progress; heresy in religion always precedes endeavor for political freedom. You cannot have effectual political progress without wide-spread heretical thought. Every grand political change in which the people have played an important part has been preceded by the popularisation of heresy in the immediately earlier generations.

Fortunately, ignorant men cannot be real heretics, so that education must be hand-maiden to heresy. Ignorance and superstition are twin sisters. Belief too often means nothing more than prostration of the intellect on the threshold of the unknown. Heresy is the pioneer, erect and manly, striding over the forbidden line in his search for truth. Heterodoxy develops the intellect, orthodoxy smothers it. Heresy is the star twinkle in the night, orthodoxy the cloud which hides this faint gleam of light from the weary travellers on life's encumbered pathway. Orthodoxy was well exemplified in the dark middle ages, when the mass of men and women believed much and knew little, when miracles were common and schools were rare, and when the monasteries on the hill tops held the literature of Europe. Heresy speaks for itself in this nineteenth century, with the gas and electric light, with cheap newspapers, with a thousand lecture rooms, with innumerable libraries, and at least a majority of the people able to read the thoughts the dead have left, as well as to listen to the words the living utter.

The word heretic ought to be a term of honor; for honest, clearly uttered heresy is always virtuous, and this whether truth or error; yet it is not difficult to understand how the charge of heresy has been generally used as a means of exciting bad feeling. The Greek word *αἵρεσις*, which is in fact our word heresy, signifies simply selection or choice. The heretic philosopher was the one who had searched and found, who, not content with the beaten paths, had selected a new road, chosen a new fashion of travelling in the march for that happiness all human-kind are seeking.

Heretics are usually called "infidels," but no word could be more unfairly applied, if by it is meant anything more than that the heretic does not conform to the State faith. If it meant those who do not profess the faith, then there would be no objection, but it is more often used of those who are unfaithful, and then it is generally a libel. Mahomedans and Christians both call Jews infidels, and Mahomedans and Christians call each other infidels. Each

religionist is thus an infidel to all sects but his own; there is but one degree of heresy between him and the heretic who rejects all churches. Each ordinary orthodox man is a heretic to every religion in the world except one, but he is heretic from the accident of birth without the virtue of true heresy.

In our own country heresy is not confined to the extreme platform adopted as a standing-point by such a man as myself. It is rife even in the state-sustained Church of England, and to show this one does not need to be content with such illustrations as are afforded by the Essayists and Reviewers, who discover the sources of the world's education rather in Greece and Italy than in Judea; who reject the alleged prophecies as evidence of the Messianic character of Jesus; who admit that in nature and from nature, by science and by reason, we neither have, nor can possibly have, any evidence of a deity working miracles; but declare that for that we must go out of nature and beyond science, and in effect avow that Gospel miracles are always *objects*, not *evidences*, of faith; who deny the necessity of faith in Jesus as savior to peoples who could never have such faith; and who reject the notion that all mankind are individually involved in the curse and perdition of Adam's sin; or even by the Rev. Charles Voysey, who declines to preach "the God of the Bible," and who will not teach that every word of the Old and New Testament is the word of God; or by the Rev. Dunbar Heath, who in defiance of the Bible doctrine, that man has only existed on the earth about 6,000 years, teaches that unnumbered chiliads have passed away since the human family can be traced as nations on our earth; or by Bishop Colenso, who in his impeachment of the Pentateuch, his denial of the literal truth of the narratives of the creation, fall, and deluge, actually impugns the whole scheme of Christianity (if the foundation be false, the superstructure cannot be true); or by the Rev. Baden Powell, who declared "that the whole tenor of geology is in entire contradiction to the cosmogony delivered from Mount Sinai," and who denied a "local heaven above and a local hell beneath the earth;" or by the Rev. Dr. Giles, who, not content with preceding Dr. Colenso in his assaults on the text of the Pentateuch, also wrote as vigorously against the text of the New Testament; or by the Rev. Dr. Wall, who, unsatisfied with arguments against the admittedly incorrect authorised translation of the Bible, actually wrote to prove that a new and corrected Hebrew text was necessary, the Hebrew itself being corrupt; or by the Rev. Dr. Irons, who teaches that not only are the Gospel writers unknown, but that the very language in which Jesus taught is yet to be discovered, who declares that prior to the Ezraic period the literal history of the Old Testament is lost, who does not find the Trinity taught in Scripture, and who declares that the Gospel does not teach the doctrine of the Atonement; or by the late Archbishop Whately, to

whom is attributed a Latin pamphlet raising strong objections against the truth of the alleged confusion of tongues at Babel.

We may fairly allege, that amongst thinking clergymen of the Church of England, heresy is the rule and not the exception. So soon as a minister begins to preach sermons which he does not buy ready lithographed — sermons which are the work of his brain — so soon heresy more or less buds out, now in the rejection of some church doctrine or article of minor importance, now in some bold declaration at variance with major and more essential tenets. Even Bishop Watson, so famous for his Bible Apology, declared that the church articles and creeds were not binding on any man. “They may be true, they may be false,” he wrote. To-day scores of Church of England clergymen openly protest against, or groan in silence under the enforced subscription of Thirty-nine unbelievable Articles. Sir William Hamilton declares that the heads of Colleges at Oxford well knew that the man preparing for the Church “will subscribe Thirty-nine Articles which he cannot believe, and swears to do and to have done a hundred articles which he cannot or does not perform.”

In scientific circles the heresy of the most efficient members is startlingly apparent. Against the late Anthropological Society charges of Atheism were freely levelled; and although such a charge does not seem to be justified by any reports of their meetings, or by their printed publications, it is clear that not only out of doors, but even amongst their own circle, it was felt that their researches conflicted seriously with the Hebrew writ. The Society was preached against and prayed against until it collapsed; and yet it was simply a society for discovering everything possible about man, prehistoric as well as modern. It had, however, an unpardonable vice in the eyes of the orthodox — it encouraged the utterance of facts without regard to their effect on faiths.

The Ethnological Society is kindred to the last-named in many of its objects, and hence some of its most active members have been direct assailants of the Hebrew Chronology, which limits man’s existence to the short space of 6,000 years; they have been deniers of the origin of the human race from one pair, of the confusion of tongues at Babel, and of the reduction of the human race to one family by the Noachian deluge.

Geological science has a crowd of heretics amongst its professors, men who deny the sudden origin of fauna and flora; who trace the gradual development of the vegetable and animal kingdoms through vast periods of time; and who find no resting place in a beginning of existence, but are obliged to halt in face of a measureless past, inconceivable in its grandeur. Geology, to quote the words of Dr. Kalisch, declares “the utter impossibility of a creation of even the earth alone in six days.” Mr. Goodwin says in the “Essays and Reviews:” “The school-books of the present

day, while they teach the child that the earth moves, yet assure him that it is a little less than six thousand years old, and that it was made in six days. On the other hand, geologists of all religious creeds are agreed that the earth has existed for an immense series of years — to be counted by millions rather than by thousands; and that indubitably more than six days elapsed from its first creation to the appearance of man upon its surface.”

Mr. Richard Proctor says: “It has been shown that had past geological changes in the earth taken place at the same rate as those which are now in progress, one hundred millions of years at the very least would have been required to produce those effects which have actually been produced, we find, since the earth’s surface was fit to be the abode of life. But recently it has been pointed out, correctly in all probability, that under the greater tide-raising power of the moon in past ages, these changes would have taken place more rapidly. As, however, certainly ten millions of years, and probably a much longer time, must have elapsed since the moon was at that favorable distance for raising tides, we are by no means enabled, as some well-meaning but mistaken persons have imagined, to reduce the life-bearing stage of the earth from a duration of a hundred millions of years to a minute fraction of such a period. The short life, but exceedingly lively one, which they desire to see established by geological or astronomical reasoning, never can be demonstrated. At the very least we must assign ten millions of years to the life-bearing stage of the earth’s existence.”

Astronomy has in the ranks of its professors many of its most able minds who do not believe in the sun and moon as two great lights, who cannot accept the myriad stars as fixed in the firmament solely to give light upon the earth, who refuse to believe in the heaven as a fixed firmament to divide the waters above from the waters beneath, who cannot by their telescopes discover the local heaven above or the local hell beneath, although their science marks each faint nebosity crossing, or crossed, by the range of the watcher’s vision. To quote again from Mr. Goodwin: — “On the revival of science in the sixteenth century, some of the earliest conclusions at which philosophers arrived, were found to be at variance with popular and long established belief. The Ptolemaic system of astronomy, which had then full possession of the minds of men, contemplated the whole visible universe from the earth as the immovable centre of things. Copernicus changed the point of view, and placing the beholder in the sun, at once reduced the earth to an inconspicuous globule, a merely subordinate member of a family of planets, which the terrestrials had, until then, fondly imagined to be but pendants and ornaments of their own habitation. The Church, naturally, took a lively interest in the disputes which arose between the philosophers of the new school, and

those who adhered to the old doctrines, inasmuch as the Hebrew records, the basis of religious faith, manifestly countenanced the opinion of the earth's immobility, and certain other views of the universe, very incompatible with those propounded by Copernicus. Hence arose the official proceedings against Galileo, in consequence of which he submitted to sign his celebrated recantation, acknowledging that 'the proposition that the sun is the centre of the world and immovable from its place, is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to the Scripture;' and that 'the proposition that the earth is not the centre of the world, nor immovable, but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is absurd, philosophically false, and at least erroneous in faith.'"

Why is it that society is so severe on heresy? Three hundred years ago it burned heretics, till thirty years ago it sent them to jail; even in England and America to-day it is content to harass, annoy, and slander them. In the United States a candidate for the Governorship of a State, although otherwise admittedly eligible, was assailed bitterly for his suspected Socinianism. Sir Sidney Waterlow, standing for a Scotch seat, was sharply catechised as to when he had last been inside a Unitarian Chapel, and only saved his seat by not too boldly avowing his opinions. Lord Amberley, who was "unwise" enough to be honest in some of his answers, did not obtain his seat for South Devon in consequence of the suspicion of heresy excited against him. It was chiefly to the *odium theologicum* that John Stuart Mill attributed his rejection at Westminster.

During the past few years we have had an attempt to revive the old persecuting spirit. Atheism has been held sufficient ground for depriving Mrs. Besant of the custody of her infant daughter. Heretical views were enough to cancel the appointment made by Lord Amberley for the guardianship of his children. The Blasphemy Laws have been once more put in force in different parts of England, and the Conservative party boast that they have been united in their effort to prevent an Atheist from exercising his political rights.

Sir William Drummond says: "Early associations are generally the strongest in the human mind, and what we have been taught to credit as children we are seldom disposed to question as men. Called away from speculative inquiries by the common business of life, men in general possess neither the inclination, nor the leisure to examine *what* they believe or *why* they believe. A powerful prejudice remains in the mind; insures conviction without the trouble of thinking; and repels doubt without the aid or authority of reason. The multitude then is not very likely to applaud an author, who calls upon it to consider what it had hitherto neglected, and to stop where it had been accustomed to pass on. It may also happen

that there is a learned and formidable body, which, having given its general sanction to the literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, may be offended at the presumption of an unhallowed layman, who ventures to hold that the language of those Scriptures is often symbolical and allegorical, even in passages which both the Church and the Synagogue consider as nothing else than a plain statement of fact. A writer who had sufficient boldness to encounter such obstacles, and to make an appeal to the public, would only expose himself to the invectives of offended bigotry, and to the misrepresentations of interested malice. The press would be made to ring with declamations against him, and neither learning, nor argument, nor reason, nor moderation on his side, would protect him from the literary assassination which awaited him. In vain would he put on the heaven-tempered panoply of truth. The weapons which could neither pierce his buckler nor break his casque, might be made to pass with envenomed points through the joints of his armor. Every trivial error which he might commit would be magnified into a flagrant fault; and every insignificant mistake into which he might fall would be represented by the bigoted, or by the hireling critics of the day as an ignorant, or as a perverse deviation from the truth.”

Both by the Statute Law and Common Law, heresy is punishable, and many are punished for it even in the second half of the nineteenth century. Besides open persecution, there is the constant, unceasing, paltry, petty persecuting spirit which refuses to trade with the heretic; which declines to eat with him; which will not employ him; which feels justified in slandering him; which seeks to set his wife’s mind against him, and to take away the affection of his children from him.

CHAPTER II

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

IT requires a more practised pen than mine to even faintly sketch the progress of heresy during the past three centuries, but I trust to give the reader an idea of its rapid growth and wide extension during the period in which, aided by the printing press, heresy has made the majority of its converts amongst the mass of the people. In earlier times heretics were not only few, but they talked to the few, and wrote to the few, in the language of the few. It is only during the last hundred years that the greatest men have sought to make heresy "vulgar;" that is, to make it common. One of our leading scientific men, about fifteen years ago, admitted that he had been reproved by some of his more orthodox friends, for not confining to the Latin language such of his geological opinions as were supposed to be most dangerous to the Hebrew records. The starting-point of the real era of popular heresy may be placed at the early part of the sixteenth century, when the memories of Huss and Ziska (who had really inoculated the mass with some spirit of heretical resistance a century before) aided Luther in resisting Rome.

Martin Luther, born at Eisleben in Saxony, in 1483, was one of the heretics who sought popular endorsement for his heresy, and who following the example of the Ulrich [Zwingli], of Zurich, preached to the people in rough plain words. While others were limited to Latin, he rang out in plain German his opposition to Tetzl and his protectors. Martin Luther is spoken of by orthodox Protestants as if he were a saint without blemish in his faith. Yet in justification of my ranking him amongst the heretics of the sixteenth century, it will be sufficient to mention that he regarded "the books of the Kings as more worthy of credit than the books of the Chronicles," that he wrote as follows: — "The book of Esdras I toss into the Elbe." "I am so an enemy to the book of Esther I would it did not exist." "Job spake not therefore as it stands written in his book." "It, is a sheer *argumentum fabulæ*." "The book of the Proverbs of Solomon has been pieced together by others." Of Ecclesiastes "there is too much of broken matter in it; it has neither boots nor spurs, but rides only in socks." "Isaiah hath borrowed his whole art and knowledge from David." "The history of Jonah is so monstrous that it is absolutely incredible." "The Epistle to the Hebrews is not by St. Paul, nor indeed by any Apostle." "The Epistle of James I account the writing of no Apostle," and it "is truly an Epistle of straw." The Epistle of Jude "allegeth sayings or stories which have no place in Scripture." "Of Revelation I can discover no trace that it is established by the Holy Spirit." If Martin Luther were alive to-day, the Established Church

of England, which pretends to revere him, would prosecute him in the English Ecclesiastical Courts if he ventured to repeat the foregoing phrases from her pulpits. What would Christian writers now say of the following passage, which occurs with reference to Melancthon, whom Luther boasts that he raised miraculously from the dead? "Melancthon," says Sir William Hamilton, to whose essay I am indebted for the extracts here given, "had fallen ill at Weimar from contrition and fear for the part he had been led to take in the Landgrave's polygamy: his life was even in danger." "Then and there," said Luther, "I made our Lord God to smart for it. For I threw down the sack before the door, and rubbed his ears with all his promises of hearing prayer, which I knew how to recapitulate from Holy Writ, so that he could not but hearken to me, should I ever again place any reliance on his promises." Martin Luther, with his absolute denial of free-will, and with his double code of morality for princes and peasants — easy for one and harsh for the other — may be fairly left now with those who desire to vaunt his orthodoxy; here his name is used to illustrate the popular impetus given to nonconformity by his quarrel with the papal authorities. Luther protested against the Romish Church, but established by the very fact the right for some more advanced man than Doctor Martin Luther to protest in turn against the Lutheran Church. The only consistent church in Christendom is the Romish Church, for it claims the right to think for all its followers. The whole of the Protestant Churches are inconsistent, for they claim the right to think and judge against Rome, but deny extremer Nonconformists the right to think and judge against themselves. Goethe, says Froude, declares that Luther threw back the intellectual progress of mankind by using the passions of the multitude to decide subjects which should have been left to the learned. But at least some of the multitude once having their ears fairly opened, listened to more than the appeal to their passions, and examined for themselves propositions which otherwise they would have accepted or rejected from habit and without inquiry. Martin Luther's public discussions with pen and tongue, in Wittemberg, Augsburg, and Lichtenburg, and the protest he encouraged against Rome, were the commencement of a vigorous controversy, in which the public (who heard for the first time sharp controversial sermons preached publicly in the various pulpits by Lutheran preachers on free-will and necessity, election and predestination, etc.) began to take real part and interest which is still going on, and will in fact never end until the unholy alliance of Church and State is everywhere annulled, and each religion is left to sustain itself by its own truth, or to fall from its own weakness, no man being molested under the law on account of his opinions on religious matters. While Luther undoubtedly gave an impetus to the growth of Rationalism by his own appeal to reason

and his reliance on reason for himself, it is not true that he contended for the right of general freedom of inquiry, nor would he have left unlimited the privileges of individual judgment for others. He could be furious in his denunciations of reason when a freer thinker than himself dared to use it against his superstitions. It is somewhat remarkable that while on the one hand one man, Luther, was detaching from the Church of Rome a large number of minds, another man, Loyola, was about the same time engaged in founding that powerful society (the Society of Jesuits), which has done so much to check free inquiry and maintain the priestly domination over the human intellect. That which Luther commenced in Germany roughly, inefficiently, and perhaps more from personal feeling for the privileges of the special order to which he belonged than from desire for popular progress, was aided in its permanent effect in England by Bacon, in France by Montaigne and Descartes, and in Italy by Bruno.

Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, was born on the 22nd January, 1561, and died 1626. His mother, Anne, daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, was a woman of high education, and certainly with some inclinations favorable to Freethought, for she had herself translated into English some of the sermons on fate and free-will of Bernard Ochino, or Bernardin Ochinus, an Italian Reforming Heretic, alike repudiated by the powers at Rome, Geneva, Wittenberg, and Zurich. Ochino, in his famous disquisition "touching the freedom or bondage of the human will, and the foreknowledge, predestination, and liberty of God," after discussing, with great acuteness, and from different points of view, these important topics, comes to the conclusion that there is no outlet to the mazes of thought in which the honest speculator plunges in the endeavor to solve these problems. Although, like other writers of that and earlier periods, many of Bacon's works were published in Latin, he wrote and published also in English, and if I am right in numbering him as one of the heretics of the sixteenth century, he must be also counted a vulgar heretic — *i.e.*, one who wrote in the vulgar tongue, who preached his heresy in the language which the mass understood. Lewes says: "Bacon and Descartes are generally recognised as the Fathers of Modern Philosophy, although they themselves were carried along by the rapidly-swelling current of their age, then decisively setting in the direction of science. It is their glory to have seen visions of the coming greatness, to have expressed in terms of splendid power the thoughts which were dimly stirring the age, and to have sanctioned the new movement by their authoritative genius." Bacon was the populariser of that method of reasoning known as the inductive, that method which seeks to trace back from the phenomena of the moment to the eternal noumenon or noumena — from the conditioned to the absolute. Nearly two thousand years before, the same method had

been taught by Aristotle in opposition to Plato, and probably long thousands of years before the grand Greek, pre-historic schoolmen had used the method; it is natural to the human mind. The Stagirite was the founder of a school, Bacon the teacher and populariser for a nation. Aristotle's Greek was known to few, Bacon's eloquent English opened out the subject to the many whom he impregnated with his own confidence in the grand progressiveness of human thought. Lewes says: "The spirit of his philosophy was antagonistic to theology, for it was a spirit of doubt and search; and its search was for visible and tangible results." Bacon himself, in his essay on Superstition, says: "Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation, all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men: therefore Atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to Atheism, as the time of Augustus Caesar, were civil times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile* (the first motive cause), that ravisheth all the spheres of government." It is true that he also wrote against Atheism, and this in strong language, but his philosophy was not used for the purpose of proving theological propositions. He said: "True philosophy is that which is the faithful echo of the voice of the world, which is written in some sort under the dictation of things, which adds nothing of itself, which is only the rebound, the reflexion of reality." It has been well said that the words "Utility and Progress" give the keynotes of Bacon's teachings. With one other extract we leave his writings. "Crafty men," he says, "contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man; and therefore, if a man write little, he need have a great memory; if he confer little, he need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematicis subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend." He was the father of experimental philosophy. In one of his suggestions as to the force of attraction of gravitation may be found the first aid to Sir Isaac Newton's later demonstrations on this head; another of his suggestions, worked out by Torricelli, ended in demonstrating the weight of the atmosphere. But to the method he so

popularised may be attributed the grandest discoveries of modern times. It is to be deplored that the memory of his moral weakness should remain to spoil the praise of his grand intellect.

Lord Macaulay, in the *Edinburgh Review*, after contrasting at some length the philosophy of Plato with that of Bacon, said: — “To sum up the whole: we should say that the aim of the Platonic philosophy was to exalt man into a god. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to provide man with what he requires while he continues to be man. The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants. The former aim was noble; but the latter was attainable. Plato drew a good bow; but, like Acestes in Virgil, he aimed at the stars; and therefore, though there was no want of strength or skill, the shot was thrown away. His arrow was indeed followed by a track of dazzling radiance, but it struck nothing. Bacon fixed his eye on a mark which was placed on the earth and within bowshot, and hit it in the white. The philosophy of Plato began in words and ended in words — noble words indeed — words such as were to be expected from the finest of human intellects exercising boundless dominion over the finest of human languages. The philosophy of Bacon began in observations and ended in arts.”

In France the political heresy of Jean Bodin — who challenged the divine right of rulers; who proclaimed the right of resistance against oppressive decrees of monarchs; who had words of laudation for tyrannicide, and yet had no conception that the multitude were entitled to use political power, but on the contrary wrote against them — was very imperfect, the conception of individual right was confounded in the habit of obedience to monarchical authority. Bodin is classed by Mosheim amongst the writers who sowed the seeds of scepticism in France; but although he was far from an orthodox man, it is doubtful if Bodin ever intended his views to be shared beyond the class to which he belonged. To the partial glimpse of individual right in the works of Bodin add the doctrine of political fraternity taught by La Boetie, and then this political heresy becomes dangerous in becoming popular.

The most decided heretic and doubter of the sixteenth century was one Santhez, by birth a Portuguese, and practising as a physician at Toulouse; but the impetus which ultimately led to the spread and popularity of sceptical opinions in relation to politics and theology, is chiefly due to the satirical romances of Rabelais and the essays of Montaigne. “What Rabelais was to the supporters of theology,” says Buckle, “that was Montaigne to the theology itself. The writings of Rabelais were only directed against the clergy, but the writings of Montaigne were directed against the system of which the clergy were the offspring.”

Montaigne was born at Bordeaux 1533, died 1592. Louis Blanc says of his words: "Et ce ne sont pas simples discours d'un philosophe à des philosophes. Montaigne s'adresse à tous." Montaigne's words were not those of a philosopher talking only to his own order, he addressed himself to mankind at large, and he wrote in language the majority could easily comprehend. Voltaire points out that Montaigne as a philosopher was the exception in France to his class; he having succeeded in escaping that persecution which fell so heavily on others. Montaigne's thoughts were like sharp instruments scattered broadcast, and intended for the destruction of many of the old social and conventional bonds; he was the advocate of individualism, and placed each man as above society, rather than society as more important than each man. Montaigne mocked the reasoners who contradicted each other, and derided that fallibility of mind which regarded the opinion of the moment as infallibly true, and which was yet always temporarily changed by an attack of fever or a draught of strong drink, and often permanently modified by some new discovery. Less fortunate than Montaigne, Godfrey a Valle was burned for heresy in Paris in 1572, his chief offence having been that of issuing a work entitled "De Arte Nihil Credenti."

Heresy thus championed in France, Germany, and England, had in Italy its sixteenth century soldiers in Pomponatius of Mantua, Giordano Bruno, and Telesio, both of Naples, and in Campanella of Calabria, a gallant band, who were nearly all met with the cry of "Atheist," and were either answered with exile, the prison, or the faggot.

Pomponatius, who was born 1486 and died 1525, wrote a treatise on the Soul, which was so much deemed an attack on the doctrine of immortality despite a profession of reverence for the dogmas of the Church, that the work was publicly burned at Venice, a special bull of Leo X being directed against the doctrine.

Bernard Telesio was born at Naples in 1508, and founded there a school in which mathematics and philosophy were given the first place. During his lifetime he had the good fortune to escape persecution, but after his death his works were proscribed by the Church. Telesio was chiefly useful in educating the minds of some of the Neapolitans for more advanced thinking than his own.

This was well illustrated in the case of Thomas Campanella, born 1568, who, attracted by the teachings of Telesio, wrote vigorously against the old schoolmen and in favor of the new philosophy. Despite an affected reverence for the Church of Rome, Campanella spent twenty-seven years of his life in prison. Campanella has been, as is usually the case with eminent writers, charged with Atheism, but there seems to be no fair foundation for the charge. He was a true heretic, for he not only opposed Aristotle,

but even his own teacher Telesio. None of these men, however, yet strove to reach the people, they wrote to and of one another, not to or of the masses. It is said that Campanella was fifty times arrested and seven times tortured for his heresy.

One Andrew de Bena, a profound scholar and eminent preacher of the Church of Rome, carried away by the spirit of the time, came out into the reformed party; but his mind once set free from the old trammels, found no rest in Luther's narrow church, and a poetic Pantheism was the result.

Jerome Cardan, a mathematician of considerable ability, born at Pavia 1501, has been fiercely accused of Atheism. His chief offence seems to have been rather in an opposite direction; astrology was with him a favorite subject. While the strange views put forward in some of his works served good purpose by provoking inquiry, we can hardly class Cardan otherwise than as a man whose undoubted genius and erudition were more than counterbalanced by his excessively superstitious folly.

Giordano Bruno was born near Naples about 1550. He was burned at Rome for heresy on the 17th February, 1600. Bruno was burned for alleged Atheism, but appears rather to have been a Pantheist. His most prominent avowal of heresy was the disbelief in eternal torment and rejection of the common orthodox ideas of the devil. He wrote chiefly in Italian, his vulgar tongue, and thus effectively aided the grand march of heresy by familiarising the eyes of the people with newer and truer forms of thought. Bruno used the tongue as fluently as the pen. He spoke in Italy until he had roused an opposition rendering flight the only possible escape from death. At Geneva he found no resting-place, the fierce spirit of [Zwingli] and Calvin was there too mighty; at Paris he might have found favor with the King, and at the Sorbonne, but he refused to attend mass, and delivered a series of popular lectures, which won many admirers; from Paris he went to England, where we find him publicly debating at Oxford and lecturing on theology, until he excited an antagonism which induced his return to Paris, where he actually publicly discussed for three days some of the grand problems of existence. Paris orthodoxy could not permit his onslaughts on established opinions, and this time it was to Germany Bruno turned for hospitality; where, after visiting many of the different states, lecturing freely and with general success, he drew upon himself a sentence of excommunication at Helmstadt. At last he returned to Italy and spoke at Padua, but had at once to fly thence from the Inquisition; at Venice he found a resting-place in prison, whence after six years of dungeon, and after the tender mercy of the rack, he was led out to receive the final refutation of the faggot. There is a grand heroism in the manner in which he received his sentence and bore his fiery punishment. No cry of despair, no prayer for escape, no flinching

at the moment of death. Bruno's martyrdom may favorably contrast with the highest example Christianity gives us.

It was in the latter half of the sixteenth century, that Unitarianism or Socinianism assumed a front rank position in Europe, having its chief strength in Poland, with considerable force in Holland and England. In 1524, one Lewis Hetzer had been publicly burned at Constance, for denying the divinity of Jesus; but Hetzer was more connected with the Anabaptists than with the Unitarians. About the same time a man named Claudius openly argued amongst the Swiss people, against the doctrine of the Trinity, and one John Campanus contended at Wittenberg, and other places, against the usually inculcated doctrines of the Church, as to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

In 1566, Valentine Gentilis, a Neapolitan, was put to death at Berne, for teaching the superiority of God the Father, over the Son and the Holy Ghost. Modern Unitarianism appears to have had as its founders or chief promoters, Lælius Socinus, and his nephew Faustus Socinus; the first having the better brain and higher genius, but marred by a timid and irresolute character; the second having a more active nature and bolder temperament. From Cracow and Racow, during the latter half of this century, the Unitarians (who drew into their ranks many men of advanced minds) issued a large number of books and pamphlets, which were circulated amongst the people with considerable zeal and industry. Unitarianism was carried from Poland into Transylvania by a physician, George Blandrata, and a preacher Francis David or Davides, who obtained the support and countenance of the then ruler of the country. Davides unfortunately for himself, became too unitarian for the Unitarians; he adopted the extreme views of one Simon Budnæus, who, in Lithuania, entirely repudiated any sort of religious worship in reference to Jesus. Budnæus was excommunicated by the Unitarians themselves, and Davides was imprisoned for the rest of his life. As the Unitarians were persecuted by the old Romish and New Lutheran Churches, so they in turn persecuted seceders from and opposers of their own movement. Each man's history involved the widening out of public thought; each act of persecution illustrated a vain endeavor to check the progress of heresy; each new sect marked a step towards the destruction of the old obstructive faiths.

About the close of the sixteenth century, Ernestius Sonerus, of Nuremberg, wrote against the doctrine of eternal torment, and also against the divinity of Jesus, but his works were never very widely circulated. Amongst the distinguished Europeans of the sixteenth century whom Dr. J.P. Smith mentions as either Atheists or favoring Atheism, were Paul Jovius, Peter Aretin, and Muretus. Rumor has even enrolled Louis X himself in the Atheistical ranks. How far some of these men had warranted the charge other than

by being promoters of literature and lovers of philosophy, it is now difficult to say. A determined resistance was offered to the spread of heretical opinions in the South of Europe by the Roman Church, and it is alleged that some thousands of persons were burned or otherwise punished in Spain, Portugal, and Naples during the sixteenth century. The Inquisition or Holy Office was in Spain and Portugal the most prominent and active persecutor, but persecution was carried on vigorously in other parts of Europe by the seceders from Rome. [Zwingli], Luther, and Calvin, were as harsh as the Pope towards those with whom they differed.

Michael Servetus, or Servede, was a native of Arragon, by profession a physician; he wrote against the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity, but was far from ordinary Unitarianism. He was burned at Geneva, at the instance of Calvin. Calvin was rather fond of burning heretical opponents; to the name of Servetus might be added that of Gruet, who also was burned at the instance of Calvin, for denying the divinity of the Christian religion, and for arguing against the immortality of the soul.

It is worth notice that while heresy in this sixteenth century began to branch out openly, and to strike its roots down firmly amongst the people, ecclesiastical historians are compelled to record improvement in the condition of society. Mosheim says: "In this century the arts and sciences were carried to a pitch unknown to preceding ages, and from this happy renovation of learning, the European churches derived the most signal and inestimable advantages." "The benign influence of true science, and its tendency to improve both the form of religion and the institutions of civil policy, were perceived by many of the states." The love of literature is the most remarkable and characteristic form of advancing civilisation. Instead of being the absorbing passion of the learned few, it becomes gradually the delight and occupation of increasing numbers. This cultivation of literary pursuits by the masses is only possible when enough of heresy has been obtained to render their scope of study wide enough to be useful. Rotterdam gave life to the polished Erasmus, Valentia to Ludovico Vivez, Picardy to Le Fevre, and France to Rabelais.

In the latter half of this century, giants in literature grew out, giants who wrote for the people. William Shakspeare wrote even for those who could not read, but who might learn while looking and listening. His comedies and tragedies are at the same time pictures for the people of diverse phases of English life and character, with a thereunto added universality of portrayal and breadth in philosophy, which it is hardly too much to say, that no other dramatist has ever equaled. Italy boasts its "Torquato Tasso, whose "Jerusalem Delivered," the grand work of a great poet, marks, like a mighty monument, the age capable of finding even in a priest-ridden country, an audience amongst the lowest as well as the

highest, ready to read and sing, and finally permeated with the poet's outpourings. In astronomy, the name of Tycho Brahe stands out in the sixteenth century like one of the first magnitude stars whose existence he catalogued.

CHAPTER III

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE seeds of inquiry sown in the sixteenth century resulted in a fruitful display of advanced opinions during the next age. In the page of seventeenth-century history, more names of men, either avowedly heretics, or charged by the orthodox with heresy, or whose labors can be shown to have tended to the growth of heresy, may probably be recorded than can be found during the whole of the previously long period during which the Christian Church assumed to dominate and control European thought. The seventeenth-century muster-roll of heresy is indeed a grand one, and gloriously filled. One of its early martyrs was Julius Caesar Vanini, who was burned at Toulouse, in the year 1619, aged 34, as "an impious and obstinate Atheist." Was he Atheist, or was he not? This is a question, in answering which the few remains of his works give little ground for sharing the opinion of his persecutors. Yet many writers agree in writing as if his Atheism were of indisputable notoriety. He was a poor Neapolitan priest, he preached a sort of Pantheism; unfortunately for himself, he believed in the utility of public discussion on theological questions, and thus brought upon his head the charge of seeking to convert the world to Atheism.

In 1611, two men, named Legat and Whitman, were burned in England for heresy. "But," says Buckle, "this was the last gasp of expiring bigotry; and since that memorable day the soil of England has never been stained by the blood of a man who has suffered for his religious creed."

Peter Charron, of Paris, ought perhaps to have been included in the sixteenth-century list, for he died in 1603, but his only known work, "La Sagesse," belongs to the seventeenth century, in which it circulated and obtained reputation. He urged that religion is the accidental result of birth and education, and that therefore variety of creed should not be cause of quarrel between men, as such variety is the result of circumstances over which the men themselves have had no control; and he urges that as each sect claims to be the only true one, we ought to rise superior to all sects, and without being terrified by the fear of future punishment, or allured by the hope of future happiness, "be content with such practical religion as consists in performing the duties of life." Buckle, who speaks in high terms of Charron, says: "The Sorbonne went so far as to condemn Charron's great work, but could not succeed in having it prohibited."

René Descartes Duperron, a few years later than Bacon (he was born in 1596, at La Haye, in Touraine, died 1650, at Stockholm) established the foundations of the deductive method of

reasoning, and applied it in a manner which Bacon had apparently carefully avoided. Both Descartes and Bacon addressed themselves to the task of substituting for the old systems, a more comprehensive and useful spirit of philosophy; but while Bacon sought to accomplish this by persuading men to experiment and observation, Descartes commenced with the search for a first and self-evident ground of all knowledge. This, to him, is found in consciousness. The existence of Deity was a point which Bacon left untouched by reason, yet with Descartes it was the first proposition he sought to prove. He says: "I have always thought that the two questions of the existence of God and the nature of the soul, were the chief of those which ought to be demonstrated rather by philosophy than by theology, for although it is sufficient for us, the faithful, to believe in God, and that the soul does not perish with the body, it does not seem possible ever to persuade the infidels to any religion unless we first prove to them those two things by natural reason." To prove this existence of God and the immortality of the soul, Descartes needed a firm starting point, one which no doubt could touch, one which no argument could shake. He found this point in the fact of his own existence. He could doubt everything else, but he could not doubt that he, the thinking doubter, existed. His own existence was the primal fact, the indubitable certainty, which served as the base for all other reasonings, hence his famous "Cogito ergo sum:" — I think, therefore I am. And although it has been fairly objected that Descartes did not exist because he thought, but existed and thought; it is nevertheless clear that it is only in the thinking that Descartes had the consciousness of his existence. The fact of Descartes' existence was, to him, one above and beyond all logic. Evidence could not add to the certitude, no scepticism could impeach it. Whether or not we agree with the Cartesian philosophy, or the reasonings used to sustain it, we must admire the following four rules which he has given us, and which, with the view of consciousness in which we do not entirely concur, are the essential features of the basis of a considerable portion of Descartes' system: —

"1. Never to accept anything as true but what is evidently so; to admit nothing but what so clearly and distinctly presents itself as true, that there can be no reason to doubt it.

"2. To divide every question into as many separate parts as possible, that each part being more easily conceived, the whole may be more intelligible.

"3. To conduct the examination with order, beginning by that of objects the most simple, and therefore the easiest to be known, and ascending little by little up to knowledge of the most complex.

"4. To make such exact calculations, and such circumspections as to be confident that nothing essential has been omitted."

“Consciousness being the basis of all certitude, everything, of which you are clearly and distinctly conscious must be true; everything which you clearly and distinctly conceive, exists, if the idea involve existence.”

It should be remarked that consciousness being a state or condition of the mind, is by no means an infallible guide. Men may fancy they have clear ideas, when their consciousness, if carefully examined, would prove to have been treacherous. Descartes argued for three classes of ideas — acquired, compounded, and innate. It is in his assumption of innate ideas that you have one of the radical weaknesses of his system. Sir William Hamilton points out that the use of the word idea by Descartes, to express the object of memory, imagination, and sense, was quite a new usage, only one other writer, David Buchanan, having previously used the word idea with this signification.

Descartes did not write for the mass, and his philosophy would have been limited to a much narrower circle had its spread rested on his own efforts. But the age was one for new thought, and the contemporaries and successors of Descartes carried the Cartesian logic to extremes he had perhaps avoided, and they taught the new philosophy to the world in a fearless spirit, with a boldness for which Descartes could have given them no example. Descartes, who in early life had travelled much more than was then the custom, had probably made the personal acquaintance of most of the leading thinkers of Europe then living; it would be otherwise difficult to account for the very ready reception given by them to his first work. Fortunately for Descartes, he was born with a fair fortune, and escaped such difficulties as poorer philosophers must needs submit to. There is perhaps a *per contra* side. It is more than possible that if the needs of life had compelled him, Descartes' scientific predilections might have resulted in more immediate advantage to society. His philosophy is often pedantic to weariness, and his scientific theories are often sterile. The fear of poverty might have quickened some of his speculations [into] a more practical utterance. Buckle reminds us that Descartes “was the first who successfully applied algebra to geometry; that he pointed out the important law of the sines; that in an age in which optical instruments were extremely imperfect, he discovered the changes to which light is subjected in the eye by the crystalline lens; that he directed attention to the consequences resulting from the weight of the atmosphere, and that he detected the causes of the rainbow.” “Descartes,” says Saintes, “throwing off the swaddling clothes of scholasticism, resolved to owe to himself alone the acquisition of the truth which he so earnestly desired to possess. For what else is the methodical doubt which he established as the starting point in his philosophy, than an energetic protest of the human mind against all external authority? Having

thus placed all science on a philosophical basis, no matter what, he freed philosophy herself from her long servitude, and proclaimed her queen of the intellect. Hence everyone who has wished to account to himself for his existence, everyone who has desired to know himself, to know nature, and to rise to its author; in a word, all who have wished to make a wise use of their intellectual faculties, to apply them, not to hollow speculations which border on nonentity, but to sensible and practical inquiries, have taken and followed some direction from Descartes." It is almost amusing when philosophers criticise their predecessors. Mons. Henri Ritter denies to Descartes any originality of method or even of illustration, while Hegel describes him as the founder of modern philosophy, whose influence upon his own age and on modern times it is impossible to exaggerate. To attempt to deal fully and truly with Descartes in the few lines which can be spared here, is impossible; all that is sought is to as it were catalogue his name in the seventeenth-century list. Whether originator or imitator, whether founder or disciple, it is certain that Descartes gave a sharp spur to European thought, and mightily hastened the progress of heresy. It is not the object or duty of the present writer to examine or refute any of the extraordinary views entertained by Descartes as to vortices. Descartes himself is reported to have said, "my theory of vortices is a philosophical romance." Science in the last three centuries has travelled even more rapidly than philosophy; and most of the physical speculations of Descartes are relegated to the region of grandly curious blunderings. There is one point of error held by Descartes sufficiently entertained even to-day — although most often without a distinct appreciation of the position — to justify a few words upon it. Descartes denied mental faculties to all the animal kingdom except mankind. All the brute kingdom he re-garded as machines without intelligence. In this he was logical, even in error, for he accorded a soul to man which he denied to the brute. Soul and mind with him are identified, and thought is the fundamental attribute of mind. To admit that a dog, horse, or elephant can think, that it can remember what happened yesterday, that it can reason ever so incompletely, would be to admit that that dog, horse, or elephant, has some kind of soul; to avoid this he reduces all animals outside the human family to the position of machines. To-day science admits in animals, more or less according to their organisation, perception, memory, judgment, and even some sort of reason. Yet orthodoxy still claims a soul for man even if he be a madman from his birth, and denies it to the sagacious elephant, the intelligent horse, the faithful dog, and the cunning monkey. His proof of the existence of Deity is thus stated by Lewes: — "Interrogating his consciousness, he found that he had the idea of God, understanding by God, a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, omniscient, omni-

potent. This, to him, was as certain a truth as the truth of his own existence. I exist: not only do I exist, but exist as a miserably imperfect finite being, subject to change, greatly ignorant and incapable of creating anything. In this, my consciousness, I find by my finitude that I am not the All; by my imperfection, that I am not perfect. Yet an infinite and perfect being must exist, because infinity and perfection are implied as correlatives in my ideas of imperfection and finitude. God therefore exists: his existence is clearly proclaimed in my consciousness, and can no more be a matter of doubt, when fairly considered, than my own existence. The conception of an infinite being proves his real existence; for if there is not really such a being, I must have made the conception; but if I could make it, I can also unmake it, which evidently is not true; therefore there must be, externally to myself, an archetype from which the conception was derived. All that we clearly and distinctly conceive as contained in anything, is true of that thing. Now we conceive, clearly and distinctly, that the existence of God is contained in the idea we have of him —

Ergo,
God exists.”

It may not be out of place to note at this point, that the Jesuit writer, Father Hardouin, in his “Atheists Unmasked,” as a recompense for this demonstration of the existence of Deity, places Descartes and his disciples, le Grand and Regis, in the first rank of atheistical teachers. Voltaire, commenting on this, remarks: “The man who had devoted all the acuteness of his extraordinary intellect to the discovery of new proofs of the existence of a God, was most absurdly charged with denying him altogether.” Speaking of the proof of the existence of Deity: “Demonstrations of this kind,” says Froude, “were the characteristics of the period. Descartes had set the example of constructing them, and was followed by Cudworth, Clarke, Berkeley, and many others besides Spinoza. The inconclusiveness of the method may perhaps be observed most readily in the strangely opposite conceptions formed by all these writers of the nature of that Being whose existence they nevertheless agreed, by the same process, to gather each out of their ideas. It is important, however, to examine it carefully, for it is the very keystone of the Pantheistic system. As stated by Descartes, the argument stands something as follows: — God is an all-perfect Being, perfection is the idea which we form of Him, existence is a mode of perfection, and therefore God exists. The sophism, we are told, is only apparent, existence is part of the idea — as much involved in it as the equality of all lines drawn from the centre to the circumference of a circle is involved in the idea of a circle. A non-existent all-perfect Being is as inconceivable as a

quadrilateral triangle. It is sometimes answered that in this way we may prove the existence of anything, Titans, Chimeras, or the Olympian gods; we have but to define them as existing, and the proof is complete. But this objection is summarily set aside; none of these beings are by hypothesis absolutely perfect, and, therefore, of their existence we can conclude nothing. With greater justice, however, we may say, that of such terms as perfection and existence we know too little to speculate. Existence may be an imperfection for all we can tell, we know nothing about the matter. Such arguments are but endless *petitiones principii* — like the self-devouring serpent, resolving themselves into nothing. We wander round and round them in the hope of finding some tangible point at which we can seize their meaning; but we are presented everywhere with the same impracticable surface, from which our grasp glides off ineffectual.”

Thomas Hobbes, of Malmesbury, is one of those men more often freely abused than carefully read; he was born April 5th, 1588, died 1679. He was “the subtlest dialectician of his time,” and one of the earliest English advocates of the materialistic limitation of mind; he denies the possibility of any knowledge other than as resulting from sensation; his doctrine is in direct negation of Descartes’ theory of innate ideas, and would be fatal to the orthodox dogma of mind as spiritual. “Whatever we imagine,” he says “is finite. Therefore there is no idea, no conception of anything we call infinite.” In a brief pamphlet on his own views, published in 1680, in reply to attacks upon him, he writes: “Besides the creation of the world there is no argument to prove a Deity,” “and that it cannot be decided by any argument that the world had a beginning; but he professes to admit the authority of the Magistrate and the Scriptures to override argument. He says that he does not believe that the safety of the state depends upon the safety of the church.” Some of Hobbes’ pieces were only in Latin, others were issued in English. In one of those on Heresy, he mentions that by the statute of Edward VI., cap. 12, there is no provision for the repeal of all former acts of parliament “made to punish any matter of doctrine concerning religion.”

In the following extracts the reader will find the prominent features of that sensationalism which to-day has so many adherents: — “Concerning the thoughts of man, I will consider them first singly, and afterwards in a train or dependence upon one another. Singly they are every one a representation or appearance of some quality or other accident of a body without us, which is commonly called an object. Which object worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of a man’s body, and by diversity of working produceth diversity of appearances. The original of them all is that which we call sense, for there is no conception in a man’s mind which hath not at first totally or by parts been

begotten upon the organs of sense. The rest are derived from that original." The effect of this is to deny any possible knowledge other than as results from the activity of the sensitive faculties, and is also fatal to the doctrine of a soul. "According," says Hobbes, "to the two principal parts of man, I divide his faculties into two sorts — faculties of the body, and faculties of the mind. Since the minute and distinct anatomy of the powers of the body is nothing necessary to the present purpose, I will only sum them up in these three heads — power nutritive, power generative, and power motive. Of the powers of the mind there be two sorts — cognitive, imaginative, or conceptive, and motive. For the understanding of what I mean by the power cognitive, we must remember and acknowledge that there be in our minds continually certain images or conceptions of the things without us. This imagery and representation of the qualities of the things without, is that which we call our conception, imagination, ideas, notice, or knowledge of them; and the faculty, or power by which we are capable of such knowledge, is that I here call cognitive power, or conceptive, the power of knowing or conceiving." "All the qualities called sensible are, in the object that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter by which it presseth on our organs diversely. Neither in us that are pressed are they anything else but divers motions; for motion produceth nothing but motion. Because the image in vision, consisting of color and shape, is the knowledge we have of the qualities of the objects of that sense; it is no hard matter for a man to fall into this opinion that the same color and shape are the very qualities themselves, and for the same cause that sound and noise are the qualities of the bell or of the air. And this opinion hath been so long received that the contrary must needs appear a great paradox, and yet the introduction of species visible and intelligible (which is necessary for the maintenance of that opinion) passing to and fro from the object is worse than any paradox, as being a plain impossibility. I shall therefore endeavor to make plain these points. That the subject wherein color and image are inherent, is not the object or thing seen. That there is nothing without us (really) which we call an image or color. That the said image or color is but an apparition unto us of the motion, agitation, or alteration which the object worketh in the brain, or spirits, or some internal substance of the head. That as in visions, so also in conceptions that arise from the other senses, the subject of their inference is not the object but the sentient." Strange to say, Hobbes was protected from his clerical antagonists by the favor of Charles II, who had the portrait of the philosopher of Malmesbury hung on the walls of his private room at Whitehall.

Lord Herbert, of Cherbury (one of the friends of Hobbes) born 1581, died 1648, is remarkable for having written a book "De Veritate," in favor of natural — and against any necessity for

revealed — religion; and yet at the same time pleading a sort of special sign or revelation to himself in favor of its publication.

Peter Gassendi, a native of Provence, born 1592, died 1655, was one of the opponents of Descartes and of Lord Herbert, and was an admirer of Hobbes; he advocated the old philosophy of Epicurus, professing to reject “from it everything contrary to Christianity.” “But,” asks Cousin, “how could he succeed in this? Principles, processes, results, everything in Epicurus is sensualism, materialism, Atheism.” Gassendi’s works were characterised by great learning and ability, but being confined to the Latin tongue, and written avowedly with the intent of avoiding any conflict with the church, they gave but little immediate impetus to the great heretical movement. Arnauld charges Gassendi with overturning the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in his discussion with Descartes, and Leibnitz charges Gassendi with corrupting and injuring the whole system of natural religion by the wavering nature of his opinions. Buckle says: “The rapid increase of heresy in the middle of the seventeenth century is very remarkable, and it greatly aided civilisation in England by encouraging habits of independent thought.” In February 1646, Boyle writes from London: “There are few days pass here, that may not justly be accused of the brewing or broaching of some new opinion. If any man have lost his religion, let him repair to London, and I’ll warrant him he shall find it: I had almost said too, and if any man has a religion, let him but come hither now and he shall go near to lose it.”

About 1655, one Isaac La Peyrere wrote two small treatises to prove that the world was peopled before Adam, but being arrested at Brussels, and threatened with the stake, he, to escape the fiery refutation, made a full recantation of his views, and restored to the world its dearly-prized stain of natural depravity, and to Adam his position as the first man. La Peyrere’s forced recantation is almost forgotten, the opinions he recanted are now amongst common truths.

Baruch D’Espinoza or Benedict Spinoza, was born Nov. 24, 1632, in Amsterdam; an apt scholar, he, at the early age of fourteen, had mastered the ordinary tasks set him by his teacher, the Rabbi Moteira, and at fifteen puzzled and affrighted the grave heads of the synagogue, by attempting the solution of problems which they themselves were well content to pass by. As he grew older his reason took more daring flights, and after attempts had been made to bribe him into submissive silence, when threats had failed to check or modify him, and when even the knife had no effect, then the fury of disappointed fanaticism found vent in the bitter curse of excommunication, and when about twenty-four years of age, Spinoza found himself outcast and anathematised. Having no private means or rich patrons, and differing in this

from nearly everyone whose name we have yet given, our hero subsisted as a polisher of glasses, microscopes, etc., devoting his leisure to the study of languages and philosophy. There are few men as to whom modern writers have so widely differed in the description of their views, few who have been so thoroughly misrepresented. Bayle speaks of him as a systematic Atheist. Saintes says that he laid the foundations of a Pantheism as destructive to scholastic philosophy as to all revealed religion. Voltaire repeatedly writes of Spinoza as an Atheist and teacher of Atheism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge speaks of Spinoza as an Atheist, and prefaces this opinion with the following passage, which we commend to more orthodox and less acute writers: — “Little do these men know what Atheism is. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind, or goodness of heart to be an Atheist. I repeat it — Not one man in a thousand has either goodness of heart, or strength of mind, to be an Atheist.” “And yet,” says Froude, “both in friend and enemy alike, there has been a reluctance to see Spinoza as he really was. The Herder and Schleiermacher school have claimed him as a Christian, a position which no little disguise was necessary to make tenable; the orthodox Protestants and Catholics have called him an Atheist, which is still more extravagant; and even a man like Novalis, who, it might have been expected, would have said something reasonable, could find no better name for him than a ‘Gott trunkener mann,’ a God intoxicated man: an expression which has been quoted by every-body who has since written on the subject, and which is about as inapplicable as those laboriously pregnant sayings usually are. With due allowance for exaggeration, such a name would describe tolerably the transcendental mystics, a Toler, a Boehmen, or a Swedenborg; but with what justice can it be applied to the cautious, methodical Spinoza, who carried his thoughts about with him for twenty years, deliberately shaping them, and who gave them at last to the world in a form more severe than with such subjects had ever been so much as attempted before? With him, as with all great men, there was no effort after sublime emotions. He was a plain, practical person; his object in philosophy was only to find a rule by which to govern his own actions and his own judgment; and his treatises contain no more than the conclusions at which he arrived in this purely personal search, with the grounds on which he rested them.”

Spinoza, who was wise enough to know that it was utterly useless to expect an unfettered examination of philosophical problems by men who are bound to accept as an infallible arbiter any particular book, and who knew that reasonings must be of a very limited character which took the alleged Hebrew Revelation as the centre and starting point for all inquiry, and also as the circling limitation line for all investigation — devoted himself to the task of

examining how far the ordinary orthodox doctrines as to the infallibility of the Old Testament were fairly maintainable. It was for this reason he penned his "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus," wherein he says: "We see that they who are most under the influence of superstitious feelings, and who covet uncertainties without stint or measure, more especially when they fall into difficulty or danger, cannot help themselves, are the persons, who, with vows and prayers and womanly tears, implore the Divine assistance; who call reason blind, and human wisdom vain; and all, forsooth, because they cannot find an assured way to the vanities they desire." "The mainspring of superstition is fear; by fear too is superstition sustained and nourished." "Men are chiefly assailed by superstition when suffering from fear, and all they then do in the name of a vain religion is, in fact, but the vaporous product of a sorrowful spirit, the delirium of a mind overpowered by terror." He proceeds: "I have often wondered that men who boast of the great advantage they enjoy under the Christian dispensation — the peace, the joy they experience, the brotherly love they feel towards all in its exercise — should nevertheless contend with so much acrimony, and show such intolerance and unappeasable hatred towards one another. If faith had to be inferred from action rather than profession, it would indeed be impossible to say to what sect or creed the majority of mankind belong." He laid down that "No one is bound by natural law to live according to the pleasure of another, but that every one is by natural title the rightful asserter of his own independence," and that "he or they govern best who concede to every one the privilege of thinking as he pleases, and of saying what he thinks." Criticising the Hebrew prophets, he points out that "God used no particular style in making his communications; but in the same measure as the prophet possessed learning and ability, his communications were either concise and clear, or on the contrary, they were rude, prolix, and obscure." The representations of Zechariah, as we learn from the accounts themselves, were so obscure that without an explanation they could not be understood by himself; and those of Daniel were so dark, that even when explained, they were still unintelligible, not to others only, but also to the prophet himself. He argues entirely against miracles, as either contrary to nature or above nature, declaring any such to be "a sheer absurdity," "*merum esse absurdum*." Of the Scriptures themselves he points out that the ancient Hebrew is entirely lost. "Of the authors, or, if you please, writers, of many books, we either know almost nothing, or we entertain grave doubts as to the correctness with which the several books are ascribed to the parties whose names they bear." "Then we neither know on what occasion, nor at what time those books were indited, the writers of which are unknown to us. Further, we know nothing of the hands into which the books fell; nor of the

codices which have furnished such a variety of readings, nor whether, perchance, there were not many other variations in other copies." Voltaire says of Spinoza: "Not only in the character of a Jew he attacks the New Testament, but in the character of a scholar he ruins the Old."

The logic of Spinoza was directed to the demonstration of one substance with infinite attributes, for which one substance with infinite attributes he had as equivalent the name "God." Some who have since followed Spinoza, have agreed in his one substance, but have denied the possibility of infinite attributes. Attributes or qualities, they urge, are attributes of the finite or conditioned, and you cannot have attributes of substance except as attributes of its modes. You have in this distinction the division line between Spinozism and Atheism. Spinoza recognises infinite intelligence, but Atheism cannot conceive intelligence except in relation as quality of the conditioned, and not as the essence of the absolute. Spinoza denied the doctrine of freewill, as with him all phenomena are of God, so he rejects the ordinary notions of good and evil. The popular views of Spinoza in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were chiefly derived from the volumes of his antagonists; men learned his name because priests abused him, few had perused his works for themselves. To-day we may fairly say that Spinoza's logic and his biblical criticisms gave a vigor and force to the heresy of the latter half of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, a directness and effectiveness theretofore wanting. As for the Bible, there was no longer an affected reverence for every yod or comma, church traditions were ignored wherever inconsistent with reason, and the law itself was boldly challenged when its letter was against the spirit of human progress.

One of the greatest promoters of heresy in England was Ralph Cudworth, born 1617, died 1688. He wrote to combat the Atheistical tenets which were then commencing to obtain popularity in England, and was a controversialist so fair and candid in the statement of the opinions of his antagonists, that he was actually charged with heresy himself, and the epithets of Arian, Socinian, Deist, and even Atheist were freely leveled against him. "He has raised," says Dryden, "such strong objections against the being of a God and Providence, that many think he has not answered them." The clamor of bigotry seems to have discouraged Cudworth, and he left many of his works unprinted. Cousin describes him as "a Platonist, of a firm and profound mind, who bends somewhat under the weight of his erudition."

Thomas Burnett, born 1635, died 1715, a clergyman of the Church of England, though in high favor with King William and the famous Archbishop Tillotson, is said to have been shut out of preferment in the church chiefly, if not entirely, on account of his

many heterodox views. He did not accept the orthodox notions on the Mosaic account of the creation, fall, and deluge. Regarding the account of the fall as allegorical, he argued for the ultimate salvation of everyone, and of course denied the doctrine of eternal torment. In a curious passage relating to the equivocations of a large number of the clergy in openly taking the oath of allegiance to William III, while secretly supporting James as King, Burnet says: "The prevarication of too many in so sacred a matter contributed not a little to fortify the growing Atheism of the time."

As Descartes and Spinoza had been foremost on the continent, so was Locke in England, and no sketch of the progress of heresy during the seventeenth century would be deserving serious regard which did not accord a prominent place to John Locke, whom G.H. Lewes calls "one of the Wisest of Englishmen," and of whom Buckle speaks as "an innovator in his philosophy, and a Unitarian in his creed." He was born in 1632, and died in 1704. Locke, according to his own fashion, was a sincere and earnest Christian; but this has not saved him from being furiously assailed for the materialistic character of his philosophy, and many have been ready to assert that Locke's principles "lead to Atheism." In politics Locke laid down, that unjust and unlawful force on the part of the Government might and ought to be resisted by force on the part of the citizens. He urged that on questions of theology there ought to be no penalties consequent upon the reception or rejection of any particular religious opinion. How far those were right who regarded Locke's metaphysical reasoning as dangerous to orthodoxy may be judged by the following extract on the origin of ideas: —

"Follow a child from its birth and observe the alterations that time makes, and you shall find, as the mind by the senses comes more and more to be furnished with ideas, it comes to be more and more awake; thinks more, the more it has matter to think on. After some time, it begins to know the objects, which being most familiar with it, have made lasting impressions. Thus it comes, by degrees, to know the persons it daily converses with, and distinguishes them from strangers; which are instances and effects of its coming to retain and distinguish the ideas the senses convey to it; and so we may observe, how the mind by degrees improves in these, and advances to the exercise of those other faculties of enlarging, compounding, and abstracting its ideas, and of reasoning about them, and reflecting upon all these.

"If it shall be demanded then, when a man begins to have any ideas? I think the true answer is, when he first has any sensation. For since there appear not to be any ideas in the mind before the senses have conveyed any in, I conceive that ideas in the understanding are coeval with sensation; which is such an impression or emotion, made in some part of the body, as produces some per-

ception in the understanding. It is about these impressions made on our senses by outward objects, that the mind seems first to employ itself in such operations as we call perception, remembering, consideration, reasoning, etc.

“In time, the mind comes to reflect on its own operations, about the ideas got by sensation, and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflexion. These are the impressions that are made on our senses by outward objects, that are extrinsical to the mind; and its own operation, [proceeding] from powers intrinsical and proper to itself, which, when reflected on by itself, becoming also objects of its contemplation, are, as I have said, the original of all knowledge. Thus the first capacity of human intellect is, that the mind is fitted to receive the impressions made on it, either through the senses, by outward objects, or by its own operations, when it reflects on them. This is the first step a man makes towards the discovery of anything, and the ground-work whereon to build all those notions which ever he shall have naturally in this world. All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that good extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations, it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which sense or reflexion have offered for its contemplation.

“In this part the understanding is merely passive; and whether or no it will have these beginnings, and, as it were, materials of knowledge, is not in its own power. For the objects of our senses do, many of them, obtrude their particular ideas upon our minds, whether we will or no; and the operations of our minds will not let us be without, at least, some obscure notions of them. No man can be wholly ignorant of what he does when he thinks. These simple ideas, when offered to the mind, the understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter, when they are imprinted, nor blot them out and make new ones itself, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the images or ideas which the objects set before it do therein produce. As the bodies that surround us do diversely affect our organs, the mind is forced to receive the impressions, and cannot avoid the perception of those ideas that are annexed to them.”

The distinction pointed out by Lewes between Locke and Hobbes and Gassendi, is that the two latter taught that all our ideas were derived from sensations, while Locke said there were two sources, not one source, and these two were sensation and reflexion. Locke was in style a more popular writer than Hobbes, and the heretical effect of the doctrines on the mind not being so immediately perceived in consequence of Locke's repeated declarations in favor of Christianity, his metaphysical productions were more widely read than those of Hobbes; but Locke really

teaches the same doctrine as that laid down by Robert Owen in his views on the formation of character; and his views on sensation, as the primary source of ideas, are fatal to all notions of innate ideas and of freewill. Voltaire, speaking of Locke, says: — “We shall, perhaps, never be capable of knowing whether a being purely material thinks or not.” This judicious and guarded observation was considered by more than one divine, as neither more nor less than a scandalous and impious declaration, that the soul is material and mortal. Some English devotees, after their usual manner, sounded the alarm. The superstitious are in society what poltroons are in an army — they both feel and excite causeless terror. The cry was, that Mr. Locke wished to overturn religion; the subject, however, had nothing to do with religion at all; it was purely a philosophical question, and perfectly independent of faith and revelation.” One clergyman, the Rev. William Carrol, wrote, charging Atheism as the result of Locke’s teaching. The famous Sir Isaac Newton even grew so alarmed with the materialistic tendency of Locke’s philosophy, that when John Locke was reported sick and unlikely to live, it is credibly stated that Newton went so far as to say that it would be well if the author of the essay on the Understanding were already dead.

In 1689, one Cassimer Leszynski, a Polish knight, was burned at Warsaw for denying the being and providence of a God; but there are no easy means of learning whether the charge arose from prejudice on the part of his accusers, or whether this unfortunate gentleman really held Atheistic views.

Peter Bayle, born at Carlat, in Foix, 1647, died in Holland, 1706, was a writer of great power and brilliancy and wide learning. Without standing avowedly on the side of scepticism, he did much to promote sceptical views amongst the rapidly growing class of men of letters. He declared that it was better to be an Atheist, than to have a false or unworthy idea of God; that a man can be at the same time an Atheist and an honest man, and that a people without a religion is capable of good order. Bayle’s writings grew more heretical towards the latter part of his career, and he suffered considerable persecution at the hands of the Church, for having spoken too plainly of the character of David. He said that “if David was the man after God’s own heart, it must have been by his penitence, not by his crimes.” Bayle might have added, that the record of David’s penitence is not easily discoverable in any part of the narrative of his life.

Matthew Tindal, born 1656, died 1733, was, though the son of a clergyman of the Established Church, one of the first amongst the school of Deistical writers who became so prominent in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Dr. Pye Smith catalogues him as “an Atheist,” but we know no ground for this. He was a zealous controversialist, and commencing by attacking priests, he con-

tinued his attack against the revelation they preached. He was a frequent writer, but his "Christianity as old as the Creation" is his chief work, and the one which has provoked the greatest amount of discussion. It was published nearly at the close of his life, and after he had seen others of his writings burned by the common hangman. Dr. Matthew Tindal helped much to shake belief in the Bible, those who wrote against him did much more; if no one had replied to Tindal, his attacks on revelation would have been read by few, but in answering the heretic, Bishop Waterland and his *confrères* gave wider circulation to Tindal's heresy.

John Toland was born Nov. 30, 1670, at Londonderry, but was educated in Scotland. He died 1722. His publications were all about the close of the seventeenth and commencement of the eighteenth centuries, and the ability of his contributions to popular instruction may be judged by the abusive epithets heaped upon him by his opponents. While severely attacking the bulk of the clergy as misleaders of the people, and while also assailing some of the chief orthodox notions, he yet, either in order to escape the law, or from the effect of his religious education, professed a respect for what he was pleased to call true Christianity, but which we should be inclined to consider, at the least, somewhat advanced Unitarianism. At last, however, his works were ordered to be burned by the common hangman, and to escape arrest and prosecution he had to flee to the Continent. Dr. J. Pye Smith describes Toland as a Pantheist, and calls his *Pantheisticon* "an Atheistic Liturgy." In one of Toland's essays he laments "how hard it is to come to a truth yourself, and how dangerous a thing to publish to others." The publications of Toland were none of them very bulky although numerous, and as most of them were fiercely assailed by the orthodox clergy, they helped to excite popular interest in England in the critical examination of the Scriptures and the doctrines therein taught.

Besides the few authors to whom attention is here drawn, there were numerous men who — each for a little while, and often coming out from the lower ranks of the people themselves — stirred the hitherto almost stagnant pool of popular thought with some daring utterance or extravagant statement. Fanatics some, mystics some, alchemists some, materialists some, but all crude and imperfect in their grasp of the subject they advocated, they nevertheless all helped to agitate the human mind, to render it more restless and inquiring, and thus they all promoted the march of heresy. One feature of the history of the seventeenth century shows how much philosophy had gained ground, and how deep its roots were striking throughout the European world — viz., that nearly all the writers wrote in the vulgar tongue of their country, or there were published editions of their works in that tongue. A century earlier, and but few escaped from the narrow bonds of

learned Latin: two centuries before, and none got outside the Latin folios; but in this century theology, metaphysics, philosophy, and politics are discussed in French, German, English, and Italian. The commonest reader may peruse the most learned author, for the writing is in a language which he cannot help knowing.

There were in this century a large number of writers in England and throughout Europe, who, taking the Bible as a starting-point and limitation for their philosophy, broached wonderful theories as to creation, etc., in which reason and revelation were sought to be made harmonious. Enfield, a most orthodox writer, in his "History of Philosophy," says: "Who does not perceive, from the particulars which have been related concerning these Scriptural philosophers, that their labors, however well intended, have been of little benefit to philosophy? Their fundamental error has consisted in supposing that the sacred Scriptures were intended, not only to instruct men in all things necessary to their salvation, but to teach the true principles of physical and metaphysical science." How pregnant the admission that revelation and science cannot be expected to accord — an admission which in truth declares that in all philosophical research it is necessary to go beyond the Bible, if not to go against it — an admission which involves the declaration, that so long as men are bound by the letter of the Bible, so long all philosophical progress is impossible.

In this century the English Church lost much of the political power it had hitherto wielded. It was in 1625, that William, Bishop of Lincoln, was dismissed from the office of Lord Keeper, and since his day no ecclesiastic has held the great seal of England, and to-day who even in the Church itself would dream of trying to make a bishop Lord Chancellor? The church lost ground in the conflict with Charles; this it might perhaps have recovered, but it suffered irretrievable loss of prestige in its struggle with William.

CHAPTER IV

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE eighteenth century deserves that the penman who touches its records shall have some virility; for these records contain, not only the narrative of the rapid growth of the new philosophy in France, England, and Germany, where its roots had been firmly struck in the previous century, but they also give the history of a glorious endeavor on the part of a down-trodden and long-suffering people, weakened and degraded by generations of starvation and oppression, to break the yoke of tyranny and superstition. Eighteenth century historians can write how the men of France, after having been cursed by a long race of kings, who never dreamed of identifying their interests with those of the people; after enduring centuries of tyranny from priests, whose only gods were power, pleasure, and mammon, and at the hands of nobles, who denied civil rights to their serfs; at last, could endure no longer, but electrified into life by eighteenth-century heresy, “spurned under foot the idols of tyranny and superstition,” and sought “by the influence of reason to erect on the ruins of arbitrary power the glorious edifice of civil and religious liberty.” Why Frenchmen then failed in giving permanent success to their heroic endeavor, is not difficult to explain, when we consider that every tyranny in Europe united against that young republic to which the monarchy had bequeathed a legacy of a wretched pauper people, a people whose minds had been hitherto wholly in the hands of the priests, whose passions had revolted against wrong, but whose brains were yet too weak for the permanent enjoyment of the freedom temporarily resulting from physical effort. Eighteenth-century heresy is especially noticeable for its immediate connexion with political change. For the first time in European history, the great mass commenced to yearn for the assertion in government of democratic principles. The French Republican Revolution, which overthrew Louis XVI and the Bastille, was only possible because the heretical teachers who preceded it had weakened the divine right of kingcraft; and it was ultimately unsuccessful, only because an overwhelming majority of the people were as yet not sufficiently released from the thralldom of the church, and therefore fell before the allied despotisms of Europe, who were aided by the Catholic priests, who naturally plotted against the spirit which seemed likely to make men too independent to be pious.

In Germany the liberation of the masses from the dominion of the Church of Rome was effected with the, at first, active believing concurrence of the nation; in England this was not so. Protestantism here was the result rather of the influence and interests of the King and Court, and of the indifference of the great body of

the people. The Reformed Church of England, sustained by the crown and aristocracy, has generally left the people to find their own way to heaven or hell, and has only required abstinence from avowed denial of, or active opposition to, its tenets. Its ministers have usually preached with the same force to a few worshippers scattered over their grand cathedrals and numerous churches as to a thronging crowd, but in each case there has been a lack of vitality in the sermon. It is only when the material interests of the church have been apparently threatened that vigor has been shown on the part of its teachers.

It is a curious fact, and one for comment hereafter, that while in the modern struggle for the progress of heresy its sixteenth-century pages present many most prominent Italian names, when we come to the eighteenth century there are but few such names worthy special notice; it is no longer from the extreme South, but from France, Germany, and England, that you have the great array of Freethinking warriors. Those whom Italy boasts, too, are now nearly all in the Idealistic ranks.

We commenced the list by a brief reference to Bernard Mandeville, a Dutch physician, born at Dordrecht in 1670, and who died in 1733; a writer with great power as a satirist, whose fable of the "Bees, or Private Vices made Public Benefits," not only served as source for much of Helvetius, but had the double honor of an indictment at the Middlesex session, and an answer from the pen of Bishop Berkeley.

One of the early, and perhaps one of the most important promoters of heresy in the United Kingdom, was George Berkeley, an Irishman by birth. He was born on the 12th of March, 1684, at Kiltrin, and died at Oxford in 1753. It was this writer to whom Pope assigned "every virtue under heaven," and of whom Byron wrote: —

"When Bishop Berkeley said 'there was no matter,'
And proved it — 'twas no matter what he said:
They say his system 'tis in vain to batter,
Too subtle for the airiest human head;
And yet who can believe it?"

A writer in the "Encyclopædia Metropolitana" describes him as "the one, perhaps, whose heart was most free from scepticism, and whose understanding was most prone to it." Berkeley is here dealt with as one specially contributing to the growth of sceptical thought, and not as an Idealist only. Arthur Collier published, about the same time as Berkeley, several works in which absolute Idealism is advocated. Collier and Berkeley were mouthpieces for the expression of an effort at resistance against the growing Spinozistic school. They wrote against substance assumed as the "noumenon lying underneath all phenomena — the substratum

supporting all qualities — the something in which all accidents inhere.” Collier and his writings are almost unknown; Berkeley’s name has become famous, and his arguments have served to excite far wider scepticism than have those of any other Englishman of his age. Most religious men who read him misunderstand him, and nearly all misrepresent his theory. Hume, speaking of Berkeley, says: “Most of the writings of that very ingenious philosopher form the best lessons of scepticism which are to be found, either among the ancient or modern philosophers, Bayle not excepted. He professes, however, in his title page (and undoubtedly with great truth) to have composed his book against the sceptics, as well as against the Atheists and Freethinkers. But that all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are in reality merely sceptical, appears from this, that they admit of no answer, and produce no conviction.”

Berkeley wrote for those who “want a demonstration of the existence and immateriality of God, or the natural immortality of the soul,” and his philosophy was intended to check materialism. The key-note of his works may be found in his declaration: “The only thing whose existence I deny, is that which philosophers call Matter or corporeal substance.” The definition given by Berkeley of matter is one which no materialist will be ready to accept, *i.e.*, “an inert, senseless substance in which extension, figure, and motion do actually exist.” The “Principles of Human Knowledge” is the work in which Berkeley’s Idealism is chiefly set forth, and many have been the volumes and pamphlets written in reply. Whatever might have been Berkeley’s intention as to refuting scepticism, the result of his labors was to increase it in no ordinary degree. Dr. Pye Smith thus summarises Berkeley’s views: — “He denied the existence of matter as a cause of our perceptions, but firmly maintained the existence of created and dependent spirits, of which every man is one; that to suppose the existence of sensible qualities and of a material world, is an erroneous deduction from the fact of our perceptions; that those perceptions are nothing but ideas and thoughts in our minds; that these are produced in perfect uniformity, order, and consistency in all minds, so that their occurrence is according to fixed rules, which may be called the laws of nature; that the Deity is either the immediate or the mediate cause of these perceptions, by his universal operation on created minds; and that the created mind has a power of managing these perceptions, so that volitions arise, and all the phenomena of moral action and responsibility. The great reply to this is, that it is a hypothesis which cannot be proved, which is highly improbable, and which seems to put upon the Deity the inflicting on man a perpetual delusion.”

The weakness of Berkeley’s system as a mere question of logic is, that while he requires the most rigorous demonstration of the

existence of what he defines as matter, he assumes an eternal spirit with various attributes, and also creates spirits of various sorts. He creates the states of mind resulting from the sensation of surrounding phenomena into ideas, existing independent of the *ego*, when in truth, man's ideas are not in addition to man's mind; but the aggregate of sensitive ability, and the result of its exercise is the mind, just as the aggregate of functional ability and activity is life. The foundation of Berkeley's faith in the invisible "eternal spirit," in angels as "created spirits," is difficult to discover, when you accept his argument for the rejection of visible phenomena. He in truth should have rejected everything save his own mind, for the mental processes are clearly not always reliable. In dreams, in delirium, in insanity, in temporary disease of particular nerves of sensation, in some phases of magnetic influence, the ideas which Berkeley sustains so forcibly are admittedly delusions.

As in George Berkeley, so we have in Bishop Butler, an illustration of the endeavor to check the rapidly enlarging scepticism of this century. Joseph Butler was born in 1692, died 1752, and will be long known by his famous work on the "Analogy of Religion to the course of Nature." In this place it is not our duty to do more than point out a few features of the argument, observing that this elaborate piece of special pleading for natural and revealed religion, is evidence that danger was apprehended by the clergy, from the spread of Freethought views amongst the masses. A popular reply was written to provide against the growing popular objection. Bishop Butler argues that "we know that we are endued with certain capacities of action, of happiness and misery; for we are conscious of acting, of enjoying pleasure, and of suffering pain. Now that we have these powers and capacities before death, is a presumption that we shall retain them through and after death; indeed, a probability of it abundantly sufficient to act upon, unless there be some positive reason to think that death is the destruction of those living powers." It may be fairly submitted, in reply, that here the argument from analogy is as utterly faulty, as if in the spring season a traveller should say of a wayside pool, it is here before the summer sun shines upon it, and will be here during and after the summer drought, when ordinary experience would teach him that as the pool is only gathered during the rainy season in the hollow ground, so in the dry hot summer days, it will be gradually evaporated under the blazing rays of the July sun. As to the human capacities, experience teaches us that they have changed with the condition of the body; emotional feelings and animal passions, the gratification of which ensured temporary pleasure or pain, have varied, have been newly felt, and have died out in different periods and conditions of our lives, and the presumption is against the complete endurance of all these "capacities for action," etc., even during the whole life, and much more strongly, therefore,

against their endurance after death. Besides which — continuing the argument from analogy — my “capacities” having only been manifested since my body has existed, and in proportion to my physical ability, the presumption is rather that the manifestation which commenced with the body will finish as the body finishes. Further, it is fair to presume that “death is the destruction of those living powers,” for death is the cessation of organic functional activity; a cessation consequent on some change or destruction of organisation. Of course, the word “destruction” is not here used in any sense of annihilation of substance, but as meaning such a change of condition that vital phenomena are no longer manifested. But, says Butler, “we know not at all what death is in itself, but only some of its effects, such as the dissolution of flesh, skin, and bones, and these effects do in nowise appear to imply the destruction of a living agent.” Here, perhaps, there is an unjustifiable assumption in the words “living agent,” for if by living agent is only meant the animal which dies, then the destruction of flesh, skin, and bones does fairly imply the destruction of the living agent, but if by living agent is intended more than this, then the argument is speciously and unfairly worded. But beyond this, if Bishop Butler’s argument has any value, it proves too much. He says: “Nor can we find anything throughout the whole analogy of nature, to afford us even the slightest presumption that animals ever lose their living powers . . . by death.” That is, Bishop Butler, applies his argument for a future state of existence, not only to man, but to the whole animal kingdom; and it may be fairly conceded that there is as much ground to presume that man will live again, as there is that the worm will live again, which, being impaled upon a hook, is eaten by the gudgeon, or that the gudgeon will live again which, threadled as a bait, is torn and mangled to death by a ravenous pike, or that the pike will live again after it has been kept out of water till rigid, then gutted, scaled, stuffed with savory condiments, broiled, and ultimately eaten by Piscator and his family. Bishop Butler’s argument that because pleasure or pain is uniformly found to follow the acting or not acting in some particular manner, there is presumptive analogy in favor of future rewards and punishments by Deity, appears weak in the extreme. According to Butler, God is the author of nature. Nature’s laws are such, that punishment, immediate or remote, follows non-observance, and reward, more or less immediate, is the result of observance; and because God is, by Butler’s argument, assumed as the author of nature, and has therefore already punished or rewarded once, we are following Butler, to presume that he will after death punish or reward again for an action upon which he has already adjudicated. In his chapter on the Moral Government of God, Butler says: “As the manifold appearances of design and of final causes in the constitution of the world prove it to be the

work of an intelligent mind, so the particular final causes of pleasure and pain distributed amongst his creatures prove that they are under his government — what may be called his natural government of creatures endowed with sense and reason.” But taking Bishop Butler’s own position, what sort of government is demonstrated by this argument from analogy? God, according to Bishop Butler’s reasoning, designed the whale to swallow the *Clio Borealis*, which latter he designed to be so swallowed, but which he nevertheless invested with some 360,000 suckers, to enable it in its turn to seize the minute animalculæ on which it lives. God designed Brutus to kill Cesar, Orsini to be beheaded by Louis Napoleon. These, according to Butler, would be all under the special control of God’s government. Bishop Butler’s theory that our present life is a state of trial and probation is met by the difficulty, that while he assumes the justice and benevolence of God as moral governor, he has the fact that many exist with organisations and capacities so originally different, that it is manifestly most unfair to put one and the same reward, or one and the same punishment for all. The Esquimaux or Negro is not on a level at the outset of life with the Caucasian races. How from analogy can anyone argue in favor of the doctrine that an impartial judge who had started them in the race of life unfairly matched, would put the same prize before all, none of the starters being handicapped? Bishop Butler’s argument on the doctrine of necessity, is that which one might expect to find from a hired *nisi prius* advocate, but which is read with regret coming from the pen of a gentleman who ought to be striving to convince his erring brethren by the words of truth alone. He says, suppose a child to be educated from his earliest youth in the principles of “fatalism,” what then? The reply is, that a necessitarian knowing that a certain education of the human mind was most conducive to human happiness, would strive to impart to his children education of that character. That a worse “fatalism” is inculcated in the doctrine of a foreordaining and ever-directing providence, planning and controlling every one of the child’s actions, than ever was taught in necessitarian essays. That the child would be taught the laws of existence, and would be shown how certain conduct resulted in pleasure, and certain other conduct was during life attended with pain, and that the result of such teaching would be far more efficacious in its moral results, than the inculcation of a present responsibility, and an ultimate heaven and hell, in which latter doctrine, nearly all Christians profess to believe, but nearly all act as if it were not of the slightest consequence whether any such paradise or infernal region exists.

Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, born October 1, 1672, died November 15, 1751, may be taken as one of the school of polished deistical writers, who, though comparatively few, fairly

enough represents the religious opinions of the large majority of the journalists of the present day. In the course of Bolingbroke's "Letters on the Study of History" a strong sceptical spirit is manifested, and he speaks in one of "the share which the divines of all religions have taken in the corruption of history." In another he thus deals with the question of the Bible: — "It has been said by Abbadie, and others, 'that the accidents which have happened to alter the texts of the Bible, and to disfigure, if I may say so, the scriptures in many respects, could not have been prevented without a perpetual standing miracle, and that a perpetual standing miracle is not in the order of providence.' Now I can by no means subscribe to this opinion. It seems evident to my reason that the very contrary must be true; if we suppose that God acts towards men according to the moral fitness of things; and if we suppose that he acts arbitrarily, we can form no opinion at all. I think these accidents would not have happened, or that the scriptures would have been preserved entirely in their genuine purity notwithstanding these accidents, if they had been entirely dictated by the Holy Ghost: and the proof of this probable proposition, according to our clearest and most distinct ideas of wisdom and moral fitness, is obvious and easy. But these scriptures are not so come down to us: they are come down broken and confused, full of additions, interpolations, and transpositions, made we neither know when, nor by whom; and such, in short, as never appeared on the face of any other book, on whose authority men have agreed to rely. This being so, my lord, what hypothesis shall we follow? Shall we adhere to some such distinction as I have mentioned? Shall we say, for instance, that the scriptures were originally written by the authors to whom they are vulgarly ascribed, but that these authors writ nothing by inspiration, except the legal, the doctrinal, and the prophetic parts, and that in every other respect their authority is purely human, and therefore fallible? Or shall we say that these histories are nothing more than compilations of old traditions, and abridgements of old records, made in later times, as they appear to every one who reads them without prepossession and with attention?"

It has been alleged that Pope's verse is but another rendering of Bolingbroke's views without his "aristocratic nonchalance," and that some passages of Pope regarded as hostile to revealed religion, were specially due to the influence of Bolingbroke; and more than one critic has professed to trace identities of thought and expression in order to show that Pope was largely indebted to the published works of St. John.

David Hume was born at Edinburgh, 26th April, 1711, and died 1776. He created a new school of Freethinkers, and is to-day one of the most esteemed amongst sceptical authors. He was a profound thinker, and an easy, elegant writer, who did much to

give a force and solidity to extreme heretical reasonings, which they had hitherto been regarded as lacking. His heretical essays have had a far wider circulation since his death than they enjoyed during his life. Many volumes have been issued in the fruitless endeavor to refute him, and all these have contributed to widen the circle of his readers. He adopted and advocated the utilitarian and necessitarian theory of morals, and wrote of ordinary theism and religion as arising from personification of unknown causes for general or special phenomena. He held and advanced the idea, which Buckle so fully states, and endeavors to prove in his "History of Civilisation" — viz., that general laws operate amongst peoples, and influence and determine their so-called moral conduct, much as other laws do the orbits of planets, the occurrences of eclipses, etc. His arguments against miracles, as evidences for revealed religion, remain unrefuted, although they have been made the subject of many attacks. He contends, in effect, that in each account of a miraculous occurrence there is always more *prima facie* probability of error, or bad faith on the part of the narrator, than of interference with those invariable sequences known as natural laws, and there was really no reply in the conclusion of Dr. Campbell, to the effect that we have equally to trust human testimony for an account of the laws of nature and for the narratives of miracles, for in truth you never have the same character of human testimony for the latter as for the former. And, further, while in the case of human testimony as to natural events, it is evidence which you may test and compare with your own experience. This is not so as to miracles, declared at once to be out of the range of all ordinary experience. "Men," he says, "are carried by a natural instinct or prepossession to repose faith in their senses. When they follow this blind and powerful instinct of nature, they always suppose the very images presented to the senses to be the external objects, and never entertain any suspicion that the one are nothing but representatives of the other. But this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception. So far, then, we are necessitated by reasoning to contradict the primary instincts of nature, and to embrace a new system with regard to the evidence of our senses. But here philosophy finds herself extremely embarrassed, when she would obviate the cavils and objections of the sceptics. She can no longer plead the infallible and irresistible instinct of nature, for that led us to quite a different system, which is acknowledged fallible, and even erroneous, and to justify this pretended philosophical system by a chain of clear and convincing argument, or even any appearance of argument, exceeds the power of all human capacity. Do you follow the instinct and propensities of nature in assenting to the veracity of the senses? But these lead

you to believe that the very perception or sensible image is the external object — (Idealism.) Do you disclaim this principle in order to embrace a more rational opinion, that the perceptions are only representations of something external? You here depart from your natural propensities, and more obvious sentiments; and yet are not able to satisfy your reason, which can never find any convincing argument from experience to prove that the perceptions are connected with external objects — (Scepticism.)”

Charles de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu, born in 1689 near Bordeaux, died at Paris 1755, who earned considerable fame by his “Lettres Persanes,” is more famous for his oft-referred to work “L’Esprit des Lois.” Victor Cousin describes him as “the man of our country who has best comprehended history, and who first gave an example of true historic method.” In the publication of certain of his ideas on history, Montesquieu was the layer of the foundation-stone for an edifice which Buckle would probably have gloriously crowned had his life been longer. Voltaire, who sharply criticises Montesquieu, declares that he has earned the eternal gratitude of Europe by his grand views and his bold attacks on tyranny, superstition, and grinding taxation. Montesquieu urged that virtue is the true essence of republicanism, but misled by the mistaken notions of honor held by his predecessors and contemporaries, he declared honor to be the principle of monarchical institutions. Voltaire reminds him that “it is in courts that men, devoid of honor, often attain to the highest dignities; and it is in republics that a known dishonorable citizen is seldom trusted by the people with public concerns.” Montesquieu wrote in favor of a constitutional monarchy such as then existed in England, and his work shadowed forth a future for the middle class in France.

Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire, born 20th February, 1694, at Chatenay, died 30th May, 1778, may be fairly written of as the man, to whose fertile brain and active pen, to whose great genius, fierce irony, and thorough humanity, we owe much more of the rapid change of popular thought in Europe during the last century, than to any other man. His wit, like the electric flash, spared nothing; his love for his kind would have made him the protector of everything weak, his desire to protect himself from the consequences of his truest utterances often dims the hero-halo with which his name is surrounded. Born and trained amongst a corrupt and selfish class, it is not wonderful that we find some of their pernicious habits clinging to parts of his career. On the contrary, it is more wonderful to find that he has shaken off so much of the consequences of his education. Neither in politics nor in theology was he so very extreme in his utterances as many deemed him, for while he occasionally severely handled individual monarchs, we do not find him the preacher of republicanism. On the contrary, he is often severe against some of the advanced political views of

Jean Jacques Rousseau. He nevertheless suggests that it might have been “the art of working metals which originally made kings, and the art of casting cannons which now maintains them,” and as a commentary on kingly conduct in the matter of taxation, declares that “a shepherd ought to shear his sheep and not to flay them.” In theological controversy he wrote as a Theist, and declares “Atheism and Fanaticism” to be “two monsters which may tear Society in pieces, but the Atheist preserves his reason, which checks his propensity to mischief, while the fanatic is under the influence of a madness constantly urging him on.” For the ancient Jews, and for the Hebrew records, Voltaire entertained so thorough a feeling of contemptuous detestation, that in his “*Défense de mon Oncle*,” and his articles and letters on the Jews, we find utter disbelief in them as a chosen people, and the strongest abhorrence of their brutal habits, heightened in expression by the scathing satire of his phrases. To the more modern descendants of Abraham he said: “We have repeatedly driven you away through avarice; we have recalled you through avarice and stupidity; we still, in more towns than one, make you pay for liberty to breathe the air; we have, in more kingdoms than one, sacrificed you to God; we have burned you as holocausts — for I will not follow your example, and dissemble that we have offered up sacrifices of human blood; all the difference is, that our priests, content with applying your money to their own use, have had you burned by laymen; while your priests always immolated their human victims with their own sacred hands. You were monsters of cruelty and fanaticism in Palestine; we have been so in Europe.”

Writing on miracles, Voltaire asks: “For what purpose would God perform a miracle? To accomplish some particular design upon living beings? He would then, in reality, be supposed to say — I have not been able to effect by my construction of the universe, by my divine decrees, by my eternal laws, a particular object; I am now going to change my eternal ideas and immutable laws, to endeavor to accomplish what I have not been able to do by means of them. This would be an avowal of his weakness, not of his power; it would appear in such a being an inconceivable contradiction. Accordingly, therefore, to dare to ascribe miracles to God is, if man can in reality insult God, actually offering him that insult. It is saying to him — You are a weak and inconsistent being. It is therefore absurd to believe in miracles; it is, in fact, dishonoring the divinity.”

Those who are inclined to attack the character of Voltaire should read the account of his endeavors for the Calas family. How, when old Calas had been broken alive on the wheel at Toulouse, and his family were ruined, Voltaire took up their case, aided them with means, spared no effort of his pen or brain, and ultimately achieved the great victory of reversing the unjust sen-

tence, and obtaining compensation for the family. If, then, these Voltaire-haters have not learned to love this great heretic, let them study the narrative of his even more successful endeavors on behalf of the Sirvens; more successful, because in this case he took up the fight before an unjust judgment could be delivered, and thus prevented the repetition of such an iniquitous execution as had taken place in the Calas case. The cowardly slanders as to his conduct when dying are not worth notice; those spit on the grave of the dead who would not have dared to look in the face of the living.

Claude Adrian Helvetius was born at Paris 1715, and died December, 1771. His best known works are "De l'Esprit," published 1758; "Essai sur l'Origine des Connaissances Humaines," 1746; "Traite des Systemes," 1749; "Traite des Sensations," 1758. Rousseau wrote in reply to Helvetius, but when the Parliament of Paris condemned the work "De l'Esprit," and it was in consequence burned by the common hangman, Rousseau withdrew his refutatory volume. Helvetius argues that any religion, of which the chiefs are intolerant, and the conduct of which is expensive to the state, "cannot long be the religion of an enlightened and well governed nation. The people that submit to it will labor only to maintain the ease and luxury of the priesthood; each of its inhabitants will be nothing more than a slave to the sacerdotal power. A religion to be good should be tolerant and little expensive. Its clergy should have no authority over the people. A dread of the priest debases the mind and the soul, makes the one brutish and the other slavish. Must the ministers of the altar always be armed with the sword of the State? Can the barbarities committed by their intolerance ever be forgotten? The earth is yet drenched with the blood they have spilled. Civil tolerance alone is not sufficient to secure the peace of nations. Every dogma is a seed of discord and injustice sown amongst mankind."

"Why do you make the Supreme Being resemble an eastern tyrant? Why make him punish slight faults with eternal torment? Why thus put the name of the Divinity at the bottom of the portrait of the devil? Why oppress the soul with a load of fear, break its springs, and of a worshipper of Jesus make a vile, pusillanimous slave? It is the malignant who paint a malignant God. What is their devotion? A veil for their crimes."

"Let not the rewards of heaven be made the price of trifling religious operations, which convey a diminutive idea of the Eternal and a false conception of virtue; its rewards should never be assigned to fasting, haircloth, a blind submission, and self-castigation. The men who place these operations among the virtues, might as well place those of leaping, dancing, and tumbling on the rope." "Humility may be held in veneration by the dwellers in a monastery or a convent, it favors the meanness and idleness of a

monastic life. But ought humility to be regarded as the virtue of the people? No." Speaking of the Pagan systems, Helvetius says: "All the fables of mythology were mere emblems of certain principles of nature."

Baron d'Holbach, a native of the Palatinate, born January 1723, died 21st January, 1789, deserves special notice, as being the man whose house was the gathering place of the knot of writers and thinkers who struck light and life into the dark and deadened brain of France. He is generally reputed to have been the author of that well-known work, the "System of Nature," which was issued as if by Mirabaud. This work, although it was fiercely assailed at the time by the pen of Voltaire, and by the *plaidorie* of the prosecuting Avocat-General, and has since been attacked by hundreds who had never read it, yet remains a wonderfully popular exposition of the power-gathering heresy of the century, and, as far as we are aware, has never received efficient reply. Probably next to Paine's works, it had in England during the second quarter of this century the widest circulation of any anti-theological book, this circulation extending through the manufacturing ranks. In the eighteenth century Mirabaud could, in England, only be found in the hands of the few, but fifty years had wondrously multiplied the number of readers.

Joseph Priestley was born near Leeds, 13th March, 1733, and being towards the latter part of his life driven out of England, by the persecuting spirit evinced towards him, and which had been specially excited by his republican tendencies, he died at Northumberland, Pennsylvania, on the 6th February, 1804. Originally a Church of England clergyman, his first notable inclination towards heterodoxy manifested itself in hesitation as to the doctrine of the atonement. He ultimately rejected the immortality and immateriality of the soul, argued for necessitarianism, and earned considerable unpopularity by the boldness of some of his sentiments on political as well as theological matters. Priestley was one of the rapidly multiplying instances of heresy alike in religion and politics, but he provoked the most bitter antagonism. His works were burned by the common hangman, his house, library, and scientific instruments were destroyed by an infuriate and pious mob. Despite all this, his heresy, according to his own view of it, was not of a very outrageous character, for he believed in Deity, in revealed religion, and in Christianity, rather putting the blame on misconduct of alleged Christians. He said: "The wretched forms under which Christianity has long been generally exhibited, and its degrading alliance with, or rather its subjection to, a power wholly heterogeneous to it, and which has employed it for the most unworthy purposes, has made it contemptible and odious in the eyes of all sensible men, who are now everywhere casting off the very profession and every badge of it. Enlightened Christians must

themselves, in some measure, join with unbelievers in exposing whatever will not bear examination in or about religion." His writings on scientific topics were most voluminous; his most heretical volumes are those on "Matter and Spirit."

Edward Gibbon was born at Putney, the 27th April, 1737, and died 16th January, 1794. He was a polished and painstaking writer, aristocratic in his tendencies and associations, who had educated himself into a disbelief in the principal dogmas of Christianity, but who loved the peace and quietude of an easy life too much to enter the lists as an active antagonist of the Church. His works, especially the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," have been regarded as infidel in their tendency, rather from what has been left unsaid than from the direct statements against Christianity. The sneer at the evidence of prophecy, or the doubt of the reality of miraculous evidences, is guardedly expressed. It is only when Gibbon can couch his lance against some reckless and impudent forger of Christian evidences, such as Eusebius, that you have anything like a bold condemnation. A prophecy or a miracle is treated tenderly, and if killed, it is rather with over-affectionate courtesy than by rough handling. In some parts of his vindications of the attacked passages, Gibbon's scepticism finds vent in the collection and quotation of unpleasantly heretical views of others, but he carefully avoids committing himself to very distinct personal declarations of disbelief; he claims to be the unbiased historian recording fact, and leaving others to form their own conclusions. It would perhaps be most appropriate to express his convictions as to the religions of the world, in nearly the same words as those which he used to characterise the various modes of worship at Rome: "All considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful."

Pierre John George Cabanis, born at Conac, near Breves 5th June, 1757, died 6th May, 1808, following Condillac in many respects, was one of those whose physiological investigations have opened out wide fields of knowledge in psychology, and who did much to promote the establishment in France, America, and England, of a new school of Freethinkers. "Subject to the action of external bodies," he says, "man finds in the impressions these bodies make on his organs, at once his knowledge and the causes of his continued existence, for to live is to feel; and in that admirable chain of phenomena which constitute his existence, every want depends on the development of some faculty; every faculty by its very development satisfies some want, and the faculties grow by exercise, as the wants extend with the facility of satisfying them. By the continual action of external bodies on the senses of man, results the most remarkable part of his existence. But is it true that the nervous centres only receive and combine

the impressions which reach them from the bodies? Is it true that no image or idea is formed in the brain, and that no determination of the sensitive organ takes place, other than by virtue of these same impressions on the senses strictly so-called? The faculty of feeling and of spontaneous movement forms the character of animal nature. The faculty of feeling consists in the property possessed by the nervous system of being warned by the impressions produced on its different parts, and notably on its extremities. These impressions are internal or external. External impressions, when perception is distinct, are called sensations. Internal impressions are very often vague and confused, and the animal is then only warned by their effects, and does not clearly distinguish their connexion with the causes. The former result from the application of external objects to the organs of sense, and on them ideas depend. The latter result from the development of the regular functions, or from the maladies to which each organ is subject; and from these issue those determinations which bear the name of instincts. Feeling and movement are linked together. Every movement is determined by an impression, and the nerves, as the organs of feeling, animate and direct the motor organs. In feeling, the nervous organ reacts on itself. In movement it reacts on other parts, to which it communicates the contractile faculty, the simple and fecund principle of all animal movement. Finally, the vital functions can exercise themselves by the influence of some nervous ramifications, isolated from the system — the instinctive faculties can develop themselves, even when the brain is almost wholly destroyed, and when it seems wholly inactive. But for the formation of thoughts, it is necessary that the brain should exist, and be in a healthy condition; it is the special organ of thought.”

Thomas Paine, the most famous Deist of modern times, was born at Thetford, on the 29th January, 1737, and died 8th June, 1809. It will hardly be untrue to say that the famous “rebellious needleman” has been the most popular writer in Great Britain and America against revealed religion, and that his works, from their plain clear language, have in those countries had, and still have, a far wider circulation than those of any other modern sceptical author. His anti-theology was allied to his republicanism; he warred alike against church and throne, and his impeachment of each was couched in the plainest Anglo-Saxon. His name became at the same time a word of terror to the aristocracy and to the clergy. In England numerous prosecutions were commenced against the vendors of his political and theological works, and against persons suspected of giving currency to his views. The peace-officers searched poor men’s houses to discover his dreaded works. Lancashire and Yorkshire artisans read him by stealth, and assembled in corners of fields that they might discuss

the “Age of Reason,” and yet be safe from surprise by the authorities. Heavy sentences were passed upon men convicted of promulgating his opinions; but all without effect, the forbidden fruit found eager gatherers. Paine appears to have been tinged with scepticism from his early boyhood, but it was as a democratic writer that he first achieved literary fame. His “Age of Reason” was the culminating blow which the dying eighteenth century aimed at the Hebrew and Christian records. Theretofore scholarly philosophers, metaphysicians, and critics had written for their fellows, and whether or not any of the mass read and understood, the authors cared but little. Now the people were addressed by one of themselves in language startling in its plainness. Paine was not a deep examiner of metaphysical problems, but he was terribly in earnest in his rejection of an impossible creed.

Charles Francois Dupuis was born near Chaumont, in France, the 16th Oct., 1742, died 29th Sept., 1809. He played a prominent part in the great revolutionary movement, and was Secretary to the National Convention. His famous work, “L’Origine de tous les Cultes,” is one of the grand heresy marks of the eighteenth century. Himself a Pantheist, he searched through the mythic traditions of the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Hindus, and the Hebrews, and as a result, sought to demonstrate a common origin for all religions. Dr. John Pye Smith classes Dupuis as an Atheist, but this is most certainly an incorrect classification. He did not believe in creation, nor could he go outside the universe to search for its cause, but he regarded God as “*la force universelle et eternellement active,*” which permeated and animated everything. Dupuis was an example of a new and rapidly increasing class of Freethinking writers — *i.e.*, those who, not content with doubting the divine origin of the religions they attacked, sought to explain the source and progress of the various systems. He urges that all religions find their base in the attempts at personification of some one or other, or of the whole of the forces of the universe, and shows what an important part the sun and moon have been made to play in the Egyptian, Greek, and Hindu mythologies. He argues that the fabulous biographies of Hercules, Bacchus, Osiris, Mithra, and Jesus, find their common origin in the sun-worship, thus cloaked and hidden from the vulgar in each country. He does not attack the Hebrew Records as simply inaccurate, but endeavors to show clear Sabaistic foundation for many of the most important narratives. The works of Dupuis and Dulaure should be read together; they contain the most complete amongst the many attempts to trace out the common origins of the various mythologies of the world. In the ninth chapter of Dupuis’ great work, he deals with the “fable made upon the sun adored under the name of Christ,” “*un dieu qui ait mangé autrefois sur la terre, et qu’on y mange aujourd’hui*” and unquestionably urges strange points of

coincidence. It is only astrologically that the 25th of December can be fixed, he argues, as the birthday of Mithra and of Jesus, then born of the celestial Virgin. Our Easter festivities for the resurrection of Jesus are but another form of the more ancient rejoicing at that season for Adonis, the sun-God, restored to the world after his descent into the lower regions. He recalls that the ancient Druidic worship recognised the Virgin suckling the child, and gathers together many illustrations favorable to his theory. Here we do no more than point out that while reason was rapidly releasing itself from priestly thralldom, heretics were not content to deny the divine origin of Christianity, but sought to trace its mundane or celestial source, and strip it of its fabulous plumage.

Constantine Francis Chasseboeuf Count Volney, born at Craon in Anjou, February 3rd, 1757, died 1820. He was a Deist. In his two great works, "The Ruins of Empires," and "New Researches on Ancient History," he advances many of the views brought forward by Dupuis, from whom he quotes, but his volumes are much more readable than those of the author of the "Origin of all Religions." Volney appears to have been one of the first to popularise many of Spinoza's Biblical criticisms. He denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He wrote most vigorously against kingcraft as well as priestcraft, regarding all systems of monarchy and religion as founded on the ignorance and servility, the superstition and weakness of the people. He puts the following into the mouth of Mahomedan priests replying to Christian preachers: "We maintain that your gospel morality is by no means characterised by the perfection you ascribe to it. It is not true that it has introduced into the world new and unknown virtues; for example, the equality of mankind in the eyes of God, and the fraternity and benevolence which are the consequence of this equality, were tenets formerly professed by the sect of Hermetics and Samaneans, from whom you have your descent. As to forgiveness of injuries, it had been taught by the Pagans themselves; but in the latitude you give to it, it ceases to be a virtue, and becomes an immorality and a crime. Your boasted precept, to him that strikes thee on thy right cheek turn the other also, is not only contrary to the feelings of man, but a flagrant violation of every principle of justice; it emboldens the wicked by impunity, degrades the virtuous by the servility to which it subjects them; delivers up the world to disorder and tyranny, and dissolves the bands of society — such is the true spirit of your doctrine. The precepts and parables of your Gospel also never represent God other than as a despot, acting by no rule of equity; than as a partial father treating a debauched and prodigal son with greater favor than his obedient and virtuous children; than as a capricious master giving the same wages to him who has wrought but one hour, as to those who have borne the burden and heat of the day, and preferring the last

comers to the first. In short, your morality throughout is unfriendly to human intercourse; a code of misanthropy calculated to give men a disgust for life and society, and attach them to solitude and celibacy. With respect to the manner in which you have practised your boasted doctrine, we in our turn appeal to the testimony of fact, and ask, was it your evangelical meekness and forbearance which excited those endless wars among your sectaries, those atrocious persecutions of what you call heretics, those crusades against the Arians, the Manichæans, and the Protestants, not to mention those which you have committed against us, nor the sacrilegious associations still subsisting among you, formed of men who have sworn to perpetuate them?¹ Was it the charity of your Gospel that led you to exterminate whole nations in America, and to destroy the empires of Mexico and Peru; that makes you still desolate Africa, the inhabitants of which you sell like cattle, notwithstanding the abolition of slavery that you pretend your religion has effected; that makes you ravage India whose domain you usurp; in short, is it charity that has prompted you for three centuries past to disturb the peaceful inhabitants of three continents, the most prudent of whom, those of Japan and China, have been constrained to banish you from their country, that they might escape your chains and recover their domestic tranquillity?"

During the early part of the eighteenth century, magazines and other periodicals began to grow apace, and pamphlets multiplied exceedingly in this country. Addison, Steele, Defoe, and Dean Swift all helped in the work of popular education, and often in a manner probably unanticipated by themselves. Dean Swift's satire against scepticism was fiercely powerful; but his onslaughts against Roman Catholics and Presbyterians made far more sceptics than his other writings had made churchmen.

During the latter portion of the eighteenth century, a new phase of popular progress was exhibited in the comparatively lively interest taken in political questions by the great body of the people inhabiting large towns. In America, France, and England, this was strongly marked; it is, however, in this country that we find special evidences of the connexion between heresy and progress, as contradistinguished from orthodoxy and obstructiveness, manifested in the struggle for the liberty of the press and platform; a struggle in which some of the boldest efforts were made by poor and heretical self-taught men. The dying eighteenth century witnessed, in England, repeated instances of State prosecutions, in which the charge of entertaining or advocating the views of the Republican heretic, Paine, formed a prominent feature, and there is little doubt that the efforts of the London Corresponding Society (which the Government of the day made strenuous endeavors to repress) to give circulation to some of Paine's political opinions in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the North, had for result

the familiarising many men with views they would have otherwise feared to investigate. The step from the “Rights of Man” to the “Age of Reason” was but a short stride for an advancing inquirer. In France the end of the eighteenth century was marked by a frightful convulsion, but in the case of France, the revolution was too sudden to be immediately beneficial or enduring, the people were as a mass too poor, and therefore too ignorant, to wield the power so rapidly wrested from the class who had so long monopolised it. It is far better to grow out of a creed by the sure and gradual consciousness of the truths of existence, than to dash off a religious garb simply from abhorrence of the shameful practices of its professors, or sudden conviction of the falsity of many of the testimonies in its favor. So it is a more permanent and more complete revolution which is effectuated by educating men to a sense of the majesty and worth of true manhood, than is any mere sudden overturning a rotten or cruel usurpation. Monarchies are most thoroughly and entirely destroyed — not by pulling down the throne, or by decapitating the king, but by educating and building up with a knowledge of political duty, each individual citizen amongst the people.

It is here that heresy has its great advantage. Christianity says: “The powers that be are ordained of God, he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God.” Heresy challenges the divine right of the governor, and declares that government should be the best contrivance of national wisdom to promote the national weal, to provide against national want, and alleviate national suffering — that government which is only a costly machinery for conserving class privileges, and preventing popular freedom, is a tyrannical usurpation of power, which it is the duty of true men to destroy.

I have briefly and imperfectly alluded to a few of the men who stand out as the sign-posts of heretical progress during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; in some future publication of wider scope fairer tribute may be paid to the memories of some of these mighty warriors in the Freethought army. My object is to show that the civilisation of the masses is in proportion to the spread of heresy amongst them, that its effect is seen in an exhibition of manly dignity and self-reliant effort which is utterly unattainable amongst a superstitious people. Look at the lazzaroni of the Neapolitan States, or the peasant of the Campagna, and you have at once the fearful illustration of demoralisation by faith in the beggar, brigand, and believer.

It is sometimes pretended that such advantages of education and position as the people may boast in England, their civil rights and social advancement, are owing to their Christianity, but in point of fact the reverse is the case. For centuries Christianity had

done little but fetter tightly the masses to Church and Crown, to Priest and Baron; the enfranchisement is comparatively modern. Even in this very day, in the districts where the people are entirely in the hands of the clergy of the Established Church, there they are as a mass the most depraved. Take the agricultural counties and the agricultural laborers: there are no heretical books or papers to be seen in their cottages, no heretical speakers come amongst them to disturb their contentment; the deputy-lieutenant, the squire, and the rector wield supreme authority — the parish church has no rival. But what are the people as a mass? They are not men, they are not women; they lack men's and women's thoughts and aspirations; they are diggers and weeders, hedgers and ditchers, ploughmen and carters; they are taught to be content with the state of life in which it has pleased God to place them.

My plea is, that modern heresy, from Spinoza to Mill, has given brain-strength and dignity to every one it has permeated — that the popular propagandists of this heresy, from Bruno to Carlile, have been the true redeemers and saviors, the true educators of the people. The redemption is yet only at its commencement, the education only lately begun, but the change is traceable already; as witness the power to speak and write, and the ability to listen and read, which have grown amongst the masses during the last hundred years. And if to-day we write with higher hope, it is because the right to speak and the right to print has been partly freed from the fetters forged through long generations of intellectual prostration, and almost entirely freed from the statutory limitations which, under pretence of checking blasphemy and sedition, have really gagged honest speech against Pope and Emperor, against Church and Throne.

ENDNOTES

¹ The oath taken by the Knights of the Order of Malta is to kill, or make the Mahometans prisoners, for the glory of God.