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ARTICLE I.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPINIONS.

The Eclipse of Faith; a Visit to a Religious Skeptic.—Third Edition. Boston: Crosby Nichols & Co., 111 *Washington-street:* 1853.

Reason and Faith, and other Miscellanies of Henry Rogers, author of Eclipse of Faith. Boston: Crosby Nichols & Co. New-York: Charles S. Francis & Co. 1853.

The last named of these two volumes is made up of contributions to the Edinburgh Review, by one of its ablest recent writers. These essays are all valuable, and it is a great convenience to have them thus collected into a volume. That on the "Vanity and Glory of Literature," is worthy of the fine scholarship of the author, and presents to scholars many important lessons, both of hope and humility. The essays on the "Genius and Writings of Pascal," and on "Reason and Faith, their claims and conflicts," may, in this day, when Christianity has to meet her adversaries on a new arena, be read with advantage by all students of the Evidences. And the articles on "Luther's correspondence and character," is just such a tribute to the grandeur and nobleness of the Reformer's mind and life as we like to see. The author's views are produced in the form of an examination of Hallam's Critique upon Luther's intellect and writings. We think he demonstrates that Hallam's "excellent and well-practised judgment deserted him in this instance."

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Luther's deficiencies in different respects are admitted and pointed out, and still he is exhibited as "not far behind any of those who have played illustrious parts in this world's affairs; and as leaving behind him a name, than which few have greater claims on the gratitude of mankind,—nay, Mr. Rogers well says, that even "Rome owes him thanks; for whatever ameliorations have since taken place in her system, have been owing far more to him than to herself."

But it is the first named volume which we would especially recommend to the reader's attention. Though published anonymously, it is ascribed to Henry Rogers, and, we have no doubt, correctly. The style, the modes of thought, the illustrations, the allusions to Strauss, to Pascal, to Butler,—all the internal characteristics of the book, unite to show that one and the same pen wrote this work and the articles aforenamed, on "Reason and Faith." At one time, indeed, we suspected that some travelling countryman of our own might be the writer of this book,—and that was when we stumbled on the words *profanity* and *realize*, both used, (see pp. 31, 67, and 102,) as English critics assert that only Americans use them. But, besides the book's allusions to England, as the author's native land, there is unquestionable proof that the work is English in its treatment of the subject of slavery. No American writer of such breadth of mind as is displayed in the Eclipse of Faith, could have indicted, at the present period of that discussion in our country, so shallow a defence of the Apostles and their Master, against the charge of sanctioning slavery, as that, forsooth, they dared not condemn it for fear of ruin to their own cause.

But, whoever the author, we are certainly indebted to him for making, in this work, a most vigorous and well-sustained onset upon some of the latest risen enemies of Christianity. He writes with elegance and ease, and exhibits all the freshness and fulness which belong only to a disputant completely master of his subject. The plan of the work is such as to admit largely of the dramatic element in its conduct and developement. It opens with a letter from one Brother, residing in England, to another, long a Missionary in the South Seas, in

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which is given a sketch of the progress, in their native land, of the Oxford party, and of the rise there of the "*Spiritualists*,"—propagandists of a subtle infidelity, far more dangerous than Romanism, in the judgment of the author. This sublimation of Christianity is so exquisite, that "when you have ceased to believe all that is specially characteristic of the New Testament,—its history, its miracles, its peculiar doctrines,—you may still be a genuine Christian." Mr. Francis Newman, brother to the *quondam* Oxford Professor of that name, appears to be the chief leader of this new school of unbelief. His views have been published in his works on the "Soul," and the "Phases of Faith." He rejects the rationalism of Paulus, and all the rest of the so-called *Naturalists*, who account for the supernatural occurrences mentioned in Scripture on the ground of misjudged natural phenomena. Nor does his school altogether harmonize with the rationalism of Strauss, which declares the supernatural in Christianity to be, not illusion, but myth. They are neither naturalists nor rationalists, but spiritualists, and talk much of insight into God, the oracle within, the religious instinct, and the intuitional consciousness; nay, they adopt and continually use a scriptural phraseology. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned." "The fruit of the Spirit is joy, love, peace." These texts they are constantly quoting. They affect a very "unctuous way of talking." And yet, under all this gosamer disguise of New Testament phrases, and spiritual pretensions, this new doctrine is but a bastard Deism. They reject all the supernatural narratives of Christianity. All the distinguishing doctrines of the system, too, are cast aside,—as the Trinity, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Judgment. "Christianity is not so much a system as a discipline,—not a creed, but a life,—in short, a Divine philosophy." They reject, indeed, all creeds, and pour contempt on all discussions, as to dogma, and all examinations of evidence. They hold, in the language of Theodore Parker, (their American brother,) to the "absolute religion" which is found imbedded in every religious creed. "Their faith includes a belief in one

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Supreme God, who is a Divine Personality; in the duty of reverencing, loving, and obeying Him,—whether we know how that is to be done or not; that we must repent of our sins,—if, indeed, we duly know what things are sins in His sight; that He will certainly forgive, to any extent, on such repentance, without any mediation; that perhaps there is a heaven hereafter; but that is very doubtful, if there are any punishments." And thus, "with the exception of the immortality of the soul, on which Lord Herbert has the advantage of speaking a little more firmly," the Deists and these Spiritualists appear to be tolerably identical.

It is against this modern Deism our author chiefly employs his strength. But his attack is not so much from the side of Christianity as of Atheism. He turns the enemy's flank, and then makes as brilliant and effective a descent upon him as ever was accomplished by a troop of dragoons in full charge. The chief of the *dramatis personarum* is Harrington, nephew to the two Brothers. After graduating at an English college, he spends three years abroad. The spectacle of the interminable controversies which occupy the mind of Germany, throws him into doubts extending to the whole field of Theology. And "not contented with one-sided theories, or inconsequential reasonings, he pursues the argument to its *logical* termination," and is landed in complete skepticism. But "he is an *impartial doubter;* he doubts whether Christianity be true; but he also doubts whether it be *false;* and either from his impatience of the theories which infidelity proposes in its place, as inspiring yet stronger doubts; or, in revenge for the peace of which he has been robbed, he never seems more at home than in ridiculing the confidence and conceit of that internal oracle, which professes to solve the problems which it seems Christianity leaves in darkness; and in pushing the principles on which infidelity rejects the New Testament to their legitimate conclusion." A college friend of Harrington's is introduced, now a disciple of the Spiritualists, and in their discussions we have Christianity defended by the skeptic, or Atheist, against the Deist. It is the conversations of these two individuals, and sundry others, who occasion-

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ally enter on the stage, and of Harrington's uncle, which make up the volume; and the whole is presented to us in the form of a journal kept by the Brother in England for the one abroad.

It will thus be seen, that our author undertook a rather unusual task. He aimed not so much to produce a positive, Christian argument against the new Deism, as to turn the Anti-Christian weapons of Deists against themselves. In the language of the preface to the American edition: "He adopts the Platonic method, and exhibits a dialectic skill in confounding by objections, when objections can be made to do service as arguments." He himself states one end he aimed at, to be the setting forth: "how easily an impartial doubter can retort with interest the deistical arguments against Christianity, and how little merely insoluble *objections* can avail against anything."

The reader will find two important subjects especially discussed in this work, viz: Miracles and Inspiration. The impossibility of God's giving to his creatures a book-revelation or a lip-revelation; and the impossibility of a miracle's being wrought, or, if wrought, the impossibility of its being proved;—each of these three impossibilities being asserted and strenuously maintained by Mr. Newman and the new spiritual Deists, our new ally, the skeptic is allowed to propose a few of his doubts on these points, and his Platonic skill shortly involves in difficulties inextricable, these seekers of a *Via Media* between Atheism and the Gospel.

There is yet another subject repeatedly referred to by our author, on which we feel inclined to offer some observations. It is the question of human responsibility for opinions. Many shallow thinkers maintain that *sincerity* is the chief point in religion,—far more important than *truth*,—and that it is no matter what a man's religious opinions may be, if he is only sincere in maintaining them. In fact this saying has passed into a maxim with multitudes of these loose reasoners. And some, too, who generally are neither shallow thinkers, nor loose reasoners, assert that actions only are the subject matter of responsibility, and that mere opinions are not properly the objects of moral approbation or disapprobation. Sir

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James McIntosh gave it as his judgment that the establishment of the doctrine of our irresponsibility for opinions is desirable, as the only thing which can eradicate the evils of controversy and persecution. The spirit of the age is latitudinarian. It says with Pope,

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

It holds all religious opinions matters of indifference. Whosoever so commits himself to any set of doctrines that he will not countenance the very opposite, it calls *a bigot*,—a harsh name, indeed, and designed to be reproachful, but expressing, actually, the age's sense of that very man's uncommon firmness, earnestness and consistency. And surely, as Burke said, it must be a very easy thing, and a thing deserving no praise, that those should tolerate all opinions who deem no opinions of any special value or importance. We are, however, of those, on the contrary, who hold with the author of the work we have been noticing, that a man's creed may be his crime. We hold the latitudinarian spirit to be that of treachery to all truth. We hold that principles of no description, whether religious, moral, political or scientific, are worth having, except to maintain and act upon them. We agree, of course, with Lord Brougham, that it is, or ought to be, "no offence against the law to entertain any religious, or any political principles, neither to discuss them, with decency and propriety."—We look upon religious and political discussion as a matter to be regulated *just as little* as comports with the best good of all concerned. Restraints upon free discussion, like those upon free trade, ought to be few,—only such as public morals and decency demand. We also agree with Lord Brougham, that "man should render no account to man for his belief." But we cannot admit his Lordship's broad assertion, that man "has no control over his own belief," and that "man deserves no praise and no blame for his belief, which he can no more change than he can the hue of his skin, or the height of his stature." We hold that man, even in his present fallen state, has *some* control over his own belief, and that to his Maker he is perfectly and entirely responsible for that

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belief; and, moreover, that while society has, indeed, no right to inflict pains and penalties upon his person, or property, for the errors of his creed, she must, she ought, and she always will, measure out to him, while he lives, yea, and long after he is dead and buried, her praise or her blame, her honour or her contempt, her love or her hatred, according to the hue and complexion of his and of her religious and moral opinions.

We are free to admit that the question of human responsibility for belief has its difficulties. Here is a child receiving a distinctive religious training from his parents, and almost sure, we might say, to believe whatever he is taught. How can that child help believing its father's creed? Well, he *very often does not believe it.* Here is a Heathen, involved in Pagan darkness,—how can he help believing in the idol? Well, he very often does not believe in it. Not only did Heathen philosophers of old rise above the popular superstitions of their country and time, but even amongst the common people, in every Pagan land, and in every age, there have been, and there are, those who have no confidence at all in their own religion. But, admitting that the child does generally believe what he is taught, and that the Heathen do generally confide in their native religion,—and admitting their irresponsibility *to us*, and also the impossibility of *our* deciding in what degree each individual is responsible to God for what he believes, we can have no hesitation whatever in adopting the general principle that they are justly responsible to God, and will be judged by the Creator for their religious opinions.

In reference to any of the affairs of life, the maxim referred to is never allowed to operate. For example, no man feels that it is indifferent what his friend believes about him, provided that friend is only sincere. Every one holds his friend responsible for his abstractest and most secret opinions of him. It is the most secret and most abstract opinions respecting us, which others in general hold, that we most highly appreciate. How, then, can any man cherish the notion that we, responsible creatures, may entertain all sorts of opinions about our Father and our God, and about his revealed truth, without being held to account by Him?

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Take another example. No man feels that any absolute government should regard with indifference the disloyal opinions of its internal foes, however secret or abstract. It is true, under absolute governments that are in any degree just and liberal, *actions only* are taken cognizance of. But this is because all human governments are necessarily incapable of judging anything but the conduct of men. But, if there was a government possessed of the power to judge the hearts of men, and having also the indisputable *right* of rewarding or punishing their sentiments, every man must admit, not only the justice, but also the necessity and duty of that government's holding its subjects responsible for the abstractest disloyalty. Now, such is the government of God. The Divine Ruler has both the power and the right of judging our opinions. How, then, can any man entertain the idea of God's being indifferent,—much more, how can any man gravely maintain that he *ought to be* indifferent to the religious opinions and feelings of his moral and responsible subjects?

Take another example, from our own free government. At every important juncture in our nation's history, all men of sense and patriotism are expected to have an opinion respecting public affairs. But in any very critical period, when the most vital interests of the country are manifestly at stake, whoever holds an opinion which puts in jeopardy those interests, all men feel that the country has a right to hold that man responsible for that opinion. No matter how he comes by such an opinion, we blame him for it. We may do no more, but at least we blame him for it. But if he proceeds to *act out* his unpatriotic opinions, all agree that he deserves the extremest penalty. And how, then, can any reasonable man for a moment imagine, that in religion, where so many and such vast interests are at stake, it should be indifferent what are a man's opinions? But, if it should still be held by any, that in religion, opinions are matters of indifference, how could the inference be avoided that to act in accordance with wrong opinions is quite harmless, and indeed praiseworthy, because it evidences sincerity? The maxim in question, therefore, leads directly to the most deplorable moral consequences. It sanctions

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every wicked opinion, and, in fact, requires, for the sake of consistency, and as a proof and mark of sincerity, it requires all the wicked acts which flow from it.

The true doctrine on this subject was well set forth by the late venerable Dr. Alexander, of Princeton, in reviewing, some years ago, in the Biblical Repertory, two volumes of essays by an English writer, on the formation and publication of opinions. He says, "It may be summed up in the following particulars:

1st. Those truths which are *self-evident*, or the proof of which is demonstrative and perfectly clear, are believed by necessity; that is, the constitution of our minds is such, that we cannot do otherwise than believe them.—We cannot disbelieve them by any effort. In regard to such truths as these, there can be no merit in believing, nor is there any moral quality in assent thus given.

2nd. There are other truths, the evidence of which is not so obvious and convincing as to place them beyond the reach of doubt or contradiction; and yet these, *having no relation to duty*, men may differ about them, and be equally innocent. In such a case also, our opinions are not the proper objects of moral approbation or disapprobation.

3rd. There may be truths which have an important relation to human duty, which, however, are so situated, as to their evidences, in relation to some persons, that, although they may be diligent and honest in the search of truth, they *may not be able to discover them.* As for example, if a man in the centre of China, or Thibet, who had never heard of the Bible, should be sincerely desirous to know whether the great Creator had ever made any revelation of His will to men, he might not be able, by all the industry which he could use, and all the inquiries he could make, to satisfy himself on this important point. But, *supposing this to be the state of the facts*, it is evident that his doubt, or disbelief, although inconsistent with the truth, would be no object of moral disapprobation.

4th. Again, there is a large class of practical truths, so situated, as to evidence, that the knowledge of them is fairly attainable by the diligent and impartial inquirer;

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while they will be almost certainly hid from the view of men who are strongly under the influence of pride, avarice, or the predominant love of pleasure. In regard to this whole class,—and it is a numerous one,—men are responsible for their erroneous belief, if they are for any thing."—*Biblical Repertory*, 1832, p. 405.

According to this statement of the case, there are only *some classes of opinions* which can be regarded as proper objects of moral approbation or disapprobation. And, moreover, in relation to these very classes of opinions, there are certain circumstances which must co-exist, in order to give a moral quality to the belief of them. Not only must the truths in question concern human duty, but the individual in question must have opportunity to see, capacity to understand, and evidence to convince him of the truth. God is just and righteous. He will judge every man according to the particular degree of light which he enjoys. The Heathen man acts under a responsibility of his own, and shall give account, as well of his moral and religious opinions, as of his conduct, to the God who made him, and endowed him with reason, and bestowed on him the gift of a measure of illumination. But, as for such a people as inhabits this land, they shall be judged by a very different rule. Favoured more than all the nations of men that are around us on the globe, and beyond all the generations of men that have preceded us on the earth, it is the plain dictate of justice that we shall have to give a stricter account than all other men, for the actions we perform, the words we speak, and the thoughts and opinions we entertain.

To prove the responsibility of every human being for his moral and religious opinions, we think an argument may be derived from *the very nature of God, and of the human soul as God created it.*

God is a Spirit, and man, his creature, is also an invisible and an immortal spirit, sojourning in a clay tabernacle. May we not infer from thence the importance and value in God's sight of the abstract and the moral, together with the probability of his making us responsible as well for opinions as for conduct?

"There is" (says one who has risen of late to shine, a

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star of first magnitude among Christian Philosophers,)* "there is at least one other thing, which has as certain an existence as matter, and that is the mind which contemplates matter. What can be nobler, it may be asked, than the physical universe? We answer, the mind, which contemplates that universe. What can penetrate deeper than chemistry, which shews us the very elements of bodies; or than those beautiful microscopical observations with polarized light, which enable us to look into the very interior of matter? We answer, the mind, which has penetrated that far, and can comprehend all this.—There is something larger than the law of gravitation, and that is the capacity of thought which discovered, and can take in that law. We reckon the mind of Newton a grander object in itself than all the discoveries made by it. What, it is asked, can penetrate farther into space than the telescope? We answer, the imagination,—which, when you have taken it to the farthest point to which Lord Rosse's instrument can reach, launches forth into an infinite space beyond. What can carry us farther back than Geology? We answer, the mind, which, when you have conducted it to the beginning of the creation, declares, there must have been an eternity before this."

Now, this mind of man, which the Professor describes in such eloquent terms,—this human mind, has no relations so noble or so grand in its Creator's eye, as those it sustains to Truth, to Morals, to Duty. This human mind is of kin with all those grand, original and fundamental principles, which lie at the foundation of every species of investigation, but for none has it a closer affinity than for those which underlie the science of morals. The peculiar distinction of man is, that he can appreciate principles; but, as no class of principles is so worthy of his investigation, so no class is more adapted to his nature, than the moral or religious class. There is a world without and beneath us, which we may, and must investigate. There is a world within us, the "Realm of Thought," an "Intellectual Domain,"—this we may also investigate, and so, as the same author expresses it,

* Dr. McCosh, in his Inaugural Address at Queen's College, Belfast.

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"inspect that eye which inspects all other things." But there is also within us, and around us, a moral world. We have moral as well as intellectual intuitions and capacities. God, himself moral and spiritual, has made us moral and spiritual. He made us not only to see visible things and their visible and physical relations,—not only to contemplate intellectual questions,—but also to look at moral truths, and apprehend moral relations. We were created not merely for the natural world, and not merely for external actions, but for the moral world, and for feeling and believing internally. And when the human spirit receives anything as true,—when it adopts any moral opinion, that spirit as truly performs *an act* for which it is *responsible*, as when by volition it moves the limbs of its body. Man is an agent, no more in the world about him, than he is in the world within him. His activity is no more real in its external developements than in its external exercises,—no more real or responsible in its intellectual than in its moral operations. For the soul of man *doing*, is no more an act than *willing to do;* nor is *willing to do*, any more an act than *believing it ought to do.*

God, then, being what He is, and man being what God has constituted him, a moral as well as intellectual and physical agent, the Creator can not but hold us responsible for our belief. Whoever denies it, must deny God's and his own spiritual and moral nature, or he must deny the superiority of moral truth to every other kind of truth. The man who would choose either of these two consequences rather than admit our responsibility for opinions, never felt the beauty and the force of Dr. Johnson's fine saying—"Whatever withdraws us from the power of the senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings." For ourselves, belonging as we do to a school of Theology which has never been addicted to the flattery of our fallen nature, we should nevertheless feel ourselves to be guilty of degrading the moral constitution of humanity, as well as guilty of degrading morality, of degrading truth, and of dishonouring God himself, if we were to

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admit the idea that no moral quality attaches to human belief or unbelief.

In the next place, we think an argument for the responsibility under consideration may be derived from *the nature and power of moral opinions.*

Those who deny our responsibility for belief, admit our responsibility for conduct. Actions, say they, involve merit or demerit, but not opinions. Thus they would separate opinions and conduct,—they would *abstract* the former, in order to deprive them of any moral character.

Now, we are of those who maintain the importance and power of the most abstract principles. Action is individual, local and transitory; but principle is general, it is permanent. The human agent himself is transient, he must die; and while he lives, he must be circumscribed in his influence and power. But set afloat a principle, and its influence and power are not to be circumscribed. Principles are the seeds of things. A principle is a portion of eternal truth and right. Principles are statements of universal truths. They are the ultimate results of all science. Borrowing the phraseology of some modern philosophers, we might say they are the only real, the only absolute, the only unconditional, besides the Almighty himself. Next to God, we place Truth.

There are abstract principles of science which have no relation to human duty. And see what power and value these have! The mariner ploughs the deep and connects distant nations by regarding formulas, which are the bare, naked results of astronomical calculations. The miner sinks his shaft, and brings up various treasures from the earth's bosom by following the generalized investigations of geology. Our garments are woven by machinery built according to the abstract principles of one science, and dyed by substances employed according to the abstract principles and general laws of another science. We make our journeys from land to land, and we get our news from distant nations by the employment of powers and agencies which scientific men, abstracted from all the concerns of practical life, first brought to light and taught us how to employ and control. Indeed,

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all the great discoveries and improvements in the arts which are now being made, and the benefits of which we all enjoy, are but so many applications of principles,—of principles discovered towards the close of the last century,—all results of the abstractions of science. And thus it is, that while those who know but little of scientific matters are priding themselves upon the superior wisdom and skill of the age we live in, the highest scientific authorities tell us, that with all the show of progress in this age, it is only living on the age immediately preceding; it is operating entirely upon capital borrowed from that age, and is making no further discoveries of abstract and primary principles, for others who come after us to apply, and so roll on the tide of human improvement.* It is principles, new principles, we must have discovered and brought out, before we can make any real advance of science. The great things, the mighty things, the things which operate and have controlling influence in the whole range of material things, and in all the domain of mind, are principles, abstract principles. But if, in the physical and intellectual world, abstract principles have so much value, can they be unimportant in the moral world? Would it not be strange if there were no analogy in this respect, between the Constitution and Course of Nature and Religion, natural and revealed?

Strictly speaking, however, there is no moral principle which you can call an *abstract* principle, in distinction from a *practical* one. Moral truths, and religious truths, are all practical. Every doctrine of natural or revealed religion was given in order to influence the heart and life of man. Accordingly, the Scriptures themselves are silent on very many subjects, of very great and very natural interest to mankind. Every doctrine points, and was given that it might point, to some duty; and whatsoever was in this respect unnecessary, was withheld. Thus, the very *nature of God*, abstracted from his commands to us,—the nature and *personal* qualities of Jehovah, in whatever light creation or the Bible may present them, have a certain influence proper to them, and which

* Prof. Agassiz, at the Literary Conversation Club, Charleston, S. C.

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should be felt by us. In fact, there is no abstract light in which we can view man as contemplating moral truth. Every such truth must, from the nature of things, regard man as related either to God, or to others, or to himself; and there is no moral question which can be submitted to his belief, but it has a bearing upon his duties in one or another of these relations.

And yet, owing to the ignorance, not to say wickedness, of mankind, many moral truths come to be regarded by them as abstract ideas. They see not, and feel not, the practical bearing of these truths, and so they practically constitute and declare them abstract. But have we not all observed how the practical recognition of these so-called abstract principles always commands respect? Have we not all seen how it sometimes awakens, in the common mind, the profoundest veneration for the man who thus perceives and thus renders homage to truth?—It is this makes the Christian martyr glorious.* He dies for a divinely revealed principle. It is this ennobles the political hero. Hampden refused to pay ship-money, because of his regard for a mere abstract idea, as it might be called; and this has made his name deathless. Mrs. Motte, of this State, was a heroine, because, out of regard to the abstract idea that a Briton's right to be represented accompanies a Briton's duty to pay taxes, she set fire, by means of lighted and burning arrows, to her own house, then a castle for the invading English. But for this *abstract idea*, to which she was therein paying such costly, yet such glorious homage, her act had constituted her a mad-woman. In fact, it has been well and truthfully said, that the seven years' war, with which our revolutionary forefathers resisted successfully the attempt on the part of the English government to exercise over their colonies an unconstitutional power, was a struggle, not of desperate necessity, or of excited passion, but of pure, in one sense, almost of speculative, principle.†—"Millions for defence, not a cent for tribute!"—No one

* "At the time when the Church flourished most, it was not purple, gold and precious stones which imparted to her the splendour in which she was invested,—but it was the blood of the Martyrs."—*Calvin's Introduction to the 87th Psalm.*

† Hugh Legare's Works, vol. ii., p. 268.

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of us but feels the power of this sentiment. But certainly, to us, at this time, it is only the power of an abstract principle. And is that not a mere abstract idea, (so far as our country is concerned,) to which, with so much effect in some sections of the land, a distinguished Hungarian not long since appealed? And in the case of multitudes whose passions have all been roused by it, is not that a mere abstract idea, which has endangered and still endangers the permanency of this Union?

It has been often said, and well said, that public virtue and public intelligence are the safeguards of popular institutions. Men of observation and experience all agree, that the preservation of our government depends, not on party tactics of any kind, but on the school, the press, and the pulpit. But what power have these? None but the power of certain abstract principles. They only present to the mind of the people certain moral or spiritual and eternal relations, quite abstracted, it may be, from the material and the concrete.

Somebody has said that "no external foe, or public danger, can be half so threatening or formidable as the prejudices, the passions, the corrupt tendencies of demoralized communities. Every selfish, base desire, or feeling, or sentiment, is as anti-republican as it is anti-christian. Every act of private injustice, violence, oppression, proscription, or bad faith, is an injury done to free institutions. They are wronged, and, to a certain extent, weakened, by all private acts of this character; and, only let a sufficient number of citizens pursue such a course, and our system of government would fall as the republics of Greece and Rome did, for want of the sustaining power of private virtue."

If, then, moral principles, whether true or false, are from the nature of things always practical, and if they have so much power for good or for evil, how can any reasonable man imagine that the Divine Ruler could neglect to hold us responsible for our use and management of them? Surely, no man can maintain that belief is in such cases devoid of all moral quality, unless he totally leaves out of view the intimate connection between principles and conduct. Does not the principle on which an act is performed always give character to

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that act? Let a man treat you with ever so much kindness, do you value it, except you believe it comes from his heart? You shed the blood of a fellow-man,—if done from one principle, you become an atrocious murderer; if from another, it constitutes you, in one case, an innocent defender of your own life; in another, the proper executioner of public justice; and, in yet another, a patriot-hero, ridding your country of a bloody tyrant!—Can it be morally wrong to act in accordance with an innocent opinion; or, can it be morally right to act in accordance with a wicked opinion? Is not the man who invents a false moral theory, and sets forth a false moral principle, responsible, in a certain sense, for all the wicked conduct which flows from it? And, in every individual man, are not the moral principles he holds, antecedent to, and decisive of, his conduct? Now, is it reasonable to suppose that God would give all his attention, as our Governor and Judge, to the *effect*, regardless of the *cause*? Would He regard the stream, and not regard the fountain? Shall we be held responsible for conduct, and our opinions, which control, and should control it, not come in for their share of praise or blame? Is it not manifest, that if the general responsibility of man is acknowledged, his specific responsibility for moral opinions must also be acknowledged?—and that, on the other hand, the denial of this specific responsibility, is the denial of all responsibility whatever? If these things be so, then the immorality of the notion we are combating is evident. It tends to the release of mankind from the sense of any responsibility whatsoever.

A third argument in favour of our responsibility for belief may be drawn, as it appears to us, from the moral character which belongs essentially to the very act of believing. What is belief? John Locke says it is the admitting any proposition for true upon arguments or proof.—(Essay Book iv., ch. 15.) To believe, is, therefore, to yield to offered testimony. It is an act, in which man sits as a judge, and weighs the proofs submitted to him upon any question. But in all religious and moral questions, it is undoubtedly God himself who stands in the witness-box, and himself directly, or else indirectly, through his messengers, gives evidence before his crea-

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ture, man; man, in the meanwhile, taking his high seat of judgment, hearing what God testifies, and deciding the case for himself. And, surely, by how much more noble the faculty is, which we employ in this process, beyond those which we exercise in the larger part of all our actings, by so much the more are we responsible to the Creator, for the manner in which we make use of it. By how much the more God has elevated and dignified us, in giving us such a judicial seat and office, beyond what he has done for us, in constituting us his mere workmen and servants, surely, by so much will he exact from us a stricter account of our discharge of this high and honourable function.

And now that man sits before the reader on that seat of justice to which God has exalted him, let it be supposed that he should be seen admitting a number of individuals there upon his bench, all openly striving to sway and bias his decisions! What! sitting there to decide impartially upon the testimony offered by God himself, does man allow other parties to influence his decision by private considerations whispered in his ear? Does he even suffer them to draw away his attention, in the slightest degree, from the testimony to which he should be listening? Surely, this would be a most responsible line of procedure. But is this a real, or only a supposable case? Does man, in his capacity as judge, actually, and in fact, so conduct his investigations? He does. His private passions, and his private affections, are suffered to warp his judgment and control his decisions. This is the source of most of his errors of opinion. He thinks wrongly, because he feels wrongly. He easily believes sometimes what he wishes were true, and sometimes what he wishes were not true,—and so, hope and fear, by turns, blind and deceive him. He is frequently in a mood not to be convinced, and then you cannot convince him,—for

> "A man convinced against his will,
> Is of the same opinion still."

Lord Bacon very justly says, "lies come into favour among men, not only through the difficulty and labour of finding out the truth, nor, again, because, when the truth

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is found, it imposes on men's thoughts, but very much through the natural, corrupt love of the lie itself." By reason of the evil tendencies, the sinful prejudices, the wrong feelings, the wicked desires and passions of man, he rejects the truth, and accepts the error. And thus he abuses his trust, dishonours his office, and lays himself open to the condemnation of that Supreme Judge, by whom he was so highly privileged and honoured.

Now, how could there be framed any good and sufficient answer to the charge of sinfulness against such a prostitution of his gifts and honours on the part of man? Let us suppose the plea entered that the evidence submitted to man in favour of Christianity is not sufficient, and therefore man is not responsible for any lack of conformity of his opinions to the Scriptures. Why, then, the ground taken must be either that God's testimony is not enough for man, or that the Bible is not God's testimony. And this, in either form of it, is the ground of an Infidel. Here, then, if the opposers of the doctrine of human responsibility for belief are content, we might leave them in the infidel positions to which they have been driven, it being then to be understood on all hands that infidelity is the legitimate and final landing place of those who defend the maxim, "no matter what a man believes if he is sincere."

It appears to us, however, that no person who really believes the maxim in question, accepting with it all that it involves, can be content to take the position of an infidel; for, unless one admits the Scripture to be true, what possible room is there for this maxim? For, how can any man know, except as taught by Scripture, that God prefers sincerity to insincerity? Or, how else does any man know that God is a pitiful and gracious God, so as to hope and believe he will not punish us for sins of ignorance? How does any man know, except as taught by the Bible, that God may not be an arbitrary tyrant, reaping where he sowed not, gathering where he strewed not, and exacting the very same measures of knowledge and belief from those who have not, as from those who have light. It is not from bald and naked infidelity, therefore, that we so naturally meet with opposition to the doctrine of our responsibility for belief,—it flows ra-

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ther from a spurious Christianity. It is the legitimate progeny of a false charity. The infidel plea, therefore, we will dismiss, with the full consent, no doubt, of all who have any respect for Christianity, or who allow insincerity, or any other immorality, to be properly the subject-matter of responsibility. And we wait now for a second and a better answer to the charge of sinfulness which we bring against man whenever seated high on a judicial seat, with God himself condescending to stand before him as a witness: he makes God a liar by rejecting His truth.

Will it then be argued by any, that we are not justly accountable for our errors of belief, because of the fact of our native corruption?—a corruption existing in the deepest recesses of human nature,—in the first springs of human conduct,—in the feelings and desires of the human heart. Let this plea be boldly carried out, then, to its legitimate results, and let us say, that the fact of human corruption excuses the vilest conduct of the worst man that ever lived. The plea is as good in the one case as in the other. It is good for nothing in either case. Do we ever find men reasoning thus in the affairs of common life? The man who wilfully injures us do we ever pardon, on the ground that he is a man of evil dispositions? Is the drunkard justified because he has a raging thirst, or a passionate man because he has an ungovernable spirit? Never! And so the man who forms wrong opinions, when he has the opportunity of forming right ones, is not excusable because he naturally inclines to error. If this inclination towards evil be an excuse for wicked opinions, it is, of course, so much the more an excuse the stronger it is, and thence must follow this absurd conclusion that the most fiendish dispositions will finally involve the lightest condemnation.

But, truly, man is under a responsibility which is universal. It begins at the fountain head, the first springs of conduct,—his feelings and desires; but we shall search in vain to find any part of his constitution to which this responsibility does not extend. Man is bound to feel right, and think right, and do right. God will condemn, and has a right to condemn sin wherever it exists, and in whatsoever form it presents itself before him. Who-

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ever is conscious that he has wicked feelings which he cannot subdue, is always conscious of this too, that the more he cannot subdue these wicked feelings, the more sinful and miserable he is. The more opposed any man's heart is to right, the guiltier he is for that. And we shall find that all our objections and difficulties will give us no relief from the responsibilty under which our Creator has placed us, as judges of truth. If we are prone to be unfair judges, it is our sin that we are so,—and the greater this proneness, the greater our sin before God. If we are disposed to give a dishonest judgment from that high seat where God placed us, when he undertook to submit his truth to our examination, and commend it Himself to our belief, a dreadful, and a lamentable fact indeed it is, and we should feel it to be such. Responsible we are, and responsible we shall forever continue to be, in every part of our constitution, and at every period of our being. Responsible, not only when we act, but when we *will to act;* not only when we will to act, but when we *yield to those motives* which determine us so to will; not only when we yield to these motives, but when we *form opinions*, and *cherish feelings* which make us capable of being influenced by those motives.

There is a fourth argument, weightier far than any we have yet presented, and it shall be our last. It is derived from the general representation of Scripture, and from the specific nature of Christianity.

How often do the Scriptures represent Jesus Christ as perceiving and condemning the thoughts of the hearts of those around him! And if, while He was yet in our form, as a servant, he observed and condemned opinions, how much more must he now notice,—how much more will he, at last, condemn them from his eternal throne!

"But of the heart (said Jesus Christ) proceed evil thoughts," that is, in the original *reasonings or opinions that are wicked.* And what other evils does He describe as associated with, as issuing from, and as indicating this wicked character of the heart's reasonings? Why "murder," adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the fruits of that tree, the streams from that fountain.

The Apostle Paul charges it against the Heathen, as

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one of their sins, that they became vain in their imaginations, (or reasonings,) and had their foolish hearts darkened."—Rom. i. 21.

When Simon, the sorcerer, thought the gift of God's Spirit might be purchased with money, the Apostle Peter pronounced that thought, or opinion, a wicked one; thought it was, no doubt, as deliberately formed and as sincerely held, as it was frankly avowed. The Apostle tells him, moreover, that he is in danger of perishing for that opinion, and he exhorts him to repent of that wickedness, and pray God, if, perhaps, that thought of his heart might be forgiven him.

In like manner, with reference to those that opposed themselves to the doctrines of the gospel, Paul says, (2 Tim. ii. 25,) we must, "in meekness, instruct them, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," which shews that not acknowledging the truth is sinful, even in those cases in which it arises partly from ignorance and the want of instruction. Again the same Apostle (2 Tim. iii. 8,) speaks of those who "resist the truth, as men of *corrupt minds*, reprobate concerning the faith."

Thus it is, also, that we find the beloved Apostle John giving commandment (2 John, 10 and 11,) not to receive nor to salute any man who holds a certain "doctrine," which he names, and the ground of the commandment is that whoso wishes that man well, is partaker of his "*evil deeds*." The inference seems unavoidable, that in John's mind it is an *evil deed* to *hold* a *wicked doctrine*.

But when we leave these general representations of the word of God, and come to consider the specific nature of Christianity, we see still more plainly that man must be responsible to God for his belief. "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." The most prominent feature of the gospel is its demand upon our faith. The very foundations of the Christian religion, as a scheme of doctrine and as a personal life and experience, are laid in belief. And to deny our responsibility for religious opinions, plainly, therefore, tends towards a total denial of Christianity.

Such being our views of human responsibility for belief, we, of course, maintain that great dignity belongs

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to the office of the preacher; nay, of every teacher, whether more or less directly engaged in the communication of moral and religious instruction. It is in this aspect we see, how truly venerable is every mother with her young charge sitting at her feet. And meditating on these things, we feel how much it becomes all persons, both preachers and hearers, teachers and pupils, parents and children, in fine the whole human race, to beware how they handle truth, how they deal with principles, those most delicate, most sacred, most precious, most mighty of all things outside of God's eternal throne!

We think such impressions very wholesome ones to be cherished, by beings constituted and situated as are mankind. And these very impressions will be made, of necessity, upon every mind which acknowledges the responsibility we have been maintaining. And every such mind will, moreover, be impressed with the duty of rousing itself to earnest and honest inquiry and search after the truth; and with the necessity of controlling the passions, instead of allowing them to control the understanding, the will, and the life. Every such mind must also be sensible of the importance of cultivating right feelings on every subject, with a view to obtaining right opinions on that subject; and will strive to cherish a deep conviction of its own liability and proneness to error, with a view both to the exercise of charity towards others, and to an humble seeking of Divine guidance for itself. We say charity towards others,—but far be it, forever, from us, to appeal to that hollow, that false charity which is so general in this age. Upon that, we trust, we have learned to set its true value. Every good thing has its counterfeit, and why should there not be a counterfeit charity? The early Christians cultivated charity in all things, and allowed liberty in things indifferent, but they insisted, as we would always be found insisting, upon unity and orthodoxy in things essential. There are men, and there are churches in this day, (Mr. Newman and the Spiritualists are, perhaps, the latest found specimens,) who insist on wearing the Christian name, while they deny all the fundamental truths of Christianity. And yet, holding a totally different scheme as being the true Christian scheme, they are found as liberal towards us as

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they are towards each other! What a dreadful duplicity and treachery there is in all their charity! We would love the persons, but hate and abjure the errors of such. We would ever remember that truth stands next to God himself; and God helping us, we mean that it shall always stand next to him in our practical regards.

In opposition, then, to Sir J. Mackintosh's declaration quoted in the early part of this article, we hold the establishment of the doctrine, that men are responsible for belief, to be in every point of view most desirable,—and are unable to perceive how any benefits could flow to the human family from destroying their sense of accountability for abuse of evidence, and for rejection of truth. Intimate as the connection is between opinions, and conduct, and necessary as restraint is to beings constituted like us, would it not be a dreadful calamity to religion and virtue, if the race of man were persuaded to believe all religious and moral opinions matters of indifference? Would it not be a monstrous thing for us all to become so indifferent to truth, as to feel the very same feelings towards those who sympathize with our most cherished and sacred opinions, and those who sympathize not? If all men were once persuaded that truth is not the most sacred and precious of all things, there might, indeed, be, as Sir James says there would be, less persecution and controversy, but we should have no more patriots, or martyrs. We should no longer be able to appreciate the very best lessons of history. We should never more be stirred to noble deeds, or to heroic endurance, by any fresh examples of a tried soul yielding life, rather than to yield truth.

Such would be the deplorable, practical influences of the doctrine we are opposing. But what of the doctrine itself? It seems to us that nothing can exceed the folly and absurdity of it as embodied in the maxim, that "it is no matter what a man believes if he is only sincere." This maxim, of course, can only apply to those who hold false opinions. But how can such a man, according to this maxim itself, ever do right, or escape censure? If he act out his wrong opinions, his conduct must be wrong, of course, and he is condemned as an evil doer; but, if he does not act them out, he must be insincere, and is set down for a hypocrite.

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