

of action, if the belief itself be neither good nor evil, and not the subject of responsibility, it seems plainly absurd to hold, that action, which is but the expression or embodiment of that belief, can be possessed of such a moral character, as to render him who performs it subject to responsibility. This were to reverse the axiom, that actions have no moral character in themselves, but only in so far as they are the acts of an intelligent and moral agent; and that the good or evil which we ascribe to them, and which renders him who performs them praiseworthy or blameworthy in their performance, properly lies not in the actions, but in the principles,—the views, the feelings, the affections, the motives by which the agent has been actuated. This were to suppose that God looks to the outside alone, in dealing with his creatures as responsible, and overlooks the inward springs and sources of their conduct,—the view of Him, the feeling toward Him, the object or end in reference to Him,—all which are involved in belief,—by which that conduct has been determined. This were to imply, that should a man believe in his heart, the most High God to be a being like unto himself, or a hard and rigorous and cruel master, he could only be punishable for avowing or acting on such belief, but would at the same time be held guiltless for harboring the foul and dishonoring source of his practical ungodliness in his bosom.

It is true, that those who deny man's responsibility for his belief, do not usually admit, or, at least, do not usually advert to this necessary inference from their own doctrine; but on the contrary admit, that man, though not responsible for his belief, is still responsible for his actions; and one hears this curious theory of responsibility, not unfrequently avowed in such remarks as these, "It matters little what a man believes if his conduct is good;" or "His creed can't be wrong, whose life is in the right;" or "Men are Christians or Mahomedans just as they are trained; the great matter is an honest life." But the admission thus made, and which we have never seen even plausibly attempted to be shown consistent with the denial of man's responsibility for his belief, is usually made in a very qualified form;—made so as to admit of the condemnation of sins against society, whatever the belief in which they originate, but qualified so as to allow of most philosophical indifference to sins against God;—made so as to admit the condemnation of crimes, such as flowed from the creed of the Anabaptists of Germany, or would

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