

The doctrine of man's non-responsibility for his belief, it would have been desirable to present to you, in the words of some of its most distinguished supporters. That doctrine, it may here be mentioned, was the doctrine of the ancient philosophers, who, according to Sir J. McIntosh, "from Plato to Marcus Aurelius, taught, that error of judgment being *involuntary*, is not the proper subject of moral disapprobation." In the days of the Schoolmen, it was revived—or at least the leading principles on which it is usually rested—by the celebrated Scotus, who, according to the same authority, "contended at great length that our thoughts, (consequently our opinions,) are not subject to the will."* And as already intimated, it has in various forms been avowed or insinuated in modern times. We have not, however, been able to fall in with an exposition of the doctrine so brief, and at the same time comprehensive, as to enable us to present it to you in the words of its defenders, and we must endeavor to lay it before you in our own.

And the following propositions appear to us to embody, fairly and fully, the substance of the doctrine, with the grounds on which it is commonly rested,—or in other words, to present syllogistically the argument by which man's non-responsibility is supposed to be proved.

1. And first, grounding on the axiom, that belief is the assent of the mind to the evidence, by which any proposition submitted to it is established, it is assumed, that a man *necessarily* believes according to the view which his mind takes of the evidence,—or in other words, as one writer has expressed it, "that belief must necessarily, correspond with the perception of evidence, it being in the nature of things impossible, that the mind should believe or disbelieve, otherwise than as evidence is or is not discerned."

2. Secondly it is maintained, that a man is only responsible, when he has control over the operations of his mind,—or in other words, when the will is concerned in them.

3. And thirdly it is argued, that as a man's will is not concerned in his beliefs, as they are involuntary, as they spring up spontaneously and hold their place in his mind, whether he will or no, according as

*It would appear that S. did not explicitly state the conclusions, to which his own principles, logically carried out, would have led him. The language of Sir J. M., on this point is, "one step more would have led him to acknowledge, that all erroneous judgment is involuntary, and therefore inculpable and unpunishable, however pernicious."