

in this case is not merely allowable, it is, in fact, the safest. The incitements to mental labor are analagous to those to any other sort of labor ; it is that one shall be the richer and the better for it, and that what he acquires he may justly possess. But if by independent inquiry I may become morally poorer and spiritually worse, if I have no right to my own thoughts, and must be despoiled of my convictions, or punished for them, it is exceeding folly to risk the misery and irritation of being torn between my opinion and my creed, conscience forcing me to acquiesce, and reason compelling me to doubt. This view is no supposition ; it is fact. Submission to creeds and churches, is the true cause of that wide spread moral torpor in every country where creeds and churches have dominion. There is nothing so rare as intelligent, independent religious conviction. And how can it be otherwise, when each leans upon his priest, and the priest gives him ready-made opinions, as they were formed a thousand years ago ? There is a general and profound ignorance of the sources of opinion, of the history of opinion, of the philosophy of opinion, and of the Bible, both in its letter and in its spirit. Speak to multitudes of religion, in any broad or liberal sense, and it seems to them as if it were an unknown tongue. To have any chance of attention, you must use terms which creeds have sanctified, — you must address them in traditionary phrases, which have the sectarian or sacerdotal currency. This never could have been, had religion been recommended as a subject of individual and independent study, leaving the mind free, both in its pursuit and its conclusion. That I have stated nothing but what fact justifies, I may appeal to any one who has considered the religious condition of this