

of high authority in literature and science, have openly avowed the opinion that man is *not* responsible for his belief, and have attempted to defend it on philosophical grounds. Among the supporters of ultra liberal views in politics too, the favorite maxim, that man is not responsible to man for his belief,—a maxim which, with certain qualifications, is sound, and important as the only basis on which religious toleration, or rather, equality among the members of the same commonwealth, can be adequately secured,—is not unfrequently advanced in a form or advocated on grounds which imply, that if man is not responsible to man for his belief, so neither is he responsible to God. While among the young whom thoughtlessness or vice has inclined to infidelity, the doctrine is often employed as an excuse for their indifference to all religion,—either avowed explicitly as a tenet of their infidel creed, or more vaguely under the plea, that they are honest in their convictions, and cannot be blameable for holding, or for acting on honest convictions.

The question is thus one, which is well entitled to careful consideration among a body of young men, met as you are for intellectual and moral improvement,—who are either forming their opinions on many of the most important questions with which immortal beings can be occupied, or exposed in holding the opinions which they have embraced, and in which, perhaps, by godly parents they have been reared, to the assaults of infidelity. And a clear and thorough conviction of the responsibility to God, under which every belief is formed and held as well as acted on, cannot fail to be of immense importance in enabling you to discharge aright your duty, in dealing with all those questions of vital interest, which imperatively demand the investigation of intelligent and immortal beings, and a right solution of which is an essential element of that godliness, which has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

In endeavoring to assist you in coming to a right decision on this question, we might examine it, either in the light of reason, or in the light of revelation, or in the light furnished by both; and in either, or in both of these ways, the doctrine which it is our wish to impress upon you, might, we think, be incontrovertibly established. Time, however, would fail to enter on a field so extensive, and we propose to consider the question chiefly as a question in Ethics, and to show you on consid-

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