

inevitably follow the ascendancy of the doctrines of Socialism; but qualified so as to warrant the utmost complacency, in speaking of the gentler vices, that spring up unchecked, under the negative creed of the infidel; the practical ungodliness which results from the creed of the Socinian; or the degrading idolatry which is encouraged by the creed of the Church of Rome.

Indeed, without some such qualification, their doctrine, taken as a whole, would not subserve the purposes for which it seems to have been devised; and the only effect of admitting man's responsibility for his actions, while denying his responsibility for his belief, would be, that the one part of the doctrine would neutralize and nullify the other, and leave the whole subject of man's responsibility involved in inextricable confusion. Holding man to be not responsible for his beliefs, but responsible for his actions resulting from these beliefs, they would plainly free him with one hand, only to hold him fast with the other;—they would assure him, you shall never be condemned for thinking that to be truth, which God has declared to be error, or that to be lawful, which he has pronounced to be sin, but you shall infallibly be condemned for acting on that opinion;—they would deliver him from all fear of punishment for his beliefs, but leave him haunted with the fear of punishment for actions to which these beliefs inevitably led;—and the only solace that would thus remain to the infidel or heretic would be, that arising from the consideration, that he was placed under the government of an omnipotent Judge, who cared nothing for what he believed, but who, at the same time, might seize on him as a debtor to justice for allowing his beliefs to influence his life.

In a word, deny man's responsibility for his belief, and we do not see where you can stop, till you have freed him from all responsibility, or at the least, from all responsibility for actions flowing from belief, and till you have arrived at the conclusion, that the sceptic or the Pantheist, who believes that he has no duties to God, is innocent in neglecting every duty which God has enjoined.

But we come to the more rigid examination of the question.

And first, it is of importance that you understand distinctly and definitely the doctrine which we are to controvert, with the grounds on which it is usually made to rest, as well as the opposite truth which it is proposed to establish.