

enchained in the prison which Christianity had built around the human mind. It was not indeed inactive, but its activity took the form of heresy; or, to pursue the metaphor, those who broke chains were unable for the most part to scale the walls of the prison; their freedom extended only so far as to arrive at beliefs, which, like orthodoxy itself, were based on Christian mythology. There were some exceptions to the rule. At the end of the twelfth century a stimulus from another world began to make itself felt. The philosophy of Aristotle became known to learned men in Western Christendom; their teachers were Jews and Mohammadans. Among the Mohammadans there was a certain amount of free thought, provoked by their knowledge of ancient Greek speculation. The works of the freethinker Averroes (twelfth century) which were based on Aristotle's philosophy, propagated a small wave of rationalism in Christian countries. Averroes held the eternity of matter and denied the immortality of the soul; his general view may be described as pantheism. But he sought to avoid difficulties with the orthodox authorities of Islam by laying down the doctrine of *double truth*, that is the coexistence of two independent and contradictory truths, the one philosophical, and the other religious. This

did not save him from being banished from the court of the Spanish caliph. In the University of Paris his teaching produced a school of freethinkers who held that the Creation, the resurrection of the body, and other essential dogmas, might be true from the standpoint of religion but are false from the standpoint of reason. To a plain mind this seems much as if one said that the doctrine of immortality is true on Sundays but not on week-days, or that the Apostles' Creed is false in the drawing-room and true in the kitchen. This dangerous movement was crushed, and the saving principle of double truth condemned, by Pope John XXI. The spread of Averroistic and similar speculations called forth the Theology of Thomas, of Aquino in South Italy (died 1274), a most subtle thinker, whose mind had a natural turn for scepticism. He enlisted Aristotle, hitherto the guide of infidelity, on the side of orthodoxy, and constructed an ingenious Christian philosophy which is still authoritative in the Roman Church. But Aristotle and reason are dangerous allies for faith, and the treatise of Thomas is perhaps more calculated to unsettle a believing mind by the doubts which it powerfully states than to quiet the scruples of a doubter by its solutions.

There must always have been some private

and underground unbelief here and there, which did not lead to any serious consequences. The blasphemous statement that the world had been deceived by three impostors, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad, was current in the thirteenth century. It was attributed to the freethinking Emperor Frederick II (died 1250), who has been described as "the first modern man." The same idea, in a milder form, was expressed in the story of the Three Rings which is at least as old. A Mohammadan ruler, desiring to extort money from a rich Jew, summoned him to his court and laid a snare for him. "My friend," he said, "I have often heard it reported that thou art a very wise man. Tell me therefore which of the three religions, that of the Jews, that of the Mohammadans, and that of the Christians, thou believest to be the truest." The Jew saw that a trap was laid for him and answered as follows: "My lord, there was once a rich man who among his treasures had a ring of such great value that he wished to leave it as a perpetual heirloom to his successors. So he made a will that whichever of his sons should be found in possession of this ring after his death should be considered his heir. The son to whom he gave the ring acted in the same way as his father, and so the ring passed from hand to

hand. At last it came into the possession of a man who had three sons whom he loved equally. Unable to make up his mind to which of them he should leave the ring, he promised it to each of them privately, and then in order to satisfy them all caused a goldsmith to make two other rings so closely resembling the true ring that he was unable to distinguish them himself. On his death-bed he gave each of them a ring, and each claimed to be his heir, but no one could prove his title because the rings were indistinguishable, and the suit at law lasts till this day. It is even so, my lord, with the three religions, given by God to the three peoples. They each think they have the true religion, but which of them really has it, is a question, like that of the rings, still undecided." This sceptical story became famous in the eighteenth century, when the German poet, Lessing, built upon it his drama *Nathan the Sage*, which was intended to show the unreasonableness of intolerance.

CHAPTER IV

PROSPECT OF DELIVERANCE

(THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION)

THE intellectual and social movement which was to dispel the darkness of the Middle Ages

and prepare the way for those who would ultimately deliver reason from her prison, began in Italy in the thirteenth century. The misty veil woven of credulity and infantile naïveté which had hung over men's souls and protected them from understanding either themselves or their relation to the world began to lift. The individual began to feel his separate individuality, to be conscious of his own value as a person apart from his race or country (as in the later ages of Greece and Rome); and the world around him began to emerge from the mists of mediæval dreams. The change was due to the political and social conditions of the little Italian States, of which some were republics and others governed by tyrants.

To the human world, thus unveiling itself, the individual who sought to make it serve his purposes required a guide; and the guide was found in the ancient literature of Greece and Rome. Hence the whole transformation, which presently extended from Italy to Northern Europe, is known as the *Renaissance*, or rebirth of classical antiquity. — But the awakened interest in classical literature while it coloured the character and stimulated the growth of the movement, supplying new ideals and suggesting new points of view, was only the form in which the change of spirit began

to express itself in the fourteenth century. The change might conceivably have taken some other shape. Its true name is Humanism.

At the time men hardly felt that they were passing into a new age of civilization, nor did the culture of the Renaissance immediately produce any open or general intellectual rebellion against orthodox beliefs. The world was gradually assuming an aspect decidedly unfriendly to the teaching of mediæval orthodoxy; but there was no explosion of hostility; it was not till the seventeenth century that war between religion and authority was systematically waged. The humanists were not hostile to theological authority or to the claims of religious dogma; but they had discovered a purely human curiosity about this world and it absorbed their interest. They idolized pagan literature which abounded in poisonous germs; the secular side of education became all-important; religion and theology were kept in a separate compartment. Some speculative minds, which were sensitive to the contradiction, might seek to reconcile the old religion with new ideas; but the general tendency of thinkers in the Renaissance period was to keep the two worlds distinct, and to practise outward conformity to the creed without any real intellectual submission.

I may illustrate this double-facedness of the Renaissance by Montaigne (second half of sixteenth century). His *Essays* make for rationalism, but contain frequent professions of orthodox Catholicism, in which he was perfectly sincere. There is no attempt to reconcile the two points of view; in fact, he takes the sceptical position that there is no bridge between reason and religion. The human intellect is incapable in the domain of theology, and religion must be placed aloft, out of reach and beyond the interference of reason; to be humbly accepted. But while he humbly accepted it, on sceptical grounds which would have induced him to accept Mohammadanism if he had been born in Cairo, his soul was not in its dominion. It was the philosophers and wise men of antiquity, Cicero, and Seneca, and Plutarch, who moulded and possessed his mind. It is to them, and not to the consolations of Christianity, that he turns when he discusses the problem of death. The religious wars in France which he witnessed and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day (1572) were calculated to confirm him in his scepticism. His attitude to persecution is expressed in the remark that "it is setting a high value on one's opinions to roast men on account of them."

The logical results of Montaigne's scepti-

cism were made visible by his friend Charron, who published a book *On Wisdom* in 1601. Here it is taught that true morality is not founded on religion, and the author surveys the history of Christianity to show the evils which it had produced. He says of immortality that it is the most generally received doctrine, the most usefully believed, and the most weakly established by human reasons; but he modified this and some other passages in a second edition. A contemporary Jesuit placed Charron in the catalogue of the most dangerous and wicked atheists. He was really a deist; but in those days, and long after, no one scrupled to call a non-Christian deist an atheist. His book would doubtless have been suppressed and he would have suffered but for the support of King Henry IV. It has a particular interest because it transports us directly from the atmosphere of the Renaissance, represented by Montaigne, into the new age of more or less aggressive rationalism.

What Humanism did in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, at first in Italy, then in other countries, was to create an intellectual atmosphere in which the emancipation of reason could begin and knowledge could resume its progress. The period saw the invention of printing and

the discovery of new parts of the globe, and these things were to aid powerfully in the future defeat of authority.

But the triumph of freedom depended on other causes also; it was not to be brought about by the intellect alone. The chief political facts of the period were the decline of the power of the Pope in Europe, the decay of the Holy Roman Empire, and the growth of strong monarchies, in which worldly interests determined and dictated ecclesiastical policy, and from which the modern State was to develop. The success of the *Reformation* was made possible by these conditions. Its victory in North Germany was due to the secular interest of the princes, who profited by the confiscation of Church lands. In England there was no popular movement; the change was carried through by the government for its own purposes.

The principal cause of the Reformation was the general corruption of the Church and the flagrancy of its oppression. For a long time the Papacy had had no higher aim than to be a secular power exploiting its spiritual authority for the purpose of promoting its worldly interests, by which it was exclusively governed. All the European States based their diplomacy on this assumption. Since the fourteenth century every one acknow-

ledged the need of reforming the Church, and reform had been promised, but things went from bad to worse, and there was no resource but rebellion. The rebellion led by Luther was the result not of a revolt of reason against dogmas, but of widely spread anti-clerical feeling due to the ecclesiastical methods of extorting money, particularly by the sale of Indulgences, the most glaring abuse of the time. It was his study of the theory of Papal Indulgences that led Luther on to his theological heresies.

It is an elementary error, but one which is still shared by many people who have read history superficially, that the Reformation established religious liberty and the right of private judgment. What it did was to bring about a new set of political and social conditions, under which religious liberty could ultimately be secured, and, by virtue of its inherent inconsistencies, to lead to results at which its leaders would have shuddered. But nothing was further from the minds of the leading Reformers than the toleration of doctrines differing from their own. They replaced one authority by another. They set up the authority of the Bible instead of that of the Church, but it was the Bible according to Luther or the Bible according to Calvin. So far as the spirit of intolerance went, there

was nothing to choose between the new and the old Churches. The religious wars were not for the cause of freedom, but for particular sets of doctrines; and in France, if the Protestants had been victorious, it is certain that they would not have given more liberal terms to the Catholics than the Catholics gave to them.

Luther was quite opposed to liberty of conscience and worship, a doctrine which was inconsistent with Scripture as he read it. He might protest against coercion and condemn the burning of heretics, when he was in fear that he and his party might be victims, but when he was safe and in power, he asserted his real view that it was the duty of the State to impose the true doctrine and exterminate heresy, which was an abomination, that unlimited obedience to their prince in religious as in other matters was the duty of subjects, and that the end of the State was to defend the faith. He held that Anabaptists should be put to the sword. With Protestants and Catholics alike the dogma of exclusive salvation led to the same place.

Calvin's fame for intolerance is blackest. He did not, like Luther, advocate the absolute power of the civil ruler; he stood for the control of the State by the Church—a form of government which is commonly called theocracy; and he established a theocracy at

Geneva. Here liberty was completely crushed; false doctrines were put down by imprisonment, exile, and death. The punishment of Servetus is the most famous exploit of Calvin's warfare against heresy. The Spaniard Servetus, who had written against the dogma of the Trinity, was imprisoned at Lyons (partly through the machinations of Calvin) and having escaped came rashly to Geneva. He was tried for heresy and committed to the flames (1553), though Geneva had no jurisdiction over him. Melancthon, who formulated the principles of persecution, praised this act as a memorable example to posterity. Posterity however was one day to be ashamed of that example. In 1903 the Calvinists of Geneva felt impelled to erect an expiatory monument, in which Calvin "our great Reformer" is excused as guilty of an error "which was that of his century."

Thus the Reformers, like the Church from which they parted, cared nothing for freedom, they only cared for "truth." If the mediæval ideal was to purge the world of heretics, the object of the Protestant was to exclude all dissidents from his own land. The people at large were to be driven into a fold, to accept their faith at the command of their sovran. This was the principle laid down in the religious peace which (1555) composed the

struggle between the Catholic Emperor and the Protestant German princes. It was recognized by Catherine de' Medici when she massacred the French Protestants and signified to Queen Elizabeth that *she* might do likewise with English Catholics.

Nor did the Protestant creeds represent enlightenment. The Reformation on the Continent was as hostile to enlightenment as it was to liberty; and science, if it seemed to contradict the Bible, has as little chance with Luther as with the Pope. The Bible, interpreted by the Protestants or the Roman Church, was equally fatal to witches. In Germany the development of learning received a long set-back.

Yet the Reformation involuntarily helped the cause of liberty. The result was contrary to the intentions of its leaders, was indirect, and long delayed. In the first place, the great rent in Western Christianity, substituting a number of theological authorities instead of one—several gods, we may say, instead of one God—produced a weakening of ecclesiastical authority in general. The religious tradition was broken. In the second place, in the Protestant States, the supreme ecclesiastical power was vested in the sovran; the sovran had other interests besides those of the Church to consider; and political reasons

would compel him sooner or later to modify the principle of ecclesiastical intolerance. Catholic States in the same way were forced to depart from the duty of not suffering heretics. The religious wars in France ended in a limited toleration of Protestants. The policy of Cardinal Richelieu, who supported the Protestant cause in Germany, illustrates how secular interests obstructed the cause of faith.

Again, the intellectual justification of the Protestant rebellion against the Church had been the right of private judgment, that is, the principle of religious liberty. But the Reformers had asserted it only for themselves, and as soon as they had framed their own articles of faith, they had practically repudiated it. This was the most glaring inconsistency in the Protestant position; and the claim which they had thrust aside could not be permanently suppressed. Once more, the Protestant doctrines rested on an insecure foundation which no logic could defend, and inevitably led from one untenable position to another. If we are to believe on authority, why should we prefer the upstart dictation of the Lutheran Confession of Augsburg or the English Thirty-nine Articles to the venerable authority of the Church of Rome? If we decide against Rome, we must do so by means of reason; but once we exercise reason in the

matter, why should we stop where Luther or Calvin or any of the other rebels stopped, unless we assume that one of them was inspired? If we reject superstitions which they rejected, there is nothing except *their* authority to prevent us from rejecting all or some of the superstitions which they retained. Moreover, their Bible-worship promoted results which they did not foresee.¹ The inspired record on which the creeds depend became an open book. Public attention was directed to it as never before, though it cannot be said to have been universally read before the nineteenth century. Study led to criticism, the difficulties of the dogma of inspiration were appreciated, and the Bible was ultimately to be submitted to a remorseless dissection which has altered at least the quality of its authority in the eyes of intelligent believers. This process of Biblical criticism has been conducted mainly in a Protestant atmosphere and the new position in which the Bible was placed by the Reformation must be held partly accountable. In these ways, Protestantism was adapted to be a stepping-stone to rationalism, and thus served the cause of freedom.

¹ The danger, however, was felt in Germany, and in the seventeenth century the study of Scripture was not encouraged at German Universities.

That cause however was powerfully and directly promoted by one sect of Reformers, who in the eyes of all the others were blasphemers and of whom most people never think when they talk of the Reformation. I mean the Socinians. Of their far-reaching influence something will be said in the next chapter.

Another result of the Reformation has still to be mentioned, its renovating effect on the Roman Church, which had now to fight for its existence. A new series of Popes who were in earnest about religion began with Paul III (1534) and reorganized the Papacy and its resources for a struggle of centuries.¹ The institution of the Jesuit order, the establishment of the Inquisition at Rome, the Council of Trent, the censorship of the Press (Index of Forbidden Books) were the expression of the new spirit and the means to cope with the new situation. The reformed Papacy was good fortune for believing children of the Church, but what here concerns us is that one of its chief objects was to repress freedom more effectually. Savonarola who preached right living at Florence had been executed (1498) under Pope Alexander VI who was a notorious profligate. If Savonarola had lived

¹ See Barry, *Papacy and Modern Times* (in this series), 113 seq.

in the new era he might have been canonized, but Giordano Bruno was burned.

Giordano Bruno had constructed a religious philosophy, based partly upon Epicurus, from whom he took the theory of the infinity of the universe. But Epicurean materialism was transformed into a pantheistic mysticism by the doctrine that God is the soul of matter. Accepting the recent discovery of Copernicus, which Catholics and Protestants alike rejected, that the earth revolves round the sun, Bruno took the further step of regarding the fixed stars as suns, each with its invisible satellites. He sought to come to an understanding with the Bible, which (he held) being intended for the vulgar had to accommodate itself to their prejudices. Leaving Italy, because he was suspected of heresy, he lived successively in Switzerland, France, England, and Germany, and in 1592, induced by a false friend to return to Venice he was seized by order of the Inquisition. Finally condemned in Rome, he was burned (1600) in the Campo de' Fiori, where a monument now stands in his honour, erected some years ago, to the great chagrin of the Roman Church.

Much is made of the fate of Bruno because he is one of the world's famous men. No country has so illustrious a victim of that era to commemorate as Italy, but in other lands

blood just as innocent was shed for heterodox opinions. In France there was rather more freedom than elsewhere under the relatively tolerant government of Henry IV and of the Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin, till about 1660. But at Toulouse (1619) Lucilio Vanini, a learned Italian who like Bruno wandered about Europe, was convicted as an atheist and blasphemer; his tongue was torn out and he was burned. Protestant England, under Elizabeth and James I, did not lag behind the Roman Inquisition, but on account of the obscurity of the victims her zeal for faith has been unduly forgotten. Yet, but for an accident, she might have covered herself with the glory of having done to death a heretic not less famous than Giordano Bruno. The poet Marlowe was accused of atheism, but while the prosecution was hanging over him he was killed in a sordid quarrel in a tavern (1593). Another dramatist (Kyd) who was implicated in the charge was put to the torture. At the same time Sir Walter Raleigh was prosecuted for unbelief but not convicted. Others were not so fortunate. Three or four persons were burned at Norwich in the reign of Elizabeth for unchristian doctrines, among them Francis Kett who had been a Fellow of Corpus Christi, Cambridge. Under James I, who interested himself person-

ally in such matters, Bartholomew Legate was charged with holding various pestilent opinions. The king summoned him to his presence and asked him whether he did not pray daily to Jesus Christ. Legate replied he had prayed to Christ in the days of his ignorance, but not for the last seven years. "Away, base fellow," said James, spurning him with his foot, "it shall never be said that one stayeth in my palace that hath never prayed to our Saviour for seven years together." Legate, having been imprisoned for some time in Newgate, was declared an incorrigible heretic and burned at Smithfield (1611). Just a month later, one Wightman was burned at Lichfield, by the Bishop of Coventry, for heterodox doctrines. It is possible that public opinion was shocked by these two burnings. They were the last cases in England of death for unbelief. Puritan intolerance, indeed, passed an ordinance in 1648, by which all who denied the Trinity, Christ's divinity, the inspiration of Scripture, or a future state, were liable to death, and persons guilty of other heresies, to imprisonment. But this did not lead to any executions.

The Renaissance age saw the first signs of the beginning of modern science, but the mediæval prejudices against the investigation

of nature were not dissipated till the seventeenth century, and in Italy they continued to a much later period. The history of modern astronomy begins in 1543, with the publication of the work of Copernicus revealing the truth about the motions of the earth. The appearance of this work is important in the history of free thought, because it raised a clear and definite issue between science and Scripture; and Osiander, who edited it (Copernicus was dying), foreseeing the outcry it would raise, stated untruly in the preface that the earth's motion was put forward only as a hypothesis. The theory was denounced by Catholics and Reformers, and it did not convince some men (e. g. Bacon) who were not influenced by theological prejudice. The observations of the Italian astronomer Galileo de' Galilei demonstrated the Copernican theory beyond question. His telescope discovered the moons of Jupiter, and his observation of the spots in the sun confirmed the earth's rotation. In the pulpits of Florence, where he lived under the protection of the Grand Duke, his sensational discoveries were condemned. "Men of *Galilee*, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" He was then denounced to the Holy Office of the Inquisition by two Dominican monks. Learning that his investigations were being considered at

Rome, Galileo went thither, confident that he would be able to convince the ecclesiastical authorities of the manifest truth of Copernicanism. He did not realize what theology was capable of. In February 1616 the Holy Office decided that the Copernican system was in itself absurd, and, in respect of Scripture, heretical. Cardinal Bellarmine, by the Pope's direction, summoned Galileo and officially admonished him to abandon his opinion and cease to teach it, otherwise the Inquisition would proceed against him. Galileo promised to obey. The book of Copernicus was placed on the Index. It has been remarked that Galileo's book on *Solar Spots* contains no mention of Scripture, and thus the Holy Office, in its decree which related to that book, passed judgment on a scientific, not a theological, question.

Galileo was silenced for a while, but it was impossible for him to be mute for ever. Under a new Pope (Urban VIII) he looked for greater liberty, and there were many in the Papal circle who were well disposed to him. He hoped to avoid difficulties by the device of placing the arguments for the old and the new theories side by side, and pretending not to judge between them. He wrote a treatise on the two systems (the Ptolemaic and the Copernican) in the form of *Dialogues*, of which

the preface declares that the purpose is to explain the pros and cons of the two views. But the spirit of the work is Copernican. He received permission, quite definite as he thought, from Father Riccardi (master of the Sacred Palace) to print it, and it appeared in 1632. The Pope however disapproved of it, the book was examined by a commission, and Galileo was summoned before the Inquisition. He was old and ill, and the humiliations which he had to endure are a painful story. He would probably have been more severely treated, if one of the members of the tribunal had not been a man of scientific training (Macolano, a Dominican), who was able to appreciate his ability. Under examination, Galileo denied that he had upheld the motion of the earth in the *Dialogues*, and asserted that he had shown the reasons of Copernicus to be inconclusive. This defence was in accordance with the statement in his preface, but contradicted his deepest conviction. In struggling with such a tribunal, it was the only line which a man who was not a hero could take. At a later session, he forced himself ignominiously to confess that some of the arguments on the Copernican side had been put too strongly and to declare himself ready to confute the theory. In the final examination, he was threatened with torture. He said that before the decree

of 1616 he had held the truth of the Copernican system to be arguable, but since then he had held the Ptolemaic to be true. Next day, he publicly abjured the scientific truth which he had demonstrated. He was allowed to retire to the country, on condition that he saw no one. In the last months of his life he wrote to a friend to this effect: "The falsity of the Copernican system cannot be doubted, especially by us Catholics. It is refuted by the irrefragable authority of Scripture. The conjectures of Copernicus and his disciples were all disposed of by the one solid argument: God's omnipotence can operate in infinitely various ways. If something appears to our observation to happen in one particular way, we must not curtail God's arm, and sustain a thing in which we may be deceived." The irony is evident.

Rome did not permit the truth about the solar system to be taught till after the middle of the eighteenth century, and Galileo's books remained on the Index till 1835. The prohibition embarrassed the study of natural science in Italy.

The Roman Index reminds us of the significance of the invention of printing in the struggle for freedom of thought, by making it easy to propagate new ideas far and wide. Authority speedily realized the

danger, and took measures to place its yoke on the new contrivance, which promised to be such a powerful ally of reason. Pope Alexander VI inaugurated censorship of the Press by his Bull against unlicensed printing (1501). In France King Henry II made printing without official permission punishable by death. In Germany, censorship was introduced in 1529. In England, under Elizabeth, books could not be printed without a licence, and printing presses were not allowed except in London, Oxford, and Cambridge; the regulation of the Press was under the authority of the Star Chamber. Nowhere did the Press become really free till the nineteenth century.

While the Reformation and the renovated Roman Church meant a reaction against the Renaissance, the vital changes which the Renaissance signified—individualism, a new intellectual attitude to the world, the cultivation of secular knowledge—were permanent and destined to lead, amid the competing intolerances of Catholic and Protestant powers, to the goal of liberty. We shall see how reason and the growth of knowledge undermined the bases of theological authority. At each step in this process, in which philosophical speculation, historical criticism, natural science have all taken part, the opposition between reason and faith deepened;

doubt, clear or vague, increased; and secularism, derived from the Humanists, and always implying scepticism, whether latent or conscious, substituted an interest in the fortunes of the human race upon earth for the interest in a future world. And along with this steady intellectual advance, toleration gained ground and freedom won more champions. In the meantime the force of political circumstances was compelling governments to mitigate their maintenance of one religious creed by measures of relief to other Christian sects, and the principle of exclusiveness was broken down for reasons of worldly expediency. *Religious* liberty was an important step towards complete freedom of opinion.

CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

IN the third century B.C. the Indian king Asoka, a man of religious zeal but of tolerant spirit, confronted by the struggle between two hostile religions (Brahmanism and Buddhism), decided that both should be equally privileged and honoured in his dominions. His ordinances on the matter are memorable as the earliest existing Edicts of toleration. In

Europe, as we saw, the principle of toleration was for the first time definitely expressed in the Roman Imperial Edicts which terminated the persecution of the Christians.

The religious strife of the sixteenth century raised the question in its modern form, and for many generations it was one of the chief problems of statesmen and the subject of endless controversial pamphlets. Toleration means incomplete religious liberty, and there are many degrees of it. It might be granted to certain Christian sects; it might be granted to Christian sects, but these alone; it might be granted to all religions, but not to free-thinkers; or to deists, but not to atheists. It might mean the concession of some civil rights, but not of others; it might mean the exclusion of those who are tolerated from public offices or from certain professions. The religious liberty now enjoyed in Western lands has been gained through various stages of toleration.

We owe the modern principle of toleration to the Italian group of Reformers, who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and were the fathers of Unitarianism. The Reformation movement had spread to Italy, but Rome was successful in suppressing it, and many heretics fled to Switzerland. The anti-Trinitarian group were forced by the intoler-

ance of Calvin to flee to Transylvania and Poland where they propagated their doctrines. The Unitarian creed was moulded by Fausto Sozzini, generally known as Socinus, and in the catechism of his sect (1574) persecution is condemned. This repudiation of the use of force in the interest of religion is a consequence of the Socinian doctrines. For, unlike Luther and Calvin, the Socinians conceded such a wide room to individual judgment in the interpretation of Scripture that to impose Socinianism would have been inconsistent with its principles. In other words, there was a strong rationalistic element which was lacking in the Trinitarian creeds.

It was under the influence of the Socinian spirit that Castellion of Savoy sounded the trumpet of toleration in a pamphlet denouncing the burning of Servetus, whereby he earned the malignant hatred of Calvin. He maintained the innocence of error and ridiculed the importance which the Churches laid on obscure questions such as predestination and the Trinity. "To discuss the difference between the Law and the Gospel, gratuitous remission of sins or imputed righteousness, is as if a man were to discuss whether a prince was to come on horseback, or in a chariot, or dressed in white or in red."¹ Religion is

¹ Translated by Locky.

a curse if persecution is a necessary part of it.

For a long time the Socinians and those who came under their influence when, driven from Poland, they passed into Germany and Holland, were the only sects which advocated toleration. It was adopted from them by the Anabaptists and by the Arminian section of the Reformed Church of Holland. And in Holland, the founder of the English Congregationalists, who (under the name of Independents) played such an important part in the history of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, learned the principle of liberty of conscience.

Socinus thought that this principle could be realized without abolishing the State Church. He contemplated a close union between the State and the prevailing Church, combined with complete toleration for other sects. It is under this system (which has been called *jurisdictional*) that religious liberty has been realized in European States. But there is another and simpler method, that of *separating* Church from State and placing all religions on an equality. This was the solution which the Anabaptists would have preferred. They detested the State; and the doctrine of religious liberty was not precious to them. Their ideal system would have been

an Anabaptist theocracy; separation was the second best.

In Europe, public opinion was not ripe for separation, inasmuch as the most powerful religious bodies were alike in regarding toleration as wicked indifference. But it was introduced in a small corner of the new world beyond the Atlantic in the seventeenth century. The Puritans who fled from the intolerance of the English Church and State and founded colonies in New England, were themselves equally intolerant, not only to Anglicans and Catholics, but to Baptists and Quakers. They set up theocratical governments from which all who did not belong to their own sect were excluded. Roger Williams had imbibed from the Dutch Arminians the idea of separation of Church from State. On account of this heresy he was driven from Massachusetts, and he founded Providence to be a refuge for those whom the Puritan colonists persecuted. Here he set up a democratic constitution in which the magistrates had power only in civil matters and could not interfere with religion. Other towns were presently founded in Rhode Island, and a charter of Charles II (1663) confirmed the constitution, which secured to all citizens professing Christianity, of whatever form, the full enjoyment of political rights. Non-

Christians were tolerated, but were not admitted to the political rights of Christians. So far, the new State fell short of perfect liberty. But the fact that Jews were soon admitted, notwithstanding, to full citizenship shows how free the atmosphere was. To Roger Williams belongs the glory of having founded the first modern State which was really tolerant and was based on the principle of taking the control of religious matters entirely out of the hands of the civil government.

Toleration was also established in the Roman Catholic colony of Maryland, but in a different way. Through the influence of Lord Baltimore an Act of Toleration was passed in 1649, notable as the first decree, voted by a legal assembly, granting complete freedom to all Christians. No one professing faith in Christ was to be molested in regard to his religion. But the law was heavy on all outside this pale. Any one who blasphemed God or attacked the Trinity or any member of the Trinity was threatened by the penalty of death. The tolerance of Maryland attracted so many Protestant settlers from Virginia that the Protestants became a majority, and as soon as they won political preponderance, they introduced an Act (1654) excluding Papists and Prelatists from tolera-

tion. The rule of the Baltimores was restored after 1660, and the old religious freedom was revived, but with the accession of William III the Protestants again came into power and the toleration which the Catholics had instituted in Maryland came to an end.

It will be observed that in both these cases freedom was incomplete; but it was much larger and more fundamental in Rhode Island, where it had been ultimately derived from the doctrine of Socinus.¹ When the colonies became independent of England the Federal Constitution which they set up was absolutely secular, but it was left to each member of the Union to adopt Separation or not (1789). If separation has become the rule in the American States, it may be largely due to the fact that on any other system the governments would have found it difficult to impose mutual tolerance on the sects. It must be added that in Maryland and a few southern States atheists still suffer from some political disabilities.

In England, the experiment of Separation would have been tried under the Commonwealth, if the Independents had had their way. This policy was overruled by Cromwell. The new national Church included Presby-

¹ Complete toleration was established by Penn in the Quaker Colony of Pennsylvania in 1682.

terians, Independents, and Baptists, but liberty of worship was granted to all Christian sects, except Roman Catholics and Anglicans. If the parliament had had the power, this toleration would have been a mere name. The Presbyterians regarded toleration as a work of the Devil, and would have persecuted the Independents if they could. But under Cromwell's autocratic rule even the Anglicans lived in peace, and toleration was extended to the Jews. In these days, voices were raised from various quarters advocating toleration on general grounds.¹ The most illustrious advocate was Milton, the poet, who was in favour of the severance of Church from State.

In Milton's *Areopagitica: a speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing* (1644), the freedom of the Press is eloquently sustained by arguments which are valid for freedom of thought in general. It is shown that the censorship will conduce "to the discouragement of all learning and the stop of truth, not only by disexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindering and cropping the discovery that might be yet further made, both in religious and civil wisdom." For knowledge is

¹ Especially Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants* (1637), and Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Propheying* (1646).

advanced through the utterance of new opinions, and truth is discovered by free discussion. If the waters of truth "flow not in a perpetual progression they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition." Books which are authorized by the licensers are apt to be, as Bacon said, "but the language of the times," and do not contribute to progress. The examples of the countries where the censorship is severe do not suggest that it is useful for morals: "look into Italy and Spain, whether those places be one scruple the better, the honestest, the wiser, the chaster, since all the inquisitional rigour that hath been executed upon books." Spain indeed could reply, "We are, what is more important, more orthodox." It is interesting to notice that Milton places freedom of thought above civil liberty: "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties."

With the restoration of the Monarchy and the Anglican Church, religious liberty was extinguished by a series of laws against Dissenters. To the Revolution we owe the Act of Toleration (1689) from which the religious freedom which England enjoys at present is derived. It granted freedom of worship to Presbyterians, Congregationalists,

Baptists and Quakers, but only to these; Catholics and Unitarians were expressly excepted and the repressive legislation of Charles II remained in force against them. It was a characteristically English measure, logically inconsistent and absurd, a mixture of tolerance and intolerance, but suitable to the circumstances and the state of public opinion at the time.

In the same year John Locke's famous (first) *Letter concerning Toleration* appeared in Latin. Three subsequent letters developed and illustrated his thesis. The main argument is based on the principle that the business of civil government is quite distinct from that of religion, that the State is a society constituted only for preserving and promoting the civil interests of its members—civil interests meaning life, liberty, health, and the possession of property. The care of souls is not committed to magistrates more than to other men. For the magistrate can only use outward force; but true religion means the inward persuasion of the mind, and the mind is so made that force cannot compel it to believe. So too it is absurd for a State to make laws to enforce a religion, for laws are useless without penalties, and penalties are impertinent because they cannot convince.

Moreover, even if penalties could change men's beliefs, this would not conduce to the salvation of souls. Would more men be saved if all blindly resigned themselves to the will of their rulers and accepted the religion of their country? For as the princes of the world are divided in religion, one country alone would be in the right, and all the rest of the world would have to follow *their* princes to destruction; "and that which heightens the absurdity, and very ill suits the notion of a deity, men would owe their eternal happiness or their eternal misery to the places of their nativity." This is a principle on which Locke repeatedly insists. If a State is justified in imposing a creed, it follows that in all the lands except the one or few in which the true faith prevails, it is the duty of the subjects to embrace a false religion. If Protestantism is promoted in England, Popery by the same rule will be promoted in France. "What is true and good in England will be true and good at Rome too, in China, or Geneva." Toleration is the principle which gives to the true faith the best chance of prevailing.

Locke would concede full liberty to idolaters, by whom he means the Indians of North America, and he makes some scathing remarks on the ecclesiastical zeal which forced these "innocent pagans" to forsake their ancient

religion. But his toleration, though it extends beyond the Christian pale, is not complete. He excepts in the first place Roman Catholics, not on account of their theological dogmas but because they "teach that faith is not to be kept with heretics," that "kings excommunicated forfeit their crowns and kingdoms," and because they deliver themselves up to the protection and service of a foreign prince—the Pope. In other words, they are politically dangerous. His other exception is atheists. "Those are not all to be tolerated who deny the being of God. Promises, covenants and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all. Besides also, those that by their atheism undermine and destroy all religion, can have no pretence of religion to challenge the privilege of a Toleration."

Thus Locke is not free from the prejudices of his time. These exceptions contradict his own principle that "it is absurd that things should be enjoined by laws which are not in men's power to perform. And to believe this or that to be true does not depend upon our will." This applies to Roman Catholics as to Protestants, to atheists as to deists. Locke, however, perhaps thought that the speculative

opinion of atheism, which was uncommon in his day, does depend on the will. He would have excluded from his State his great contemporary Spinoza.

But in spite of its limitations Locke's *Toleration* is a work of the highest value, and its argument takes us further than its author went. It asserts unrestrictedly the secular principle, and its logical issue is Disestablishment. A Church is merely "a free and voluntary society." I may notice the remark that if infidels were to be converted by force, it was easier for God to do it "with armies of heavenly legions than for any son of the Church, how potent soever, with all his dragoons." This is a polite way of stating a maxim analogous to that of the Emperor Tiberius (above, p. 41). If false beliefs are an offence to God, it is, really, his affair.

The toleration of Nonconformists was far from pleasing extreme Anglicans, and the influence of this party at the beginning of the eighteenth century menaced the liberty of Dissenters. The situation provoked Defoe, who was a zealous Nonconformist, to write his pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), an ironical attack upon the principle of toleration. It pretends to show that the Dissenters are at heart incorrigible rebels, that a gentle policy is useless, and

suggests that all preachers at conventicles should be hanged and all persons found attending such meetings should be banished. This exceedingly amusing but terribly earnest caricature of the sentiments of the High Anglican party at first deceived and alarmed the Dissenters themselves. But the High Churchmen were furious. Defoe was fined, exposed in the pillory three times, and sent to Newgate prison.

But the Tory reaction was only temporary. During the eighteenth century, a relatively tolerant spirit prevailed among the Christian sects and new sects were founded. The official Church became less fanatical; many of its leading divines were influenced by rationalistic thought. If it had not been for the opposition of King George III, the Catholics might have been freed from their disabilities before the end of the century. This measure, eloquently advocated by Burke and desired by Pitt, was not carried till 1829 and then under the threat of a revolution in Ireland. In the meantime legal toleration had been extended to the Unitarians in 1813, but they were not relieved from all disabilities till the forties. Jews were not admitted to the full rights of citizenship till 1858.

The achievement of religious liberty in England in the nineteenth century has been

mainly the work of Liberals. The Liberal party has been moving towards the ultimate goal of complete secularization and the separation of the Church from the State—the logical results of Locke's theory of civil government. The Disestablishment of the Church in Ireland in 1869 partly realized this ideal, and now more than forty years later the Liberal party is seeking to apply the principle to Wales. It is highly characteristic of English politics and English psychology that the change should be carried out in this piecemeal fashion. In the other countries of the British Empire the system of Separation prevails; there is no connection between the State and any sect; no Church is anything more than a voluntary society. But secularization has advanced under the State Church system. It is enough to mention the Education Act of 1870 and the abolition of religious tests at Universities (1871). Other gains for freedom will be noticed when I come to speak in another chapter of the progress of rationalism.

If we compare the religious situation in France in the seventeenth with that in the eighteenth century, it seems to be sharply contrasted with the development in England. In England there was a great advance towards religious liberty, in France there was a

falling away. Until 1676 the French Protestants (Huguenots) were tolerated; for the next hundred years they were outlaws. But the toleration, which their charter (the Edict of Nantes, 1598) secured them, was of a limited kind. They were excluded, for instance, from the army; they were excluded from Paris and other cities and districts. And the liberty which they enjoyed was confined to them; it was not granted to any other sect. The charter was faithfully maintained by the two great Cardinals (Richelieu and Mazarin) who governed France under Louis XIII and Louis XIV, but when the latter assumed the active power in 1661 he began a series of laws against the Protestants which culminated in the revoking of the charter (1676) and the beginning of a Protestant persecution.

The French clergy justified this policy by the notorious text "Compel them to come in," and appealed to St. Augustine. Their arguments evoked a defence of toleration by Bayle, a French Protestant who had taken refuge in Holland. It was entitled a *Philosophical Commentary on the text "Compel them to come in"* (1686) and in importance stands beside Locke's work which was being composed at the same time. Many of the arguments urged by the two writers are identical. They agreed, and for the same reasons, in excluding Roman

Catholics. The most characteristic thing in Bayle's treatise is his sceptical argument that, even if it were a right principle to suppress error by force, no truth is certain enough to justify us in applying the theory. We shall see (next chapter) this eminent scholar's contribution to rationalism.

Though there was an immense exodus of Protestants from France, Louis did not succeed in his design of extirpating heresy from his lands. In the eighteenth century under Louis XV, the presence of Protestants was tolerated though they were outlaws; their marriages were not recognized as legal, and they were liable at any moment to persecution. About the middle of the century, a literary agitation began, conducted mainly by rationalists, but finally supported by enlightened Catholics, to relieve the affliction of the oppressed sect. It resulted at last in an Edict of Toleration (1787), which made the position of the Protestants endurable, though it excluded them from certain careers.

The most energetic and forceful leader in the campaign against intolerance was Voltaire (see next chapter), and his exposure of some glaring cases of unjust persecution did more than general arguments to achieve the object. The most infamous case was that of Jean Calas, a Protestant merchant of Toulouse,

whose son committed suicide. A report was set abroad that the young man had decided to join the Catholic Church, and that his father, mother and brother, filled with Protestant bigotry, killed him, with the help of a friend. They were all put in irons, tried, and condemned, though there were no arguments for their guilt, except the conjecture of bigotry. Jean Calas was broken on the wheel, his son and daughter cast into convents, his wife left to starve. Through the activity of Voltaire, then living near Geneva, the widow was induced to go to Paris, where she was kindly received, and assisted by eminent lawyers; a judicial inquiry was made; the Toulouse sentence was reversed and the King granted pensions to those who had suffered. This scandal could only have happened in the provinces, according to Voltaire: "at Paris," he says, "fanaticism, powerful though it may be, is always controlled by reason."

The case of Sirven, though it did not end tragically, was similar, and the government of Toulouse was again responsible. He was accused of having drowned his daughter in a well to hinder her from becoming a Catholic, and was, with his wife, sentenced to death. Fortunately he and his family had escaped to Switzerland, where they persuaded Voltaire of their innocence. To get the sentence reversed

was the work of nine years, and this time it was reversed at Toulouse. When Voltaire visited Paris in 1778, he was acclaimed by crowds as the "defender of Calas and the Sirvens." His disinterested practical activity against persecution was of far more value than the treatise on *Toleration* which he wrote in connexion with the Calas episode. It is a poor work compared with those of Locke and Bayle. The tolerance which he advocates is of a limited kind; he would confine public offices and dignities to those who belong to the State religion.

But if Voltaire's system of toleration is limited, it is wide compared with the religious establishment advocated by his contemporary, Rousseau. Though of Swiss birth, Rousseau belongs to the literature and history of France; but it was not for nothing that he was brought up in the traditions of Calvinistic Geneva. His ideal State would, in its way, have been little better than any theocracy. He proposed to establish a "civil religion" which was to be a sort of undogmatic Christianity. But certain dogmas, which he considered essential, were to be imposed on all citizens on pain of banishment. Such were the existence of a deity, the future bliss of the good and punishment of the bad, the duty of tolerance towards all those who accepted the fundamental

articles of faith. It may be said that a State founded on this basis would be fairly inclusive—that all Christian sects and many deists could find a place in it. But by imposing indispensable beliefs, it denies the principle of toleration. The importance of Rousseau's idea lies in the fact that it inspired one of the experiments in religious policy which were made during the French Revolution.

The Revolution established religious liberty in France. Most of the leaders were unorthodox. Their rationalism was naturally of the eighteenth-century type, and in the preamble to the Declaration of Rights (1789) deism was asserted by the words "in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being" (against which only one voice protested). The Declaration laid down that no one was to be vexed on account of his religious opinions provided he did not thereby trouble public order. Catholicism was retained as the "dominant" religion; Protestants (but not Jews) were admitted to public office. Mirabeau, the greatest statesman of the day, protested strongly against the use of words like "tolerance" and "dominant." He said: "The most unlimited liberty of religion is in my eyes a right so sacred that to express it by the word toleration seems to me itself a sort of tyranny, since the authority which

tolerates might also not tolerate." The same protest was made in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* which appeared two years later: "Toleration is not the *opposite* of Intolerance, but is the *counterfeit* of it. Both are despotisms. The one assumes itself the right of withholding liberty of conscience, and the other of granting it." Paine was an ardent deist, and he added: "Were a bill brought into any parliament, entitled 'An Act to tolerate or grant liberty to the Almighty to receive the worship of a Jew or a Turk,' or 'to prohibit the Almighty from receiving it,' all men would startle and call it blasphemy. There would be an uproar. The presumption of toleration in religious matters would then present itself unmasked."

The Revolution began well, but the spirit of Mirabeau was not in the ascendant throughout its course. The vicissitudes in religious policy from 1789 to 1801 have a particular interest, because they show that the principle of liberty of conscience was far from possessing the minds of the men who were proud of abolishing the intolerance of the government which they had overthrown. The State Church was reorganized by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790), by which French citizens were forbidden to acknowledge the authority of the Pope and the appointment of

Bishops was transferred to the Electors of the Departments, so that the commanding influence passed from the Crown to the nation. Doctrine and worship were not touched. Under the democratic Republic which succeeded the fall of the monarchy (1792-5) this Constitution was maintained, but a movement to dechristianize France was inaugurated, and the Commune of Paris ordered the churches of all religions to be closed. The worship of Reason, with rites modelled on the Catholic, was organized in Paris and the provinces. The government, violently anti-Catholic, did not care to use force against the prevalent faith; direct persecution would have weakened the national defence and scandalized Europe. They naïvely hoped that the superstition would disappear by degrees. Robespierre declared against the policy of unchristianizing France, and when he had the power (April 1795), he established as a State religion the worship of the Supreme Being. "The French people recognizes the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the Soul"; the liberty of other cults was maintained. Thus, for a few months, Rousseau's idea was more or less realized. It meant intolerance. Atheism was regarded as a vice, and "all were atheists, who did not think like Robespierre."

The democratic was succeeded by the middle-class Republic (1795-9), and the policy of its government was to hinder the preponderance of any one religious group; to hold the balance among all the creeds, but with a certain partiality against the strongest, the Catholic, which threatened, as was thought, to destroy the others or even the Republic. The plan was to favour the growth of new rationalistic cults, and to undermine revealed religion by a secular system of education. Accordingly the Church was separated from the State by the Constitution of 1795, which affirmed the liberty of all worship and withdrew from the Catholic clergy the salaries which the State had hitherto paid. The elementary schools were laicized. The Declaration of Rights, the articles of the Constitution, and republican morality were taught instead of religion. An enthusiast declared that "the religion of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius and Cicero would soon be the religion of the world."

A new rationalistic religion was introduced under the name of Theophilanthropy. It was the "natural religion" of the philosophers and poets of the century, of Voltaire and the English deists—not the purified Christianity of Rousseau, but anterior and superior to Christianity. Its doctrines, briefly formulated

were : God, immortality, fraternity, humanity ; no attacks on other religions, but respect and honour towards all ; gatherings in a family, or in a temple, to encourage one another to practise morality. Protected by the government sometimes secretly, sometimes openly, it had a certain success among the cultivated classes.

The idea of the lay State was popularized under this rule, and by the end of the century there was virtually religious peace in France. Under the Consulate (from 1799) the same system continued, but Napoleon ceased to protect Theophilanthropy. In 1801, though there seems to have been little discontent with the existing arrangement, Napoleon decided to upset it and bring the Pope upon the scene. The Catholic religion, as that of the majority, was again taken under the special protection of the State, the salaries of the clergy again paid by the nation, and the Papal authority over the Church again recognized within well-defined limits ; while full toleration of other religions was maintained. This was the effect of the Concordat between the French Republic and the Pope. It is the judgment of a high authority that the nation, if it had been consulted, would have pronounced against the change. It may be doubted whether this is true. But Napoleon's

policy seems to have been prompted by the calculation that, using the Pope as an instrument, he could control the consciences of men, and more easily carry out his plans of empire.

Apart from its ecclesiastical policies and its experiments in new creeds based on the principles of rationalistic thinkers, the French Revolution itself has an interest, in connexion with our subject, as an example of the coercion of reason by an intolerant faith.

The leaders believed that, by applying certain principles, they could regenerate France and show the world how the lasting happiness of mankind can be secured. They acted in the name of reason, but their principles were articles of faith, which were accepted just as blindly and irrationally as the dogmas of any supernatural creed. One of these dogmas was the false doctrine of Rousseau that man is a being who is naturally good and loves justice and order. Another was the illusion that all men are equal by nature. The puerile conviction prevailed that legislation could completely blot out the past and radically transform the character of a society. "Liberty, equality, and fraternity" was as much a creed as the Creed of the Apostles; it hypnotized men's minds like a revelation from on high; and reason had as little part in its propagation as in the spread

of Christianity or of Protestantism. It meant anything but equality, fraternity, or liberty, especially liberty, when it was translated into action by the fanatical apostles of "Reason," who were blind to the facts of human nature and defied the facts of economics. Terror, the usual instrument in propagating religions, was never more mercilessly applied. Any one who questioned the doctrines was a heretic and deserved a heretic's fate. And, as in most religious movements, the milder and less unreasonable spirits succumbed to the fanatics. Never was the name of reason more grievously abused than by those who believed they were inaugurating her reign.

Religious liberty, however, among other good things, did emerge from the Revolution, at first in the form of Separation, and then under the Concordat. The Concordat lasted for more than a century, under monarchies and republics, till it was abolished in December 1905, when the system of Separation was introduced again.

In the German States the history of religious liberty differs in many ways, but it resembles the development in France in so far as toleration in a limited form was at first brought about by war. The Thirty Years' War, which divided Germany in the first half of the seventeenth century, and in which, as in the

English Civil War, religion and politics were mixed, was terminated by the Peace of Westphalia (1648). By this act, three religions, the Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Reformed¹ were legally recognized by the Holy Roman Empire, and placed on an equality; all other religions were excluded. But it was left to each of the German States, of which the Empire consisted, to tolerate or not any religion it pleased. That is, every prince could impose on his subjects whichever of the three religions he chose, and refuse to tolerate the others in his territory. But he might also admit one or both of the others, and he might allow the followers of other creeds to reside in his dominion, and practise their religion within the precincts of their own houses. Thus toleration varied, from State to State, according to the policy of each particular prince.

As elsewhere, so in Germany, considerations of political expediency promoted the growth of toleration, especially in Prussia; and as elsewhere, theoretical advocates exercised great influence on public opinion. But the case for toleration was based by its German defenders chiefly on legal, not, as in England and France, on moral and intel-

¹ The Reformed Church consists of the followers of Calvin and Zwingli.

lectual grounds. They regarded it as a question of law, and discussed it from the point of view of the legal relations between State and Church. It had been considered long ago from this standpoint by an original Italian thinker, Marsilius of Padua (thirteenth century), who had maintained that the Church had no power to employ physical coercion and that if the lay authority punished heretics, the punishment was inflicted for the violation not of divine ordinances but of the law of the State, which excluded heretics from its territory.

Christian Thomasius may be taken as a leading exponent of the theory that religious liberty logically follows from a right conception of law. He laid down in a series of pamphlets (1693-1697) that the prince, who alone has the power of coercion, has no right to interfere in spiritual matters, while the clergy step beyond their province if they interfere in secular matters or defend their faith by any other means than teaching. But the secular power has no legal right to coerce heretics unless heresy is a crime. And heresy is not a crime, but an error; for it is not a matter of will. Thomasius, moreover, urges the view that the public welfare has nothing to gain from unity of faith, that it makes no difference what faith a man professes so long

as he is loyal to the State. His toleration indeed is not complete. He was much influenced by the writings of his contemporary Locke, and he excepts from the benefit of toleration the same classes which Locke excepted.

Besides the influence of the jurists, we may note that the Pietistic movement—a reaction of religious enthusiasm against the formal theology of the Lutheran divines—was animated by a spirit favourable to toleration; and that the cause was promoted by the leading men of letters, especially by Lessing, in the second half of the eighteenth century.

But perhaps the most important fact of all in hastening the realization of religious liberty in Germany was the accession of a rationalist to the throne of Prussia, in the person of Frederick the Great. A few months after his accession (1740) he wrote in the margin of a State paper, in which a question of religious policy occurred, that every one should be allowed to get to heaven in his own way. His view that morality was independent of religion and therefore compatible with all religions, and that thus a man could be a good citizen—the only thing which the State was entitled to demand—whatever faith he might profess, led to the logical consequence of com-

plete religious liberty. Catholics were placed on an equality with Protestants, and the Treaty of Westphalia was violated by the extension of full toleration to all the forbidden sects. Frederick even conceived the idea of introducing Mohammadan settlers into some parts of his realm. Contrast England under George III, France under Louis XV, Italy under the shadow of the Popes. It is an important fact in history, which has hardly been duly emphasized, that full *religious* liberty was for the first time, in any country in modern Europe, realized under a free-thinking ruler, the friend of the great "blasphemer" Voltaire.

The policy and principles of Frederick were formulated in the Prussian Territorial Code of 1794, by which unrestricted liberty of conscience was guaranteed, and the three chief religions, the Lutheran, the Reformed, and the Catholic, were placed on the same footing and enjoyed the same privileges. The system is "jurisdictional"; only, three Churches here occupy the position which the Anglican Church alone occupies in England. The rest of Germany did not begin to move in the direction pointed out by Prussia until, by one of the last acts of the Holy Roman Empire (1803), the Westphalian settlement had been modified. Before the foundation of the new

Empire (1870), freedom was established throughout Germany.

In Austria, the Emperor Joseph II issued an Edict of Toleration in 1781, which may be considered a broad measure for a Catholic State at that time. Joseph was a sincere Catholic, but he was not impervious to the enlightened ideas of his age; he was an admirer of Frederick, and his edict was prompted by a genuinely tolerant spirit, such as had not inspired the English Act of 1689. It extended only to the Lutheran and Reformed sects and the communities of the Greek Church which had entered into union with Rome, and it was of a limited kind. Religious liberty was not established till 1867.

The measure of Joseph applied to the Austrian States in Italy, and helped to prepare that country for the idea of religious freedom. It is notable that in Italy in the eighteenth century toleration found its advocate, not in a rationalist or a philosopher, but in a Catholic ecclesiastic, Tamburini, who (under the name of his friend Trautmansdorf) published a work *On Ecclesiastical and Civil Toleration* (1783). A sharp line is drawn between the provinces of the Church and the State, persecution and the Inquisition are condemned, coercion of conscience is declared inconsistent with the Christian spirit, and the principle is laid down

that the sovran should only exercise coercion where the interests of public safety are concerned. Like Locke, the author thinks that atheism is a legitimate case for such coercion.

The new States which Napoleon set up in Italy exhibited toleration in various degrees, but real liberty was first introduced in Piedmont by Cavour (1848), a measure which prepared the way for the full liberty which was one of the first-fruits of the foundation of the Italian kingdom in 1870. The union of Italy, with all that it meant, is the most signal and dramatic act in the triumph of the ideas of the modern State over the traditional principles of the Christian Church. Rome, which preserved those principles most faithfully, has offered a steadfast, we may say a heroic, resistance to the liberal ideas which swept Europe in the nineteenth century. The guides of her policy grasped thoroughly the danger which liberal thought meant for an institution which, founded in a remote past, claimed to be unchangeable and never out of date. Gregory XVI issued a solemn protest maintaining authority against freedom, the mediæval against the modern ideal, in an Encyclical Letter (1832), which was intended as a rebuke to some young French Catholics (Lamennais and his friends) who had conceived the promising idea of transforming

the Church by the Liberal spirit of the day. The Pope denounces "the absurd and erroneous maxim, or rather insanity, that liberty of conscience should be procured and guaranteed to every one. The path to this pernicious error is prepared by that full and unlimited liberty of thought which is spread abroad to the misfortune of Church and State and which certain persons, with excessive impudence, venture to represent as an advantage for religion. Hence comes the corruption of youth, contempt for religion and for the most venerable laws, and a general mental change in the world—in short the most deadly scourge of society; since the experience of history has shown that the States which have shone by their wealth and power and glory have perished just by this evil—immoderate freedom of opinion, licence of conversation, and love of novelties. With this is connected the liberty of publishing any writing of any kind. This is a deadly and execrable liberty for which we cannot feel sufficient horror, though some men dare to acclaim it noisily and enthusiastically." A generation later Pius IX was to astonish the world by a similar manifesto—his Syllabus of Modern Errors (1864). Yet, notwithstanding the fundamental antagonism between the principles of the Church and the drift of modern civilization, the Papacy sur-

vives, powerful and respected, in a world where the ideas which it condemned have become the commonplace conditions of life.

The progress of Western nations from the system of unity which prevailed in the fifteenth, to the system of liberty which was the rule in the nineteenth century, was slow and painful, illogical and wavering, generally dictated by political necessities, seldom inspired by deliberate conviction. We have seen how religious liberty has been realized, so far as the law is concerned, under two distinct systems, "Jurisdiction" and "Separation." But legal toleration may coexist with much practical intolerance, and liberty before the law is compatible with serious disabilities of which the law cannot take account. For instance, the expression of unorthodox opinions may exclude a man from obtaining a secular post or hinder his advancement. The question has been asked, which of the two systems is more favourable to the creation of a tolerant social atmosphere. Ruffini (of whose excellent work on *Religious Liberty* I have made much use in this chapter) decides in favour of Jurisdiction. He points out that while Socinus, a true friend of liberty of thought, contemplated this system, the Anabaptists, whose spirit was intolerant, sought Separation. More important is the observa-

tion that in Germany, England, and Italy, where the most powerful Church or Churches are under the control of the State, there is more freedom, more tolerance of opinion, than in many of the American States where Separation prevails. A hundred years ago the Americans showed appalling ingratitude to Thomas Paine, who had done them eminent service in the War of Independence, simply because he published a very unorthodox book. It is notorious that free thought is still a serious hindrance and handicap to an American, even in most of the Universities. This proves that Separation is not an infallible receipt for producing tolerance. But I see no reason to suppose that public opinion in America would be different, if either the Federal Republic or the particular States had adopted Jurisdiction. Given legal liberty under either system, I should say that the tolerance of public opinion depends on social conditions and especially on the degree of culture among the educated classes.

From this sketch it will be seen that toleration was the outcome of new political circumstances and necessities, brought about by the disunion of the Church through the Reformation. But it meant that in those States which granted toleration the opinion of a sufficiently influential group of the governing class was

Jurisdiction limits purely non-state action of church "being" because of civil society

ripe for the change, and this new mental attitude was in a great measure due to the scepticism and rationalism which were diffused by the Renaissance movement, and which subtly and unconsciously had affected the minds of many who were sincerely devoted to rigidly orthodox beliefs; so effective is the force of suggestion. In the next two chapters the advance of reason at the expense of faith will be traced through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

CHAPTER VI

THE GROWTH OF RATIONALISM

(SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES)

DURING the last three hundred years reason has been slowly but steadily destroying Christian mythology and exposing the pretensions of supernatural revelation. The progress of rationalism falls naturally into two periods. (1) In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries those thinkers who rejected Christian theology and the book on which it relies were mainly influenced by the inconsistencies, contradictions, and absurdities which they discovered in the evidence, and by the moral difficulties of the creed. Some scientific facts

[Cited in ...]

were known which seemed to reflect on the accuracy of Revelation, but arguments based on science were subsidiary. (2) In the nineteenth century the discoveries of science in many fields bore with full force upon fabrics which had been constructed in a naïve and ignorant age; and historical criticism undermined methodically the authority of the sacred documents which had hitherto been exposed chiefly to the acute but unmethodical criticisms of common sense.

A disinterested love of facts, without any regard to the bearing which those facts may have on one's hopes or fears or destiny, is a rare quality in all ages, and it had been very rare indeed since the ancient days of Greece and Rome. It means the scientific spirit. Now in the seventeenth century we may say (without disrespect to a few precursors) that the modern study of natural science began, and in the same period we have a series of famous thinkers who were guided by a disinterested love of truth. Of the most acute minds some reached the conclusion that the Christian scheme of the world is irrational, and according to their temperament some rejected it, whilst others, like the great Frenchman Pascal, fell back upon an unreasoning act of faith. Bacon, who professed orthodoxy, was perhaps at heart a

deist, but in any case the whole spirit of his writings was to exclude authority from the domain of scientific investigation which he did so much to stimulate. Descartes, illustrious not only as the founder of modern metaphysics but also by his original contributions to science, might seek to conciliate the ecclesiastical authorities—his temper was timid—but his philosophical method was a powerful incentive to rationalistic thought. The general tendency of superior intellects was to exalt reason at the expense of authority; and in England this principle was established so firmly by Locke, that throughout the theological warfare of the eighteenth century both parties relied on reason, and no theologian of repute assumed faith to be a higher faculty.

A striking illustration of the gradual encroachments of reason is the change which was silently wrought in public opinion on the subject of witchcraft. The famous efforts of James I to carry out the Biblical command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," were outdone by the zeal of the Puritans under the Commonwealth to suppress the wicked old women who had commerce with Satan. After the Restoration, the belief in witchcraft declined among educated people—though some able writers maintained it—and there were few executions. The last trial of a witch

was in 1712, when some clergymen in Hertfordshire prosecuted Jane Wenham. The jury found her guilty, but the judge, who had summed up in her favour, was able to procure the remission of her sentence; and the laws against witchcraft were repealed in 1735. John Wesley said with perfect truth that to disbelieve in witchcraft is to disbelieve in the Bible. In France and in Holland the decline of belief and interest in this particular form of Satan's activity was simultaneous. In Scotland, where theology was very powerful, a woman was burnt in 1722. It can be no mere coincidence that the general decline of this superstition belongs to the age which saw the rise of modern science and modern philosophy.

Hobbes, who was perhaps the most brilliant English thinker of the seventeenth century, was a freethinker and materialist. He had come under the influence of his friend the French philosopher Gassendi, who had revived materialism in its Epicurean shape. Yet he was a champion not of freedom of conscience but of coercion in its most uncompromising form. In the political theory which he expounded in *Leviathan*, the sovran has autocratic power in the domain of doctrine, as in everything else, and it is the duty of subjects to conform to the religion which the sovran

imposes. Religious persecution is thus defended, but no independent power is left to the Church. But the principles on which Hobbes built up his theory were rationalistic. He separated morality from religion and identified "the true moral philosophy" with the "true doctrine of the laws of nature." What he really thought of religion could be inferred from his remark that the fanciful fear of things invisible (due to ignorance) is the natural seed of that feeling which, in himself, a man calls religion, but, in those who fear or worship the invisible power differently, superstition. In the reign of Charles II Hobbes was silenced and his books were burned.

Spinoza, the Jewish philosopher of Holland, owed a great deal to Descartes and (in political speculation) to Hobbes, but his philosophy meant a far wider and more open breach with orthodox opinion than either of his masters had ventured on. He conceived ultimate reality, which he called God, as an absolutely perfect, *impersonal* Being, a substance whose nature is constituted by two "attributes"—thought and spatial extension. When Spinoza speaks of love of God, in which he considered happiness to consist, he means knowledge and contemplation of the order of nature, including human nature, which is subject to fixed,

invariable laws. He rejects free-will and the "superstition," as he calls it, of final causes in nature. If we want to label his philosophy, we may say that it is a form of pantheism. It has often been described as atheism. If atheism means, as I suppose in ordinary use it is generally taken to mean, rejection of a personal God, Spinoza was an atheist. It should be observed that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries atheist was used in the wildest way as a term of abuse for free-thinkers, and when we read of atheists (except in careful writers) we may generally assume that the persons so stigmatized were really deists, that is, they believed in a personal God but not in Revelation.¹

Spinoza's daring philosophy was not in harmony with the general trend of speculation at the time, and did not exert any profound influence on thought till a much later period. The thinker whose writings appealed most to the men of his age and were most opportune and effective was John Locke, who professed more or less orthodox Anglicanism. His great contribution to philosophy is equivalent to a very powerful defence of reason against the usurpations of authority. The object of his *Essay on the Human Under-*

¹ For the sake of simplicity I use deist in this sense throughout, though theist is now the usual term.

standing (1690) is to show that all knowledge is derived from experience. He subordinated faith completely to reason. While he accepted the Christian revelation, he held that revelation if it contradicted the higher tribunal of reason must be rejected, and that revelation cannot give us knowledge as certain as the knowledge which reason gives. "He that takes away reason to make room for revelation puts out the light of both; and does much what the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope." He wrote a book to show that the Christian revelation is not contrary to reason, and its title, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, sounds the note of all religious controversy in England during the next hundred years. Both the orthodox and their opponents warmly agreed that reasonableness was the only test of the claims of revealed religion. It was under the direct influence of Locke that Toland, an Irishman who had been converted from Roman Catholicism, composed a sensational book, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696). He assumes that Christianity is true and argues that there can be no mysteries in it, because mysteries, that is, unintelligible dogmas, cannot be accepted by reason. And if a reasonable Deity gave a

revelation, its purpose must be to enlighten, not to puzzle. The assumption of the truth of Christianity was a mere pretence, as an intelligent reader could not fail to see. The work was important because it drew the logical inference from Locke's philosophy, and it had a wide circulation. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu met a Turkish Effendi at Belgrade who asked her for news of Mr. Toland.

It is characteristic of this stage of the struggle between reason and authority that (excepting the leading French thinkers in the eighteenth century) the rationalists, who attacked theology, generally feigned to acknowledge the truth of the ideas which they were assailing. They pretended that their speculations did not affect religion; they could separate the domains of reason and of faith; they could show that Revelation was superfluous without questioning it; they could do homage to orthodoxy and lay down views with which orthodoxy was irreconcilable. The errors which they exposed in the sphere of reason were ironically allowed to be truths in the sphere of theology. The mediæval principle of double truth and other shifts were resorted to, in self-protection against the tyranny of orthodoxy—though they did not always avail; and in reading much of the rationalistic literature of this

period we have to read between the lines. Bayle is an interesting instance.

If Locke's philosophy, by setting authority in its place and deriving all knowledge from experience, was a powerful aid to rationalism, his contemporary Bayle worked in the same direction by the investigation of history. Driven from France (see above, p. 107), he lived at Amsterdam, where he published his *Philosophical Dictionary*. He was really a freethinker, but he never dropped the disguise of orthodoxy, and this lends a particular piquancy to his work. He takes a delight in marshalling all the objections which heretics had made to essential Christian dogmas. He exposed without mercy the crimes and brutalities of David, and showed that this favourite of the Almighty was a person with whom one would refuse to shake hands. There was a great outcry at this unedifying candour. Bayle, in replying, adopted the attitude of Montaigne and Pascal, and opposed faith to reason.

The theological virtue of faith, he said, consists in believing revealed truths simply and solely on God's authority. If you believe in the immortality of the soul for philosophical reasons, you are orthodox, but you have no part in faith. The merit of faith becomes greater, in proportion as the

revealed truth surpasses all the powers of our mind; the more incomprehensible the truth and the more repugnant to reason, the greater is the sacrifice we make in accepting it, the deeper our submission to God. Therefore a merciless inventory of the objections which reason has to urge against fundamental doctrines serves to exalt the merits of faith.

The *Dictionary* was also criticized for the justice done to the moral excellences of persons who denied the existence of God. Bayle replies that if he had been able to find any atheistical thinkers, who lived bad lives, he would have been delighted to dwell on their vices, but he knew of none such. As for the criminals you meet in history, whose abominable actions make you tremble, their impieties and blasphemies prove they believed in a Divinity. This is a natural consequence of the theological doctrine that the Devil, who is incapable of atheism, is the instigator of all the sins of men. For man's wickedness must clearly resemble that of the Devil and must therefore be joined to a belief in God's existence, since the Devil is not an atheist. And is it not a proof of the infinite wisdom of God that the worst criminals are not atheists, and that most of the atheists whose names are recorded have been honest men? By this arrangement Providence sets bounds to

the corruption of man; for if atheism and moral wickedness were united in the same persons, the societies of earth would be exposed to a fatal inundation of sin.

There was much more in the same vein; and the upshot was, under the thin veil of serving faith, to show that the Christian dogmas were essentially unreasonable.

Bayle's work, marked by scholarship and extraordinary learning, had a great influence in England as well as in France. It supplied weapons to assailants of Christianity in both countries. At first the assault was carried on with most vigour and ability by the English deists, who, though their writings are little read now, did memorable work by their polemic against the authority of revealed religion.

The controversy between the deists and their orthodox opponents turned on the question whether the Deity of natural religion—the God whose existence, as was thought, could be proved by reason—can be identified with the author of the Christian revelation. To the deists this seemed impossible. The nature of the alleged revelation seemed inconsistent with the character of the God to whom reason pointed. The defenders of revelation, at least all the most competent, agreed with the deists in making reason

supreme, and through this reliance on reason some of them fell into heresies. Clarke, for instance, one of the ablest, was very unsound on the dogma of the Trinity. It is also to be noticed that with both sections the interest of morality was the principal motive. The orthodox held that the revealed doctrine of future rewards and punishments is necessary for morality; the deists, that morality depends on reason alone, and that revelation contains a great deal that is repugnant to moral ideals. Throughout the eighteenth century morality was the guiding consideration with Anglican Churchmen, and religious emotion, finding no satisfaction within the Church, was driven, as it were, outside, and sought an outlet in the Methodism of Wesley and Whitefield.

Spinoza had laid down the principle that Scripture must be interpreted like any other book (1670),¹ and with the deists this principle was fundamental. In order to avoid persecution they generally veiled their conclusions under sufficiently thin disguises. Hitherto the Press Licensing Act (1662) had very effectually prevented the publication of heterodox works, and it is from orthodox

¹ Spinoza's *Theological Political Treatise*, which deals with the interpretation of Scripture, was translated into English in 1689.

works denouncing infidel opinions that we know how rationalism was spreading. But in 1695, the Press Law was allowed to drop, and immediately deistic literature began to appear. There was, however, the danger of prosecution under the Blasphemy laws. There were three legal weapons for coercing those who attacked Christianity: (1) The Ecclesiastical Courts had and have the power of imprisoning for a maximum term of six months, for atheism, blasphemy, heresy and damnable opinions. (2) The common law as interpreted by Lord Chief Justice Hale in 1676, when a certain Taylor was charged with having said that religion was a cheat and blasphemed against Christ. The accused was condemned to a fine and the pillory by the Judge, who ruled that the Court of King's Bench has jurisdiction in such a case, inasmuch as blasphemous words of the kind are an offence against the laws and the State, and to speak against Christianity is to speak in subversion of the law, since Christianity is "parcel of the laws of England." (3) The Statute of 1698 enacts that if any person educated in the Christian religion "shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or shall assert or maintain there are more gods than one, or shall deny