

AN  
APOLOGY FOR CHRISTIANITY

OR  
MODERN INFIDELITY

EXAMINED,  
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

TO  
ROBERT OWEN,

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BY BREWIN GRANT.

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LONDON:  
SIMPKIN MARSHALL AND CO., STATIONERS' COURT:  
AND J. H. DAVIS, LEICESTER.

ONE SHILLING.

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1840

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## LETTER I.

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SIR,

THE state of mankind seems not only to have excited commiseration on your part, but this commiseration seems to have given birth to a practical philanthropy that aims at renovating the world.

All must applaud such an object; but many must disapprove of the means by which you propose to realize it. Your system is opposed to the moral and religious nature of man.

Many have written, and have written well upon this subject; but different modes of treating the same thing may suit different individuals; the notions I have adopted will, I hope, prove beneficial to that class of minds which somewhat resembles my own.

You acknowledge that "having thus come forward to denounce, as erroneous in principle and injurious in practice, all the past and present systems of society, and to propose another system for universal adoption, *under the conviction that it is true in principle, and invaluable for practice*, I feel that reasons of sufficient weight and magnitude are required to prove the rationality of this novel and apparently strange proceeding.

"For it is, I readily admit, *incumbent upon me to shew good cause why I condemn the past and present systems of the world, and advocate another system, not founded on any other religion than truth, or on individual rewards and punishments, or upon personal responsibility of any kind*. To the most conscientious men of the present day, this language cannot fail to prove somewhat astounding, and more particularly to those individuals whose minds have been the most carefully trained in existing errors." *Owen's Manifesto, p. 43.*

This declaration involves a confession of the very principle which it was intended to denounce; you acknowledge, that to take so important a step would be most unwarrantable and unjustifiable unless you could produce a sufficient reason; this is appealing to the tribunal of rectitude to justify your rejection of responsibility—you appear to feel as before the bar of some judge (it may be conscience)—you hear a voice demanding a sufficient *reason* for your conduct—you confess that such demand is just, and proceed to render up your account; this is responsibility. This is the relation in which we stand to our Creator. We shall have to render to him a sufficient reason; if we cannot, "every mouth must be stopped and the whole world become guilty before God."

But to this notion of responsibility you refer the chief part of the

evils that afflict mankind; having therefore discovered a theory in which it is discarded, you offer to the world the catholicon,—“Truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man.” “The knowledge of truth on the subject of religion,” you tell us, “would permanently establish the happiness of man.” *Essays on the Formation of Character, page 41.* This truth you profess to have found; exulting in the prize you exclaim “Now from henceforth, CHARITY presides over the destinies of the world;—its reign, deep rooted in principles of DEMONSTRABLE TRUTH, is permanently founded;—and against it, hell and destruction shall not prevail.” *Man. p. 62.* And not only have you discovered this inestimable blessing; but, valiant for the truth, are “ready to prove to the first minister of the crown that the rational system and religion are anything but nonsense.” I will give you my reasons for concluding that they are *anything but sense*, and that your objections to the Christian religion are in themselves weak and ill-founded, and so far as they have any force, are destructive of your own sentiments.

First, your religion is anything but sense. “That all facts yet known to man indicate that there is an external or an internal Cause of all existencies, by the fact of their existence;—that this all-pervading Cause of motion and change in the universe is that Incomprehensible Power which the nations of the world have called God, Jehovah, Lord, &c., &c.:—but that the facts are yet unknown to man which define what that Incomprehensible Power is.” *Man., 62.* If all the facts yet known to man indicate an internal or external Cause of all existence, then all existence is an *effect*.—But we can have no conception of anything more than existence and non-existence; if therefore all existence be an effect, it must be the effect of non-existence,—that is, entity is the effect of nonentity—the universe was created by NOTHING.

Is this the *prima via salutis*—the avenue to this noble asylum—a COMMUNITY? Is this the way of escape from the thralls of superstition?

Further,—“all facts, &c., indicate an *internal or external Cause*.” Causation necessarily implies priority of existence;—but juxtaposition—outness or inness is inconsistent with priority of existence, for before this relation of outness or inness can be sustained, the act of creation must have been completed; so that an internal or external cause of existence is an absurdity. An internal cause of pain is that which exists within the being who suffers; but this being must himself exist before anything can be internal in reference to him, otherwise something may be internal in reference to a non-existent being. If then nothing can be internal in reference to a being that does not exist, then the cause of existence cannot be internal, otherwise it exists within the effect before the effect is pro-



duced. This rational theory of causation is the climax of mysticism and absurdity.

Further, if the fact of existence indicates an internal or external cause, then the "Cause of all existence," being itself an existence, has also an internal or external cause,—this is plain—being indicated by the fact of its existence; therefore the internal or external cause of all existence is not the internal or external cause of all existence, because it is not the creator of that internal or external cause to which it must owe its own existence.

Again, if existence indicates a cause of existence, then it indicates what common sense and right reason deny. For if there were no UNCAUSED being there could be no being at all;—if ever there were a time when nothing existed, there could be no posterior being, for nothing can create nothing. So that instead of the fact of existence indicating a cause of it, all existence is a demonstration that something is UNCAUSED.

Next is introduced,—“this all-pervading cause of motion and change”—as though cause of motion and cause of existence were convertible terms. But to pass by this confusion,—“this all-pervading cause of motion and change in the universe is that Incomprehensible Power which the nations of the world have called God, Jehovah, Lord, &c.” The being of whom you speak is not he whom the nations call Jehovah, Lord, God, &c., for we *can* define him,—he is “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” All we know respecting our fellow men is the powers they possess; our knowledge of these is founded on analogy;—we see them do that which in us results from thought and volition, hence we *infer* that they have thought and volition;—we infer that they are *thinking beings*; we do not see their thinking process—their conscious—feeling—REFLECTING SELVES—the men; but we see indications of men, that is, indications of beings, subjects of thought and emotion, and from these indications we gain all the knowledge we have of men,—we never see them—we never *see ourselves*. Why then do we expect to see God? Can we not acquire a knowledge of His character by the indications of wisdom and benevolence on the face of nature, as well as we can infer the wisdom and benevolence of a man from his inventions and conduct? Man is one of God’s handyworks, so that the more we know of man, the more knowledge we may acquire of the wisdom of his Creator. If we cannot define what God is, we cannot define what Man is. Give me a definition of the latter, and I will give as clear a definition of the former.

“But *whence* the Power which designs, or what its attributes, no man has yet ascertained; and upon this hitherto mysterious subject, the human mind must, of necessity, wait until new facts,

explanatory of the mystery, shall be discovered." *Book of the New Moral World*, p. 48. "Herein is a marvellous thing"—"the invisible things from the creation of the world have been clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," yet in the fifty-eighth century of the world, an individual, professing to be the only rational man in existence; with his eyes open, and nature's boundless stores inviting research, has not yet come to the knowledge of the character or attributes of the invisible God! If it be really true, Sir, that you are unacquainted with the character of God, I shall begin to suspect that insanity and irrationality belong to you, instead of to all mankind. Shall you not learn something of my character from its indications in these letters? And can you give no guess at the character of God by reading the letters he is daily sending you—instructing you by the structure of every leaf, and teaching you by the mechanism of every insect? Amidst all the voices with which nature resounds, is there no breeze whispers of power, wisdom, and goodness? "But whence this power, &c., no one has yet discovered." This certainly would be a hair-brained speculation, the result of ignorance and arrogance; whence the source of all!—the Cause of all existence not yet discovered!! None but madmen would embark on so strange a voyage as the discovery of the origin of being: "Waiting for facts;" why no one who has any judgment as to the legitimate objects of inquiry, would for a moment expect an explanation of the mystery of uncaused being. To arrive at any conception of this you must unrol the records of Eternity to find the date of being—but, first, discover the Philosopher's stone.

Is this then, after all, the blessing of truth without mystery? Call it doubt without certainty—darkness without light—dogmatism without reason. A noble foundation this, on which to rear the superstructure of the rational religion! But "the facts are not yet known to man, which define what that Incomprehensible power is." It would be strange, Sir, if the facts *were* known, which define this Incomprehensible power, for then it would be more within the stretch of our comprehension. But is it the province of a fact to define? A man may form a definition from an acquaintance with facts, but I was never certain before, that facts were logicians.

You smile at that folly which has led man "to create a personal Deity, author of all good," *N. M. W.* p. 31. What then is your rational religion without a "personal Deity?" It is the religion of Atheism. But it is rational, highly rational! Yet, Sir, how is it that you shudder with pious awe at that opposition to Nature's laws, which, "however it may have arisen, is, in fact, a direct denial of wisdom or design, in the Cause which creates." *N. M. W.* p. 41. Is there so much that is shocking in denying the wisdom of something that does not possess personality? Say rather, do not wisdom



and design imply a conscious—a personal being who is the subject of wisdom? Is a thinking impersonality possible? I am afraid of being bewildered amidst this rational confusion. Let me see the kind of worship you offer to this incomprehensible impersonal power. “Its Worship (will consist) in those inexpressible feelings of wonder, admiration, and delight, which when man is surrounded by superior circumstances only, will naturally arise from the contemplation of the Infinity of space, of the Eternity of duration, of the Order of the Universe, and of that Incomprehensible Power, by which the atom is moved, and the aggregate of Nature is governed.” *Man. p. 63.* Seraphic devotion! Most rational! I am forcibly reminded of the inexpressible feelings of wonder which filled the bosom of the Rustic at Rome. Ardent piety—but how distant from enthusiasm! What a soul-enlivening theme is the “Infinity of Space!” Entrancing emotions, elevating joys, ennobling contemplations!—

“Oh! I am wrapt aloft,  
My spirit soars beyond the stars,  
Adieu, base earth—farewell.”

But to return,—sobered by my flight, I begin to perceive that all this has arisen from the vague notion of an incomprehensible power of which nobody knows anything. But, Sir, pray tell me which of these Gods do you worship most; the Infinity of Space?—the Eternity of Duration?—or the Incomprehensible Power? Besides, Sir, what is incomprehensible is mysterious; if then you talk of an incomprehensible power, how have you “truth without mystery?”

Doubtless, after all, you find it no such easy affair to carry on priestcraft; it is more difficult than you at first imagined to sustain the character of Pope to the “New Moral World.”

You are waiting for a few facts to discover “*whence* is the power which designs;” I can assure you that the facts are in your own possession;—make the best use of your own resources, and despite all rivals, the victory is yours.

“Know (then) assuredly without the shadow of a doubt, that truth is nature, and nature God.” *N. M. W. p. 45.* Here then is the top-stone to the rational religion; but let us now examine the proportion of the building. First, the incomprehensible power is the cause of all existence. Secondly, it is that by which the atom is moved, and the aggregate of nature is governed. Thirdly, nature is God, and God is nature. So then, this incomprehensible power *created* nature—*governs* nature—and *is* nature; that is, God *created* himself (or nature, for nature is God) *governs* himself, and *is* himself; or in other words, nature *created* herself, *governs* herself, and *is* herself. If this is not nonsense you may despair of achieving any.

“No intelligent mind will for a moment suppose from what I have said, that I am an enemy to all religion. On the contrary,



my efforts have been, and will be, directed to secure the interests of *true* religion, and to establish it permanently throughout the world. I well know, and am competent to prove, that the real enemies to truth, to genuine religion, and to the happiness of mankind, among all people, are those parts of every religion that are direct and palpable contradictions to existing facts, and which have been added to pure and undefiled religion, either by mistaken, or by weak, designing, men. Withdraw these from the Christian system, and then it will become a religion of universal benevolence, competent to make—and it will make—men rational and happy. Let but this change be effected, and I will become a Christian indeed!" *Man. p. 42.* Really, Sir, this is a most condescending proposal,—make Christianity square with Socialism, and you will be a Christian *indeed!* Allow me to make a proposal,—remove all the fooleries and blasphemies from Owenism, insert all moral and religious truth, and I will become a Socialist indeed!

But the condescension evinced in this proposal, is no more than we might expect from one who had magnanimously declared to his audience "I am not of your religion, nor of any religion yet taught in the world!—to me they all appear united with much—yes, with very much error!" *Man. p. 60.* I am not of your religion, for, in considering it, to me there appears a combination of much—yes, very much—jargon!

Is it with *this* that you are to out-rival the religion of the cross? Is this the Colossus you have reared to bestride the world, and play at chess with the destinies of mankind?

## LETTER II.

---

SIR,

By way of interlude after the comedy of the rational religion, I propose to collect and examine a few scattered axioms which will illustrate your superior sagacity in the way of metaphysics and logic.

The petition of Robert Owen, (*Man. p. 26.*) Sheweth "that he made use of these advantages to collect the most valuable truths or ideas, *that were consistent with each other,*"—"that by continual study and the daily collection of more facts—*all consistent with each other*—was ultimately enabled to discover *Three invaluable Sciences.*" These, Sir, are your own Italics, intending I suppose to indicate that you had discovered a *new* kind of truth, viz.,—consistent truth, and an unheard of class of facts, that is,—such as are consistent with each other.

From these and many other specimens it appears, that you have quite an original notion of truth. Let us see what is your idea of a man.—"Man's feelings include his convictions or mental inclinations—indeed, man may be said to be a *compound of feeling* of varied descriptions, engendered by different parts of his organization, physical, intellectual, and moral." *N. M. W. p. 7.* A feeling, Sir, is a state of mind; if, then, man is a compound of feelings, he is a compound of states of mind.—Fine philosophy! Two states of mind cannot exist at once, so that if a man is a compound of states of mind, a man cannot exist. But again, this compound is engendered by his organization, that is, man's organization produces himself, or, in other words, it produces a compound of feelings; how prolific a hydra is this same organization, men grow out of it like the misletoe springing from the oak.—The fable of the Nile's prolific banks is totally eclipsed by this new man-making system.

"But it may be useful here to remark, that the influence of external circumstances upon the organization, partakes more of the character of a chemical action than a mere mechanical impression." *N. M. W. p. 3.* How do you know this? Who told you that its action was either chemical or mechanical? The organization is, you say, "a compound of animal propensities, intellectual faculties, and moral qualities." Is there anything chemical here? Or if mechanical, is the agency carried on by means of the lever, the pulley, or the screw? By what nice analysis did you arrive at the conclusion that the action was rather chemical than mechanical?

But the following blunder may account for the preceding:—

“the natural course of events has forced man to receive his first impressions of externals, and of himself, through his imagination.” *N. M. W.* p. 32. This, Sir, is doubtless one of your own discoveries, and indicates a man well acquainted with the structure of the human mind. Surely after this display of your acumen in these matters, your “ipse dixit” will be sufficient to decide any controversy in mental philosophy. Yet, Sir, by the way,—if man gains his first impressions of the external world and of himself through the imagination, pray how does his imagination get this impression? If the world is supported by a tortoise, pray who supports the latter? I have been taught to view all the resources of imagination as “second-hand,” but I can easily pardon you for honoring this part of your mental constitution, because it is of vast importance in building a community.

The imagination is generally represented as that storehouse which the external world supplies through the medium of the senses. But you have revolutionized all our notions, and by your astounding discoveries have taught the nation duly to appreciate the honor conferred upon her Majesty by your condescending visit; for “who may I ask, was the party most honored or dishonored on this occasion?—The man of nearly seventy years, who had spent more than half a century in collecting rare wisdom, solely that he might apply it for the benefit of his suffering fellow creatures; and who, that he might effect future important objects for the ignorant and degraded race of man, submitted to cover himself with a monkey-like dress and bend the knee to a young female—amiable, no doubt, but yet inexperienced;—or the minister, who introduced him to undergo this necessary form of etiquette, and afterwards, in a speech containing much real “nonsense,” shrunk from defending that act of his own—an act which will, perhaps, yet prove to have been the best and most important act of his administration;—or the Exalted Young Lady to whom age bent its knee?” *Man.* p. 20.

We have had a few instances and illustrations of your “rare wisdom;” I now propose by way of contrast, to expose the “rare folly” of the priests;—your light will render their darkness visible.—We have seen something of the beauty and harmony of the rational religion; we found therein a Deity—whose inimitable perfections would excite wonder and admiration—a cause of all existence—undefinable by facts—the governor of the aggregate of nature—and finally nature herself. After this disclosure of sublimated truths, we may with perfect safety examine the frauds of superstition; for with all their enchantment they cannot blind us to the charms of “Truth without MYSTERY—mixture of error, or fear of man.”

Christianity in its threatenings and promises annexes happiness and misery to certain specified actions and characters. This implies responsibility, and therefore is rejected by you, as being a system



of injustice; but you allow that nature is wise—that to question her wisdom and rectitude is a mark of arrogance and folly. *N. M. W. p. 42.* Nature is then the standard by which we can mutually measure the pretensions of all religions and systems. The question then is, does nature favour your doctrine of irresponsibility, or the Christian doctrine of accountableness to God; or, in other words, does she give happiness irrespective of character, (as your notions imply ought to be done) or does she give happiness with a certain character and a certain conduct? If the former be the case, your system of irresponsibility is natural; if the latter, Christianity is natural.

“Nature when allowed to take its course through the whole life of organized beings, produces the desire to combine or unite with those objects with which it is the best for them to unite, and to remain united with them as long as it is the most beneficial for their well-being and happiness that they should continue together, and Nature is the only correct judge in determining her own laws. It is man, alone, who has disobeyed this law; *it is man, alone, who has thereby brought sin and misery into the world*, and engendered the disunion and hatred which now render the lives of so many human beings wretched.” *N. M. W. p. 29.* “Man, then, *to be permanently virtuous and happy*, from birth to death, *must implicitly obey this law of his, and of universal nature.*” *N. M. W. p. 29.* “It is thus that disunion, crime, and misery, are always engendered by man in attempting to oppose the laws of human nature, and to interpose his own imaginary notions.” *N. M. W. p. 28.* “Ignorance, poverty, cruelty, injustice, crime, and misery were sure to follow from this opposition to the laws of that Power which pervades the universe, and gives man his nature, his feelings, and all his attributes.” *N. M. W. p. 41.* “By these vain and futile attempts to oppose Nature, and improve himself, man is made the greatest obstacle in the way of his own happiness, and of the happiness of his race.” *N. M. W. p. 42.* “This, in fact, is *real vice*, and leads to all kinds of human miseries.” *N. M. W. p. 34.*

In the first of these quotations, you shew how *natural* was Adam's state, that is, his moral position in Paradise as represented in Scripture, for he is described as introducing sin and misery by his fall; and you assert the same principle as being *a fact in nature*, when you say “it is man alone who has broken this law and thereby brought sin and misery, &c.” The position of Adam, then, was in accordance with your description of Nature's laws and proceedings. So far, then, the Bible is founded on Nature. But the Bible is directly opposed to your doctrine of irresponsibility, therefore, your doctrine is not founded in Nature.

I need not follow out the quotations to shew how exactly your account of nature agrees with the Bible's account of man's moral



relation; the agreement is sufficiently evident. From your own account of the matter, I thus conclude, that your theory of irresponsibility is falsified by fact—by those facts in the constitution of nature which you have mentioned, and which plainly agree with the scripture statement. Now if nature joins happiness or misery with obedience or disobedience to certain laws, wherein do the PRINCIPLES of nature's government differ from the PRINCIPLES of Christ's government? You boast of nature as your pattern, and denounce every other system as opposed to her; but by some strange hallucination, you attack those parts of them in which they follow nature most closely. Professing adherence to the dictates of nature, you have, notwithstanding, put together a few "fundamental facts" which seem intended to give her the lie and expose her folly.

Nature says, "a character conformed to certain laws is the only happy one." Christianity says, that "sin brings death, but obedience to the law of God will lead to life." Owenism says that both these appointments are unjust: so let it be; cast into the balance these contending authorities; and we have nature at issue with a creature of her own production.

But you appeal to nature as your standard. I submit to you, whether your own account of nature does not write the condemnation of your own system. If the doctrine of responsibility as propounded in the Gospel be a fiction, it is not invented by priests; the deception was copied from the book of nature into the book of revelation. So that you as a priest of nature have as much to do with the objection as a priest of the gospel; the Bishop of Exeter has no more to do with this than the Bishop of "New Harmony."

But that you (and my readers) may perceive further the analogy between God's word and his works, that is, between the Bible and nature, allow me to ask whether you do not profess to give happiness to man through the medium of a new character? Now if nature *has not* joined happiness to certain characters how can you so confidently promise to render all happy who have their characters manufactured on the new system? Is not *character* the established way to *destiny* in your system as well as in the Gospel? The fact; then, that you have promised to make them happy by making them (what you call) good, is a sufficient proof that you take for granted that, in nature there is an intimate connection between happiness and goodness; now on your notions of irresponsibility, this invariable connection is the result either of ignorance or of injustice. "Man," you say, "cannot be bad by nature, and it must be a gross error to make him responsible for what nature and his predecessors have compelled him to be;" and again, "It is therefore cruel and unjust, in the extreme, still further to punish an individual, after he has already been ILL-TREATED BY NATURE, and the society in

which his character has been formed from birth." *N. M. W. p. 37.* Leaving however your contradiction to nature, an arbitress of your own choice, I infer from your own arrangement, that to be in favour with nature, we must submit to her government; and the Bible tells men, that to obtain the favor of God, they must use the means he has appointed. Now if you with your doctrine of irresponsibility had claimed attention as a messenger from the Creator of the universe, I should have concluded that God's proceedings in nature sufficiently overturned all your pretensions; but when I find that the Bible and nature agree, I feel that (so far as this doctrine is concerned) the book has a fair claim on my serious attention.

Suppose upon the question of responsibility, the universe should be divided; it is evident that the "Incomprehensible Power" who governs nature would declare for me—and he, Sir, has been from everlasting. But what is your burden of seventy years, and your collection of "rare wisdom?" Do not all men fade as a leaf? But nature's decrees are eternal, and are dictated by wisdom and goodness. But nature legislates with reference to conduct and character, upon your own shewing, (for happiness is the result of obedience to her laws); the Bible also legislates with reference to conduct and character, and so far, therefore, is "holy, just and good."

After thus shewing the naturalness of the gospel in making obedience to law the condition of well-being; I proceed to offer a few general observations on the economy of nature's government.

Amidst the apparent disorders, and the so-called accidents connected with human life, many of the proceedings of nature seem wholesale and indiscriminate; yet notwithstanding these apparent mis-arrangements—inevitably connected with general laws, there is still a broad feature of distributive justice evident from the tendency of the natural government to which we are subject.

There is not a blessing that we enjoy, but is held on some *condition*, the violation of which would effectually deprive us of such enjoyment. A man may render himself tolerably happy or perfectly miserable. Some precaution is indispensable for the preservation of our health; our life is in our own hands; it is a flower which the rude hand of the suicide may crush; death is ever at our call and willingly lends his scythe to the self-murderer. Nature has placed in the hands of every rational being the key to his own happiness, and the key to his own misery. "Before I invite you to my society," says Virtue to Hercules, "I will be open and sincere with you, and must lay down the established truth, that there is nothing valuable which can be purchased without pain or labour. *The Gods have set a price upon every real and noble pleasure.* If you would gain the favour of the Deity you must be at the pains of worshipping him; if the friendship of good men, you must study to oblige them;

if you would be honoured by your country, you must take care to serve it. In short, if you would be eminent in war or peace, you must become master of all the qualifications which can make you so." *Tatler, No. 97.*

Few things of worth are ours without activity; nor will any thing continue ours without some regard to its preservation. A certain amount of effort is the *price* of every mental and moral attainment—every mental and moral attainment is the *prize* of a certain amount of effort. If we desire an effect we must put forth an adequate cause.

Such are the dictates of nature; such are the actual conditions of our being. That theory which contradicts the facts of our existence is unsuited to guide men, either in their thoughts or conduct. Man is amenable to the law of his mental, moral, and physical nature, and cannot be happy, as you yourself allow, "unless he obey this law of his and of universal nature." Nature, then, treats man as responsible, that is, suspends his happiness upon submission to rule; so does Christianity. Robert Owen denies the *justice* of this principle. I would rather be wrong with nature and nature's God, than right with Robert Owen.



## LETTER III.

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SIR,

Having shewn that your objections to the Gospel, are objections to the arrangements of nature, I now propose to examine those objections. You denounce the principle of responsibility as founded on ignorance and injustice. Your argument, which is nothing more than the old doctrine of necessity enlisted against religion and morality, may be stated in two ways: first, generally, in reference to the formation of character; secondly, specially, in reference to the pre-disposing influences which are said to determine individual actions. The first is a popular argument, and therefore I shall treat it popularly; the second is a metaphysical one, and will therefore be dealt with metaphysically.

First, the popular argument—the formation of character. The strain of your argument on this subject is, that “Frenchmen are mostly born in France.” The institutions of a country, you say, form the character of the inhabitants; but is it never the case that the inhabitants form the institutions? Which exist first, the men or the institutions? That institutions do exert a reciprocal influence upon the character of the inhabitants I readily allow; and upon some such ground as this, I shall endeavour, not to overturn, but to base man’s responsibility.

There are two influences at work in the formation of character, man himself, and the things around him. It is the duty of every man (that is, of every individual having attained the years of discretion) to select or modify the agencies that shall form his character.

The doctrine of circumstances has of late been widely diffused as an undoubted proof of man’s irresponsibility for his character and conduct. By some legerdemain, the influence of external circumstances in forming the character, has been presented to the world under a distorted view; so that those very principles which ought to excite an abhorrence of vice in all its hydra developments, have been used to extenuate guilt, and prove man an irresponsible machine. My object, Sir, is, in this case, to consider what is the legitimate influence which the doctrine of circumstances ought to have upon the minds of rational beings. Whilst the Socialist brings forward the influence of circumstances to prove that man is irresponsible, and that infidelity ought to be received; I shall endeavour to deduce what I believe to be the truth, and to follow fairly from the same premises, namely, that man is responsible, and that infidelity ought to be re-



jected. In the first place, Sir, I take it for an axiom, that danger increases the circumspection of a wise man. This axiom contains the germ of the reasoning I have to produce on this subject. If you deny the position, I must beg you to disprove it; in the meanwhile, I shall assume its truth.

Ought not the consideration that our conduct is continually influencing the character of others; that by every movement of ours, a shock is conducted throughout the moral universe; and that we are ever receiving the reflex influence of other beings, which becomes to a great degree the mould of our minds;—ought not this to impress us with the infinite importance of our most trivial actions, and the solemn consequence of our most thoughtless associations? In this view nothing is trifling; our relative position becomes of incalculable moment; our responsibility is increased in a ten-fold degree. First, our duties to ourselves are increased. Secondly, our duties to others. First, our duties to ourselves. Before we begin to think, during our MENTAL AND MORAL MINORITY, we are providentially guided by parental judgment and affection. But seeing this minority does not or ought not to continue for life, since there is a time when we attain the years of discretion—when “a man leaves his father and mother,” and comes to the regulation of his own pecuniary affairs, so also there is a time when we take the helm of our own ship and “set up for ourselves” in the business of forming our own character and guiding our general conduct. “Knowledge is power,” and the knowledge that our character is the combined effect of our pursuits and associations, is to us a power—a magic ring, by which we are enabled to discover the apparatus to form our character; a power which it becomes our duty to exert for our mental, moral and religious improvement. We have our own experience, and the fate of others by which we may learn the influence of certain circumstances upon our mental or moral character; they are our beacons; if we despise the warnings and instructions hence received, we are in a fair way to make shipwreck. The physician uses the advantages of experience and observation to remedy the physical maladies of himself and others, that is, to influence their physical character; so also may we become acquainted with the peculiar combinations of ingredients, that shall purify or debase our moral system. Artists of different schools send us their advertisements; let us not be misled; let us see what portraits they have drawn—what achievements they have effected, and then decide which of them is worthy to sketch the features of our moral character.

Suppose you possessed a tree endowed with intelligence; that could rear its head and behold the running stream; that, conscious of the fertilizing influence of this brook, it had also the ability to remove from the arid place in which it was planted, and take its

position on the bank of the stream, should you not feel that the relation sustained by this tree was different to that sustained by any other? Should you not connect the notion of *duty* with the peculiar relation of such an intellectual being? Such is our position: many objects solicit our suffrages, they invite, but do not force us; but we have a character to be formed, and we must guide our association by the kind of character we wish to possess. It is thus that we do act in the business of life; whatever profession we wish to follow, or whatever art we intend to acquire, we feel it our duty—a duty to ourselves—to place ourselves with those most skilled in what we are desirous to obtain. And why not act thus in reference to our moral character, as well as in reference to our mechanical or our professional character?

Is this a new principle—a method of action introduced by the refinement of modern improvers? Oh no! the ancients were as well acquainted with the doctrine of circumstances, *and of the duties connected with it*, as the moderns can possibly be. This doctrine of circumstances has influenced the conduct of the world for ages; what then is the deduction which new-fangled perfectionists would derive from these principles? They would teach men that all responsibility is overturned by those very principles which all men have hitherto felt to be the basis of duty. Every mechanic knows that he will best acquire his art amongst the best workmen, and, *therefore*, he feels it his duty to himself to get into such associations; but, says the acute metaphysician, “the character of your workmanship is the result of your natural aptitude, and the men who taught you, or the peculiar modes of the manufactory in which circumstances placed you; therefore, the character of your workmanship was ‘formed *for* and not *by* you,’ and, consequently, you are irresponsible for your own proficiency;” that is, your skill and application—your strenuous effort and diligent attention—your untiring energy in the pursuit of a prize which the supine can never attain;—all this is resolvable into your natural aptitude and your felicitous position; so that whilst others are applauding your diligence, and even you yourself may take some praise to your perseverance, metaphysics steps in, and, robbing you of the award—blasting the chaplet which is wreathed around your temples—stealing from you the honest pride of a self-approving heart, places you on a level with the sloth whom your diligence had left in the obscurity of the distance. For, says the metaphysician, “wherein is the difference of desert between such characters; both are influenced by the necessity of their natures; one was victimised and harrassed; dragged along and fatigued by the irrepressible activity of some internal mechanism; the other was fettered by the silken bonds of the genius of indolence.”

Every opportunity of advantage mentally, morally or physically,



is a circumstance which we should seize upon with the utmost avidity. Activity and prudence are requisite to appropriate to ourselves the benefits to be derived from some influences, as well as to avoid the ill consequences of others. Suppose an individual is desirous of becoming eloquent, what is the influence which the doctrine of circumstances exerts upon his conduct? He feels it his duty to gain the direction of the most approved masters; and being conscious that his readiness and associations will leave their traces in his mode of expression, he seeks the best models, and forms his style by imitation of the most eminent authors.

Considering, then, the plastic nature of our characters, shall we not have the greater care as to the kind of associations we patronize? Does not the moulding influence of external events increase the importance of our movements, and thereby increase the necessity and duty of circumspection? If the associations of a speaker or writer have no influence upon his style; if the doctrine of circumstances were untrue in this respect, then would his duties to himself be proportionally decreased; for if you glow not at the fire of a Demosthenes; if you imbibe none of his nervousness and simplicity; if you derive no sweetness and harmony of expression from the inimitable productions of a Cicero; if, by drinking at their fountain, you receive none of their spirit—where would be the necessity for plodding diligence and ceaseless exertion? But now, every caution must be used to avoid the influence of the defective, and to form a taste and a style by the admiration of such unrivalled masters. So with painting; so with everything.

Suppose our object be to discipline our minds, to form our intellectual character; the fact that this character will be the combined effect of our internal powers, and their action and re-action upon external agency, our duty then becomes, to form those habits which shall avoid all frittering of time, and to shun the dissipating influence of certain associations, that is, everything that would relax our mental vigour and paralyse our intellectual energies; just as the man seeking to cultivate his bodily health, would avoid the injurious tendency of indolence and dissipation, whilst he would court the bracing influence of the external circumstance—a refreshing breeze; avoiding alike the enervation of sloth, and the Delilah-lap of luxury. Activity directed by prudence, is the key to knowledge.

Or do we wish to form our moral character—to curb the passions, and check whatever we feel to be base and grovelling, let us think of the influence of circumstances; and whilst we remember that every thing with which we come into contact will tend to give the ascendancy to our passions, and render us the slaves of sin, or to strengthen within us some noble principles, and bring passion under the dominion of reason and conscience; whilst we reflect that every

step is attended with danger—every position big with importance, it is but reasonable that our duties to ourselves should increase in proportion. When some malignant plague scatters destruction on every hand; when every breeze is tainted with vapours that seem to have issued from the jaws of death; is it not a duty we owe to ourselves to walk circumspectly? What then but the influence of circumstances upon the formation of our professional, mechanical, physical, moral or mental character, is the source of half our duties?

There are three kinds of associations to which we should all do well to take heed: companionship, mental associations and books—persons, thoughts and authors. The great influence exerted by these upon the characters of men, renders it the duty of every one to be cautious and scrutinizing as to the nature of the influence these are exerting upon him. In calm moods; when not under the influence of the passions and excitements of books or company; in our cool morning thoughts—it would be well to review the influence which some may have exerted; and thus connect things with their consequences. Thus, Sir, I believe, we should discharge most of those duties to ourselves which are founded on the doctrine of circumstances.

Secondly, the influence of circumstances on the formation of the human character, increases man's duties to others, and thus renders our relative position fearfully responsible. "Adult man, or society, may effect the greatest improvement in the character and condition of infant man and of the whole human race."

Who would be careless about an action upon which the destiny of a world depends? Is it not then our duty to use all the plastic influence we possess to render men intelligent, virtuous and happy?

First, the doctrine of the influence which circumstances exert upon the character of mankind, increases the responsibility of parents. Affection teaches this; reason suggests it; the Bible asserts it. Secondly, it increases the responsibility of Educators. If institutions form men's characters, then the duty of these is to form good ones. Thirdly, of Legislators. "If there be one duty therefore more imperative than another, on the government of every country, it is, that it should adopt, without delay, the proper means to form those sentiments and habits to the people, which shall give the most permanent and substantial advantages to the individuals, and to the community." *Essays*, p. 53. Fourthly, of Magistrates. Fifthly, of Authors; and indeed of every class of men whose conduct and proceedings influence the character and happiness of others. What is the influence of this consideration upon every affectionate and considerate parent—upon every patriotic legislator—every noble-minded author? Ought it not to remind them that the noblest patriot is the good man who performs his relative duties? In a word, will



not the influence of circumstances lead every rightly constituted mind to inquire *what kind of a circumstance am I in my relative capacity?*—Am I a blight and a pest, or a light in my day and generation? This is the state of mind which this doctrine ought to produce, and not the feeling that we are irresponsible; it should arouse us to a sense of our duty and responsibility. “I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say;” I speak as to conscientious men; look within, reader; I know the position may be cavilled at; but do you not *feel* that it is right?

In the perplexities of business the husband or parent is anxious on account of his relative position. How many have felt this as the mainspring of their heart—if I fall I shall not fall alone—if I rise I shall advance the interests of those dearer than myself. How many have said, “I could bear this myself, but the affliction is rendered insupportable by the consciousness that my family is involved in the same distress.” What parent, knowing that his conduct will be of infinite consequence in the training of his children, does not feel the awful responsibility of his social relations? So that, in this case also, instead of the influence of circumstances in the formation of character, subverting our responsibility, it is a sure foundation for our personal and relative duties.

Your own opinion, as incidentally expressed, is exactly in accordance with the conclusion I have deduced from the influence of circumstances on the formation of character. “It becomes then the highest interest, and consequently the first and most important duty of every state, to form the individual characters of which the state is composed.” *Essays*, p. 61. “It has been shewn, that the governing powers of any country may easily and economically give its subjects just sentiments and the best habits; and so long as this shall remain unattempted, governments will continue to neglect their most important duties, as well as interests.” *Essays*, p. 72. “Shall we, then, continue to surround our fellow-creatures with a temptation which, as many of them are now trained, we know they are unable to resist?” *Essays*, p. 56. “Shall yet another year pass in which crime shall be forced on the infant, who, in ten, twenty, or thirty years hence shall suffer DEATH for being taught that crime? Surely it is impossible. Should it be so delayed, the individuals of the present parliament, the legislators of this day, ought in strict and impartial justice to be amenable to the laws, for not adopting the means in their power to prevent the crime.” *Essays*, p. 26. “What have you done, and what are you now doing, with the immense power for good or for evil committed to your direction?” *Man*, p. 4. This last quotation, in which you examine the legislature, seems to be an anticipation of that scrutiny which God will exercise in reference to all our social duties. May we be prepared to answer such a question, that we may not be confounded in that day of account.

I now proceed to my third proposition; that is, that the influence of circumstances upon the formation of the character, instead of being a reason for adopting infidelity is a decisive one for rejecting it.

If our characters are formed by circumstances, the better the circumstances that exist in the world, the better will be man's character, and consequently the happier he will be. It is therefore our duty to create, or cherish if created, those circumstances which shall tend to form the best characters. Christianity ennobles man; infidelity debases him. This I shall endeavour briefly to prove; but first, I will answer the common objection arising from the corruption of religion; but most men are ashamed to advance such an objection, it having been so often defeated; however, it is not foreign to my purpose to glance at it. That many dark deeds have been done in the name of religion, I will readily admit; but maintain, that every single case was a desecration of religion, and not its own unperverted tendency. The scriptures as much condemn hypocrisy and deceit, as those men do who bring the charge of these evils against religion. It is sufficient to remark, that corruptions always flourished most when wicked men could succeed in concealing the Bible from which they pretended to draw their authority; but the appearance of the Bible always dispelled these frauds. *The Bible was not made for it then; as well say the sun produces darkness, because it is dark when he is absent, as say the Bible produces those things which endure not its presence.*

Some will tell us, that the many sects which have been professedly founded on the Bible, are sufficient to stamp it with uncertainty. Many of the divisions in the Christian church are non-essential; indeed, the majority of the sects may consistently extend to each other the right-hand of fellowship; and as the principles of Christianity become better known and take deeper root in the minds of men, this Catholicity of feeling will be extended.

But, Sir, what standard of truth have you? Do you answer, all the facts which nature presents around you? How happens it that nature has not presented those facts which bring all men to the same conclusion? Is not the Bible one of those very objects which nature offers to the notice of man? If, then, it is uncertain, it is one of those uncertainties which your boasted nature presents.

It is asserted as an objection, that the sects of Christianity, like other sects, have been the occasion of persecution. Christianity does not sanction such conduct, and, therefore, ought not to be charged with it; its genius is love, to our friends and enemies; its teacher exhibited in his life and death, an embodiment of this principle; that is Christianity which accords with his example. Persecution may have been the spirit of some professed Christians, but it never was the spirit of Christianity.



Man is a being formed for religion; he has a religious nature. If he did not possess this, he never could have been the victim of superstition; if he had not this as an original susceptibility of his nature, he never could have had any notion of worship; no temples would have been erected; no priesthood would have been thought of, nor would it have been of any avail to those who invented it; for they would have had no hold on the minds of men; they would have had a lever without a fulcrum; for there would have been no principle in human nature to which they could appeal.

Man, then, has a religious nature. This nature may be made—was intended to be made, subservient to his happiness and moral dignity. That system of training is defective, which neglects the cultivation of so important a part of man. You profess to bring forward a perfect system of training, in which system this part of man is neglected; your system is, therefore, unadapted to the beings for whom you intend it. You have no duties or moral obligations imposed, by our relation to the Holy Benevolence by whom we were created, and by whom we are preserved; under your system nothing is said of acting with a view to the approbation of a wise and righteous God; your system is, therefore, irreligious and consequently unsuited to man who is a religious being.

Man ought so to be cultivated, as to obtain the greatest amount of happiness and the highest degree of moral dignity. Religion tends to advance these noble objects. The higher pleasures ought especially to be cultivated; intellectual pleasures are to be preferred to sensual gratifications—moral goodness to intellectual strength; that which places the *brute* under the guidance of the *man*—which leads man from the dominion of the passions and gives him nobler pleasures, tends to his highest good: religion is this; it presents

“Reflections such as meliorate the heart,  
Compose the passions and exalt the mind.”

In attaining excellence of any kind, perhaps nothing is more conducive to our aim, than the possession of an inimitable model; we have, then, something to aim at. In the pursuit of moral excellence, men are often incited to “glory and to virtue” by the attainments of others;—“whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely” are to be found in Jesus Christ—the model of Christianity; real religion leads to the imitation of him, and, therefore, advances man’s moral dignity. Your Congress has paid its tribute to his character, by styling him “THE AMIABLE AND BENEFICENT JESUS.” See *Advertisements to “The Constitution and Laws,”* &c.

The more innocent and ennobling sources of bliss man possesses, the less will he be the subject of sense, of passion and vice. Religion affords an exhaustless fund of such delights and aspirations; infidelity would snatch these from man, and thus leave him more de-

pendent on his animal instincts, more abandoned to the most degrading impulses.

Let a Williams and a Socialist—the one with his Christianity, the other with his Infidelity—try their respective systems upon the most debased and brutalized nations of the world, how different would be the result! What power of moral renovation is there in the notion of irresponsibility? What is there in this to tame “the wildest excesses of the wildest passions?” Why has not this been tried? Why have we had no infidel missionary to travel to the most benighted lands and shed upon them the light of truth?

Religion is acting with a regard to the scrutiny of a God of love and justice; but what is there that is so ennobling in curtaining a community from the glance of Omniscience?

Religion excels all other sources of enjoyment; it is not confined to time or place; it depends not upon riches or even health itself; it is independent of external scenes and lives with the mind itself. It affords happiness when the heart is too sad for the pursuits of intelligence, or for any other kind of bliss. I have seen it enliven the face of woe and give brightness to the dying countenance. And is this worth nothing? Nothing to the surrounding friends? Nothing to the individuals themselves?

Perhaps, Sir, you will say “religious happiness is all a dream.” And what then? Is not life itself a dream? To dream one is happy, is to be very near it. Happiness is *a state of mind*. All things around us may be bright and joyous, but a burdened spirit casts the mantle of its own gloom on external scenes. All things may be dark and threatening; yet

“The soul can rear her sceptre,

Smile in anguish, and triumph o’er oppression.”

Religion places its happiness within; it gives a *state of mind*, and—

“The mind is its own place and in itself

Can make, a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”

“The rosy-bosomed spring

To weeping fancy pines; and yon bright arch

Contracted, bends into a dusky vault.”

Further, Sir, you may not have sufficient reason to be *quite certain* there is no judgment—no immortality for which man has to prepare. Which, then, is the greater risk? Suppose the Christian is mistaken, what then? He has obtained a *real happiness* from anticipating another state of being; the state of being may be an illusion; but the state of mind which enables him to triumph in sickness and death, is surely no illusion.

Christianity alone is worthy to guide men’s actions here, and to prepare them for what may be hereafter.



## LETTER IV.

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SIR,

So much for the popular argument against responsibility. Now for the metaphysical one—"Every action is the result of an adequate motive, and therefore no action is blameworthy or praiseworthy."

Man is an agent endued with intelligence, sensation and volition. "No one can, for a moment, imagine that the infant possessed any power to direct or control his formation, or gave his consent in any manner, to become what he is." *N. M. W. p. 17.* From this, you conclude, that a child is not accountable for his constitution. I have not now to do with your argument in reference to that case, but simply to observe, that your reasoning implies that men stand in a different relation to those things for which they "give their consent," than to those which are independent of their choice. Such are most of the actions we perform, and it is only for such actions that I claim responsibility. "I alone am the author, and, *therefore*, I alone ought to be, if any one shall be, prosecuted and punished for the wickedness that may be extracted from it." *Man. p. 22.* Here also is an acknowledgement that you stand in a different moral relation in reference to your own actions, than others who are not "the authors." According to this, the writer of a book, or the founder of a system, ought rather to be blamed or praised for the qualities of his production, than that another should receive the award; but this directly contradicts the objection I am now considering.

For the sake of convenience and distinctness, motives may be divided into two classes; external and internal. By the former, I mean, the inducements or presentments which influence the agent; and by the latter, I mean, the intention or object by which the agent is actuated. First, then, the external motives or inducements presented to the mind. The external inducements may be physical violence, appeal to the feelings, or considerations presented to the judgment; according to the nature of these inducements is our moral emotion in reference to the action. The man exiled from the land of his fathers excites our compassion; the one induced by the degradation and misery of his fellow mortals, to relinquish the sweets of home and all that is dear to our nature, in order to ameliorate their mental and moral condition, calls forth our admiration. The one emotion as much rests upon the constitution of our mind as does the other. We have no greater reason to say that the injured exile is the proper and natural object of our compassion, than we have to as-

sert that the magnanimity of the philanthropist is deservedly admired.

You assert, that our emotions of approbation and disapprobation in reference to conduct, are founded on the mistake that man possesses a certain kind of freedom. This, Sir, is a great mistake of your own—it is, at least, a glaring assumption; you declare that our moral emotions are founded upon a certain process of reasoning; this process you attack, and having (as you suppose) overthrown it, you conclude that our moral emotions are mis-directed. In the first place, Sir, you ought to have proved, that our emotions *are* founded upon reasoning, before you attempted to shew that this reasoning is fallacious. Let an opponent of your system at once deny that responsibility is based on a process of reasoning, and all your objections are useless; your artillery is aimed at the wrong place.

Our moral emotions are based on no false supposition, nor are they excited by any fallacious reasoning, as you most unwarrantably assume; on the contrary, they are the immediate result of consciousness.

These emotions are independent of reasoning; and to assert that the adequacy of the motive destroys the responsibility of the agent; is at once to belie the instincts of our moral nature.

Considerations presented to the judgment imply a certain kind of freedom in the agent; to receive a reason is to be free. Children are guided by authority: men by reason; the one acts from the command of another, the other acts from conviction of utility, propriety or expediency.

The difference between a freeman and a slave, is, that one acts from the arbitration of a tyrant; the other, must himself be consulted, he must have a reason, and is influenced by moral suasion. Thus, is a man in reference to circumstances; they ask his suffrages, he has to weigh the importance of their arguments; he is invited, not driven; the slave is commanded, the freeman is solicited.

The next class of motives is the internal—the feelings, intention or design of the agent. In accordance with the nature of these feelings, are our emotions in reference to the agent. Instead of an adequate motive being destructive of the moral quality of the action, and therefore a reason why we should have no moral emotions in reference to him, the motives themselves are the only objects of our feelings; they are the direct cause of our moral sentiments. So far from the motives removing the blameworthiness or praiseworthiness of the being who acts, they are the very foundation of our judgment respecting men's conduct. Nay, Sir, to assert that the motive deprives the action of moral quality, is unmeaning tautology, for, *the motive itself is the moral action*; the motive or intention is also the proper and natural object of our moral judgment. If not, you must account for the feeling of gratitude; why is it not directed towards

the *gift* instead of the giver? Or, if you please, explain the difference between the giver and the gift. Tell me, further, upon what principle do children and adults so universally expect to be exculpated by saying—"I really did not *intend* it?"

There are certain truths, Sir, which cannot be logically demonstrated, yet which cannot be disbelieved;—nay, demonstration itself is founded upon principles unproved and inexplicable. Something must be assumed before we can begin to reason. There are truths which rest on no reasoning, but are written in the constitution of our minds. For these ultimate principles, no reason can be assigned, (for that would imply ulterior principles) and every objection or reason against these first principles is worthless.

We believe in our mental identity; that we are the same thinking selves as we were an hour ago. And why do we believe this? We believe that we exist, and why? While engaged in the pursuits of business or pleasure, we believe that we are awake, and why? We believe in memory and look with certainty to the past, why? We trust to experience; nay, we convert experience into prophecy, and expect in the same circumstances the recurrence of the same phenomenon, and why? The only reason which can be assigned, (if indeed we may call it a reason) is, simply to state the fact—that our minds are so constituted. The constitution of our minds is the foundation of all our knowledge; and if there be any certainty in that, there is the same certainty in our moral emotions, for they are founded on the same principle.

"It follows, that, as all religions and codes of laws are founded in the error, that there is merit or demerit in belief and in feeling—religions and laws must have originated in some error of the imagination, similar to the universal error, maintained through unnumbered ages, that the earth was flat, immoveable, and the centre of the universe." *N. M. W. p. 47.* This happy analogy between these two "errors," is a fine illustration of your genius for metaphysical subtleties. However, there is one slight discrepancy in this analogy; and, that is, that to know properly about the universe, required a telescope and a great deal of mathematical knowledge; but to know about those emotions of our mind, which are founded on consciousness, required only the possession of that consciousness.

Happily for mankind, the broad features of morality were known to man without the march of refinement, or the invention of telescopes. Had they lived for ever in ignorance of the structure of the universe, it would have been but of little consequence; but that they should live for unnumbered ages in total ignorance upon such a subject, is a libel upon their Creator.

"To withdraw that bandage without danger, reason must be judiciously applied to lead men of every sect (for all have been in



part abused) to reflect; that if untold myriads of beings, formed like themselves, have been so grossly deceived as they believe them to have been, what power in nature was there to prevent them from being equally deceived?" *Essays*, p. 77. That imagination should be the origin of such a notion, is an egregiously unphilosophical assumption; any origin or cause short of the constitution of our minds will fail to account for so long existent and deep rooted a principle—a principle which has left its traces in every language and stamped its impress upon every human institution. Every attempt to account for it will fail, unless we ascribe it to that Being by whom we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." If it is untrue, or unjust, our conclusion is that a lie is written upon our minds by the finger of God.

But to return to "first principles." You speak of external circumstances as forming the character; now it has been logically demonstrated that no external world exists. Hume says that Berkeley's arguments against the existence of matter "admit of no answer, but produce no conviction." How shall we explain this anomaly? Here is a belief which the world has ever held, and which it cannot resign—without which mankind could not long continue; and yet there has not been a single philosopher who could successfully defend what none can permanently disbelieve. The only answer which has been given to the subtle objections of the sceptics, is simply the irresistible feeling or belief which mankind hold in reference to an external world. Now, Sir, since your system has so much to do with the external world it behoves you to prove that there is one—that external circumstances really exist. To a novice in philosophy this may appear an easy task; but if you are at all acquainted with this controversy you will not deny that all a clown or a philosopher can say in favor of materialism is that no man in his senses can disbelieve it. Belief in the existence of an external world is one of our intuitive beliefs, which disdain the tribunal of reason, and bid defiance to the utmost efforts of scepticism. Nature has not left us the sport of puzzling sophistry, but has fixed in our constitution those convictions which are inseparable from our well-being. A Pyrrhonist sitting at peace in his study, may be staggered and confounded by the acuteness of his own reasonings; but when he mingles with his fellow men and engages in the activity of business, he leaves his philosophy, and feels like a man rising from a dream. Whilst at his desk, he proves unanswerably that this universe is an illusion; when in the bustle of life, he feels irresistibly that his philosophy is the illusion. So with the sceptic in reference to morality—as a philosopher, he proves that every action is the result of an adequate motive, and therefore, blameless; but when he contemplates his own conduct and that of his fellow men, the motives themselves are the objects of his warmest emotions. After all, he feels

that benevolence is lovely—that malevolence is hateful; magnanimity excites his admiration—meanness, his contempt. In his sceptical reasoning, the motive is the argument he urges against the merit or demerit of the action; but when as a human being he comes into contact with human agents—in the state of unguardedness, when nature like a child speaks what she means and feels, we find that the reasons for which the *sceptic* exculpates, the *man* condemns.

Let us see how far these remarks are true in reference to you; we shall find, that you also judge of conduct by the motives which actuate men—that, when apart from your metaphysical floundering and sceptical speculations, you give forth the unsophisticated feelings of your heart, it is sufficiently evident, that your system is an illusion, which cannot permanently maintain its sway in your mind.

“Why, therefore, should any class of men endeavour to rouse the indignation of the public against them? Their conduct and their motives are equally correct, and, therefore, equally good with those who raise the cry against and oppose the errors of the church.” *Essays. p. 66.* “I never sought advantage from this measure. From the beginning of my career, when I had no one to support me, I had, for the cause of truth, to place myself in direct and open opposition to all the most deep-rooted prejudices of the past ages. I then anticipated and made up my mind to be misunderstood and traduced; to be made to incur fines, imprisonment, and death, perhaps at the stake: and what are these to an individual when his mind and feelings are deeply imbued with the desire permanently to benefit the human race?” *Man. p. 23.* “Nor yet has the Memorialist been actuated to the conduct which he adopts, by a desire for wealth, for popularity, for honours, or for future fame; to him these already appear the playthings of infants.” *Man. p. 29.* “Before he moved one step in this course, “he put his life in his hand;” and all personal objects he considered “as a feather in the balance,” compared with the *immensity of good* which he knew, under such circumstances, might be accomplished for his fellow-creatures. And to attain this amelioration for them, is the sole object which now influences his conduct.” *Man. p. 41.* “What the consequences of this daring deed shall be to myself, I am as indifferent about, as whether it shall rain or be fair to-morrow. Whatever may be the consequences, I will now perform my duty to you and to the world; and should it be the last act of my life, I shall be well content, and know that I have lived for an important purpose.” *Man. p. 59.* “By those details you will find that from the commencement of my management I viewed the population, with the mechanism and every other part of the establishment, as a system composed of many parts, *and which it was my duty and interest so to combine, as that every hand, as well as every spring, lever, and wheel, should effectually co-operate to,*



produce the greatest pecuniary gain to the proprietors." *Essays*, p. 27. "Indeed, after experience of the beneficial effects, from due care and attention to the mechanical implements, it became easy to a reflecting mind to conclude at once, that at least equal advantages would arise from the application of similar care and attention to the living instruments. And when it was perceived that inanimate mechanism was greatly improved by being made firm and substantial; that it was the essence of economy to keep it neat, clean, regularly supplied with the best substance to prevent unnecessary friction, and by proper provision for the purpose, to preserve it in good repair; it was natural to conclude that the more delicate, complex, living mechanism, would be equally improved by being trained to strength and activity; and that it would also prove true economy to keep it neat and clean; to treat it with kindness, that its mental movements might not experience too much irritating friction." *Essays*, p. 28.

(They are *your property*, or machines, or slaves—you not a brother machine, but would become the proprietor of an engine composed of the brains and sinews of mankind.)

All reasoning proceeds upon certain assumed first principles; unless argument appealed to such a principle, reasoning would have no groundwork—unless there are some things intuitively believed, there could be no belief at all. Reasoning, by the many steps it involves, may err, although in every stage of the process an appeal is made to the principle of intuition; but that which at once, without intermediate stages, is felt as true, may be considered as resting immediately on the principle of intuition, which gives validity to reasoning itself. The *moral* turpitude or excellence of the motives by which men are actuated is such a felt truth; it is an axiom of morality woven into the spirit of man by nature herself; and the very sceptics who call it in question in spite of their teeth, feel its truth and act upon it. I have shewn that you acknowledge it, and as for the rest who hold your principles, I can say, I have heard several Socialist Lecturers and read many Socialist publications; but never read a pamphlet, nor heard a lecture, in which the principle was not acknowledged. The doctrine, then, of the morality of motives is a felt truth—its opponents themselves being judges.

This principle moulds our emotions and mingles with our modes of thought; the venal or mercenary—the generous or magnanimous excite our contempt or our love, in accordance with the nature of the motives from which they act.

So much for the metaphysical objection to the moral nature of human agency.

I have hitherto studiously avoided the term CONSCIENCE, that whilst we were considering the phenomena which every breast presents, we might be uninfluenced by the prejudice this word is calcu-



lated to produce. Yet, Sir, although I have avoided the use of the term, the principle intended by it is involved in the phenomena we have been examining. I propose, therefore, to consider your objections to responsibility as they are aimed at the doctrine of a conscience. By conscience, I mean, that original susceptibility by which we feel what is right; as by reason, I mean, that faculty by which we perceive what is true. The object of the former is virtue, of the latter, truth.

I place these principles on the same footing, and expect the same fallibility or infallibility from each. I infer the existence of reason from its daily development in men's actions and writings; I infer the existence of conscience from its constant exhibition in the estimates we form of our own conduct and that of others. Since the notion of innate ideas is exploded, every philosopher must allow that we can have no notion without having previously possessed the means of acquiring it. Independent of sensation, we could form no idea of heat and cold—a blind man can have no idea of colour, nor a deaf man of sound; without reason we could have no notion of truth, and without conscience we can have no notion of morality. So that the very scepticism which calls morality in question is a demonstrative evidence of man's moral nature.

If morality is capricious—if conscience is the imagination moulded by local prejudice—if, in other words, we have no certain moral instincts—no moral nature, it would be as reasonable to attempt to charm the blind with the beauty of a landscape, as to seek to entrance mankind by the beauties of a "NEW MORAL WORLD;" to form such beings into a society of intelligence, morality and happiness, is as great an undertaking as to form an harmonic society of deaf and dumb.

If man has no conscience, or principle of moral calculation—if his impressions of rectitude are to be utterly discarded—if nature has placed no standard of equity in his breast, how is he to appreciate your arguments about the injustice of competitive arrangements, and to what principle do you appeal when you seek to impress men with the peculiar justice of your new arrangements?

Your objection to conscience is, the varying nature of men's feelings in reference to certain acts, from which you endeavour to cast the dark shade of scepticism over the distinctions of morality and involve the dictates of conscience in interminable confusion. Your libel upon Lawyers is a good description of your own position in reference to morality, for you say, "they are necessarily trained to endeavour to make wrong appear right, or involve both in a maze of intricacies, and to legalize injustice." *Essays*, p. 51. Now you endeavour to involve both in intricacy—nay, you remove every standard of rectitude, and your system tends effectually to destroy the distinction between rectitude and injustice.

But to approach the style of your own objections—man, you tell us, is a localized animal, whose morality varies with his clime;—one born in China, differs in his feelings of rectitude from one born in Greenland; whilst the Englishman differs from both; who, then, you ask, is to decide, why is not one's right as good as another's right—and what kind of a conscience is that flexible principle which assumes such various features?

Thus conscience is soon disposed of, being too changing for a moment's dependence; but let her not wander a solitary exile; weigh reason in the same balances, and if she be wanting, let her be packing too.

If nature has planted in man a principle called reason, by which he is to discover truth, how happens it that this boasted universal principle varies so amazingly in its deductions? A man born in China becomes a Confucian; one in Greenland imbibes the sentiments peculiar to his country; an Englishman is perhaps a follower of Robert Owen; who is to decide between them? Why is not one's truth as good as another's truth? And if truth be so protean a thing, have we not reason to conclude that truth and reason, like conscience and morality, are unstable as the wind and vary with the colours of the national flag? Shall we not say that reason, like conscience, is the plastic idol of local bigotry—the child of caprice, and unworthy the reliance of a prudent man?

If because men can be trained to believe that anything is just or honourable therefore we have no standard of justice and honour, then, because men may be taught to believe that anything is true, therefore, we have no standard of truth. If because men can be made to think that injustice is justice, therefore, there is nothing intrinsically just; then it follows, that because men may be taught to believe any lie, there is, therefore, no truth; and if, then, there is no truth, modesty becomes you, since all you can prove is, that we are all deceived and have no means of escape.

For the honour of Socialism, Sir, do not be a Polyphemus in philosophising; since you have one eye open with which you have discovered that morality is a baseless fabric; let the other be used to examine cautiously the foundation of philosophy and see if that too is;—but I hope to be excused, I was forgetting that your own system would then hang on the clouds; yet do despair, as a friend, I would suggest that you should support it on your own atlantian shoulders, and by way of consolation, assure you that its extreme lightness may render you less apprehensive. I admire that clearness of judgment, which, despite the authority of the world and the monitions of your own breast, has led you to reject morality; yet although I admire that coolness which was uninfluenced by these biasing circumstances, still, I cannot sympathize with the tenacity with which you



cling to the authority of reason; for, the objections brought against conscience may as reasonably be urged against reason. I am pleased to see your mind so liberalised as to reject the authority of conscience, from arguments founded on the honoured vices which have stained our world; but sincerely lament, that you do not see, or do not frankly acknowledge, that the admired follies which disgrace the annals of our nations tell as strongly against reason.

Whilst I congratulate you that you have gone so far, I must lament that you have gone no farther; however, I doubt not, you will yet advance and assume the toga virilis of "mental independence."

When men surrender reason and conscience at your command, it will be incumbent on you to abandon all pretensions to reason and truth; and then you must no longer have the dogmatism to assert that you have "truth without mixture of error."

The same reasoning which hurls confusion into the universe of morals, creates disorder and uncertainty in the intellectual world. Providence seems wisely to have ordered that error should destroy itself; and thus your thrust at morality is rendered fatal to your own philosophy.

To conclude this subject; you have sometimes boasted that you could teach a child to feel and believe anything. I have one task to set you; perform it, and I am at once a Socialist:—so overturn the fundamental principles of reason, as that, to a mind of your training, an accumulation of evidence shall be felt as the disproof of a fact, and so modify the dictates of conscience, as that a child shall hate you for loving it.

Man in all circumstances is true to his nature. The broad features of morality are stamped on every heart. Savage or civilised life is only a ruder or more refined development of the same principles. The human countenance is the index of the human heart; but although the countenance varies in its features, in all we readily recognize the distinctive outlines of our common humanity.

Many of the apparently distorted moral views which mankind have possessed are easily accounted for. Although some customs and institutions have in their working involved cruelty, yet cruelty itself, and for its own sake, has never been the object of any custom or institution. Hunting may be considered as a cruel sport, but the cruelty is no part of the object, but only a necessary accompaniment of some desired object. War involves bloodshed, but bloodshed is not the object of war. The warrior is invested with glory, but it is not the glory that delights in murder; it is true that murder, or killing, is necessarily involved in war, but murder in its naked deformity is met with the unmitigated abhorrence of mankind. It is only by their alliance with better principles, that the cruelties and enormities of many actions and customs are tolerated and perpetrated



by the human race. The butcher does not slay the ox because he delights in inflicting misery, for they all are aware that this might more effectually be done without destroying life; but here also cruelty is involved, but it is not the object—so with every custom that has obtained amongst men. Yet all these customs are ignorantly adduced to prove the capriciousness of morality; surely little need be said to convince any thinking mind of the futility of such reasoning.

A natural objection to the parallelism of conscience and reason may thus be stated;—the different notions of philosophy may be said to indicate no change in the rational dictates, since they may be accounted for by the various amount of information. But, first, this objection fails in those cases wherein the opinion admits of no evidence, but is in itself manifestly foolish and absurd—which absurdity ought to be felt, apart from any consideration of evidence—it ought to bear witness against itself. And not only does the analogy hold good in reference to those notions which are at once ridiculous, but how often do we see much inconclusiveness, and many “non sequiturs,” when to others it may appear an unanswerable chain of demonstration. How often do we find several persons drawing different conclusions from the same evidence. All this goes as far to prove the uncertainty of reason, as men’s different notions of actions goes to destroy the authority of conscience. Prejudice ever exerts its modifying influence upon our judgment, and renders us open to the admission of innumerable follies; and why may not prejudice in some way modify our original moral feelings? Do you say this destroys their efficiency, by making them unsafe because uncertain guides? Just so, then, with regard to reason; we ought, in consistency to feel that our judgment is not to be trusted because prejudice has an influence upon us. You will perhaps admit this, and say that our reasoning is as suspicious as our moral feelings, because it is as susceptible of modification. Granted; then mistrust your reasoning against morality.

But further, Sir, the analogy of our other feelings may also be urged; distress naturally excites our compassion; humanity gains our affections; yet the propriety of these emotions is not called in question on account of the pitiless ferocity which some hordes of savages exhibit. If because some men applaud and encourage vice, therefore, we have no standard of what is worthy, then it follows, that because some men are moved and others are unmoved at the cry of the orphan and the widow, we have no standard as to what has a proper natural claim upon our compassionate regard. Upon this system of reasoning all your boasted philanthropy is mis-directed; for you cannot prove that any men are the appropriate objects of commiseration.

## LETTER V.

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SIR,

We have considered your popular and metaphysical objections to responsibility—we have found them worth nothing. But supposing they possessed all the validity you suppose, instead of the sophistry which they serve to cover, it would prove no better for your conclusion—viz. the culpability of society in punishing innocence, or of God in taking vengeance upon the victims of necessity who are driven to break his laws. You inquire if it is not manifestly unjust for society to punish an individual for the very character with which it has imbued him. But, Sir, what is society but a combination of individuals who are as much under the influence of circumstances as the victim of their persecution; if, then, the doctrine of circumstances exculpates him, does it not also cast the mantle of charity over them? If your notions exonerate the malicious who injure the person, property, or reputation of the unoffending, will they not as effectually shield the avengers of these crimes? The same reasoning which removes the possibility of guilt on the part of offenders, destroys the possibility of guilt on the part of those who inflict the penalty. If, because crimes (as we now call them) are the result of an adequate motive, they are therefore blameless; then punishing these crimes, being the result of an adequate motive, is also blameless. This you have generally overlooked; you have endeavoured to fix the charge of guilt on the avengers, instead of on the perpetrators of crime. Forgetting, or wilfully overlooking, that your doctrine of motives, if true, applies to every intelligent agent, (since no action in any being can be without a motive) you still would charge the Omnipotent with injustice, upon the supposition that the scriptural account of his moral government is true; whereas all you can deduce when the whole system of your philosophy is admitted, is simply this—that sinners do not deserve the punishment of hell, nor saints the reward of heaven; yet that, notwithstanding the innocence of the one and the want of merit in the other, God does nothing blameworthy in making the award. The full sweep of your scepticism simply tends to prove that the vilest miscreant is as innocent as the benevolent and honest; and yet it proves that there is nothing morally wrong—nothing of guilt in hanging the one and honouring the other. On my principles, society does wrong, and thus contracts guilt, by punishing the innocent; but you cannot consistently admit this. Your reasoning proves that the criminal is

innocent, yet that his tormentors are also innocent. The very same arguments which are proposed to extenuate guilt, are also very useful in defending the punishment of it. "Shall yet another year pass," you inquire, "in which crime shall be forced on the infant, who in ten, twenty, or thirty years hence shall suffer DEATH for being taught that crime? Surely it is impossible. Should it be so delayed, the individuals of the present parliament, the legislators of this day, ought in strict and impartial justice to be amenable to the laws, for not adopting the means in their power to prevent the crime." *Essays*, p. 26. Now, Sir, will not the religion of "charity to the convictions, feelings and conduct of every human being" afford a place for sympathy with these poor deluded legislators, who are forced to make the laws for which they have the strongest motive? By the way, Sir, it seems that none but parsons, lawyers and legislators can possibly commit the unpardonable sin. I am inclined to think their chief offence lies in occupying a position at which you aim—for you want to become parson, lawyer and legislator of the new moral world.

Upon your principles, men are not unjust in violating the laws of society, and society commits no injustice in punishing their innocence. In the same way the subjects of God's moral government do nothing wrong in refusing submission to his authority, and he may be a righteous God whilst he consigns them to a state of undeserved misery: unless, indeed, it so happens that offenders against law are the only beings who are subject to the tyranny of necessity. If objectors to moral and religious obligation will not meet us in the clear light of day and on the sure footing of common sense, we must follow them into their own murky cave of metaphysical subtleties, and entangle the spider in his own cobwebs. "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

How strange a revolution must take place in all our notions of rectitude before we shall be able to regard with execration, the men who punish crime, instead of those who commit it. Is this one of the doctrines of the New Moral World—that sin consists, not in violating laws, but enforcing the penalty? It will, certainly, be a notable era in the history of our moral emotions, when the magistrate and not the murderer shall be accounted worthy of the halter.

"It will be obvious, even to children, thus rationally educated, that all human laws must be either unnecessary, or in opposition to nature's laws, that they must create disunion, produce crime incessantly, and involve all transactions in inextricable confusion." *N. M. W.* p. xv. After becoming acquainted with your philosophy—after reading the above declaration and hearing your objections to responsibility, we are warranted in expecting that by some felicitous scheme you would institute a system of pure anarchy, in which no



artificial law should check the inclination of any individual; you warrant the expectation of something strange and unique—a system in which, by a species of political ledgerdémain, legislation should be exploded. Hitherto, no system of society has effected this; the human mind knows nothing of freedom from government;—a band of desperadoes has its leader; a clan of savages has its chief; a polished nation has its mode of government and code of laws. But now the secret is discovered;—community is the consummation of this great achievement; approach with silent reverence, that you may behold order without law and anarchy without confusion; there are no “CONSTITUTION AND LAWS of the society of rational religionists”—“old things have passed away.” A constitution and a code of laws, penalties and penances, belong to the irrationals. I am not aware, Sir, whether you have a government stamp on your community label, but I can assure you that a Birmingham congress has assumed your name—THE RATIONAL—and has affixed it to the insane effusions of a *legislative body*.

How are we to explain the “constitution and laws” of a society of irresponsibles? Of what avail are your laws unless men are responsible to them? If responsibility be an error, we must come to the absurd conclusion that error is essential to the well being of society, and to the happiness and peace of mankind. That society, one of whose objects is “to govern most beneficially for all, and ULTIMATELY without artificial rewards and punishments,” will not, surely, declare in real earnest that its system is founded on irresponsibility; if so, where is the consistency of government, either with or without artificial rewards and punishments? Is it not “obvious, even to children thus rationally educated, that human laws must be unnecessary?”

“It is, therefore, evident that man has NOT been created to be a responsible being, in the ordinary acceptation of the term—but that he is left to experience the *necessary effects* of his conduct, which teach all in the best possible manner,—through the sensations of pain and pleasure—the means of increasing happiness; and through this knowledge, adult man, or society, may effect the greatest improvement in the character and condition of infant man, and of the human race.” *Constitution and Laws, &c. p. 18.* Upon this sublime principle you establish “an entirely new state of society, without priests, lawyers, military, buyers or sellers, or money-changers, but composed of a superior, intelligent, and efficient population, all of whom will be producers, educators, and enjoyers: each class, according to age, being upon an equality of rights and privileges; and EQUAL SERVICES BEING REQUIRED FROM EACH ACCORDING TO AGE AND CAPACITY.” *Con. and Laws, chap. XII. sec. iv.*

How very different is this from the common notion of responsi-

bility—"equal services for equal rights"—measure for measure; what say the scriptures? "it shall be rendered unto every man according to his work;"—"to whom much is given, of him much will be required,"—God requireth of a man "according to what he hath and not according to what he hath not." But you will be ready to cavil at this arrangement; therefore, giving the words of scripture to the winds, and adopting your own, I would say—God requires of every man "according to his age and capacity." Services give rights—is not that the essence of responsibility? How depressing it must be to you, Sir, in this advanced stage of mental and moral science—now that "mental independence" has been proclaimed to the world—that there should still be found a body of "rational religionists" who not only declare that "men will never be rational till all forms of worship cease," but also recognise in their association a law called "responsibility of officers!"

I imagine, Sir, it would not be an uninteresting inquiry for a philologist to discover wherein the use of responsibility here differs from the "common acceptation of that term." But we will leave the philologist to his frivolous researches, whilst we sigh for a "universal charity—to establish over the world, in principle and practice, charity for the convictions, feelings, and conduct, of every human being, without distinction of sex, class, sect, party, country, or colour." *Con. and Laws, chap. I, sect. 2.* That we may no more hear of the "dismissal of members—for any aggravated offence against the laws of this society, or for immoral conduct." *Chap. II, sect. 3.* That we may be no more pained by such unphilosophical regulations as the "suspension of trustees for the neglect of any duties required of them." *Chap. IV, sect. 4.* And that no branch may hereafter "forfeit its charter for neglecting the laws of this society, or NONCONFORMITY thereto." *Chap. V, sect. 6.*

But, Sir, the inconsistency of these philosophers may be thus explained:—philosophy has to do with abstractions and ideal perfections, theories, schemes, and utopias; but when men come to the "section on business," they bow at the shrine of common sense.

If this explanation should not satisfy the present sceptical age, the apology offered by the society itself may perhaps alter the premature views which some men have formed. "The Congress were quite aware that some of the rules are inapplicable to such a state of society as that which they desire to produce, and which will obtain, when the moral and intellectual nature of man is cultivated in a rational manner, so that no necessity will exist for any of the artificial stimulants to action which are now so prevalent. But they felt, at the same time, that a grave mistake had hitherto been made by their predecessors, in legislating for the present generation on abstract principles, without reference to their previously acquired habits,



customs, and associations. This error, they believe they have avoided; but, in doing so, they are anxious to caution their friends that these are not permanent arrangements, but merely preliminary steps to a higher state of being—incipient efforts after perfection,—which are compelled by their essence to partake of the nature of the source from which they spring, and which they earnestly hope will help forward, in their due place, in the eternal chain of causation, that series of effects which will ultimately result in universal intelligence, morality, and happiness.

On behalf of the central board of the society,

RICHARD BEWLEY, General Secretary."

*Preface to Constitution and Laws, &c.*

"The congress are quite aware that these rules are inapplicable to the state of society they wish to produce." Who ever supposed that a course of discipline was applicable to the state for which that discipline was intended to prepare? Who would for a moment have imagined that the sports of our boyhood or the training of our childhood is applicable to our advanced age? Why then this studied defence?—it was not without occasion. The "congress were quite aware" that their rules gave the lie to their philosophy; that their rules were a practical abandonment of their fundamental tenets, and therefore, they were "anxious to caution their friends that these were only preliminary arrangements;" preliminary to what? "A higher state of being!" What then, does this system of law and punishment, of irresponsibility and irrationality—this system and these notions that disgrace the Bible and have ruined the world, do these become the stepping stones to virtue, intelligence and bliss? Is your philosophy to stand aside until the old irrationality of mankind shall have put you in a position to receive it? Your system is to borrow the discipline of society; to inflict its penalties and exact its services; to castigate the stubborn and expel the refractory; to continue, in all its practical bearings, that principle which has brutalized and degraded mankind;—you are to ascend up to heaven by the very same road that we have descended into chaos or perdition.

The doctrine of responsibility, as it is exhibited in the gospel, has been held up to public odium and vulgar scorn, and then transposed to a godless and unholy system that phoenix-like would arise from the ashes of the scriptures. This moral plagiarism leaves far behind the impositions of the priesthood, or the jugglery of lawyers—it is worse than tearing the tiara from the brow of royalty, plucking its richest gems, and casting it away as useless. Such a procedure can only be described when men of wit have ceased to retail their stale jests at courtiers, parsons and lawyers, and have sought an original theme in the effrontery of infidelity.



## LETTER VI.

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SIR,

Christianity comes to man professing to be a message from the Creator of the universe; it makes known certain blessings as dependent on certain conditions; it requires qualifications—modes of feeling; without which, men will be deprived of the blessings therein made known. To all this you object, as being a system of responsibility which is opposed to your philosophy. I have previously attempted to grapple with your philosophy itself, and shall now apply your own reason, to your own system, and shall shew you a case of “Owen, versus Owenism.” Man stands in the same position in reference to your system as in reference to the gospel;—the plan you propose to mankind, involves the very principles you are “daily contradicting and blaspheming.”

It has been previously shewn, that the internal structure and arrangement of the system you advance, involves the doctrines for which you oppose the scriptures.

I have now to do with the means of admission to its privileges; if I succeed in proving that here also you are open to the same objections as the scriptures, it will then be evident that your proceedings are just as irrational and absurd as you describe the rest of the world.

The scriptures require a certain state of moral feeling on the part of man, in order that he may receive the blessings they offer. There must in some way be a change of disposition produced; whether this be effected by the truths and considerations they present, or by the supernatural intervention of the “Spirit of truth,” we need not here determine. We only state the fact of the requisition—that man must be the subject of a prescribed feeling, and the agent in a prescribed course of conduct.

So with Socialism. “Every thing depends upon the producers themselves taking up the subject in good earnest, and applying all their powers of mind, purse and skill to the work of their redemption from the degraded and vile position they now occupy; without such exertions on their part the best concerted schemes for their benefit remain a dead letter.” *Preface to Constitution and Laws.*

“And why, it may be asked,” says Wilberforce, “are we in the pursuit of religion alone to expect knowledge without inquiry, and success without endeavour? The whole analogy of nature inculcates on us a different lesson, and our own judgments in matters of tem-

poral interest and worldly policy confirm the truth of her suggestions. Bountiful as is the hand of providence, its gifts are not so bestowed as to seduce us to indolence, but to arouse us to exertion; and no one expects to attain the height of learning, or arts, or power, or wealth, or military glory without vigorous resolution, and strenuous diligence, and steady perseverance. Yet we expect to be christians without labour, study, or inquiry."

Are the blessings offered in your "best concerted scheme" more free from the necessity of man's activity and self-appropriation, than those offered in the word of life? Why, then, do you traduce the scriptures because they require certain states of mind—the due regulation of men's feelings and actions in order to lay hold on eternal life;—whilst you also require certain states of mind—incessant activity and unremitting exertion, to secure the visionary phantoms of ephemeral bliss with which you would supplant our nobler aspirations and immortal hopes? If the gospel commits injustice by making distinctions and requiring qualifications of any kind, it should be your object to obviate this; and offer blessings without any barrier on account of fitness or unfitness to enter your community. If you do not cast away every qualification, you are just as inconsistent in opposing the scriptures, as the physician who should endeavour to supplant a competitor by complaining that it was needful to attend to his directions.

Besides your requirements as to the "*character, knowledge, and general fitness of such persons for promoting the objects of the society,*" (*Con. and Laws, chap. V, sect. 6,*)—which effectually REPROBATE those whose characters are *not* suitable, whose information is *not* sufficiently mature, and who are *not* endued with "*a fitness to promote the objects of the society,*"—what is to become of those who cannot raise the fifty pounds?

"But these," you will say, "are preliminary arrangements, and when the community has settled these things will be abandoned." True, Sir,—that is, when men have paid the price of entrance they will not have to pay it again. But are not all qualifications preliminary arrangements? Are not those of the gospel preliminary? Besides, Sir, I might ask whether this inconsistency on your part, is a "preliminary step" to "a higher state of being"—consistency.

I will take a closer view of what I shall please to term your "conditional salvation." "*To Members—The assurance to be effected by this society from the community funds shall be the residence, comfortable maintenance, and education, in any establishment of the society, either in sickness or health, of any member, his wife and children elected or chosen, to reside therein, during the time they may CONFORM TO THE RULES of such establishment.*" *Chap. XI, sec. 1.* What is the poor fellow to do who is *elected* without his wife and

family? Is this election regulated by the principle of responsibility, expediency, or justice? Will not all be surprised to hear of "conformity to rules," in an establishment based upon non-responsibility?

When any member is dismissed for nonconformity, I hope, Sir, the Congress will not send away the culprit without a copy of the "rational religion," which consists in "a knowledge of the unerring and unchanging laws of nature, derived from accurate and extended observation of the works of the great creating power of the universe, and the PRACTICE OF CHARITY (you will observe, Sir, these are your own capitals) for the feelings, convictions and conduct of all men." But would not the Congress discover that *they* had made "a grave mistake" if the offender should happen to have been initiated into the mystery of your "five fundamental facts?" Would they not be "condemned out of their own mouths" while he expostulated with them upon necessity and non-responsibility?

But you will perhaps tell me that "some regulations are absolutely necessary—we cannot live without law." I am quite aware we cannot, Sir; for every state of society will involve certain duties; no less in a community of united interests than in this competitive system that now obtains; but it is not for making laws that I would blame any one, but for legislating after establishing a theory subversive of all law.

You appear after all your researches to act as though conscious that non-responsibility is an ideal scheme, that suits only your own ideal world.

But I have been wandering from the terms of admission, to the happiness promised, and the tenure on which it is held; I will now return to the conditions on which the enjoyment of this happiness depends. "The contribution entitling a member to these benefits shall be not less than £50, to be paid in one or more payments or by weekly instalments. But any member not having paid up the full sum of £50, may be elected as a resident in any of the society's establishments, IF HIS CAPACITY FOR USEFULNESS appear to entitle him to such election. Nevertheless, members who have *paid up most money* shall be deemed *most eligible*—all other qualifications being equal. The families of married members may also *be permitted* to accompany the latter into community, *if elected*; the sum of £50 being provided by such members themselves, or on their behalf by the society, at its discretion, for the use of the community, for each individual of the family so elected." CHAP. XI. SECT. 1.

Here is an opening for a man of noble spirit, to enter a community, where the wife of his bosom—the partner of his joys and sorrows, may perhaps by *permission*, at the discretion of the *social* community—perhaps, may, be—elected! To say nothing of the children whom he counts dearer than himself;—but he is to learn a general



philanthropy—to forget all private preferences—all individual partialities; he must abandon the “unnatural monopoly”—marriage; paternal tenderness must be merged in general sympathy—he must learn to love everybody by ceasing to love any one.

But suppose by extreme good fortune the candidate's whole family be elected; and what MAN would have his family accompany him by *permission*—especially whilst he is possessed of that “capacity for usefulness” so preeminently necessary? Allowing, Sir, that an honest mechanic would stoop to such a degradation, what is meant by £50 being provided *on his behalf* for each member so elected? Would not the member in question have to mortgage his sinews for life, to discharge the debt so incurred? And do you not think, Sir, that there are many working men in England who would prefer independence and poverty—nay, sheer want, to a life of conscious bondage to a debtor, even though amidst profusion and plenty? Do you imagine, Sir, that men, though struggling with poverty, will sacrifice their mental independence and moral dignity for the “bread that perisheth?”

“The dregs corrupt  
Of barbarous ages, that Circæan draft  
Of servitude and folly, have not yet,  
Bless'd be the Eternal Ruler of the world!  
Yet have not so dishonour'd, so deform'd  
The native judgment of the human soul,  
Nor so effaced the image of her sire.”

In addition to payments to the community fund, the following pecuniary exactions are enforced:—

“A fund for defraying the salaries of the missionaries and other general expenses of the society shall be raised by weekly payments from all the members and candidates as follows—(besides any quarterly or other sums that may be required to meet the expenses of the branch)—namely,

Each male or single female, or wife whose husband is not enrolled, three half-pence.

Each wife of a candidate or member, one penny.” *Chap. VII, sec. 1.*

“A fund for defraying the current expenses for books and management attendant upon the community fund shall be raised by the payment of one penny weekly from each subscriber to that fund.” *Chap. VII, sec. 3.*

“*Fines.*—Every contributor to the community fund neglecting to pay the weekly contributions to that fund, or to the auxiliary fund, as REQUIRED BY THE LAWS, shall be fined for such neglect at the following rates:—

For one month, one penny;

— two months, twopence;

- For three months, sixpence ;
- four months, one shilling ;
- five months, one shilling and sixpence ;
- six months, two shillings ; and
- each subsequent month, two shillings.

And any contributor continuing such neglect until the fines incurred thereby are equal to the amount of all the monies actually paid by him to the community fund, such contributor shall thereupon be dismissed, and such monies shall be applied in discharge of the fines so incurred. But the directors or local managers may remit any of the said fines, upon satisfactory evidence being given them of sickness or other sufficient occasion for such neglect." *Chap. VII, sec. 3.*

Might it not occur to a candidate when reading over this list of fines, that it is as cheap to be responsible as to be irresponsible? Of what avail is it, Sir, to be told one is not responsible, and yet to be punished for not doing as "law requires," just as under the old system? A man is not responsible, but must pay two shillings monthly for neglect ;—but this is, perhaps, only "the necessary effect of his conduct, to teach him by the best possible method (payment of fines) the means of increasing happiness."

I am unable to understand the nature of the tribunal of local managers. The fines are to be remitted if sufficient evidence be produced to shew that there was sickness or some other sufficient cause to produce neglect. Is it not a fundamental tenet of your system, that no action is performed without an adequate motive? What, then, are we to understand by a *sufficient occasion* for neglect? Is it possible, Sir, that the stationed lecturer may be one of the individuals composing this tribunal—the person who, perhaps, in his last lecture has been logically demonstrating that whether neglect of what is thought our duty be occasioned by a want of ability, or a bad disposition, it is equally free from blameworthiness, being the necessary effect of an adequate motive, which motive we did not create? Is not this, Sir, the sum of what is said in nearly every social harangue? Follow, then, in your imagination, this same sapient missionary of non-responsibility, as he retires from his public labours, to fine a member because he cannot give "satisfactory evidence that he had sufficient occasion for such neglect!" What! does he ask evidence to satisfy himself of what he has been so confidently asserting on the platform? How sceptical is the infidel of his own scepticism!

"The rate of weekly payments to the community fund," says the preface to your *Constitution and Laws*, "is reduced from one shilling to sixpence as the minimum sum. This has been frequently desired, as many wished to contribute who could not regularly afford the larger weekly amount. The congress have added the condition



‘that those who have paid up most money shall be deemed most eligible as candidates for community, all other circumstances as to disposition and ability being equal.’ By this regulation it is wished to give all the members *a motive to keep up their payments* as fully as possible, while, at the same time, payments *alone* are not to be depended on without other RECOMMENDATORY QUALITIES.”—“The sum required with each member to ensure the full benefits to be conferred by this society is £50. To some this may appear an unattainable amount; and many may draw back in despair from the idea of subscribing £50, under the impression that they must pay this sum before participating in the benefits which the society will ultimately confer, and thus be led to neglect the support of the only means for their effectual emancipation from thralldom and misery.”—“It will not, however, be necessary for every individual to have *paid* £50 to qualify him as a resident member. The likelihood, on the contrary, is that those who have paid into the funds less than others, but who possess some *peculiar recommendatory qualities*, will be first elected; for, with the characteristic injustice and inconsistency of all competitive arrangements, it frequently occurs, at present, that the most useful and indispensable labourers are the worst paid, and therefore the least able to free themselves from the evils which press upon them. But as utility is the pole-star of the new system, and labour recognized as the only true source of wealth, the useful producers, and who are intelligent and of good dispositions, would be the first chosen, whatever the amount of their paid-up subscriptions might be.” *Preface to Con. and Laws, p. 12, 13.*

An individual who can barely afford his sixpence a week may well be startled at the idea of subscribing fifty pounds; it will require some degree of patience to wait forty years for the desired consummation, to say nothing of the contingencies to which so long a period may expose his hopes. Taking into account the age at which we might suppose an individual to be when beginning to pay, he must live much longer than the average amount of human life before he will have finished his subscription. Say the candidate begins to pay at twenty years of age, he will be thinking of the asylum of the tomb, rather than a social community, by the time his payments are completed. To this I might add, that the person paying sixpence weekly will have subscribed nearly eighty pounds (reckoning the extra expenses, fines, &c.) before he has completed his subscription of fifty pounds to the community fund.

But it will be said that the preceding extract asserts that they need not wait until they have completed their subscriptions, but that, on the contrary, they may perhaps be chosen as resident members when they have paid only a small sum. True, Sir, the men who can best struggle under the present system—the useful, intelligent



and hearty—these may enter, because “UTILITY IS THE POLE STAR OF THE NEW SYSTEM;”—but the victims of poverty or sickness, who cannot succeed in this *new competition* of personal ability, must do as they can. Persons who have least need of assistance—who are most “fitted to promote the objects of this society”—these have the “peculiar recommendatory qualities that entitle to election.”

What, then, is to become of the present race of beings whose wretchedness you so glowingly describe? How few of them will be able to raise the necessary sum, and those who can procure it, either at once or by a life of drudgery, cannot think of enjoying the state of purity and happiness you propose—formed as their minds are by the irrationality of existing institutions, their only hope is to tear from their bosoms the children of their love, and, ere they are corrupted by parental converse, consign them to the universal nursery of Robert Owen; being content themselves to linger out a solitary and hopeless old age, cheered only with the thought that their children will, in their span of earthly existence, enjoy the dream of life and learn manfully to meet the hour of death, without the assistance of the delusive hopes, and unappalled by the groundless fears of an eternal world.

Would it not be charity if the man possessed of means to rectify the laws of the moral universe, should also endeavour to dissolve the connecting links of the physical system—thus absolving nature from the laws imposed by her creator, and opening “the windows of heaven”—unbarring the flood-gates of the mighty deep, at once remove so many hopeless victims from their irretrievable condition; whilst he himself, with a choice few whose ductile spirits have yet received no evil impress, might ride safely in his ark over the desolating billows?

Christian Fathers! your well-being is not disjoined from that of your children, you have a “more sure word of prophecy” adapted to the actual condition in which God has placed you,—holding out “the promise to you and to your children;” this does not endanger your immortal well-being by inciting you to become the slaves of time, but has “the promise of the life that now is and that which is to come.” Poverty is no obstacle to the enjoyment of these blessings, and sin itself is provided with a cure; the poor may be rich in faith,—and the vilest sinner may wash his robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Christianity does not shrink from the world with its vices; it enters the den of human misery and guilt, and raises man above his condition by imbuing him with a “hope that maketh not ashamed.” It waits not for a change before it can operate, but will produce a change by its own operations. It civilizes the barbarous and exalts the refined. With this the missionary has met with the sanguinary

horde, wresting the battle-axe of vengeance from the grasp of the warrior, and rendering him a "hewer of wood," without the degradation of a martial defeat. Through its moral agency the horrid yell of demon war has lost much of its ferocity, and will ultimately be lost itself in the song of a triumphant Church. Whilst it raises the nations socially, intellectually and morally, these are only the leaves of a tree which effuses its blossoms in time, but whose fruit eternity alone shall pluck.

I have no doubt, Sir, you will esteem this as the effusion of enthusiasm, and founded on superstition. It is founded on the Bible against which you have many subtle objections, but all of which sap the foundation of the system you wish to establish; for man stands exactly in the same relation to your social scheme, as towards the benefits offered in the gospel; since, *in order to receive the advantage of either it is necessary that he accede to its requirements.* The only difference being, that Socialism professes to view man as irresponsible, and deals with him as though responsible:—Christianity recognises man's accountability, and deals with him accordingly.

## LETTER VII.

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SIR,

I now come to a subject of vital importance—faith. Your objection against the requirement of faith is regarded by most of your principles as an invulnerable argument against the Scriptures.

It may not be improper to premise, that the faith of the Scriptures is not an inoperative credence, or religious sentimentalism; but is connected with active moral principles;—“faith without works is dead.”

In my last letter, I treated of the active principles which religion inculcated, and shewed plainly, that Socialism equaled it in the extent of its requirements. In this letter I shall endeavour to prove that the other part of scriptural faith, namely, the assent of the understanding, is also needful to embrace Socialism.

It is almost needless that I should treat of the assent of the understanding, seeing I have sufficiently proved that you require a certain exertion, which, *of course, pre-supposes that this assent has been given.* But I shall treat of simple belief apart from moral principles, that I may directly meet your objections, since they are propounded with so much confidence.

A little attention to the following considerations, will tend to check that temerity with which this objection is urged; since you may perhaps find reason to conclude, that in this case also your arguments are suicidal.

Before I directly meet this objection, I will trouble you with a few thoughts on the agency by which assent may be regulated, and how a man may be said to influence his belief. He cannot by a direct volition determine whether he will assent to any proposition; his influence upon his belief must therefore be of an indirect nature. A man cannot become learned by a direct volition; but must institute an agency, and form a habit of attention and untiring perseverance to accomplish his desires. In the same manner, though a man is unable to influence his belief by direct volition in reference to an isolated proposition, yet he can so train his mind as to *render it susceptible of truth in general*, and thus materially influence his opinions. There are two means of securing a belief in the truth; one, by rendering our perception of it more acute;—the other, by collecting information on which to found our system of notions. Industry is the price at which truth (like most other blessings) is to be purchased: he who applies his mind with perseverance and en-



ergy to mathematical exercises, lays a foundation for the superstructure of truth by strengthening his judgment and rendering his mind more acute in detecting a fallacy, and more capable of feeling the real force of a sound argument.

If a man is able by discipline to increase the agility of his movements and to form himself by practice for feats of dexterity, then, a man can by mental discipline form himself for intellectual achievements and feats of acuteness in judgment. The gymnasium is not less useful to the hero of intellectual achievement, than to the competitor for the Olympic wreath. But I simply throw out this as a suggestion, and as I do not here profess to enter into the mysticism of metaphysics, I shall hasten to the matter-of-fact with which we are now more immediately concerned.

It is an undeniable fact, that our belief greatly influences our condition; no scheme, however calculated to alleviate our distresses, can exert its genial influence upon our destiny unless we have some degree of faith in the probable efficacy of the plan proposed. Credulity sometimes exposes us to the wiles of the designing, and doubt sometimes deprives us of many advantages connected with promptness and decision. It is not likely that we should turn aside from our usual course for what we conceive to be an Utopian scheme. On the contrary, we must think the objects proposed both desirable and within the reach of the energies we can command, or our scepticism in reference to the successful issue will deprive us of all advantages that might otherwise be obtained. What system of philosophy was ever presented to man that did not require faith? Nay, even they who taught us to believe that we ought not to believe anything, required faith in their preposterous notions. The second and third sections of the first chapter of the *Constitution and Laws* fully express the fact I would illustrate:—"The object of this society is to establish over the world, in principle and practice, charity for the convictions, feelings, and conduct of every human being."—"These objects are to be obtained by the following means,"—"By creating A NEW PUBLIC OPINION in favour of the entire change in the character and condition of mankind, through the medium of public meetings, lectures, discussions, &c."

Thus, Sir, it is agreed that belief is necessary as a step to the glorious change you wish to introduce amongst men. And not only must men have a favourable opinion of the advantages to be derived from your "best concerted schemes for their benefit," but this belief must lead to action, and urge to the performance of all things needful to remove the present and introduce the new state of things.

If, then, the salvation of the world depends upon the belief of your peculiar views, it will certainly continue in its degradation if it continue to neglect your "patiently formed and fact supported conclu-

sions." If, by the reception of your notions the world will be benefited, it will be deprived of those benefits if men do not receive the proposal you hold forth to all;—and in proportion to the magnitude of the advantages to be obtained from receiving your system, will be the weight of the deprivation consequent on rejecting it; if men forfeit no prize by refusal, they can reap no harvest from acceptance; from the nature of the case, if they spurn your "means of emancipating themselves from thralldom and misery," they must continue to be galled by the chains they love;—"if they believe, then, they are saved; if not, they are lost."

Destruction and salvation (if I may be allowed to use the terms) as much depend upon belief in your system, as that of the Gospel; if you are confessedly unable to renovate the world without its faith in your wisdom, and acquiescence in your plans, why do you object to the Scriptures requiring the same? Does not the world stand in the same relation towards your proposal in this respect also, as towards the blessings offered in the Bible? Does not disbelief or disregard of your proposal, as effectually shut man out from the advantages of your community, as disregard of Christ shuts man out of heaven? The only difference being, that the gospel consistently declares its terms; whilst you carp at its requirements, and of necessity present the very same. Should you again in public discuss the rectitude of the gospel requirements, have the rectitude to acknowledge that you require those very qualifications for which you traduce the Scriptures.

And not only do you, Sir, from the *necessity of the case*, require the assent of the understanding and concurrence of the will, but you have added the sanction of an express provision:—"All individuals, of every colour, country, religion, class, and party, are admissible into this society, WHO ADMIT THE PRINCIPLES ABOVE SET FORTH, and will adopt the practice of the rational religion, and consequently evince in all their actions a desire to promote the well-being and happiness of every man, woman, and child, without regard to distinctions of class, sect, party, country, or colour." *Chap. II, sect. 1.* Is this, then, the improvement upon the Gospel? Is it possible for men to assume such temerity as to spend all their talents in vilifying and slandering the word of life, because it requires faith in the declarations which it makes respecting man's condition and means of recovery? Will they have the shameless effrontery to tear with sacriligious hands the inscription of requirements from the entrance to religion, and place it over the portals of their own institution? Are not the same arguments valid against the requirement of faith on the part of infidelity, as when the Gospel makes the requisition?

Never again let it be heard from the Social Lecturers, that the Gospel unjustly requires faith, whilst you demand the "*admission of*



*the principles above set forth, and the practice of the rational religion."*

I have endeavoured to shew that man stands in the same relation to your system as to the gospel; to say nothing of competition to escape competitive arrangements, he has to perform works to leave a system that requires works, and to believe in order to avoid a system that requires faith.

But lest some one should think that you are more liberal in opening the doors of community, because you mention classes and religions as admissible, we will look at it once more. Your professed object is to render men charitable to the convictions and feelings of their fellow-men; but as a noble instance of charity to men's convictions, you admit those into community only, who will adopt your opinions and practices;—"men of every country, colour, class, sect, party and religion, who will adopt the principles above set forth;" that is, men of every sect, who are of *our* sect—men of every religion, who are of *our* religion. Extensive philanthropy! Extreme forbearance to the "convictions and feelings of every human being!" How ought the members of every club to blush at their exclusive spirit, in rejecting from their communion men of different political or religious views; when they see you receive men of every sect and religion, with no other qualifications than "admitting your principles and adopting your practices!"

I fear, Sir, I have trespassed too far upon your patience; but since I have not yet acquired sufficient power of language to convey my thoughts clearly, I will avail myself of the simple method of an *equation table*, to exhibit plainly the spirit of my arguments.

Your objection to the Scriptures is, that they present an offer of blessings to men, and by the conditions on which their salvation is suspended, seem to imply that man is responsible for his faith and conduct;—this you deny, and by the denial reject the Scriptures.

The following table will shew how much you have avoided the objections urged against the Scriptures;—a careful attention is not required to perceive, that men are just as much obliged to conform to the standard of your requirements, as to those of the Bible.

**YOU REQUIRE.**

Faith and fifty pounds.

Social Brethren, what are the terms of admission?—"All individuals of every country, colour, class, sect, party, and religion, are admissible into this society, WHO ADMIT THE PRINCIPLES ABOVE SET FORTH."

**CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES.**

Faith and works.

"Men and brethren what shall we do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."



## YOU REQUIRE.

“To some, £50 may appear an unattainable amount,” “and thus they may be led to neglect the only means for their effectual emancipation from thralldom and misery.”

All are admissible “who admit the principles above laid down and ADOPT THE PRACTICE OF THE RATIONAL RELIGION, and consequently evince in all their actions a desire for the happiness of every man, woman, and child.”

“Every member is bound by the principles of the society to exert himself to the utmost to carry out its principles, and to assist others in *preparing themselves to become members.*”

“Members may be dismissed by the managers of their branch for any aggravated offence against the principles or laws of this society, or for immoral conduct, but they may appeal against the dismissal, to a general meeting of the branch, or to the district board whose decision shall be final.”

“*Probation.*—All such persons shall continue as candidates for three months, and contribute weekly the amount required by the laws, and by the branch to which they belong, to carry on the operations of the society.”—

“*Examination.*—At the termination of such period, candidates shall apply to be passed as mem-

## CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”

“If a man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.”

“If any man would be my disciple let him take up his cross and follow me.”

“Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault *between him and thee alone*: if he shall repent thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”

“And when the King came in to see the guests, he saw a man that had not on a wedding garment; and he said unto him, friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?”

## YOU REQUIRE.

bers; and on a day fixed by the examining committee of the branch, shall be examined as to their knowledge of the objects, principles, and laws of the society, and their fitness in other respects to become members of the society." — "Admission. — If the examiners are satisfied, the candidate shall be enrolled as a member, and receive a card accordingly. If the candidate is not found qualified, the examiners shall adjourn the examination until a subsequent period."

"It must be evident, however, that every thing depends upon the producers themselves applying all their powers of mind, purse, and skill to the task of their redemption from the servile and degraded position they now occupy."

"Without this conduct on their part, the best concerted schemes for their benefit will remain a dead letter, and however excellent they may abstractedly be, will produce no beneficial effects upon their condition."

"Each class being upon an equality of privileges and *equal services being required from each, according to age and capacity.*"

"The contributions entitling a member to these benefits shall not be less than £50, to be paid in one or more payments, or by weekly instalments; but any member not having paid up the full sum of £50 may be elected as

## CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES.

"For many are called but few are chosen."

"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my words, and doeth them, I will tell you to whom he is like; he is like a man that built a house, and digged deep and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose the stream beat violently against that house and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock."

"But he that heareth and doeth not, is like a man that built his house upon the sand, against which the rain did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

God will "render unto every man according to his works." — "To whom much is given of him much shall be required."

"Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

## YOU REQUIRE.

a resident in any of the society's establishments, *if his capacity for usefulness appear to entitle him to such election.* Nevertheless, persons who have paid most money shall be deemed most eligible, all other qualifications being equal. —The assurance to be effected by this society from the community funds shall be residence, comfortable maintenance, and education, in any establishment of the society, either in sickness or health, of any member, his wife and children, *elected or chosen* to reside therein, during the time they may CONFORM TO THE RULES OF SUCH ESTABLISHMENT.”

## CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES.

Such is the specimen of improved legislation now man's responsibility for his “convictions, feelings, and conduct” is utterly repudiated.



## LETTER VIII.

---

SIR,

Every system of means for benefiting man must be adopted and acted upon, or it cannot produce any good effects; before it will be adopted it must be believed. The gospel is nothing more than advice or direction; and surely it would be strange advice indeed if it assured us that it was unimportant whether we believed it or not. The rational method for us is to inquire whether it has a just claim to "all acceptance;" but no, you reject it *because* it demands our assent; and not because it is unworthy of our belief.

Some one may object, in answer to the reasoning I have adopted, that the punishment of hell is not a *natural consequence* of rejecting the gospel. My answer is, that according to the representations of scripture, and it is with these the objector has to do, the punishment in question is both a penal and a natural consequence. Man is represented as lost by sin; only one medium of escape is offered, and that is, such a faith in Jesus Christ as will lead to love and obey him, and to rely on his mediation. The natural consequence of not receiving a Saviour, is, not to be saved.

Some may object, that the parallelism between the requirements and proceedings of socialism and those of christianity, fails in this, that whilst socialism does exclude those who either do not come up to the standard of its requirements, when they apply as candidates, or do not *conform* to its regulations when they have become members, still it has no place of punishment—no hell to which it consigns the exiled. Now, Sir, it is admitted that christianity recognises two appointed places of destiny—it has its heaven and its hell; one of which must be the lot of every man. On the other hand, Sir, do you not consider this world a place of disorder, crime and misery? If not, why have you provided an asylum for beings who do not need it? Well, Sir, if men are abandoned by you—if they are refused admittance into the ark, what follows, but that they must be drowned by the flood? By sending them from community, you banish them from the only place of happiness—the only heaven, and drive them to the only place of woe—the only hell, which your system recognises.

It may be further objected, although socialism does thus deal with those who do not answer its demands, still there is nothing *penal* in this—this regulation has no reference to *desert*. Is there nothing *penal* in being excluded from community for "immo-

rality," or "nonconformity?" If *this* is not a penal infliction, what is? Or, if you please, let it not be penal; and what then? What consolation is this to the excluded, or what honour is it to their excluders? What is it but the morosest tyranny—the sternest despotism to cast a man back upon a system of unreason, discord and crime—to hurl him into the vortex of irrationality and injustice, and cause him to be victimised by an arrangement that befools his reason, warps his conscience, and totally degrades and debases him; and to inflict all this without any regard to a *right* or *desert*, but simply to satisfy a whim, or to conform to a "cold and selfish policy," dignified with the name of philanthropy?

I grant the objectors, that the scriptural award is not to be conducted on such a principle; some regard will be had to the idea of a right, and if any are to be punished, it will be from the notion (however mistaken this notion may be) that they *deserve* it.

A man must either be in himself calculated to "promote the objects of the society," or he must have money that will answer the same end; he must either work his way or pay his way into community—nay more, he must subscribe to its articles—"admit its principles;" his character must go through several examinations before he can enter; when he has entered, his conduct is subject to a scrutiny; a standard of conduct is set up for him; to this he must conform or be excluded.

Such is the socialist economy as exhibited in its charter—its "constitution and laws," as revised by congress in eighteen hundred and thirty nine. Yet, as the evangelists of such a system—as the precursors of such an economy, the socialist lecturers are sent to preach nonresponsibility for belief, feelings, character and conduct.

Christians sometimes refer to the "evidence from prophecy." Was not Saint Paul a socialist seer—had he not your system in his mind's eye, when he said "so we see they could not enter in because of unbelief." Heb. iii, 19. "Oh, my prophetic soul! my uncle!"

You, and they who publish the gospel, may be considered as moral physicians coming to a world diseased;—each publishes his own opinion as to the nature of the malady and presents his own prescription as *the* remedy suited to man's condition.

The gospel solemnly assures man, that unless he receive its prescriptions his case is hopeless; you tell man, that your preparation is the only restorative; but not content with this, you condemn the scriptures from *philosophical reasons*, because they require to be believed—because they require an attention to their prescriptions in order to insure a return to health; but at the same time you demand a strict attention to your own. The quacks in medicine have resorted to many expedients, puffs and advertisements "to create a new public opinion in favour of" their "incomparable elixir;" but

none have been so notoriously philosophical as our modern empirics in morality.

Condescend, Sir, to examine the Bible in the same way that you would test any other book that demands your assent; and do not presume to establish any test of internal evidence, which will inevitably mislead in reasoning upon any other subject.

The gospel, Sir, calls upon man to love what is lovely, to believe what is reasonable, and to do what is right; and the loveliness, the reasonableness and the rectitude are the motives it presents to our hearts, to our heads, and to our consciences. In the gospel, God has used the expedients of reason and love to render us his willing subjects. He has there displayed mercy to guilty man; if our responsibility is a burden to us, let us not seek to deceive ourselves—let us not leave the tract of right reasoning to obtain peace for our conscience; but let us cast our burden at the foot of the cross, and he who prayed for his murderers will intercede for us;—our Heavenly Father will receive us as returning prodigals, and we shall be at one again, through the atonement made known in that religion we have neglected. That this may be the case with you, is the sincere desire of your well-wisher,

BREWIN GRANT.

*Leicester, August 22, 1840.*