

propagation of the principle of free thought, and the tendencies of the new Philosophy. Taking its rise with Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1633) it lasted well-nigh throughout the eighteenth century, finally passing over in its most negative stage to France, whose province it seems to be to carry on the worst side of any movement, to its utmost limit. Deism was a form of rationalism. Reason, the Deists thought, was competent to discover all necessary truth, without the aid of revelation. Hence it was inevitable that miracles and mysteries should be attacked and discredited. And thus, as the principles of Deism were gradually adopted, more and more of the Christian faith was held to be irrational and untrue, and therefore made a subject of assault. Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, reduced the truths of religion to five points. (1) The Being of God. (2) The Duty of Worship. (3) Virtue and Piety. (4) Repentance. (5) Retribution in this world and the next. (Hagenback Hist. of Doctrines, Vol. II.)

Those who are inclined to think that unaided reason can discover religious truth, and propagate a religious creed, will have that idea rudely disturbed by the consideration of the Deistic Controversy, and the subsequent course of free thought in England. For there is not one of these five points of the author of Deism which has not been assailed, either by Deists themselves or by later thinkers. We have seen how much meaning Hobbes gave to the words 'virtue' and 'piety,' and we have further seen how Mandeville called vice 'virtue,' and defended sensuality from a Utilitarian standpoint.

Repentance, therefore, is no part of the Creed of Hobbes and Mandeville, and such thinkers. Bolingbroke, a very prominent Deist, denied a particular Providence, the existence of the soul apart from the body, and the future state, and hence of course, one part of Lord Herbert's 5th point, viz., Retribution in the next world. The failure of reason then to formulate a creed was manifest, and this was probably the cause of the dissolution of Deism; some Deists becoming sceptics, others returning to orthodoxy. It is very important that we should observe in connection with this controversy how little constructive theology was attempted. The Deists emphasized the power of reason to discover the truth, yet limited their efforts to the destruction of what they believed was falsehood. Lord Herbert's five *reasonable* articles were afterwards declared *unreasonable*. The sufficiency of natural religion was a favorite hope with the Deists, but the natural religion of Herbert was a very different thing from that of Bolingbroke or of Chubb. Indeed to all intents and purposes, to construct theology was not their object but rather to destroy it. And it is here that Deism connects itself with scepticism of every age. It is mainly destructive; it cannot re-construct, and hence it is doomed to failure. If there be religious instincts they must be shared by both high and low, rich and poor, cultured and vulgar alike.

And history proves indubitably that religious instincts there are, and that they are shared by all men. The

Christian Religion for nearly nineteen hundred years has commended itself to all classes, has satisfied all religious cravings, has made it possible for the humblest peasant to be as holy and saintly as the most profound theologian. It is not by the multitude that Christianity has been deliberately weighed in the balance and found wanting. And hence the difficulty which Deist or Positivist finds in re-constructing religion. He may by cunning logic, or by sarcasm, or by one-sided history, shake the faith of many, but so soon as he commences to re-construct, his proselyte often turns away with scorn and laughter at his puny efforts. The religion he has been persuaded to reject is after all, he finds, better, infinitely better, aye and infinitely truer, than anything that can be substituted for it.

So, therefore, we are not surprised that the natural religion of the seventeenth century resulted in Scepticism, nor that the free-thinking religious thought of the nineteenth century has resulted in no new religion, but for the most part in Agnosticism—for we decline to call Positivism a religion in any true sense of that word. But in spite of the astonishing discussion of Religious topics, which extended to all society, there was very little real religion. The eighteenth century—prior to the Evangelical Revival—is always looked upon as a dreary arid spot in the History of the Church. Yet how many great theologians lived in it—Sherlock and Hillingfleet, Butler and Paley, Pearson and Bull, Warburton and Waterland, and many others. But we must not forget that Apologetics are only in a limited sense Theology. Apology may be necessary to defend dogma, but it tends too often to destroy a living faith. On both sides the conflict becomes a strife of human weapons, of reason, of logic, of criticism, and faith suffers in consequence. The adversaries of Religion in the present centuries sometimes hurt the church, with her lack of great theologians, but whilst not by any means so destitute of Intellect as they suppose, the wisdom of opposing Spiritual and Personal Religion, to Scepticism is very manifest. The victory of faith has in every age bewildered the world, which cannot comprehend the superiority of spirituality to sensuality.

Still it is a source of satisfaction to know that even on their own ground the Deists were defeated. Mr. Lecky, whose impartiality may be relied upon, and who certainly is not likely to be prejudiced in favor of the Orthodox, says, "On the whole the English constructive Deism of the eighteenth century has hardly left a trace behind." (History of England in the eighteenth century, Vol. II, p. 575). We may add that the destructive Deism is only known to scholars, and for them possesses but historical interest, whilst the works of Butler and Paley and others still continue to be eagerly read, and that for the sake of their permanent value. Mr. Lecky further writes: "A brilliant school of Divines maintained the orthodox opinion with extraordinary ability, and with a fearless confidence that Science and a severe reasoning were on their side." (14 Sup. p. 576). And