

Christian tendency, hostile to everything supernatural, every sentiment of a God above the world; a tendency which contained.....the *germ* of absolute rationalism" (*Hist. of the Chr. Church*, Torrey's tr. ix, 536). Pantheism, logically extended, obviously reduces the supernatural and the natural to unity, and is thus atheistic. But that the pantheists of Geneva in Calvin's day reached logical consistency is incredible. The Libertine sect, in all likelihood, was only partially antinomian, and only in every small part consciously anti-Christian.

At this period (1552), on the same issue of predestination, Calvin broke utterly with one of his closest friends, Jacques de Bourgoigne, Sieur de Falais.¹ It seemed as if the Protestant polity were disrupting in a continuous convulsion of dogmatic strife; and Melanchthon wrote to Bucer in despair over the madness and misery of a time in which Geneva was returning to the fatalism of the Stoics, and imprisoning whosoever would not agree with Zeno. By this time it must have been clear to some that behind the strifes of raging theologians there lay a philosophic problem which they could not sound. It is therefore not surprising to learn that already Basel University, as fifty years before at Erfurt, there was a latitudinarian group of professors who aimed at a universal religion, and came near "naturalism" in the attempt;² while elsewhere in Switzerland, as we shall see later, there grew up the still freer way of thought which came to be known as Deism.

A great impulse to that development, as well as to simple Unitarianism, must have been given by the execution of Michael Servetus.⁴ That ill-starred heretic, born of Spanish stock in France, brought to the propaganda of Unitarianism, of which he may be reckoned the inaugurator, a determination as strong as Calvin's own. Sent by his father to study civil law at Toulouse, he began there to study the Bible, doubtless under the stimulus of the early Protestant discussions of the time. The result was a prompt advance beyond the Protestant standpoint. Leaving Toulouse after two or three years' residence, he visited Bologna and Augsburg in the train of the confessor of Charles V. Thereafter he visited Lyons and Geneva, and had some intercourse with Oecolampadius

¹ Stähelin, ii, 293-301.

² Stähelin, ii, 293. Arminius pointed to this letter as a proof that Melanchthon had abandoned his early predestinarianism (*Declaratio* of 1608, xx, 2; *Works of Arminius*, ed. Nichols, i, 578). But of course Melanchthon had previously guarded himself in his *Loci Communes* (1545) and elsewhere. (*Id.* pp. 597-98.)

⁴ Latinized name of Miguel Serveto, alias Reves, born at Tudela in Navarre in 1511, son of Hernando Villanueva, a notary of an Aragonese family, of which Villanueva had been the seat. The statement of De la Roche that Servetus was born in Aragon, though long current, is now exploded.

at Basel, where he put in the hands of a bookseller the signed manuscript of his first book, *De Trinitatis erroribus libri septem*. The bookseller sent it on to Hagenau, in Alsace, which as an "imperial city" seems to have had special freedom in the matter of book-publishing; and thither, after visiting Bucer and Capito at Strasburg, Servetus went to have it printed in 1531.¹ In this treatise, produced in his twenty-first year, he definitely rejects Trinitarianism, while putting somewhat obscurely his own idea of the nature of Jesus Christ—whom, it should be noted, he held in high reverence. In the following year he produced at the same place another small treatise, *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo*, wherein he recasts his first work, "retracting" it and apologizing for its crudity, but standing substantially to its positions. It was not till 1553 that he printed at Vienne in Dauphiné, without his name, his *Christianismi Restitutio*.² In the interval he had been doing scientific work as an editor of Ptolemy (1535, Lyons), and as a student of and lecturer on anatomy and medicine at Paris, where (1536) he met Calvin on his last visit to France. In 1538 he is found studying at Louvain; and, after practising medicine at Avignon and Charlieu, he again studies medicine at Montpellier. The Archbishop of Vienne, who had heard him lecture at Paris, established him at Vienne as his confidential physician (1541–53), and there it was that he produced the book for which he died. About 1545–46 he had rashly written to Calvin, sending him the MS. of the much-expanded recast of his books which later appeared as the *Restitutio*. Calvin sent a hostile reply, and on the same day wrote to Farel: "If he come, and my influence can avail, I shall not suffer him to depart alive." Servetus had denounced the papacy as fiercely as any Protestant could wish, yet his heresy on the question of the Trinity³ was enough to doom him to instant death at Calvin's hands. Servetus could not get back his MS., and wrote to a friend about 1547 that he felt sure the affair would bring him to his death.⁴ When in 1552–53 he had the book privately

¹ De la Roche, *Mémoires de Littérature*, cited in *An Impartial History of Servetus*, 1724, p. 27.

² *Christianismi Restitutio, h.e. Totius ecclesiæ apostolicæ ad sua limina vocatio in integrum, restituta cognitione Dei, fidei christianæ, justificationis nostræ, regenerationis, baptismi, Cœnæ Domini manducationis. Restituito denique nobis regno cœlesti, Babylonis impia captivitate solutâ, et antichristo cum suis penitus destructo*, 1553. Of this book De la Roche (1711) knew of no printed copy, having read it solely in MS. Perfect copies, however, are preserved in Vienna and Paris; and an imperfect one in Edinburgh University Library has been completed from the original draft, which has matter not in the printed copy. It has been pointed out that the book is not absolutely anonymous, inasmuch as it has at the end the initials M. S. V.—the V. standing for the name Villanova or Villanovanus, which he bore as a student at Louvain and put on the title-pages of his scientific works; and Servetus is actually introduced as an interlocutor in one of the dialogues.

³ It is to be remembered, however, that he pronounced all Trinitarians to be "veros Atheos." *History of Servetus*, p. 131. ⁴ "Mihi ob eam rem moriendum esse certo scio."

printed at Vienne, and the bulk of the edition was sent to Lyons and Frankfort, the toils closed around him, the ecclesiastical authorities at Lyons being apprised of the facts by de Trie, a Genevan Protestant, formerly of Lyons. The whole Protestant world, in fact, was of one opinion in desiring to suppress Servetus's anti-Trinitarian books, and the wonder is that he had so long escaped both Protestant and Catholic fury. Luther had called his first book horribly wicked; and Melanchthon, who in 1533 foresaw from the second much dangerous debate, wrote in 1539 to the Venetian Senate to warn them against letting either be sold.¹ It is significant of the random character of Protestant as of Catholic thought that Servetus, like Melanchthon, was a convinced believer in astrology,² while Luther on Biblical grounds rejected astrology and the Copernican astronomy alike, and held devoutly by the belief in witchcraft. The superiority of Servetus consists in his real scientific work—he having in part given out the true doctrine of the circulation of the blood³—and his objection to all persecution of heresy.⁴ Philosophically, he was more than a mere Scripturist. Though pantheism was not charged upon him, we have Calvin's testimony that he propounded it in the strongest form.⁵

Calvin's guilt in the matter begins with his devices to have Servetus seized by the Catholic authorities of Lyons⁶—to set misbelievers, as he regarded them, to slay the misbeliever—and his use of Servetus's confidential letters against him.⁷ He was not repelling a heresy from his own city, but heretic-hunting far away in sheer malignity. The Catholics were the less cruel gaolers, and let their prisoner escape, condemning him to death at Vienne in absence. After some months of wandering he had the temerity to seek to pass into Italy by way of Geneva, and was there at length recognized, and arrested. After a long trial he was sentenced to be burned alive (Oct. 27, 1553). The trial at Geneva is a classic document in the records of the cruelties committed in honour of chimeras; and

¹ Melanchthon, *Epist.* lib. i, ep. 3; McCrie, *Reformation in Italy*, p. 96; Trechsel, *Lelio Sozini*, 1844, pp. 38-41.

² Willis, *Servetus and Calvin*, 1877, p. 117.

³ See the careful account of Dr. Austin Flint, of New York, in his pamphlet, *Rabelais as a Physiologist*, rep. from *New York Medical Journal* of June 29, 1901.

⁴ Willis, p. 53.

⁵ Letter to Farel, Aug. 20, 1553 (*Letters*, Eng. tr. ii, 399). Cp. Henry, ii, 195-96.

⁶ *Id.* ch. xix. See the letter of Trie, given in Henry's *Life of Calvin* (Eng. tr. ii, 184-85), with the admission that Trie was in Calvin's counsels. Henry vainly endeavours to make light (pp. 181-82) of Calvin's written words to Farel concerning Servetus: "Si venerit, modo valeat mea autoritas, vivum exire nunquam patiar." Still, it must in fairness be remembered that Trie, by his own account, persuaded Calvin, who was reluctant, to his act of complicity with the inquisitors of Lyons. Cp. Bossert, *Calvin*, pp. 160-64.

⁷ Willis, ch. xx. Cp. pp. 457, 503. The defence of Calvin in Mackenzie's *Life* (1809, p. 79) on the score that he was not likely to communicate with Catholic officials does not meet the case as to Trie. And cp. p. 83.

Calvin's part is the sufficient proof that the Protestant could hold his own with the Catholic Inquisitor in the spirit of hate.¹ It has been urged, in his excuse, that the doctrines of Servetus were blasphemously put; but in point of fact Calvin passed some of his bitterest denunciation on the statement, cited (from Lorenz Friese) in a note in Servetus's edition of Ptolemy's *Geography*, that Judea is actually a barren and meagre country, and not "flowing with milk and honey." Despite the citation of ample proof, and the plea that the passage was drawn from a previous edition, it was by Calvin adjudged blasphemous in that it "necessarily inculpated Moses and grievously outraged the Holy Spirit."² The language of Calvin against Servetus at this point is utterly furious. Had Servetus chanced to maintain the doctrine of the earth's motion, he would certainly have been adjudged a blasphemer on that score also; for in the Argument to his *Commentary on Genesis* (1563) Calvin doggedly maintains the Ptolemaic theory. His language tells of much private freethinking around him on the Mosaic doctrine, and his tone leaves no doubt as to how he would treat published heresy on that theme. The audacity of Servetus in suggesting that the 53rd chapter of Isaiah had historical reference to Cyrus is for him anathema.³

Even before this hideous episode, Calvin's passion of malevolence against his theological opponents in his own sect is such as to shock some of his adoring biographers.⁴ All the Protestant leaders, broadly speaking, grew more intolerant as they grew in years—a fair test as between the spirit of dogma and the spirit of freethought. Calvin had begun by pleading for tolerance and clemency; Luther, beginning as a humanitarian, soon came to be capable of hounding on the German nobility against the unhappy peasants; Melanchthon, tolerant in his earlier days, applauded the burning of Servetus;⁵ Beza laboriously defended the act. Erasmus stood for tolerance; and Luther accordingly called him godless, an enemy of true religion, a slanderer of Christ, a Lucian, an Epicurean, and (by implication) the greatest knave alive.⁶

¹ Ten years after the death of Servetus, Calvin calls him a "dog and wicked scoundrel" (Willis, p. 530; cp. *Hist. of Servetus*, p. 214, citing Calvin's Comm. on Acts xx); and in his *Commentary on Genesis* (i, 3, ed. 1838, p. 9) he says of him: "*Latrat hic obscoenus canis.*" And Servetus had asked his pardon at the end.

² White, *Warfare of Science with Theology*, 1896, i, 113; *History of Servetus*, 1724, p. 93 sq.; Willis, *Servetus and Calvin*, p. 325.

³ Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, i, 430.

⁴ See Stäbelin, *Johannes Calvin*, ii, 300-308.

⁵ F. A. Cox, *Life of Melanchthon*, 1815, pp. 523-24; Willis, pp. 47, 511.

⁶ *Table Talk*, ch. 43. Cp. Michelet's *Life of Luther*, Eng. tr. 1846, pp. 195-96; and Hallam, *Lit. of Europe*, i, 360-65. Michelet's later enthusiasm for Luther (*Hist. de France*, x, ch. v, ed. 1884, pp. 96-97) is oblivious of many of the facts noted in his earlier studies.

The burning of Servetus in 1553, however, marked a turning point in Protestant theological practice on the Continent. There were still to come the desperate religious wars in France, in which more than 300,000 houses were destroyed, abominable savageries were committed, and all civilization was thrown back, both materially and morally; and there was yet to come the still more appalling calamity of the Thirty Years' War in Germany—a result of the unstable political conditions set up at the Reformation; but theological human sacrifices were rapidly discredited. Servetus was not the first victim, but he was nearly the last.

The jurist Matthieu Gripaldi (or Gribaldo) lectured on law at Toulouse, Cahors, Valence, and Padua successively, and, finding his anti-Trinitarian leanings everywhere a source of danger to him, had sought a retreat at Fargias near Geneva, then in the jurisdiction of Berne. Venturing to remonstrate with Calvin against the sentence on Servetus, he brought upon himself the angry scrutiny of the heretic-hunter, and was banished from the neighbourhood. For a time he found refuge in a new professorship at Tübingen; but there too the alarm was raised, and he was expelled. Coming back to Fargias, he gave refuge to the heretic Valentinus Gentilis on his escape from Geneva; and again Calvin attacked him, delivering him to the authorities of Berne. An abjuration saved him for the time; but he would probably have met the martyr's fate in time had not his death by the plague, in 1564, guaranteed him, as Bayle remarks, against any further trial for heresy.¹

The effect of theological bias on moral judgment is interestingly exemplified in the comment of Mosheim on the case of Servetus. Unable to refer to the beliefs of deists or atheists without vituperation, Mosheim finds it necessary to add to his account of Servetus as a highly-gifted and very learned man the qualification: "Yet he laboured under no small moral defects, for he was beyond all measure arrogant, and at the same time ill-tempered, contentious, unyielding, and a semi-fanatic." Every one of these characterizations is applicable in the highest degree to Calvin, and in a large degree to Luther; yet for them the historian has not a word of blame.

Even among rationalists it has not been uncommon to make light of Calvin's crimes on the score that his energy maintained a polity which alone sustained Protestantism against the Catholic Reaction. This is the verdict of Michelet: "The Renaissance, betrayed by the accident of the mobilities of France, turning to the wind of light volitions, would assuredly

¹ Bayle, Art. GRIBAUD; Christie, *Étienne Dolet*, 2nd ed. pp. 303-305. Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, ii, Art. 18.

have perished, and the world would have fallen into the great net of the fishers of men, but for that supreme concentration of the Reformation on the rock of Geneva by the bitter genius of Calvin." And again: "Against the immense and darksome net into which Europe fell by the abandonment of France nothing less than this heroic seminary could avail" (*Hist. de France*, vol. x, *La Réforme*: end of pref. and end of vol.). Though this verdict has been accepted by such critical thinkers as Pattison (*Essays*, ii, 30-32) and Lord Morley (Romanes Lecture on *Machiavelli*, 1877, p. 47), it is difficult to find for it any justification in history.

The nature of the proposition is indeed far from clear. Michelet appears to mean that Geneva saved Europe as constituting a political rallying-point, a nucleus for Protestantism. Pattison, pronouncing that "Calvinism saved Europe" (*Essays*, ii, 32), explains that it was by "a positive education of the individual soul"; and that "this, and this alone, enabled the Reformation to make head against the terrible repressive forces brought to bear by Spain—the Inquisition and the Jesuits" (p. 32). The thesis thus vanishes in rhetoric, for it is quite impossible to give such a formula any significance in the light of the history of Protestantism in Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, and Holland. It implies that where Protestantism finally failed—as in Italy, France, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, Belgium, parts of Germany, and parts of Switzerland—it was because the individual spirit had not been educated enough, which is a mere omission to note the real economic and political causation. Neither Michelet nor Pattison had any scientific notion of the nature of the process.

If we revert to Michelet's claim, we get no more satisfaction. The very fact that Calvin's polity could subsist without any special military protection is the proof that it could have subsisted without the gross cruelty and systematic persecution which marked it out from the rest of the world, making Geneva "a kind of frozen hell of austerity and retribution and secret sin." To say otherwise is to say that freedom and toleration are less attractive to men than ferocity, tyranny, and gloom. Calvin drove many men back to Catholicism, and had his full share in the mortal schism which set Calvinists and Lutherans at daggers drawn for a century, while Catholicism re-conquered Poland and Bohemia and Hungary, held France, and nearly re-conquered Lutheran Germany. There is no reason to suppose that the Reformation would have gone otherwise in Britain, Scandinavia, and Holland had Geneva gone as far in tolerance as it actually did in intolerance. To call it, as Michelet does, an "asylum," in view of Calvin's expulsion or execution of every man who dared to differ from him, is courageous.

At the close of his argument (p. 41) Pattison sums up that,

“Greatly as the Calvinistic Churches have served the cause of political liberty, they have contributed nothing to the cause of knowledge.” The admission is in the main valid; but the claim will not stand, unless “political liberty” is to be newly defined. The Calvinistic rule at Geneva was from the first a class tyranny, which became more and more narrow in its social basis. The Calvinist clergy and populace of Holland turned their backs on republican institutions, and became violent monarchists. The Calvinists of England and Scotland were as determined persecutors as ever lived. And, indeed, how should liberty anywhere flourish when knowledge is trodden under foot?

The treatment of Bernardino Ochino, who had turned Protestant after being vicar-general of the Capuchin order, shows the slackening of ferocity after the end of Servetus. Ochino in a late writing ventured guardedly to suggest certain relaxations of the law of monogamy—a point on which some Lutherans went much further than he—and was besides mildly heretical about the Trinity.¹ He was in consequence expelled with his family from the canton of Zürich (1563), at the age of seventy-six. Finding Switzerland wholly inhospitable, and being driven by the Catholics from Poland, where he had sought to join the Socinians, he went to die in Moravia.² This was no worse treatment than Lutherans and Calvinists normally meted out to each other;³ and several of the Italian Protestants settled at Geneva who leant to Unitarian views—among them Gribaldo, Biandrata, and Alciati—found it prudent to leave that fortress of orthodoxy, where they were open to official challenge.⁴ Finally, when the Italian Valentinus Gentilis, or Gentile, the anti-Trinitarian, variously described as Tritheist, Deist, and Arian, uttered his heresies at Geneva, he contrived, after an imprisonment, a forced recantation, and a public degradation (1558), to escape thence with his life, but was duly beheaded at Berne in 1566, refusing this time to recant.⁵

This ends the main Swiss era of theological murder; but a century was to pass before sectarian hatreds subsided, or the spirit of persecution was brought under control of civilization. In 1632, indeed, a Protestant minister, Nicholas Anthoine, was burned at Geneva on the charge of apostasy to Judaism. As he had been

¹ Benrath, *Bernardino Ochino of Siena*, Eng. tr. 1876, pp. 268-72, 287-92.

² McCrie, p. 230; Audin, ch. xxxv; Benrath, *Bernardino Ochino*, p. 297.

³ Cp. Pusey, *Histor. Enquiry into Ger. Rationalism*, 1828, p. 14 sq.; Beard, p. 183.

⁴ Stähelin, ii, 337. Biandrata went to Hungary, where, as we saw (p. 421), he turned persecutor, and then Protestant.

⁵ Mosheim, 16 Cent. sec. iii, pt. ii, ch. iv, § 6; Audin, pp. 394-99; Aretius, *Short Hist. of Valentinus Gentilis*, Eng. tr. 1696; Stähelin, ii, 338-45; Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, ii, Art. 20.

admittedly insane for a time, and had repeatedly shown much mental excitement,¹ his execution tells of a spirit of cruelty worthy of the generation of Calvin. The Protestant Bibliolatry, in short, was as truly the practical negation of freethought and tolerance as was Catholicism itself; and it was only their general remoteness from each other that kept the different reformed communities from absolute war where they were not, as in Switzerland, held in check by the dangers around them.² As it was, they had their full share in the responsibility for the furious civil wars which so long convulsed France, and for those which ultimately reduced Germany to the verge of destruction, arresting her civilization for over a hundred years.

To sum up. In Germany Protestantism failed alike as a moral and as an intellectual reform. The lack of any general moral motive in the ecclesiastical revolution is sufficiently proved by the general dissolution of conduct which, on the express admission of Luther, followed upon it.³ This was quite apart from the special disorders of the Anabaptist movement, which, on the other hand, contained elements of moral and religious rationalism, as against Bibliolatry, that have been little recognized.⁴ Of that movement the summing-up is that, like the Lutheran, it turned to evil because of sheer lack of rationalism. Among its earlier leaders were men such as Denk, morally and temperamentally on a higher plane than any of the Lutherans. But Anabaptism too was fundamentally scriptural and revelationist, not rational; and it miscarried in its own way even more hopelessly than the theological "reform." Lutheranism, renouncing the rational and ethical hope of social betterment, ran to insane dissension over irrational dogma; Anabaptism, ignorantly attaching the hope of social betterment to religious delusion, ran to irrational social schemes, ending in anarchy, massacre, and extinction. But the Lutheran failure was intellectually and morally no less complete. Luther was with good reason ill at ease about his cause when he died in 1546; and Melanchthon, dying in 1560, declared himself glad to be set free from the *rabies theologorum*.⁵

The test of the new regimen lay, if anywhere, in the University of Wittemberg; and there matters were no better than anywhere

¹ See the *Historical Account* of his life and trial in the *Harleian Miscellany*, iv, 168 sq.

² See Stähelin, ii, 293, 304, etc.

³ Cp. Menzel, *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 3te Aufl. Cap. 417; A. F. Pollard, in *Cam. Mod. Hist.* vol. ii, ch. vii, p. 223; *The Dynamics of Religion*, pp. 6-8.

⁴ See Beard, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 189-90, 196. The same avowal was made in the eighteenth century by Mosheim (16 Cent. sec. iii, pt. ii, § 5).

⁵ F. A. Cox, *Life of Melanchthon*, 1815, p. 544, citing Adam, *Vitæ philosophorum* (p. 934). Cp. pp. 528-29.

else.¹ German university life in general went from bad to worse till a new culture began slowly to germinate after the Thirty Years' War;² and the germs came mainly from the neighbouring nations. German Switzerland exhibited similar symptoms, the Reformation being followed by no free intellectual life, but by a tyranny identical in spirit and method with that of Rome.³ It rests, finally, on the express testimony of leading Reformers that the main effect of the Reformation in the intellectual life of Germany was to discredit all disinterested learning and literature. Melanchthon in particular, writing at dates as far apart as 1522 and 1557, repeatedly and emphatically testifies to the utter disregard of erudition and science in the interests of pietism, corroborating everything said to the same effect by Erasmus.⁴

On the social and political side the rule of the Protestant princes was not only as tyrannous but as indecorous as that of their Catholic days, each playing pope in his own dominions;⁵ and their clergy were not in a position to correct them. Menzel notes that the normal drunkenness of the Protestant aristocracy at this period made current in Europe the expression "a German swine." And whereas Germany before the Reformation was at various points a culture force for Europe—whence the readiness in other nations at first to follow the Lutheran lead—it progressively became more and more of an object-lesson of the evils of heresy, thus fatally weakening the cause of Protestantism in France, where its fortunes hung in the balance.

Even in the matter of theology, Protestantism did not hold its own against Catholic criticism. Both began by discriminating in the scriptural canon, rejecting some books and depreciating others, all the while professing to make the Word of God their sole or final standard. When the Catholics pressed the demand as to how they could settle what was the true Word of God, their followers and successors could make no answer, and had to fall back on an indiscriminate acceptance of the Canon. Again, Luther and Calvin alike maintained the doctrine of "Assurance," and this was one of the points in Calvinism accepted by Arminius. The Catholics, naturally making the most of the admitted increase of sexual and other licence in Germany and elsewhere under Lutheranism, dwelt upon Luther's predestinarianism in general, and the doctrine of Assurance in particular, as the source of the demoralization; and

¹ K. von Raumer, as cited, pp. 32-37.

² *Id.* pp. 42-52; Pusey, as cited, p. 112.

³ Dändliker, *Geschichte der Schweiz*, ii, 556-59, 622 sq., 728-29.

⁴ See the extracts in Beard's Hibbert Lectures, pp. 340-41.

⁵ Menzel, *Geschichte der Deutschen*, Cap. 417.

at the Council of Trent it was expressly condemned. Thereafter, though it was "part and parcel of the Confessions of all the Churches of the Reformation down to the Westminster Assembly," it was in the last-named conclave (1643) declared not to be of the essence of faith; and the Scottish General Assembly subsequently deposed and condemned holders of this, the original Protestant doctrine. Similar modifications took place elsewhere. Thus the Protestant world drifted back to a Catholic position, affirmed at the Council of Trent against Protestantism;¹ and in Holland we shall see, in the rise of Arminianism, a similar surrender on the Protestant side to the general pressure of Catholicism upon the ethical weaknesses of Predestinarianism. On that point, however, the original Catholic doctrine of predestination was revived by the Spanish Jesuit Luis Molina (1535-1600; not to be confused with the later Quietist, Miguel de Molinos), who in his treatise *Liberi Arbitrii concordia cum gratiæ donis* (1588) set it forth as consequent upon God's foreknowledge of man's free use of his will. As a result of the dispute between the Thomists and Molina's followers, known as the Molinists, the Pope in 1607 pronounced that the views of both sides were permissible—a course which had already been taken twenty years before with the controversy on predestination aroused by the doctrines of Michael Baius at the University of Louvain.² Thus the dissensions of Catholics in a manner kept in countenance the divided Protestants; but the old confidence of affirmation and formulation was inevitably sapped by the constant play of controversy; and from this Protestantism necessarily suffered most.

Intellectually, there was visible retrogression in the Protestant world. It is significant that throughout the sixteenth century most of the great scientific thinkers and the freethinkers with the strongest bent to new science lived in the Catholic world. Rabelais and Bruno were priests; Copernicus a lay canon; Galileo had never withdrawn from the Church which humiliated him; even Kepler returned to the Catholic environment after professing Protestantism. He was in fact excommunicated by the Tübingen Protestant authorities in 1612³ for condemning the Lutheran doctrine that the body of Christ could be in several places at once. The immunity of such original spirits as Gilbert and Harriott from active molestation is to

¹ Cp. Hamilton, *Discussions in Philosophy and Literature*, 1852, pp. 493-94, note.

² Mosheim, Reid's ed. pp. 625-26. Such solutions were common in papal polity. *Id.* p. 767.

³ Bishop Schuster, *Johann Kepler und die grossen kirchlichen Streitfragen seiner Zeit*, 1888, p. 178 sq. It is noteworthy that Kepler's mother was sentenced for witchcraft, and saved by the influence of her son. *Johann Keppler's Leben und Werken nach neuerlich aufgefundenen MSS.*, von G. L. C. Freiherrn von Breitschwert, 1835, p. 97 sq.

be explained only by the fact that they lived in the as yet un-Puritanized atmosphere of Elizabethan England, before the age of Bibliolatry. It would seem as if the spirit of Scripturalism, invading the very centres of thought, were more fatal to original intellectual life than the more external interferences of Catholic sacerdotalism.¹ In the phrase of Arnold, Protestantism turned the key on the spirit, where Catholicism was normally content with an outward submission to its ceremonies, and only in the most backward countries, as Spain, destroyed entirely the atmosphere of free mental intercourse. It was after a long reaction that Bruno and Galileo were arraigned at Rome.

The clerical resistance to new science, broadly speaking, was more bitter in the Protestant world than in the Catholic; and it was merely the relative lack of restraining power in the former that made possible the later scientific progress. The history of Lutheranism upon this side is an intellectual infamy. At Wittemberg, during Luther's life, Reinhold did not dare to teach the Copernican astronomy; Rheticus had to leave the place in order to be free to speak; and in 1571 the subject was put in the hands of Peucer, who taught that the Copernican theory was absurd. Finally, the rector of the university, Hensel, wrote a text-book for schools, entitled *The Restored Mosaic System of the World*, showing with entire success that the new doctrine was unscriptural.² A little later the Lutheran superintendent, Pfeiffer, of Lubeck, published his *Pansophia Mosaica*, insisting on the literal truth of the entire Genesiac myth.³ In the next century Calovius (1612-1686), who taught successively at Königsberg, Dantzic, and Wittemberg, maintained the same position, contending that the story of Joshua's staying the sun and moon refuted Copernicus.⁴ When Pope Gregory XIII, following an impulse abnormal in his world, took the bold step of rectifying the Calendar (1584), the Protestants in Germany and Switzerland vehemently resisted the reform, and in some cities would not tolerate it,⁵ thus refusing, on theological grounds, the one species of co-operation with Catholicism that lay open to them. And the anti-scientific attitude persisted for over a

¹ "There is much reason to believe that the fetters upon scientific thought were closer under the strict interpretation of Scripture by the early Protestants than they had been under the older church" (White, *Warfare of Science with Theology*, i, 212). Concerning the Protestant hostility to the Copernican system and to Kepler, see Schuster, as cited, pp. 87 sq., 191 sq.

² White, as cited, i, 129.

³ *Id.* i, 213.

⁴ *Id.* p. 147.

⁵ Menzel, Cap. 431; Dändliker, *Geschichte der Schweiz*, 1884, ii, 743. The cantons of Glarus, Outer Appenzell, St. Gall, and the Grisons formally rejected the Gregorian Calendar. *Id. ib.* Zschokke (*Des Schweizerlands Geschichte*, 9te Ausg. 1853, p. 179) implies that the Protestants in general ignored it. Ranke (*Hist. of the Popes*, Bohn tr. 1908, i, 337) mentions that "all Catholic nations took part in this reform."

century in Switzerland as in Scotland. At Geneva, J.-A. Turretin (1671-1737), writing after Kepler and Newton had done their work, laboriously repeated the demonstration of Calovius, and reaffirmed the positions of Calvin. So far as its ministers could avail, the Sacred Book was working the old effect.

§ 2. *England*

Freethought gained permanently as little in England as elsewhere in the process of substituting local tyranny for that of Rome. The secularizing effect of the Reformation, indeed, was even more marked there than elsewhere. What Wolsey had aimed at doing with moderation and without revolution was done after him with violence on motives of sheer plunder, and a multitude not only of monasteries but of churches were disendowed and destroyed. The monastic churches were often magnificent, and "when the monasteries were dissolved, divine service altogether ceased in ninety out of every hundred of these great churches, and the remaining ten were left.....without any provision whatever" for public worship.¹ All this must have had a secularizing effect, which was accentuated by the changes in ritual; and by the middle of the century it was common to treat both churches and clergy with utter irreverence, which indeed the latter often earned by their mode of life.² Riots in churches, especially in London, were common; there was in fact a habit of driving mules and horses through them;³ and buying and selling and even gaming were often carried on. But with all this there was no intellectual enlightenment, and in high places there was no toleration. Under Henry VIII anti-Romanist heretics were put to death on the old Romanist principles. In 1532, again, was burned James Bainham, who not only rejected the specially Catholic dogmas, but affirmed the possible salvation of unbelievers.

Under the Protectorate which followed there was indeed much religious semi-rationalism, evidently of continental derivation, which is discussed in the theological literature of the time. Roger Hutchinson, writing about 1550, repeatedly speaks of contemporary "Sadducees and Libertines" who say (1) "that all spirits and angels are no substances, but inspirations, affections, and qualities"; (2) "that the devil is nothing but *nolitum*, or a filthy affection coming of the flesh"; (3) "that there is neither place of rest nor

¹ Blunt, *Ref. of the Church of England*, ed. 1892, ii, 76. Of the twenty-six cathedrals in the reign of Henry VIII, thirteen had been monastic churches, and these were "razed to the smallest possible dimensions as to number and endowments." *Id.* p. 77.

² Strype's *Memorials of Cranmer*, ed. 1848, ii, 89.

³ Blunt, i, 160-61.

pain after this life; that hell is nothing else but a tormenting and desperate conscience; and that a joyful, quiet, and merry conscience is heaven."

See *The Image of God, or Layman's Book*, 1550, ch. xxiv: Parker Society's rep. 1842, pp. 134, 138, 140. Cp. p. 79 and Sermon II, on The Lord's Supper (*id.* p. 247), as to "Julianites" who "do think mortal *corpo*, mortal *anima*." To the period 1550-60 is also assigned the undated work of John Veron, *A Frutefull Treatise of Predestination and of the Divine Providence of God, with an Apology of the same against the swynishe gruntinge of the Epicures and Atheystes of oure time*. There was evidently a good deal of new rationalism, which has been generally ignored in English historiography. Its foreign source is suggested by the use of the term "Libertines," which derives from France and Geneva. See below, p. 473. The above-cited tenets are, in fact, partly identical with those of the *libertins* denounced at Geneva by Calvin.

Such doctrine, which we shall find in vogue fifty years later, cannot have been printed, and probably can have been uttered only by men of good status, as well as culture; and even by them only because of the weakness of the State Church in its transition stage. Yet heresy went still further among some of the sects set up by the Anabaptist movement, which in England as in Germany involved some measure of Unitarianism. A letter of Hooper to Bullinger in 1549 tells of "libertines and wretches who are daring enough in their conventicles not only to deny that Christ is the Messiah and Saviour of the world, but also to call that blessed Seed a mischievous fellow and deceiver of the world."¹ This must have been said with locked doors, for much milder heresy was heavily punished, the worst penalties falling upon that which stood equally with orthodoxy on Biblical grounds.

In 1541, under Henry VIII, were burned three persons "because they denied transubstantiation, and had not received the sacrament at Easter." See the letter of Hilles to Bullinger, *Original Letters*, as cited, i, 200. The case of Jean Bouchier or Bocher, burned in 1550, is well known. It is worth noting that the common charge against Cranmer, of persuading the young king to sign her death warrant, is false, being one of the myths of Foxe. The warrant was passed by the whole Privy Council, Cranmer not being even present. See the Parker Society's reprint of Roger Hutchinson, 1842, introd. pp. ii-5. Hutchinson apparently approved; and it is significant of the clerical attitude of the time that he calls (*Image of*

¹ *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, Parker Society, 1846, i, 66.

God, ch. xxx, p. 201) for the punishment of Anabaptists by death if necessary, but does *not* suggest it for "Sadducees and Libertines."

The Elizabethan archbishops and the Puritans were equally intolerant; and the idea of free inquiry was undreamt of. That there had been much private discussion in clerical circles, however, is plain from the 13th and 18th of the Thirty-nine Articles (1562), which repudiate natural morality and hold "accursed" those who say that men can be saved under any creed.¹ This fulmination would not have occurred had the heresy not been pressing; but the "curse" would thenceforth set the key of clerical and public utterance. The Reformation, in fact, speedily over-clouded with fanaticism what new light of freethought had been glimmering before; turning into Bibliolaters those who had rationally doubted some of the Catholic mysteries, and forcing back, either into silence or, by reaction, into Catholic bigotry, those more refined spirits who, like Sir Thomas More, had before been really in advance of their age intellectually and morally, and desired a transmutation of the old system rather than its overthrow. Nothing so nearly rational as the *Utopia* (1515-16) appeared again in English literature for a century; it is indeed, in some respects, a lead to social science in our own day. More, with all his spontaneous turn for pietism, had evidently drunk in his youth or prime² at some freethinking source, for his book recognizes the existence of unbelievers in deity and immortality; and though he pronounces them unfit for political power, as did Milton, Locke, and Voltaire long after him, he stipulates that they be tolerated.³ Broadly speaking, the book is simply deistic. "From a world," says a popular historian, clerically trained—"from a world where fifteen hundred years of Christian teaching had produced social injustice, religious intolerance, and political tyranny, the humorist philosopher turns to a 'Nowhere' in which the efforts of mere natural human virtue realized those ends of security, equality, brotherhood, and freedom, for which the very institution of society seems to have been framed."⁴ In his own case, however, we see the Nemesis of the sway of feeling over

¹ Bishop Burnet (*Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Art. 18) has given currency to the pretence that the words "saved by the law" are meant to exclude the sense "saved in the law," the latter salvation being allowed as possible. That there was no such thought on the part of the framers of the Article is shown by the Latin version, where the expression is precisely "*in lege*." Burnet prints the Latin, yet utterly ignores its significance.

² Book II of the *Utopia* was written at Antwerp, during his six months' stay there on an embassy.

³ Bk. ii, sec. "Of the Religions" (Arber's ed. pp. 143-47; Morley's ed. pp. 151-53).

⁴ Green, *Short History*, ch. vi, § 4; 1881 ed. p. 311. Compare Green's whole estimate. Michelet's hostile criticism (x, 356) is surprisingly inept. For the elements of naturalism in the *Utopia* see bk. ii, sections "Of their Journeying" and "Of the Religions."

judgment, for, beginning by keeping his prejudice above the reason of whose teaching he is conscious, he ends by becoming a blind religious polemist and a bitter persecutor.

Cp. Isaac Disraeli's essay, "The Psychological Character of Sir Thomas More," in the *Amenities of Literature*, and the present writer's essay, "Culture and Reaction," in *Essays in Sociology*, vol. i. Lord Acton, vindicating More as against Wolsey, pleads (*Histor. Essays and Studies*, 1907, p. 64) that More before his death protested that no Protestant perished by his act. This seems to be true in the bare sense that he did not exceed his ostensible legal duties, and several times restrained the execution of the law (Archdeacon Hutton, *Sir Thomas More*, 1895, pp. 215-22). But the fact remains that More expressly justified and advocated the burning of heretics as "lawful, necessary, and well done." Title of ch. xiii of Dialogue, *The Supper of the Lord*. Cp. title of ch. xv.

It is in the wake, then, of the overthrow of Catholicism in the second generation that a far-reaching freethought begins to be heard of in England; and this clearly comes by way of new continental and literary contact, which would have occurred in at least as great a degree under Catholicism, save insofar as unbelief was facilitated by the irreverence developed by the ecclesiastical revolution, or by the state of indifference which among the upper classes was the natural sequel of the shameless policy of plunder and the oscillation between Protestant and Catholic forms. And it was finally in such negative ways only that Protestantism furthered freethought anywhere.

§ 3. *The Netherlands*

Hardly more fortunate was the earlier course of things intellectual after the Reformation in the Netherlands, where by the fifteenth century remarkable progress had been made alike in science and the arts, and where Erasmus acquired his culture and did his service to culture's cause. The fact that Protestantism had to fight for its life against Philip was of course not the fault of the Protestants; and to that ruinous struggle is to be attributed the arrest of the civilization of Flanders. But it lay in the nature of the Protestant impulse that, apart from the classical culture which in Holland was virtually a successful industry, providing editions for all Europe, it should turn all intellectual life for generations into vain controversy. The struggle between reform and popery was followed by the struggle between Calvinism and Arminianism; and

the second was no less bitter if less bloody than the first,¹ the religious strife passing into civil feud.

The secret of the special bitterness of Calvinist resentment towards the school of Arminius lay in the fact that the latter endorsed some of the most galling of the Catholic criticisms of Calvinism. ARMINIUS [Latinized name of Jacob Harmensen or van Harmin, 1560-1609, professor of theology at Leyden] was personally a man of great amiability, averse to controversy, but unable to reconcile the Calvinist view of predestination with his own quasi-rational ethic, and concerned to secure that the dogma should not be fastened upon all Dutch Protestants. In his opinion, no effective answer could be made on Calvinist lines to the argument of Cardinal Bellarmine² that from much Calvinist doctrine there flowed the consequences: "God is the author of sin; God really sins; God is the only sinner; sin is no sin at all."³ This was substantially true; and Arminius, like Bellarmine, unable to see that the Calvinist position was simply a logical reduction to moral absurdity of all theistic ethic, sought safety in fresh dogmatic modifications. Of these the Calvinists, in turn, could easily demonstrate the logical incoherence; and in a ring of dilemmas from which there was no logical exit save into Naturalism there arose an exacerbated strife, as of men jostling each other in a prison where some saw their nominal friends in partial sympathy with their deadly enemies, who jeered at their divisions.

The wonder is that the chaos of dispute and dogmatic tinkering which followed did not more rapidly disintegrate faith. Calvinists sought modifications under stress of dialectic, like their predecessors; and the high "Supralapsarian" doctrine—the theory of the certain regeneration or "perseverance" of "the saints"—shaded into "the Creabibitarian opinion"⁴ and yet another; while the "Sublapsarian" view claimed also to safeguard predestination. So long as men remained in the primary Protestant temper, convinced that they possessed in their Bibles an infallible revelation, such strife could but generate new passion, even as it had done on the other irrational problem of the eucharist. For men of sane and peaceful disposition, the only modes of peace were resignation and doubt; and in the case of the doubters the first intellectual movements would be either

¹ Cp. T. C. Grattan, *The Netherlands*, 1830, pp. 231-43.

² Who, as it happened, avowed that "religion was almost extinct" in Europe at the time of the rise of the Lutheran and Calvinistic heresies. *Concio xxviii. Opera*, vi, 296, ed. 1617, cited by Blunt, *Ref. of Church of England*, ed. 1892, i, 4, note.

³ Cp. *The Works of Arminius*, ed. by James Nichols, 1825, i, 580, note.

⁴ *Id.* p. 581 note.

back towards Rome¹ or further on towards deism. The former course would be taken by some who had winced under the jeers of the Catholics; the latter by the hardier spirits who judged Catholicism for themselves. As most of the fighting had been primed by and transacted over texts, the surrender of the belief in an inspired scripture greatly reduced the friction; and in Holland as elsewhere deism would be thus spontaneously generated in the Protestant atmosphere. A few went even further. "I have no doubt that many persons have secretly revolted from the Reformed Church to the Papists," wrote Uitenbogaert to Vorstius in 1613. "I firmly believe," he added, "that Atheism is creeping by degrees into the minds of some."²

Where mere Arminianism could bring Barneveldt to the block, even deism could not be avowed; and generations had to pass before it could have the semblance of a party; but the proof of the new vogue of unbelief lies in the labour spent by Grotius (Hugo or Huig van Groot, 1583-1645) on his treatise *De Veritate Religionis Christianæ* (1627)—a learned and strenuous defence of the faith which had so lacerated his fatherland, first through the long struggle with Spain, and again in the feud of Arminians and Calvinists. When Barneveldt was put to death, Grotius had been sentenced to imprisonment for life; and it was only after three years of the dungeon that, by the famous stratagem of his wife, he escaped in 1621. The fact that he devoted his freedom in France first to his great treatise *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625), seeking to humanize the civil life of the world, and next to his defence of the Christian religion, is the proof of his magnanimity; but the spectacle of his life must have done as much to set thinkers against the whole creed as his apologetic did to reconcile them to it. He, the most distinguished Dutch scholar and the chief apologist of Christianity in his day, had to seek refuge, on his escape from prison, in Catholic France, whose king granted him a pension. The circumstance which in Holland chiefly favoured freethought, the freedom of the press, was, like the great florescence of the arts in the seventeenth century, a result of the whole social and political conditions, not of any Protestant belief in free discussion. That there were freethinkers in Holland in and before Grotius's time is implied in the pains he took to defend Christianity; but that they existed in despite and not by grace of the ruling Protestantism is proved by the fact that they did not venture to publish their opinions. In

¹ Cp. Schuster, as cited, pp. 191 sq., 202 sq.

² Nichols's *Arminius*, i, p. 233.

France, doubtless, he found as much unbelief as he had left behind. In the end, Grotius and Casaubon alike recoiled from the narrow Protestantism around them, which had so sadly failed to realize their hopes.¹ "In 1642 Grotius had become wholly averse to the Reformation. He thought it had done more harm than good"; and had he lived a few years longer he would probably have become a Catholic.²

§ 4. Conclusion

Thus concerning the Reformation generally "we are obliged to confess that, especially in Germany, it soon parted company with free learning; that it turned its back upon culture; that it lost itself in a maze of arid theological controversy; that it held out no hand of welcome to awakening science. Presently we shall see that the impulse to an enlightened study and criticism of the Scriptures came chiefly from heretical quarters; that the unbelieving Spinoza and the Arminian Le Clerc pointed the way to investigations which the great Protestant systematizers thought neither necessary nor useful. Even at a later time it has been the divines who have most loudly declared their allegiance to the theology of the Reformation who have also looked most askance at science, and claimed for their statements an entire independence of modern knowledge."³ In fine, "to look at the Reformation by itself, to judge it only by its theological and ecclesiastical development, is to pronounce it a failure"; and the claim that "to consider it as part of a general movement of European thought.....is at once to vindicate its past and to promise it the future"—this amounts merely to avowing the same thing. Only as an eddy in the movement of freethought is the Reformation intellectually significant. Politically it is a great illustration of the potency of economic forces.

While, however, the Reformation in itself thus did little for the spirit of freethought, substituting as it did the arbitrary standard of "revelation" for the not more arbitrary standard of papal authority, it set up outside its own sphere some new movements of rational doubt which must have counted for much in the succeeding period. It was not merely that, as we shall see, the bloody strifes of the two Churches, and the quarrels of the Protestant sects among themselves, sickened many thoughtful men of the whole subject of theology; but that the disputes between Romanists and anti-Romanists raised

¹ Hallam, *Lit. of Europe*, ii, 406-416; Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon*, 2nd ed. pp. 447-48. As to Casaubon's own intolerance, however, see p. 446.

² Hallam, ii, 411, 416.

³ Beard, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 298.

difficult questions as to the bases of all kinds of belief. As always happens when established beliefs are long attacked, the subtler spirits in the conservative interest after a time begin putting in doubt beliefs of every species; a method often successful with those who cannot carry an argument to its logical conclusions, and who are thus led to seek harbour in whatever credence is on the whole most convenient; but one which puts stronger spirits on the reconsideration of all their opinions. Thus we shall find, not only in the skepticism of Montaigne, which is historically a product of the wars of religion in France, but in the more systematic and more cautious argumentation of the abler Protestants of the seventeenth century, a measure of general rationalism much more favourable alike to natural science and to Biblical and ethical criticism than had been the older environment of authority and tradition, brutal sacerdotalism, and idolatrous faith. Men continued to hate each other religiously for trifles, to quarrel over gestures and vestures, and to wrangle endlessly over worn-out dogmas; but withal new and vital heresies were set on foot; new science generated new doubt; and under the shadow of the aging tree of theology there began to appear the growths of a new era. As Protestantism had come outside the "universal" Church, rearing its own tabernacles, so freethought came outside both, scanning with a deepened intentness the universe of things. And thus began a more vital innovation than that dividing the Reformation from the Renaissance, or even that dividing the Renaissance from the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RISE OF MODERN FREETHOUGHT

§ 1. *The Italian Influence*

THE negative bearing of the Reformation on freethought is made clear by the historic fact that the new currents of thought which broadly mark the beginning of the "modern spirit" arose in its despite, and derive originally from outside its sphere. It is to Italy, where the political and social conditions thus far tended to frustrate the Inquisition, that we trace the rise alike of modern deism, modern Unitarianism, modern pantheism, modern physics, and the tendency to rational atheism. The deistic way of thinking, of course, prevailed long before it got that name; and besides the vogue of Averroïsm we have noted the virtual deism of More's *Utopia* (1516). The first explicit mention of deism noted by Bayle, however, is in the epistle dedicatory to the second and expanded edition of the *Instruction Chrétienne* of the Swiss Protestant Viret (1563), where professed deists are spoken of as a new species bearing a new name. On the admission of Viret, who was the friend and bitter disciple of Calvin, they rejected all revealed religion, but called themselves deists by way of repudiating atheism; some keeping a belief in immortality, some rejecting it. In the theological manner he goes on to call them all execrable atheists, and to say that he has added to his treatise on their account an exposition of natural religion grounded on the "Book of Nature"; stultifying himself by going on to say that he has also dealt with the professed atheists.¹ Of the deists he admits that among them were men of the highest repute for science and learning. Thus within ten years of the burning of Servetus we find privately avowed deism and atheism in the area of French-speaking Protestantism.

Doubtless the spectacle of Protestant feuds and methods would go far to foster such unbelief; but though, as we have seen, there were aggressive Unitarians in Germany before 1530, who, being scholars, may or may not have drawn on Italian thought, thereafter there is reason to look to Italy as the source of the propaganda.

¹ Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, art. VIRET, note D.

Thence came the two Sozzini, the founders of Socinianism, of whom Lelio, the uncle of Fausto, travelled much in northern Europe (including England) between 1546 and 1552.¹ As the earlier doctrine of Servetus shows clear affinities to that of the Sozzini, and his earlier books were much read in Italy between 1532 and 1540, he may well have given them their impulse.² It is evidently to Servetus that Zanchi referred when he wrote to Bullinger in 1565 that "Spain bore the hens, Italy hatched the eggs, and we now hear the chickens piping."³ Before Socinianism had taken form it was led up to, as we have seen, in the later writings of the ex-monk Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), who, in the closing years of a much chequered career, combined mystical and Unitarian tendencies with a leaning to polygamy and freedom of divorce.⁴ His influence was considerable among the Swiss Protestants, though they finally expelled him for his heresies. From Geneva or from France, in turn, apparently came some of the English freethought of the middle period of the sixteenth century;⁵ for in 1562 Speaker Williams in the House of Commons, in a list of misbelievers, speaks of "Pelagians, Libertines, Papists, and such others, leaving God's commandments to follow their own traditions, affections, and minds"⁶—using theologically the foreign term, which never became naturalized in English in its foreign sense. It was about the year 1563, again, that Roger Ascham wrote his *Scholemaster*, wherein are angrily described, as a species new in England, men who, "where they dare," scorn both Protestant and Papist, "rejecting scripture, and counting the Christian mysteries as fables."⁷ He describes them as "ἄθεοι in doctrine"; adding, "this last word is no more unknowne now to plane Englishe men than the Person was unknown somtyme in England, untill some Englishe man took peines to fetch that develish opinion out of Italie."⁸ The whole tendency he connects in a general way with the issue of many new translations from the Italian, mentioning in particular Petrarch and Boccaccio.

¹ Calvin, scenting his heresy, warned him in 1553 (Bayle, art. MARIANUS SOCIN, the first, note B); but they remained on surprisingly good terms till Lelio's death in 1562. Cp. Stähelin, *Johannes Calvin*, ii, 321-28.

² Cp. the English *History of Servetus*, 1724, p. 39, and Trechsel, *Lelio Sozzini und die Antitrinitarier seiner Zeit* (Bd. ii. of *Die protestantischen Antitrinitarier*, 1844, pp. 38-41.

³ Cited by Trechsel, p. 42, note.

⁴ Cp. Bayle, art. OCHIN; Miss Lowndes, *Michel de Montaigne*, p. 266; Owen, *French Skeptics*, p. 588; Benrath, *Bernardino Ochino of Siena*, Eng. tr. 1876, pp. 268-72. McCrie mentions (*Ref. in Italy*, p. 228, note) that Ochino's dialogue on polygamy has been translated and published in England "by the friends of that practice." (In 1657. Rep. 1732.)

⁵ Above, pp. 458-59, Sermons (orthodox) by Ochino were published in English in 1548, and often reprinted.

⁶ D'Ewes, *Journals of Parliament in the Reign of Elizabeth*, 1682, p. 65.

⁷ See above, p. 459.

⁸ *The Scholemaster*, Arber's rep. p. 82.

Among good Protestants his view was general; and so Lord Burghley in his *Advice to his Son* writes: "Suffer not thy sons to pass the Alps, for they shall learn nothing there but pride, blasphemy, and atheism." As it happened, his grandson the second Earl of Exeter, and his great-grandson Lord Roos, went to Rome, and became not atheists but Roman Catholics.

Such episodes should remind us that in that age of ignorance and superstition the Church had always an immense advantage. Those who, like Gentillet in his raging *Discours*, commonly known as the *Contre-Machiavel* (1576), ascribed to "atheism" and the teaching of Machiavelli all the crimes and oppressions wrought by Catholics,¹ were ludicrously perverting the facts. Massacres in churches, which are cited by Gentillet as impossible to believing Catholics, were wrought, as we have seen, on the largest scale by the Church in the thirteenth century. So, when Scaliger calls the Italians of his day "a set of atheists," we are to understand it rather of "the hypocrisy than of the professed skepticism of the time."² But rationalism and semi-rationalism did prevail in Italy more than in any other country.³

Like the old Averroïsm, the new pietistic Unitarianism persisted in Italy and radiated thence afresh when it had flagged in other lands. The exploded Unitarian tradition⁴ runs that the doctrine arose in the year 1546 among a group of more than forty learned men who were wont to assemble in secret at Vicenza, near Venice. Claudius of Savoy, however, emphatically gave out his anti-Trinitarian doctrine at Berne in 1534, after having been imprisoned at Strasburg and banished thence;⁵ and Ochino and Lelio Sozzini left Italy in 1543. But there seems to have been a continuous evolution of Unitarian heresy in the south after the German movement had ceased. Giorgio Biandrata, whom we have seen flying to Poland from Geneva, had been seized by the Inquisition at Pavia for such opinion. Still it persisted. In 1562 Giulio Guirlando of Treviso, and in 1566 Francesco Saga of Rovigo, were burned at Venice for anti-Trinitarianism. Giacomo Aconzio too, who dedicated his *Stratagems of Satan* (Basel, 1565) to Queen Elizabeth, and who

¹ *E.g.*, work cited, pt. ii, Max. 1, and Max. 6, end. Eng. tr. 1608, pp. 93, 128.

² Mark Pattison, *Essay on Joseph Scaliger*, in *Essays*, Routledge's ed. i, 114.

³ When Pattison declares that Italian curiosity had bred "not secret unbelief but callous acquiescence" he sets up a spurious antithesis; and when he generalizes that in Italy "men did not disbelieve the truths of the Christian religion," he understates the case. He errs equally in the opposite direction when he alleges (*ib.* p. 141) that in the France of Montaigne "a philosophical skepticism had become the creed of all thinking men." Such a difference between France and Italy was impossible.

⁴ See McCrie, *Reformation in Italy*, ed. 1856, pp. 96-99.

⁵ Trechsel, *Die Protestantischen Antitrinitarier vor Faustus Socinus*, i (1839), 56; Mosheim, 16 Cent. 3rd sec. pt. ii, ch. iv, § 3.

pleaded notably for the toleration of heresy,¹ was a decided latitudinarian.²

It is remarkable that the whole ferment occurs in the period of the Catholic Reaction, the Council of Trent, and the subjection of Italy, when the papacy was making its great effort to recover its ground. It would seem that in the compulsory peace which had now fallen on Italian life men's thoughts turned more than ever to mental problems, as had happened in Greece after the rise of Alexander's empire. The authority of the Church was outwardly supreme; the Jesuits had already begun to do great things for education;³ the revived Inquisition was everywhere in Italy; its prisons, as we have seen, were crowded with victims of all grades during a whole generation; Pius V and the hierarchy everywhere sought to enforce decorum in life; the "pagan" academies formed on the Florentine model were dissolved; and classic culture rapidly decayed with the arts, while clerical learning flourished,⁴ and a new religious music began with Palestrina. Yet on the death of Paul IV the Roman populace burned the Office of the Inquisition to the ground and cast the pope's statue into the Tiber;⁵ and in that age (1548) was born Giordano Bruno, one of the types of modern free-thought.

The great service of Italy to modern freethought, however, was to come later, in respect of the impulse given to the scientific spirit by Bruno, Vanini, and Galileo. On the philosophical or critical side, the Italy of the middle of the sixteenth century left no enduring mark on European thought, though her serious writers were numerous. Aconzio had published, before his *De Stratagematibus Satanae*, a treatise *De Methodo, sive recta investigandarum tradendarumque scientiarum ratione* (Basel, 1558), wherein he pleads strenuously for a true logical method as the one way to real knowledge of things. In this he anticipates Bacon, as did, still earlier, Mario Nizolio in his *Antibarbarus sive de veris principiis et vera ratione philosophandi contra pseudo-philosophos* (Parma, 1553). Nizolio's main effort is towards the discrediting of Aristotle, whom, like so many in the

¹ Hallam, *Lit. of Europe*, ii, 82.

² Art. ACONTIUS, in *Dict. of National Biog.* Cp. J. J. Tayler, *Retrospect of the Religious Life of England*, 2nd ed. pp. 205-206. As to the attack on latitudinarianism in the Thirty-nine Articles, see above, p. 460.

³ Bacon, *Adv. of Learning*, bk. i; *Filum Labyrinthi*, § 7 (Routledge ed. pp. 50, 63, 209).

⁴ Cp. Zeller, *Hist. de l'Italie*, pp. 400-12; Green, *Short Hist.*, ch. viii, § 2.

⁵ McCrie, p. 164. It was said by Scaliger that "in the time of Pius IV [between Paul IV and Pius V] people talked very freely in Rome." *Id. ib.* note. "It was even considered characteristic of good society in Rome to call the principles of Christianity in question. 'One passes,' says P. Ant. Bandino, 'no longer for a man of cultivation unless one put forth heterodox opinions concerning the Christian faith.'" Ranke, *Hist. of the Popes*, Bohn. tr. ed. 1908, i, 58, citing Caracciolo's MS. Life of Paul IV.

generation following, he regarded as the great bulwark of scholastic obscurantism. He insists that all knowledge must proceed from sensation, which alone has immediate certainty; and thus stands for direct scientific observation as against tradition and verbalism. But Ludovicus Vives had before him (in his *De causis corruptarum artium*, Antwerp, 1531) claimed that the true Aristotelian went direct to nature, as Aristotle himself had done; and Nizolio did nothing in practical science to substantiate his polemic against the logic-choppers.

He and Aconzio in effect cancel each other. Each had glimpsed a truth, one seeing the need for a right method in inference, the other protesting against the idea that abstract reasoning could lead to knowledge; but neither made good his argument by any treasure trove of fact. Another writer of the same decade, Gomez Pereira, joined in the revolt against Aristotelianism, publishing in 1554 his *Margarita Antoniana*, wherein, in advance of Descartes, he maintained the absence of sensation in brutes.¹ For the rest, he championed freedom in speculation, denying that authority should avail save in matters of faith. But he too failed to bring forth fruits meet for freedom. Neither by abstract exposition of right methods of reasoning, nor by abstract attacks on wrong methods, could any vital impulse yet be given to thought. What was lacking was the use of reason upon actual problems, whether of human or of natural science. All the while Europe was anchored to ancient delusion, historical and scientific. Even as the horrors of age-long religious war could alone drive men to something like toleration in the religious life, there was needed the impact of actual discovery to win them to science as against scholasticism. And rational thinking on the religion which resisted all new science was to be still later of attainment, save for the nameless men who throughout the ages of faith rejected the creeds without publishing their unbelief. Of these Italy had always a large sprinkling.

§ 2. Spain

The fact that sixteenth-century Spain could be charged, on the score of Servetus, with producing the "hen" of Socinianism, is an important reminder of the perpetuity of variation and of the fatality of environment. The Portuguese Sanchez, whom we shall find laying new potential foundations of skepticism in France alongside of Montaigne, could neither have acquired nor propounded his

¹ Hallam, ii, 116.

philosophy in his native land. But it is to be noted that an elder contemporary of Sanchez, living and dying in Spain, was able, in the generation after Servetus, to make a real contribution to the revival of freethought, albeit under shelter of a firm profession of orthodoxy.

No book of the kind, perhaps, had a wider European popularity than the *Examen de Ingenios para las ciencias* of HUARTE de San Juan, otherwise Juan Huarte y Navarro (c. 1530–1592). Like Servetus and Sanchez and many another, Huarte had his bias to reason fostered by a medical training; and it is as a "natural philosopher" that he stands for a rational study of causation. As a pioneer of exact science, indeed, he counts for next to nothing. Taking as his special theme the divergences of human faculty, he does but found himself on the *à priori* system of "humours" and "temperatures" passed on by Aristotle to Galen and Hippocrates, inconsistently affirming on the one hand that the "characters" not only of whole nations but of the inhabitants of provinces are determined by their special climates and aliments, and on the other hand that individual faculty is determined by the proportions of hot and cold, moist and dry "temperatures" in the parents. Apart from his insistence on the functions of the brain, and from broadly rational deliverances as to the kinds of faculty which determine success in theology and law, arms and arts, his "science" is naught. Dealing with an obscure problem, he brought to it none of the exact inductiveness which alone had yielded true knowledge in the simpler field of astronomy. In virtue, however, either of his confidence in affirmation or of his stand for rational inquiry, or of both, Huarte's book, published in 1575, went the round of Europe. Translated into Italian in 1582 (or earlier; new rendering 1600), it was thence rendered into English by Richard Carew in 1594.¹ A French version appeared in 1598, and two others in 1661 and 1671. A later English translation, from the original, was produced in 1698; and Lessing thought the book worth putting into German in 1785.

The rationalistic importance of Huarte lies in his insistence on the study of "second causes" and his protest against the burking of all inquiry by a reference to deity. On this head he anticipates much of the polemic of Bacon. The explanation of all processes and phenomena by the will of God, he observes, "is so ancient a manner of talk, and the natural philosophers have so often refuted it, that

¹ Under the alternative titles of *The Examination of Men's Wits* and *A Trial of Wits*. Rep. 1596, 1604, 1616.

the seeking to take the same away were superfluous, neither is it convenient.....But I have often gone about to consider the reason and the cause whence it may grow that the vulgar sort is so great friend to impute all things to God, and to reave them from Nature, and do so abhor the natural means."¹ His solution is the impatience of men over the complexity of Nature, their spiritual arrogance, their indolence, and their piety. For himself, he pronounces, as Middleton did in England nearly two centuries later, that "God doth no longer those unwonted things of the New Testament; and the reason is, for that on his behalf he hath performed all necessary diligence that men might not pretend ignorance. And to think that he will begin anew to do the like miracles.....is an error very great.....God speaks once (saith Job) and turns not to a second replial."²

Only thus could the principle of natural causation be affirmed in the Spain of Philip II. Huarte is careful to affirm miracles while denying their recurrence; and throughout he writes as a good Scripturist and Catholic. But he sticks to his naturalist thesis that "Nature makes able," and avows that "natural philosophers laugh at such as say, This is God's doing, without assigning the order and discourse of the particular causes whence they may spring."³ The fact that the book was dedicated to Philip tells of royal protection, without which the author could hardly have escaped the Inquisition. Years after, we shall find Lilly in England protesting on the stage against the conception of *Natura naturans*; and Bacon powerfully reaffirming Huarte's doctrine, with the same reservations. The Spaniard must have counted for something as a pleader for elementary reason, if Bacon did.

But this is practically the only important contribution from Spain to the intellectual renascence then going on in Europe. As we have seen, it was not that Spaniards had any primordial bias to dogmatism and persecution: it was simply that their whole socio-political evolution, largely determined by Spanish discovery and dominion in the New World, set up institutions and forces which became specially powerful to stamp out freethought. The work of progress was done in lands where lack of external dominion left on the one hand a greater fund of variant energy, and on the other made for a lesser power of repression on the part of Church and State.

¹ Carew's tr. ed. 1596, p. 15.

² *Id.* p. 17.

³ *Id.* p. 19.

§ 3. *France*

While Italy continues to be reputed throughout the sixteenth century a hotbed of freethinking, styled "atheism," it appears to have been in France, alongside of the wars of religion, that positive unbelief, as distinct from scripturalist Unitarianism, made most new headway among laymen. It was in France that the forces of change had greatest play. The mere contact with Italy which began with the invasion of Charles VII in 1494 meant a manifold moral and mental influence, affecting French literature and life alike; and the age of strife and destruction which set in with the first Huguenot wars could not but be one of disillusionment for multitudes of serious men. We have seen as much in the work of Bonaventure des Periers and Rabelais; but the spread of radical unbelief is to be traced, as is usual in the ages of faith, by the books written against it. Already in 1552 we have seen Guillaume Postell publishing his book, *Contra Atheos*.¹ Unbelief increasing, there is published in 1564 an *Atheomachie* by one De Bourgeville; but the Massacre must have gone far to frustrate him. In 1581 appears another *Atheomachie, ou réfutation des erreurs et impiétés des Athéistes, Libertins, etc.*, issued at Geneva, but bearing much on French life; and in the same year is issued the long-time popular work of the Huguenot Philippe de Mornay, *De la verité de la religion Chrestienne, Contre les Athées, Epicuriens, Payens, Juifs, Mahumédistes, et autres Infidèles*.² In both the Epistle Dedicatory (to Henry of Navarre) and the Preface the author speaks of the great multiplication of unbelief, the refutation of which he declares to be more needful among Christians than it ever had been among the heathen. But, like most of the writers against atheism in that age, he declares³ that there are no atheists save a few young fools and utterly bad men, who turn to God as soon as they fall sick. The reputed atheists of antiquity are vindicated as having denied not the principle of deity but the false Gods of their age—this after the universality of a belief in Gods in all ages had been cited as one of the primary proofs of God's existence. In this fashion is compiled a book of nine hundred pages, ostensibly for the confutation of a few fools and knaves, described as unworthy of serious consideration.

¹ According to Henri Estienne, Postell himself vended strange heresies, one being to the effect that to make a good religion there were needed three—the Christian, the Jewish, and the Turkish. *Apologie pour Herodote*, liv. i, ed. 1607, pp. 98-100.

² Published at Antwerp. It was reprinted in 1582, 1583, and 1590; translated into Latin in 1583, and frequently reprinted in that form; translated into English (begun by Sir Philip Sidney and completed by Arthur Golding) in 1587, and in that form at least thrice reprinted in blackletter.

³ Ed. 1582, p. 18. Eng. tr. 1604, p. 10.

Evidently the unbelief of de Mornay's day was a more vigorous growth than he affected to think; and his voluminous performance was followed by others. In 1586, Christophe Cheffontaines published his *Epitome novæ illustrationis Christianae Fidei adversus Impios, Libertinos et Atheos*; and still skepticism gained ground, having found new abettors.

First came the Portuguese Francisco Sanchez (1552-1623?), born in Portugal, but brought as a child to Bordeaux, which seems to have been a place of refuge for many fugitive heretics from both sides of the Peninsula. Sanchez has recorded that in his early youth he had no bias to incredulity of any kind; but at some stage of his adolescence he travelled in Italy and spent some time at Rome. The result was not that special disbelief in Christianity which was proverbially apt to follow, but a development on his part of philosophic skepticism properly so-called, which found expression in a Latin treatise entitled *Quod Nihil Scitur*—"That Nothing is Known." Composed as early as 1576, in the author's twenty-fourth year, the book was not published till 1581, a year after the first issue of the *Essais* of Montaigne. It is natural to surmise that while Sanchez was at Bordeaux he may have known something of his famous contemporary; but though Montaigne is likely to have read the *Quod Nihil Scitur* in due course, he nowhere speaks of it; and in 1576 Sanchez was a Professor of Medicine at Montpellier, then a town of Huguenot leanings. Soon he left it for Toulouse, the hotbed of Catholic fanaticism, where he contrived to live out his long life in peace, despite his production of a Pyrrhonist treatise and of a remarkable Latin poem (1578) on the comet of 1577. The *Quod Nihil Scitur* is a skeptical flank attack on current science, in no way animadverting on religion, as to which he professed orthodoxy: the poem is a frontal attack on the whole creed of astrology, then commonly held by Averroïsts and Aristotelians, as well as by orthodox Catholics. Yet he seems never to have been molested. It would seem as if a skepticism which ostensibly disallowed all claims to "natural" knowledge, while avowedly recognizing "spiritual," was then as later thought to make rather for faith than against it. That such virtual Pyrrhonism as that of Sanchez can ever have ministered to religious zeal is not indeed to be supposed: it is rather as a weapon against the confidence of the "Naturalist" that the skeptical method has always recommended itself to the calculating priest. And inasmuch as astrology could be, and was, held by a non-religious theory, though many Christians added it to their creed, a polemic against that was the least dangerous form of

rationalizing then possible. At all times there had been priests who so reasoned, though, as we have seen in dealing with the men of the Protestant Reformation, the belief in astral influences is too closely akin to the main line of religious tradition to be capable of ejection on religious grounds.

With his hostility to credulous hopes and fears in the sphere of Nature, Sanchez is naturally regarded as a forerunner and helper of freethought. But there is nothing to show that his work had any effect in undermining the most formidable of all the false beliefs of Christendom.¹ Like so many others of his age, he flouted Aristotelean scholasticism, but was perforce silent as to the verbalisms and sophistries of simple theology. It may fairly be inferred that his poem on the comet of 1577 helped to create that current of reasoned disbelief² which we find throwing up almost identical expressions in Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Molière,³ concerning the folly of connecting the stars with human affairs. But a skepticism which left untouched the main matter of the creeds could not affect conduct in general; and while Sanchez passed unchecked the watchdogs of the Inquisition, the fiery Bruno and Vanini were in his day to meet their fiery death at its hands—the latter in Toulouse, perhaps under the eyes of Sanchez. Having resigned his professorship of medicine, he seems to have lived to a ripe age, dying in 1623.

Probably those very deaths availed more for the rousing of critical thought than did the dialectic of the Pyrrhonist. To the life of the reason may with perfect accuracy be applied the claim so often made for that of religion—that it feeds on feeling and is rooted in experience. Revolt from the cruelties and follies of faith plays a great part in the history of freethought. In the greatest French writer of that age, a professed Catholic, but in mature life averse alike to Catholic and to Protestant bigotry, the shock of the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew can be seen disintegrating once for all the spirit of faith. MONTAIGNE typifies the kind of skepticism produced in an unscientific age by the practical demonstration that religion can avail immeasurably more for evil than for good.⁴ A few years before the Massacre he had translated for his dying father⁵

¹ Or even in modifying philosophic doctrine, save perhaps as regards Descartes, later. Cp. Bartholmess, *Hist. crit. des doct. relig. de la philos. moderne*, 1855, i, 21-22.

² See Owen, *Skeptics of the French Renaissance*, pp. 631-36—a fairer and more careful estimate than that of Hallam, *Lit. of Europe*, ii, 111-13.

³ *Essais*, bk. ii, ch. xiii, ed. Firmin-Didot, vol. ii, 2-3; *King Lear*, i, 2, near end; *Les Amants Magnifiques*, i, 2; iii, 1. Montaigne echoes Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* ii, 8), as Molière does Cicero, *De Divinatione*, ii, 43.

⁴ "Our religion," he writes, "is made to extirpate vices; it protects, nourishes, and incites them" (*Essais*, liv. ii, ch. xii; éd. Firmin-Didot, ii, 464). "There is no enmity so extreme as the Christian." (I quote in general Florio's translation for the flavour's sake; but it should be noted that he makes many small slips.)

⁵ Owen was mistaken (*Skeptics of the French Renaissance*, p. 414) in supposing that

the old *Theologia Naturalis* of Raymond of Sebonde; and we know from the later *Apology* in the *Essays* that freethinking contemporaries declared the argument of Raymond to be wholly insufficient.¹ It is clear from the same essay that Montaigne felt as much; though the gist of his polemic is a vehement attack upon all forms of confident opinion, religious and anti-religious alike. "In replying to arguments of so opposite a tenour, Montaigne leaves Christianity, as well as Raimond Sebonde, without a leg to stand upon. He demolishes the arguments of Sebonde with the rest of human presumption, and allows Christianity, neither held by faith nor provable by reason, to fall between the two stools."² The truth is that Montaigne's skepticism was the product of a mental evolution spread over at least twenty years. In his youth his vivid temperament kept him both credulous and fanatical, so much so that in 1562 he took the reckless oath prescribed by the Catholic Parliament of Paris. As he avows with his incomparable candour, he had been in many things peculiarly susceptible to outside influences, being always ready to respond to the latest pressure;³ and the knowledge of his susceptibility made him self-distrustful. But gradually he found himself. Beginning to recoil from the ferocities and iniquities of the League, he yet remained for a time hotly anti-Protestant; and it seems to have been his dislike of Protestant criticism that led him to run amuck against reason, at the cost of overthrowing the treatise he had set out to defend. The common end of such petulant skepticism is a plunge into uneasy yet unreasoning faith; but, though Montaigne professed Catholicism to the end, the sheer wickedness of the Catholic policy made it impossible for him to hold sincerely to the creed any more than to the cause.⁴ Above all things he hated cruelty.⁵ It was the Massacre that finally made Montaigne renounce public life;⁶ it must have affected likewise his working philosophy.

That philosophy was not, indeed, an original construction: he found it to his hand partly in the deism of his favourite Seneca; partly in the stoical ethic of Epictetus, then so much appreciated in France; and partly in the *Hypotyposes* of Sextus Empiricus, of which the Latin translation is known to have been among his

Montaigne spent several years over this translation. By Montaigne's own account at the beginning of the *Apologie*, it was done in a few days. Cp. Miss Lowndes's excellent monograph, *Michel de Montaigne*, pp. 103, 106.

¹ Ed. Firmin-Didot, ii, 469.

² Miss Lowndes, p. 145. Cp. Champion, *Introd. aux Essais de Montaigne*, 1900.

³ *Essais*, liv. ii, ch. xii; liv. iii, ch. v. Ed. cited, i, 65; ii, 309.

⁴ For a view of Montaigne's development see M. Champion's excellent *Introduction*—a work indispensable to a full understanding of the *Essais*. ⁵ Liv. ii, ch. xi.

⁶ Cp. the *Essais*, liv. iii, ch. i (ed. cited, ii, 208). Owen gives a somewhat misleading idea of the passage (*French Skeptics*, p. 486).

books; from which he took several of the mottoes inscribed on his library ceiling,¹ and from which he frequently quotes towards the end of his *Apology*. The body of ideas compacted on these bases cannot be called a system: it was not in Montaigne's nature to frame a logical scheme of thought; and he was far from being the philosophic skeptic he set out to be² by way of confounding at once the bigots and the atheists. He was essentially *ondoyant et divers*, as he freely admitted. As he put it in a passage added to the later editions of the *Essais*,³ he was a kind of *metis*, belonging neither to the camp of ignorant faith nor to that of philosophic conviction, whether believing or unbelieving. He early avows that, had he written what he thought and knew of the affairs of his times, he would have published judgments "à mon gré mesme et selon raison," in his opinion true and reasonable, but "illégitimes et punissable."⁴ Again, "whatsoever is beyond the compass of custom, we deem likewise to be beyond the compass of reason, God knows how unreasonably, for the most part."⁵ Yet in the next breath he will exclaim at those who demand changes. Often he comments keenly on the incredible readiness of men to go to war over trifles; but in another mood he accuses the nobility of his day of unwillingness to take up arms "except upon some urgent and extreme necessity."⁶ In the same page he will tell us that he is "easily carried away by the throng," and that he is yet "not very easy to change, forso much as I perceive a like weakness in contrary opinions."⁷ "I am very easily to be directed by the world's public order,"⁸ is the upshot of his easy meditations. And a conformist he remained in practice to the last, always bearing himself dutifully towards Mother Church, and generally observing the proprieties, though he confesses that he "made it a conscience to eat flesh upon a fish day."⁹

His conformities, verbal and practical, have set certain Catholics upon proving his orthodoxy, though his Essays are actually prohibited by the Church. A Benedictine, Dom Devienne, published in 1773 a *Dissertation sur la Religion de Montaigne*, of which the main pleas are that the *Essais* often affirm the divinity of the Christian faith; that the essayist received the freedom of the city of Rome under the eyes of the

¹ Miss Lowndes, *Michel de Montaigne*, p. 131. Cp. Owen, p. 444.

² He was consistent enough to doubt the new cosmology of Copernicus (*Essais*, as cited, i, 615); and he even made a rather childish attack on the reform of the Calendar (liv. iii, chs. x, xi); but he was a keen and convinced critic of the prevailing abuses in law and education. Owen's discussion of his opinions is illuminating; but that of Champion makes a still more searching analysis as regards the conflicting tendencies in Montaigne.

³ Liv. i, ch. liv.

⁴ Liv. i, ch. xxii.

⁵ Liv. ii, ch. xvii. Ed. cited, ii, 58.

⁶ Liv. iii, ch. xiii. Ed. cited, ii, 572.

⁷ Liv. i, ch. xx, end.

⁸ Liv. ii, ch. ix.

⁹ *Id.* p. 59.

pope; and that his epitaph declared his orthodoxy! A generation later, one Labouderie undertook to set forth *Le Christianisme de Montaigne* in a volume of 600 pages (1819). This apologist has the courage to face the protest of Pascal: "Montaigne puts everything in a doubt so universal and so general that, doubting even whether he doubts, his uncertainty turns upon itself in a perpetual and unresting circle.....It is in this doubt which doubts of itself, and in this ignorance which is ignorant of itself, that the essence of his opinion consists.....In a word, he is a pure Pyrrhonist" (*Pensées*, supp. to Pt. i, art. 11). The reply of the apologist is that Montaigne never extends his skepticism to "revelation," but on the contrary declares that revelation alone gives man certainties (work cited, p. 127).

That is of course merely the device of a hundred skeptics of the Middle Ages; the old shibboleth of a "twofold truth" modified by a special disparagement of reason, with no attempt to meet the rejoinder that, if reason has no certainties, there can be no certainty that revelation is what it claims to be. When the apologist concludes that Montaigne's aim *en froissant la raison humaine* is to "oblige men to recognize the need of a revelation to fix his incertitudes," it suffices to answer that Montaigne in so many words declares at the outset of the *Apologie de Raimond Sebonde* that he knows nothing of theology, which is equivalent to saying that he is not a student of the Bible. As a matter of fact he never quotes it!

In the last and most characteristic essay of all, discoursing at large *Of Experience*, he makes the most daring attack on laws in general, as being always arbitrary and often irrational, and not seldom more criminal than the offences they punish. After a planless discourse of diseases and diets, follies of habit and follies of caprice, the wisdom of self-rule and the wisdom of irregularity, he contrives to conclude at once that we should make the best of everything and that "only authority is of force with men of common reach and understanding, and is of more weight in a strange language"—a plea for Catholic ritual. Yet in the same page he pronounces that "Supercelestial opinions and under-terrestrial manners are things that amongst us I have ever seen to be of singular accord."

There is no final recognition here of religion as even a useful factor in life. In point of fact Montaigne's whole habit of mind is perfectly fatal to orthodox religion; and it is clear that, despite his professions of conformity, he did not hold the Christian beliefs.¹

¹ Cp. the clerical protests of Sterling (*Lond. and Westm. Rev.* July, 1838, p. 346) and Dean Church (*Oxford Essays*, p. 279) with the judgment of Champion, pp. 159-73. Sterling piously declares that "All that we find in him [Montaigne] of Christianity would be suitable to apes and dogs....."

He was simply a deist. Again and again he points to Sokrates as the noblest and wisest of men; there is no reference to Jesus or any of the saints. Whatever he might say in the *Apology*, in the other essays he repeatedly reveals a radical unbelief. The essay on Custom strikes at the root of all orthodoxy, with its thrusts at "the gross imposture of religions, wherewith so many worthy and sufficient men have been besotted and drunken," and its terse avowal that "miracles are according to the ignorance wherein we are by nature, and not according to nature's essence."¹ Above all, he rejected the great superstition of the age, the belief in witchcraft; and, following the lead of Wier,² suggested a medical view of the cases of those who professed wizardry.³ This is the more remarkable because his rubber-ball fashion of following impulsions and rebounding from certainty made him often disparage other men's certainties of disbelief just because they were certainties. Declaring that he prefers above all things qualified and doubtful propositions,⁴ he makes as many confident assertions of his own as any man ever did. But the effect of the whole is a perpetual stimulus to questioning. His function in literature was thus to set up a certain mental atmosphere,⁵ and this the extraordinary vitality of his utterance enabled him to do to an incalculable extent. He had the gift to disarm or at least to baffle hostility, to charm kings,⁶ to stand free between warring factions. No book ever written conveys more fully the sensation of a living voice; and after three hundred years he has as friendly an audience as ever.

Owen notes (*French Skeptics*, p. 446; cp. Champion, pp. 168-69) that, though the papal curia requested Montaigne to alter certain passages in the *Essays*, "it cannot be shown that he erased or modified a single one of the points." Sainte-Beuve, indeed, has noted many safeguarding clauses added to the later versions of the essay on Prayers (i, 56); but they really carry further the process of doubt. M. Champion has well shown how the profession of personal indecision and mere self-portraiture served as a passport for utterances which would have brought instant punishment on an author who showed any clear purpose. As it was, nearly a century passed before the *Essais* were placed upon the Roman *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (1676).

To the orthodox of his own day Montaigne seems to have given entire satisfaction. Thus Florimond de Bœmond, in his

¹ Liv. i, ch. xxii. Cp. liv. iii, ch. xi.

² Liv. iii, ch. xi.

³ Cp. citations in Buckle, 3-vol. ed. ii, 18, note 42 (1-vol. ed. p. 296); Lecky, *Rationalism*, i, 92-95; and Perrens, *Les Libertins*, p. 44.

⁴ As to Henri IV see Perrens, p. 53.

⁵ Below, § 5.

⁶ Liv. iii, ch. xi.

Antichrist (2e éd. 1599, p. 4), begins his apologetic with a skeptical argument, which he winds up by referring the reader with eulogy to the *Apologie* of Montaigne. The modern resort to the skeptical method in defence of traditional faith seems to date from this time. See Prof. Fortunat Strowski, *Histoire du sentiment religieux en France au xviiie siècle*; 1907, i, 55, note. (*De Montaigne à Pascal*.)

The momentum of such an influence is seen in the work of CHARRON (1541–1603), Montaigne's friend and disciple. The *Essais* had first appeared in 1580; the expanded and revised issue in 1588; and in 1601 there appeared Charron's *De la Sagesse*, which gives methodic form and as far as was permissible a direct application to Montaigne's naturalistic principles. Charron's is a curious case of mental evolution. First a lawyer, then a priest, he became a highly successful popular preacher and champion of the Catholic League; and as such was favoured by the notorious Marguerite (the Second¹) of Navarre. On the assassination of the Duke of Guise by order of Henri III he delivered an indignant protest from the pulpit, of which, however, he rapidly repented.² Becoming the friend of Montaigne in 1586, he shows already in 1593, in his *Three Truths*, the influence of the essayist's skepticism,³ though Charron's book was expressly framed to refute, first, the atheists; second, the pagans, Jews, Mohammedans; and, third, the Christian heretics and schismatics. The *Wisdom*, published only eight years later, is a work of a very different cast, proving a mental change. Even in the first work "the growing teeth of the skeptic are discernible beneath the well-worn stumps of the believer";⁴ but the second almost testifies to a new birth. Professedly orthodox, it was yet recognized at once by the devout as a "seminary of impiety,"⁵ and brought on its author a persecution that lasted till his sudden death from apoplexy, which his critics pronounced to be a divine dispensation. In the second and rearranged edition, published a year after his death, there are some modifications; but they are so far from essential⁶ that Buckle found the book as it stands a kind of pioneer

¹ Not, as Owen states (*French Skeptics*, p. 569), the sister of Francis I, who died when Charron was eight years old, but the daughter of Henri II, and first wife of Henri of Navarre, afterwards Henri IV.

² Cp. Prof. Strowski, *De Montaigne à Pascal*, as cited, p. 170 sq., and the *Discours Chrétien* of Charron—an extract from a letter of 1589—published with the 1609 ed. of the *Sagesse*.

³ Cp. Sainte-Beuve, as cited by Owen, p. 571, note, and Owen's own words, p. 572.

⁴ Owen, p. 571. Cp. pp. 573, 574.

⁵ Bayle, art. CHARRON. "A brutal atheism" is the account of Charron's doctrine given by the Jesuit Garasse. Cp. Perrens, p. 57.

⁶ Owen (p. 570) comes to this conclusion after carefully collating the editions. Cp. p. 587, note. The whole of the alterations, including those proposed by President Jeannin, will be found set forth in the edition of 1607, and the reprints of that. One of the modified passages (first ed. p. 257; ed. 1609, p. 785) is the Montaignesque comment (noted by Prof.

manual of rationalism.¹ Its way of putting all religions on one level, as being alike grounded on bad evidence and held on prejudice, is only the formal statement of an old idea, found, like so many others of Charron's, in Montaigne; but the didactic purpose and method turn the skeptic's shrug into a resolute propaganda. So with the formal and earnest insistence that true morality cannot be built on religious hopes and fears—a principle which Charron was the first to bring directly home to the modern intelligence,² as he did the principle of development in religious systems.³ Attempting as it does to construct a systematic practical philosophy of life, the book puts aside so positively the claims of the theologians,⁴ and so emphatically subordinates religion to the rule of natural reason,⁵ that it constitutes a virtual revolution in public doctrine for Christendom. As Montaigne is the effective beginner of modern literature, so is Charron the beginner of modern secular teaching. He is a Naturalist, professing theism; and it is not surprising to find that for a time his book was even more markedly than Montaigne's the French "freethinker's breviary."

Strowski, as cited, pp. 164-65, 183 sq., founding on Garasse and Mersenne. Strowski at first pronounces Charron "in reality only a collector of commonplaces" (p. 166); but afterwards obviously confesses (p. 191) that "his audacities are astonishing," and explains that "he formulates, perhaps without knowing it, a whole doctrine of irreligion which outgoes the man and the time—a thought stronger than the thinker!" And again he forgetfully speaks of "cette critique hardie et méthodique, j'allais écrire scientifique" (p. 240). All this would be a new form of commonplace.

It was only powerful protection that could save such a book from proscription; but Charron and his book had the support at once of Henri IV and the President Jeannin—the former a proved indifferentist to religious forms; the latter the author of the remark that a peace with two religions was better than a war which had none. Such a temper had become predominant even among professed Catholics, as may be gathered from the immense popularity of the *Satyre Menippée* (1594). Ridiculing as it did the insensate fanaticism of the Catholic League, that composition was naturally

Strowski, p. 195) on the fashion in which men's religion is determined by their place of birth. "C'est du Montaigne aggravé," complains M. Strowski. And it is left unchanged in substance.

¹ "The first.....attempt made in a modern language to construct a system of morals without the aid of theology" (3-vol. ed. ii, 19; 1-vol. ed. p. 296).

² Cp. Owen, pp. 580-85.

³ Buckle, 3-vol. ed. ii, 21; 1-vol. ed. p. 297.

⁴ E.g., the preface to the first edition, *ad init.*

⁵ E.g., liv. ii, ch. xxviii of revised ed. (ed. 1609, p. 399).

described as the work of atheists; but there seems to have been no such element in the case, the authors being all Catholics of good standing, and some of them even having a record for zeal.¹ The *Satyre* was in fact the triumphant revolt of the humorous common sense of France against the tyranny of fanaticism, which it may be said to have overthrown at one stroke,² inasmuch as it made possible the entry of Henri into Paris. By a sudden appeal to secular sanity and the sense of humour it made the bulk of the Catholic mass ashamed of its past course.³ On the other hand, it is expressly testified by the Catholic historian De Thou that all the rich and the aristocracy held the League in abomination.⁴ In such an atmosphere rationalism must needs germinate, especially when the king's acceptance of Catholicism dramatized the unreality of the grounds of strife.

After the assassination of the king in 1610, the last of the bloody deeds which had kept France on the rack of uncertainty in religion's name for three generations, the spirit of rationalism naturally did not wane. In the Paris of the early seventeenth century, doubtless, the new emancipation came to be associated, as "libertinism," with licence as well as with freethinking. In the nature of the case there could be no serious and free literary discussion of the new problems either of life or belief, save insofar as they had been handled by Montaigne and Charron; and, inasmuch as the accounts preserved of the freethought of the age are almost invariably those of its worst enemies, it is chiefly their side of the case that has been presented. Thus in 1623 the Jesuit Father François Garasse published a thick quarto of over a thousand pages, entitled *La Doctrine Curieuse des Beaux Esprits de ce temps, ou prétendus tels*, in which he assails the "libertins" of the day with an infuriated industry. The eight books into which he divides his treatise proceed upon eight alleged maxims of the freethinkers, which run as follows:—

I. There are very few good wits [*bons Esprits*] in the world; and the fools, that is to say, the common run of men, are not

¹ See the biog. pref. of Labitte to the Charpentier edition, p. xxv. The *Satyre* in its own turn freely charges atheism and incest on Leaguers; e.g., the *Harangue de M. de Lyon*, ed. cited, pp. 79, 86. This was by Rapin, whom Garasse particularly accuses of *libertinage*. See the *Doctrine Curieuse*, as cited, p. 124.

² It had to be four times reprinted in a few weeks; and the subsequent editions are innumerable. Ever since its issue it has been an anti-fanatical force in France.

³ Cp. Ch. Read's introd. to ed. 1886 of the *Satyre*, p. iii. (An exact reprint.) The *Satyre* anticipates (ed. Read, p. 281; ed. Labitte, p. 227) the modern saying that the worst peace is better than the best war.

⁴ De Thou, T. v, liv. 98, p. 63, cited in ed. 1699 of the *Satyre*, p. 489. De Thou was one of the Catholics who loathed the savagery of the Church; and was accordingly branded by the pope as a heretic. Buckle, 1-vol. ed. pp. 291, 300, notes.

capable of our doctrine; therefore it will not do to speak freely, but in secret, and among trusting and cabalistic souls.

II. Good wits [*beaux Esprits*] believe in God only by way of form, and as a matter of public policy (*par Maxime d'Etat*).

III. A *bel Esprit* is free in his belief, and is not readily to be taken in by the quantity of nonsense that is propounded to the simple populace.

IV. All things are conducted and governed by Destiny, which is irrevocable, infallible, immovable, necessary, eternal, and inevitable to all men whomsoever.

V. It is true that the book called the Bible, or the Holy Scripture, is a good book (*un gentil livre*), and contains a lot of good things; but that a *bon esprit* should be obliged to believe under pain of damnation all that is therein, down to the tail of Tobit's dog, does not follow.

VI. There is no other divinity or sovereign power in the world but NATURE, which must be satisfied in all things, without refusing anything to our body or senses that they desire of us in the exercise of their natural powers and faculties.

VII. Supposing there be a God, as it is decorous to admit, so as not to be always at odds with the superstitious, it does not follow that there are creatures which are purely intellectual and separated from matter. All that is in Nature is composite, and therefore there are neither angels nor devils in the world, and it is not certain that the soul of man is immortal.

VIII. It is true that to live happily it is necessary to extinguish and drown all scruples; but all the same it does not do to appear impious and abandoned, for fear of offending the simple or losing the support of the superstitious.

This is obviously neither candid¹ nor competent writing; and as it happens there remains proof, in the case of the life of La Mothe le Vayer, that "earnest freethought in the beginning of the seventeenth century afforded a *point d'appui* for serious-minded men, which neither the corrupt Romanism nor the narrow Protestantism of the period could furnish."² Garasse's own doctrine was that "the true liberty of the mind consists in a simple and docile (*sage*) belief in all that the Church propounds, indifferently and without distinction."³ The later social history of Catholic France is the sufficient comment on the

¹ M. Labitte, himself a Catholic, speaks of Garasse's "forfanterie habituelle" and "ton d'insolence sincère qui déguise tant de mensonges" (Pref. cited, p. xxxi.). Prof. Strowski (p. 130) admits too that "Il ne faut pas trop s'attacher aux révélations sensationnelles du père Garasse: les maximes qu'il prête aux beaux esprits, il les leur prête en effet, elles ne leur appartient pas toutes. La société secrète, la *Confrérie des Bouteilles*, ou il les dit engagés, est un invention de sa verve bouffonne." But the Professor, with a "N'importe!", forgives him, and trades on his matter.

² Owen, *French Skeptics*, p. 659. Cp. Lecky, *Rationalism*, i, 97, citing Maury, as to the resistance of *libertins* to the superstition about witchcraft.

³ *Doctrine Curieuse des Beaux Esprits*, as cited, p. 208. This is one of the passages which fully explain the opinion of the orthodox of that age that Garasse "helped rather than hindered atheism" (Reimann, *Hist. Atheismi*, 1725, p. 408).

efficacy of such teaching to regulate life. In any case the new ideas steadily gained ground; and on the heels of the treatise of Garasse appeared that of Marin Mersenne, *L'impiété des Déistes, Athées et Libertins de ce temps combattue, avec la refutation des opinions de Charron, de Cardan, de Jordan Brun, et des quatrains du Déiste* (1624). In a previous treatise, *Quæstiones celeberrimæ in Genesimin quo volumine Athei et Deisti impugnantur et expugnantur* (1623), Mersenne set agoing the often-quoted assertion that, while atheists abounded throughout Europe, they were so specially abundant in France that in Paris alone there were some fifty thousand. Even taking the term "atheist" in the loosest sense in which such writers used it, the statement was never credited by any contemporary, or by its author; but neither did anyone doubt that there was an unprecedented amount of unbelief. The *Quatrains du Déiste*, otherwise *L'Antibigot*, was a poem of one hundred and six stanzas, never printed, but widely circulated in manuscript in its day. It is poor poetry enough, but its doctrine of a Lucretian God who left the world to itself sufficed to create a sensation, and inspired Mersenne to write a poem in reply.¹ Such were the signs of the times when Pascal was in his cradle.

Mersenne's statistical assertion was made in two sheets of the *Quæstiones Celeberrimæ*, "qui ont été supprimé dans la plupart des exemplaires, à cause, sans doute, de leur exagération" (Bouillier, *Hist. de la philos. cartésienne*, 1854, i, 28, where the passage is cited). The suppressed sheets included a list of the "atheists" of the time, occupying five folio columns. (Julian Hibbert, *Plutarchus and Theophrastus on Superstition*, etc., 1828; App. Catal. of Works written against Atheism, p. 3; Prosper Marchand, *Lettre sur le Cymbalum Mundi*, in éd. Bibliophile Jacob, 1841, p. 17, note; Prof. Strowski, *De Montaigne à Pascal*, 1907, p. 138 sq.) Mersenne himself, in the preface to his book, stultifies his suppressed assertion by declaring that the impious in Paris boast falsely of their number, which is really small, unless heretics be reckoned as atheists. Garasse, writing against them, all the while professed to know only five atheists, three of them Italians (Strowski, as cited).

¹ Mersenne ascribed the quatrains to a skilled controversialist. *Quæstiones*, pref.

