any religious theme. The many and violent controversies within Protestantism all reacted on the doctrine relative to Deity, causing it to be studied with intense energy, but in a manner and spirit very unfavourable, on the whole, to truth and piety. Every new dispute elicited more abstruse conclusions and more subtle definitions. In the disputa­tions of orthodox divines of the 17th and 18th centuries as to the nature, the attributes, the decrees, and the operations of God, we see scholasticism with all its peculiarities re­introduced and often exaggerated. Yet Protestant theism was in various respects an advance on that of the doctors of mediæval scholasticism. The protest of the Reformers against the faults of the scholastic treatment regarding God did not lose its pertinency or value because their own followers fell into these very faults. If the subsequent history plainly showed that the doctrine could not have been so fixedly and exhaustively determined by the ancient church as the Reformers supposed, it also showed that the scholastic treatment of the doctrine had been justly condemned by them, and that speculation regarding God when not rooted in spiritual experience must necessarily be unfruitful. The scholasticism of Protestantism was in essential contradiction to the genius and aim of Protestan­tism. Then, in the Protestant doctrine of God more prominence was given than had previously been done to His manifestation in redemption, to the relation of His character towards sin, and, in particular, to the attribute of justice. The strong emphasis laid on the righteousness of God marked a distinct ethical advance. At the same time the idea of God in the older Protestant theology was far from ethically complete. His fatherhood was strangely ignored or most defectively apprehended. Absolute sove­reignty had assigned to it the place which should have been given to holy love, and was often conceived of in an unethical manner. Further, whereas among mediæval theologians it was the rule and not the exception, among Protestant divines it was the rare exception and not the rule, to affirm God to be unknowable. They asserted merely His incomprehensibility and man’s limited know­ledge of His perfections. They did not in general, how­ever, abandon, at least explicitly, the premiss from which mediæval theologians inferred the Divine incognoscibility, namely, that the absolute simplicity of the Divine essence was incompatible with the existence of distinctions there­in.@@1

Difference of opinion as to the relation of reason to Scripture was in the Protestant world one of the chief causes of difference of belief as to God. Assaults on trinitarianism were contemporary with the Reformation, and they proceeded more on the conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity was unreasonable than that it was unscriptural. The founder of Socinianism, indeed, not only fully accepted the authority of Scripture, but went so far as to represent it as the source of all religious truth, even of the primary truths of natural religion ; yet, while he thus apparently and in theory attributed the knowledge of God more to Scripture and less to reason than did Luther or Calvin, really and in practice he did just the reverse, because he conceived quite otherwise of the con­nexion between Scripture and reason. While he held Scripture to be the source of religious truth, he also held reason to be so the organ of religious truth that nothing contrary to reason could be accepted on the authority of Scripture, and that only those declarations of Scripture could be deemed to be interpreted aright which were inter­preted in accordance with the axioms of reason. Luther, on the other hand, proclaimed aloud, Strangle reason like

a dangerous beast if it dare to question Scripture ; and Calvin, although he did not speak so harshly, demanded the unqualified submission of reason to the authority of Scripture. Antitrinitarianism has maintained its ground throughout the Protestant area, has assumed a variety of forms, and has exerted a powerful influence. It has been unable, it is often said, to do more than revive the doctrines which distracted the ancient church and were condemned by it as heresies. And this must be so far admitted. The doctrine of the Trinity comprehends only a few propositions, and every departure from it must involve a rejection of one or more of these, and must, consequently, belong to some one of a very few possible types or classes of belief. But essentially the statement is superficial and unjust. For the ways in which, and the grounds on which, both the affirmations of which the doctrine consists and the negations of these have been main­tained have not been the same. Alike the defences and the attacks have in the later era implied a deeper consciousness of the nature of the problems in dispute than those of earlier times. As of history in general, so of the history of the doctrine of God, it holds good that no present has been the mere reproduction of any past. The rationalistic process was carried farther in English deism and its Continental developments. Deism sought to found religion on reason alone. It represents “ nature ” as the sole and sufficient revelation of God. There is no warrant for the view that the deists held nature to be independent of God, self­conservative and self-operative,—or, in other words, God to be withdrawn from nature, merely looking on and “ seeing it go.” They believed that God acted through natural laws, and that it was doubtful if He ever acted otherwise than through these. Whatever was taught about God in Christianity and other positive religions beyond what reason could infer from nature ought, in their opinion, to be rejected as fiction and superstition. All their zeal was negative,—against “superstition.” What was positive in their own doctrine had but a feeble hold on them. God was little more to them than a logical inference from the general constitution of the world. They lacked perception of the presence of God, not only in the Bible, but in all human life and history.@@2

Modern philosophy, from its rise to the close of the 18th century, showed a double development, the one ideal and the other empirical, the Cartesian and the Baconian. The former was the more essentially religious. Descartes en­deavoured to found philosophy on an indubitable refuta­tion of absolute scepticism. Such a refutation he believed himself to have effected when he had argued that thought, even in the form of doubt, necessarily implies the exist­ence of him who thinks; that the implication yields a universal criterion of certainty ; and that the presence of the idea of God in a man’s mind, the consciousness of the mind’s imperfection, and especially the character of the mind’s concept of God as that of the most real being con­taining every perfection, demonstratively establish that God is and is what He is thought to be. God is and is true ; therefore man has not been made to err, and what­ever he clearly and distinctly sees as true must be true. In the opinion of Descartes, the idea of God is inherent in reason, is the seal of all certainty, and the corner-stone of all true philosophy. To the whole Cartesian school theology was the foundation of all science. To Spinoza,

@@@1 Gass, *Gesch. d. prot. Dogm.,* i. ; Heppe, *Dogm. d. deutsch. Protes­tantismusim 16ten Jahrh.,* i. ; Frank, *Gesch. d. prot. Theol.,* i. ; Dorner, *Hist. of Prot. Th.,* ii. ; and Muller, *De Godsleer van Calviin,* 1883.

@@@2 Besides the works of Gass, Frank, and Dorner already mentioned, see the histories of deism by Leland, Lechler, and Sayous ; of rationalism by Stäudlin, Tholuck, Hagenbach, and Hurst; Noack’s *Freidenker,* 3 vols., 1853-55; Farrar’s *Crit. Hist. of Free Thought,* 1863; Hunt’s *Rel. Thought in England,* 3 vols., 1870-73; Leslie Stephen’s *Engl. Thought in the Eighteenth Cent., 2* vols., 1883; Cairns’s *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Cent.,* 1881; Beard’s *Hib. Lect.,* 1883 ; and the 2d vol. of Gillett’s *God in Human Thought,* 1874.