

FORMS OF MODERN INFIDELITY. *R. J. Burrow.*

From its shifting character, it is difficult to attempt a regular classification of the forms of Modern Infidelity.

We regard Deism, Pantheism, and Atheism as the principal branches growing out of the main trunk of this deadly Upas.

I. DEISM has its offshoots.

Its prominent principle is the sufficiency of natural religion, but it is advocated in different ways. There is a Deism which keeps on friendly terms with Christianity; a Deism which maintains a neutral position; and a Deism which assumes an attitude positively hostile.

1. The Deism of the *first* class looks upon Christianity as a republication, in a new and improved edition, of the religion of nature. It hails Christ, not as a Redeemer, who "wept in the manger and hung upon the tree," to re-estate man in God's forfeited favour, and, to re-engrave on his shattered soul, God's effaced image; but as a reformer, raised up at a degenerate era, to dispel the mists of prejudice, to deliver from the shackles of superstition, and to set forth "fair as the moon and clear as the sun," the grand distinctive principles of natural religion. He is lauded as the type of the true man, who gave a fresh polish and setting to gems of truth that had lain imbedded amid a mass of mental and moral rubbish, which the course of time had accumulated. The morality of the Bible is greatly admired; but its doctrines are regarded as unnatural excrescences on its fair surface, marring its symmetry, and impairing its strength. This is just the old Deism, suited to the temper of the nineteenth Century.

2. The Deism of the *second* class stand aloof from Christianity, contending for the entire sufficiency of natural religion, and painting in glowing colors its attractive features. "Love God and have perfect Faith in His love to man,—cultivate the religious principle. Listen to the inspiration of genius,—contemplate the infinite." These are the prime articles in its creed. It speaks of the beauty of virtue, of the natural goodness implanted in every man's heart, and the singular felicity of those who are released from the trammels of a written law, and spontaneously follow the promptings of a generous, disinterested love.

3. The Deism of the *third* class rises not to the level of those sublime heights at which the other two aspire. Divested of every mask, and impelled by an implacable malice, it wages an uncompromising and unscrupulous war against Christianity. It breathes no honeyed compliments, but only "threatenings and slaughter." Reposing a general belief in the Being and attributes of God, it frowns indignantly on the Christian faith as a mighty hoax, a miserable sham, a huge system of imposture. It deals in the basest insinuations, invents the grossest slanders, rakes up the dust of foes long dead and buried, resorts in short to the most mean and spiteful expedients. It upholds the religion of nature in common with the others, but more, with the view of assailing, under the covert it supplies, the religion of Christ.

II. PANTHEISM, as the name imports, asserts the universality of God. This seems quite an orthodox sentiment when first announced, for whither can we go from God's presence or flee from His Spirit? But this is not the sense in which it is understood. Pantheism professes to find God every where, but, in point of fact, finds him nowhere. It ignores the distinct personality of the Divine Being, and intimates in a vague, indefinite, misty fashion, that the divine element is diffused through the whole realm of Nature. It assumes a double form, a spiritual and a material. The one makes the Universe God, the other makes God the Universe. In both forms, it is but a revival, with slight modifications, of the notion which is incorporated with the Buddhist religion