

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALIST

"EVERY PLANT WHICH MY HEAVENLY FATHER HATH NOT PLANTED SHALL BE ROOTED UP."

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FREEDOM.

Freedom is the soul's first attribute. Self-preservation the first law of being.

Spiritualism tends to freedom. From the advent of Jesus Christ to the present day, all Spiritual development has taught the principles of freedom. Christ's theories all contained the elements of personal freedom and personal responsibility. Freedom of thought, freedom to act, freedom to be a man, is what the soul needs, and what it must have; or the elements will melt with fervent heat. Man is very far from being as free as the soul requires and demands. The enslaved earth still groans and languishes in servitude, and can never rest till all servile bonds are burst asunder, and the Spirit is free.

If it is a doubtful and debatable point, how far man is deprived of his natural rights, we propose to consider the doubts, and give the whole subject a careful investigation. In doing so we think it necessary to invite the attention of the careful investigator to the preliminary and primary axioms, which will enable us to enter more largely into the subject under consideration.

PROPOSITION I.

We have no right to legislate upon morals as such.

We cannot legislate against a thing, simply because it is wrong; nor in favor of it, simply because it is right.

One court cannot try causes which belong exclusively to another.

Were the President of the United States to be impeached, we could not arraign him before a justice of the peace; and were a man to be tried for stealing a loaf of bread, we could not arraign him before the Senate of the United States.

An individual charged with deserting from the army of the United States, could not be tried at a court of common pleas; neither could an individual guilty of assault and battery, be tried before a court martial.

A person guilty of violating the policy of a church, could not be tried before a civil tribunal, neither could a person be tried for grand larceny before an ecclesiastical tribunal.

From these illustrations, it will be quite obvious, that a person who has been guilty of violating the law of God, cannot be tried before a civil court, a court martial, nor any other earthly tribunal.

One child in a family might as rightfully try and punish another for disobedience to his parents.

A person may be liable to be tried for the same act, both by an earthly and a heavenly court; as in the case of theft. But it must be borne in mind, that while it is the same act, it is not the same offence. He is tried before an earthly court, because he has trespassed on the rights of his fellows, and violated a rule of society; but he is tried at the court of heaven because he has been guilty of a wicked act, and has violated a law of God.

We cannot punish for theft as a wicked act, but as an injury done to a compact.

It is for this reason that a church can have no penal authority. It cannot punish its members, nor molest any one for a wicked act.

It is a wicked act to defame the character of a brother in the church; but the church cannot punish the offender. It may exclude him from its communion, and then leave him to answer to civil society, through a legal process.

A member of a church is guilty of unbelief in the existence of a God, the divine inspiration of the Bible, and the immortality of the soul. This is a great fault, but the church has no power to punish the offender; neither has society, because it is a crime based on our common and equal accountability to God; and not on our obligations to each other. It is obvious, therefore, that we cannot inflict punishment for a crime which is based entirely on our mutual and equal accountability to God. An act must be a violation of the interests of society, and a violation of a rule of civil organization, before we can punish or restrain the individual; and all acts of society that violate this principle are based on usurpation, and should be resisted by the individual. Society has never attained power on any footing, but that of a common interest in the arrangement of social affairs.

Hence, our proposition is proved, that society has no right to legislate upon morals, but upon useful or hurtful acts considered with reference to organized social arrangements.

The bare fact that an act is immoral or wicked, is not a sufficient ground for legal restraint. It must be shown that it is injurious to others in respect to interests which civil society was organized to protect. It is not sufficient to show that it injures others—it must injure them in regard to their constitutional rights.

PROPOSITION II.

Every man is the sole judge of his own act, so far as they affect him only.

A man has perfect right to act as he will—is entitled to the exercise of the largest liberty, so long as his acts relate to himself alone. He may be a lawyer, a blacksmith, or a physician; may pursue

his calling as he pleases, without any dictation from his neighbors, or from the church, or the State. He may plant potatoes, or corn, onions, cucumbers or watermelons. He may buy and sell nutmegs, saw-mills or tape; may live in a stone, brick or wooden house; and no power in the Universe can call him to account for this free exercise of his rights of choice, so far as they violate no right of God nor man. God has granted him the free exercise of volition; and in that privilege, the man is not to be molested. But when he ceases to love God, and to obey His direct commandments to reverence and acknowledge Him, he subverts the rights of Heaven, and incurs accountability to God. But even yet he has not incurred any accountability to man. He is still invested with the fullest liberty to act as he will, so far as his fellows are concerned. But while one man enjoys this unbounded liberty, every other man should enjoy the same. If one man chooses to hunt, another may, with equal right, cultivate the ground; and while the latter may choose to clear away the forest, the former may wish to preserve it as a hunting ground. One man may desire to procure his subsistence by navigation, while others may prefer to fish; and while the former would disturb the waters, and frighten away the fishes by his boats and ships, the latter would desire to let the waters be tranquil, so that the fishes might frequent them. While one might choose a very desirable spot of ground, a multitude of others might fancy the same; and while the former might attempt to build a house upon it, the latter might unite to pull it down. Thus the stronger party would trample upon the rights of the weaker. Might would be the supreme law, and tigers and men would be governed by the same rules. All human improvement would be at an end, and man must sink below the standard of savage life, because the rudest tribes have some form of law, by which these evils are regulated.

Without, happiness was beyond human reach even amidst the profusions of bountiful Nature. But man was not only driven by necessities, but impelled by wants, to seek greater advantages than unimproved Nature held out to him. He needed not only exemption from natural evils, but also an augmentation of natural advantages.

The resources of the earth must be developed. The forests must be subdued, the streams must be navigated, the great laws of Nature must be discovered and subjugated, the elements must be harnessed to the car of progress; science, art, literature and social happiness—all the great elements of human improvement—must be discovered and established.

How could this be done? Certainly not by antagonism. Union is strength, and without united exertion and union of plan, no great end could be accomplished.

The united wisdom and enterprise of a community could accomplish many things entirely unattainable by individuals. It was for this reason that society was arranged. But for this, no public works could have been constructed—no railroads, canals, or even highways, could have been made.

No administration of justice, no restraining of crime, no promotion of education, nor any advancement of public interest. Therefore it was not a matter of choice, but of necessity, that civil society was constructed. Thus it will be seen that the public good is the great fundamental principle on which civil society is based. But there must be a just restriction of civil power, that it shall not trespass upon private rights. How can this obstacle be removed? How shall the public good be secured, and private right be sustained? It is done by a very simple process.

By allowing society to judge what will be for the public good, and letting the citizen judge what will be for his individual good.

Thus society judges for itself, and the individual, in all other respects, judges for himself.

This is the great safeguard between society and the individual. But from this it is obvious that society becomes the sole judge of its own good.

Hence the following:—

PROPOSITION III.

A civil community has the right to do all things that may be necessary to promote the public good.

This is the only true basis of society. Should any other rule be adopted, it would lead to great abuses.

Under an absolute monarchy, the ruling principle of government is the will of one man, but this form of government is highly dangerous to the liberties of the people. Under an aristocracy, the few rule the many; but this is also destructive of the liberties of the people.

But when the whole people judge what will be for the good of the whole, no higher authority could be appealed to, except God himself.

The public good is the highest law known to human society, except the direct command of God.

Under ordinary circumstances, there is no law of society more sacred than that which secures to individuals the unmolested enjoyment of the domestic circle. Here the individual is secure in the enjoyment of liberty, and the rewards of his industry.

Crime must first enter his enclosures, or civil law must not cross his threshold. At his fireside the individual is peculiarly exempted from the interference of law. But when contagion invades society, and is spreading its ravages throughout a community, that community can arise in its strength and remove the family from the sacred precincts of their own dwelling, and cleanse their premises.

Why can a civil compact thus triumph over individual, and even constitutional rights? Simply because the public good requires it.

The constitutional pledge which secures to the

individual the fruits of his industry, forbids society to destroy, or exercise any authority over private property; but when a fire is raging, the hand of municipal authority seizes upon private property, places a keg of powder in a private dwelling, and blows it to the four winds if the occasion require it.

The guarantees of law allow any man to bring a cargo of goods into our harbors; but when that cargo becomes infected with disease, the sovereign law of public safety triumphs over statute law, and officers are sent to throw the whole cargo overboard.

Constitutional barriers lie between the civil power and the citizen, so that the former cannot seize upon the estate of the latter; but when a railroad or canal, or a common highway is needed, the sovereign people arise in their strength, and require the individual to sell a portion of his land for the benefit of the people.

Our institutions allow entire personal freedom to the citizen. He may generally go when and where he chooses, and his liberty cannot be restrained. But in time of great public danger, this sacred right must give way; and the law of public good must tell the individual when and where he may walk.

Even the law of God is subject to the same inflexions. The commandment to observe the Sabbath day, and keep it holy, is positive, and without exception, in the enactment; but Christ in applying it to the practical wants of society, greatly astonished the Pharisees, by claiming that even the direct commandments of God must find their exceptions in the great law of necessity, and public utility.

The laws of God were designed for good, and whenever circumstances arise to pervert the good, the law must yield.

Hence Christ taught that works of mercy, and necessity, form an exception to the commands of God.

All laws, human and divine, that relate to society, must be designed for the good of society; and therefore must be administered with strict regard to the public good.

All laws may be enacted, amended, abrogated, suspended, or varied in any way, that the public good demands.

This is the great law of all social or civil society, and must triumph over all other laws. But the right is inseparable from the obligation. Society in attaining so large a release of privileges, incurred solemn responsibilities, hence—

PROPOSITION IV.

Society in attaining the right, incurred the obligation to promote the public good, by all means within its reach.

The right cannot exist in one party, and the obligation, or duty, in another. The party holding the obligation without the right, would be bound to do what it had no right to do, and therefore would be in a singular predicament. The right and the obligation are inseparable; and it follows that society as clearly incurs the obligation, as it acquires the right, to promote the public good, to the greatest possible extent. Individuals have a natural right to protection, in their persons, and property. The laws of being impose on every one the obligation to protect himself, and family.

Should the repose of night be disturbed by the assassin, and the safety of himself and family periled, he would be bound, by every sacred tie, and every holy impulse, to protect the object of his affection, by every means in his power. Should any one commence a business subversive of the rights, and dangerous to the health, and even the lives of his wife and children, he would have the right to resist this dangerous infringement, by all laudable means.

After patient toil, in providing the means of subsistence for his family, he would have the right, and be under an obligation, to protect them, so that his family might not be left destitute.

Should any one attempt to poison the streams, from which his family must procure water, the individual would be impelled forcibly to resist such an outrage. Every day would bring its demands for protection from wrong.

In a natural state, every man possesses the three functional powers of government: the legislative, judicial, and executive; and here he finds both his right, and his duty, to protect his family from violence.

And he cannot relinquish the right to a compact, without, at the same time, imposing the obligation on society to exercise these powers for him.

If he relinquishes the right, and still rests under the obligation, he binds himself to the fulfilment of a duty which he has no right to perform, and he places himself and family in a perilous situation. The natural evils which he sought to overcome have been largely augmented; and society proves to him the greatest calamity. Therefore it is quite evident that society as clearly incurs the obligation, as it acquires the right, to protect the public to the extent of its ability.

Thus we have granted both to society and to individuals, the largest privileges that can be set up for either.

In our next we will make the application to the practical wants of social life, and show how far individuals enjoy their just rights, and how faithfully society protects them in the enjoyment of those rights.

Men in general cannot now endure to think that their own narrow church holds all the goodness on the earth. True, much intolerance remains; its separating walls are not fallen, but with a few exceptions, they no longer reach to the clouds. Many of them have crumbled away, till the men whom they sever can shake hands, and exchange words of fellowship, and recognize in one another's features of brethren.—*Channing.*

EXISTENCE OF GOD PROVED FROM THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL.

Every man acknowledges that he has some agency in the guidance of his acts. When approaching a precipice, he does not say that he is under the guidance of the unerring laws of the universe, and therefore has no power to turn aside. If struck by an assassin, he does not tamely say it is the work of regular laws, over which he nor the assassin has any power.

No one has sufficient confidence in the fixedness of natural laws, to dismiss all fear and apprehension; and trust the interests of himself and family to the mercy of the elements, and the harmonious workings of natural phenomena. Whatever may be a man's theory, he will make some effort to avoid drinking poison, falling down a precipice, or running into any extreme danger.

We find also that this does not indicate a diseased state of the intellect; but, on the contrary, it is the regular and uniform result of the unperverted mind.

We notice, also, that when the formula of logical inductions have brought out the conclusion that all things are governed by fixed and unvarying laws; and man has no agency in anything that transpires, the mind still recognizes its ability to seek its own good, and supervise the exigencies of life.

Logic cannot allay its fears, nor satisfy its desires. It still feels the strivings of a principle too active in its energies, too enterprising in its aims, too haughty in its aspirations, to be thus reduced to the level of a stone, or a clod of the valley.

Neither is this a partial result. All men—all philosophers—even the most confirmed skeptics follow the same law.

They may amuse themselves with the eccentric achievements of mental gymnastics; by which it may be shown that two opposites may be true; or that a man cannot move from one place to another; but when danger assails, or want inspires, yet the powers of philosophy give way to the teachings of consciousness. No man trusts his own philosophy when that philosophy contradicts the simple affirmations of his intuition. The fatalist has never yet evinced the least faith in his own theory, by adopting it in the practical affairs of business. He has never yet been known to risk a single farthing upon the verity of his philosophy. His speculations lead where his courage refuses to follow.

From what we have seen it is apparent,

1. That all men believe that the human will is free in its volitions.
2. That it is so obvious, that all minds are naturally led to this conclusion; and cannot be made to trust the opposite.
3. That even when the mind is led to the opposite conclusion, it rebels against it, and will not receive it.
4. That this is not a result produced on diseased minds alone. It is the conclusion to which all minds arrive in the most healthy and unperverted state.

But it is a well settled principle in natural science, that the regular and unperverted impulses of Nature, lead to the correct use of every function. Nature prompts all men to walk on their feet, and not on their hands; to see with their eyes, to hear with their ears, and to work with their hands. Nor are these partial results. They are the uniform promptings of all minds alike.

Should any one be led to the conclusion that they are false, he would not adopt the results of his own reasoning. He would still walk on his feet, and hear with his ears, and see with his eyes; and be convinced that these organs were legitimately employed.

But these dictates of Nature are no more uniform and convincing, than the conviction that the will is free from arbitrary control—that man is free in the choice of his actions—that he is responsible for the results; and that duty and interest alike demand of him a prudent exercise of the liberty which he possesses.

Man has as clear evidence that he wills, as that he sees or hears.

The freedom of the will is a fact which stands above the reach of sophistry. It is so firmly fortified against all opposition, that any logical formula which can be made to deny it, will at the same time admit it.

A man cannot deny the freedom of the will, till he wills to deny it; and he cannot will to deny it, till he has power to control his will.

Therefore the moment any one admits that he performs an act of any kind, he admits that he wills, and therefore that he has the power to will. Hence, he cannot construct a sentence of any kind without admitting the freedom of the will. Therefore the same proposition which denies the freedom of the will admits it.

The freedom of the will is a necessary element in the subject of a proposition, and can neither be admitted nor denied in the predicate. It belongs to the premises of an argument, and is a necessary element which cannot be separated from the premises; and cannot be brought into the conclusion.

It cannot be proved because it becomes a part of the proof, and therefore it cannot be established by the proof. We cannot prove a thing till we will to do so; and we cannot will to do so unless we have power to use the will. Therefore the attempt to prove is an acknowledgment of the freedom of the will.

We cannot even admit the freedom of the will, because we cannot admit it till we will to admit it, and we cannot will to admit it till we have the ability to use the will. Therefore the act of admitting the freedom of the will pre-supposes it, and the thing is admitted both in the subject and in the

predicate; and it amounts to an admission before it can be admitted.

The freedom of the will is affirmed by our intuitions; and that is the highest source of authority. What our consciousness declares, our logic cannot dispute. Therefore the freedom of the will stands above the province of logic, and can be neither proved nor disproved, admitted nor denied, received nor rejected. It must be let alone, as one of those things which are known without reasoning, and from which reasoning is derived.

It is common with logicians to admit the freedom of the will, and then by an ingenious process to effectually deny it.

This feat is performed by the following affirmation: "Man has the freedom to choose what he does choose, but he has not the freedom to choose the opposite."

According to this philosophy, Brutus had the liberty to choose to stab Caesar; but he had not the liberty to choose the opposite; therefore he had not the ability to choose not to stab Caesar, and consequently he could avoid the act of stabbing Caesar; or, in other words, Brutus was compelled to stab Caesar; and this admitted freedom of the will amounts to the most absolute fate, or irresistible and absolute control.

This gives to man precisely the same kind of liberty that it does to a stone. A stone possesses the liberty to fall to the ground; but it has not the liberty to do the opposite, and therefore it has not the freedom to rise; consequently, it is compelled to fall.

To say that the will is free, and that man has the liberty to choose to do a thing, and has no power to choose the opposite, involves a direct solecism.

It is a form of words without meaning; unless it means that man has the liberty to be controlled; or has the liberty to do what he cannot avoid doing, just as the oyster has the liberty to lie still, and has not the liberty to fly.

To say that an apple has the liberty to be produced on an apple tree, or that the blackbird has the liberty to be black, may be a convenient way of amusing one's self; but to call it reasoning is a liberty which we deny.

Even that, however, may be justifiable, as a boy may make himself a clown or a king for want of some better employment.

As an attempt at perverting the province of reasoning, it holds a respectable rank among feats of sophistry; but among candid men, reasoning on an important subject, such perversions of the import of language are quite reprehensible.

If man has no other freedom than that of doing as he is compelled; or if he has no liberty but the liberty of necessity; he has nothing that comes within the meaning of liberty; and to call it liberty, or freedom of choice, is a direct absurdity and contradiction.

Man either has or has not a certain amount of freedom. He is either a machine, or not. Let the issue be fairly met. We cannot allow to any one the liberty of arguing on one side, while he seems to be on the other. This pretended liberty of choice, is necessity, fatalism, and must not be allowed the garb of freedom. It is a perversion and prostitution of the word *freedom*, that cannot be shielded from censure.

We have now seen—

1. That all men believe in the freedom of the will.
2. That they believe it even when they think their reasoning has disproved it; therefore,
3. They believe it more firmly than they do any thing that depends on reasoning.
4. That it is not the result of disease; but of healthy and regular operations of mind.
5. That a man cannot deny it without admitting it, in the same proposition.
6. That it cannot be proved nor disproved, admitted nor denied, received nor rejected, without assuming the point in dispute.
7. That it is a part of the premises of every argument, and cannot be brought into the conclusion.
8. That it is affirmed by our consciousness; and therefore is more obvious than anything that can be proved by reasoning.
9. Therefore it is the first truth which is known without reasoning; is antecedent to reasoning; is an element in all reasoning; and therefore cannot be affirmed nor denied by reasoning; and is of higher authority than anything that depends on reasoning.

We have now seen that the freedom of the will is placed beyond the power of logic. But freedom of any kind implies the existence of a God.

If there is no God, the governing principle must reside in the fixed laws of Nature; and freedom cannot exist. Natural laws are devoid of freedom. If there is any such thing as freedom in the Universe, it must reside in something above the fixed order of Nature.

Either freedom or necessity must lie at the foundation of things. But freedom must be at the foundation or it cannot exist. It cannot arise out of necessity, because it is not contained in necessity. Unless necessity includes the elements of liberty, it cannot become the source of liberty. Therefore if liberty exists at all, it is the foundation of all things.

But liberty does exist as a first truth, which logic cannot dispute. It is above the province of logical proof; and must be admitted in all processes of reasoning.

Liberty is therefore the governing principle of the universe.

But liberty or freedom cannot exist in the ab-

sence of a God who is free; therefore a God exists.

We may further observe, that liberty is an attribute. Freedom implies something that is free. Freedom also implies choice. Nothing can be said to be free, unless it has the power of choosing between two objects, or modes of action. Choice implies intelligence. No choice can be made without the exercise of thought in comparing the objects to be chosen.

Now since intelligence is involved in choice, and choice in freedom, and freedom is an attribute of some being possessing freedom; it follows that choice and intelligence are attributes of the same being.

We have seen that liberty is the principle which governs the foundations of things; and as liberty is an attribute of some being, that being must be the governor of all things. Therefore liberty implies a great thinking, choosing, acting being; who governs all things; or liberty implies a God as the governor of all things.

We have now seen that the idea of liberty implies the existence of a God; and therefore to deny the existence of a God, is to deny liberty or freedom. But it has been shown that we cannot deny freedom without, at the same time, admitting it.

Now we cannot deny the existence of a God, without denying freedom; and we cannot deny freedom without admitting it; therefore we cannot deny the existence of a God, without admitting it.

The existence of a God is therefore involved in the nature of first truths, and cannot be denied without, at the same time, admitting the point in dispute.

[From the M'Arthur Herald.]

THE LIFE-TIME OF MAN.

When the world was created, and all creatures assembled to have their life-time appointed, the ass first advanced and asked how long he would have to live. "Thirty years," replied Nature; "will that be agreeable to thee?" "Alas," answered the ass, "it is a long while. Remember what a wearisome existence will be mine; from morning until night I shall have to bear heavy burdens, dragging corn sacks to the mill that others may eat bread, while I shall have no encouragement, nor be refreshed by anything but blows and kicks. Give me but a portion of that time, I pray!" Nature was moved with compassion, and allotted but eighteen years. The ass went away comforted, and the dog came forward. "How long dost thou require to live?" asked Nature. "Thirty years were too many for the ass, but wilt thou be contented with them?" "Is it thy will that I should?" replied the dog; "think how much I shall have to run about; my feet will not last for so long a time, and when I shall have lost my voice for barking, and my teeth for biting, what else shall I be fit for but to lie in a corner and growl?" Nature thought he was right, and gave him twelve years. The ape then made his appearance. "Thou wilt, doubtless, willingly live the thirty years," said Nature; "thou wilt not have to labor as the ass and the dog. Life will be pleasant to thee." "Ah, no," cried he, "so it may seem to others, but it will not be. Should puddings ever rain down, I shall have no spoon. I shall play merry tricks, excite laughter by my grimaces, and then be rewarded by a sour apple. How often sorrow lies concealed behind a jest. I shall not be enabled to endure for thirty years." Nature was gracious, and he received but ten. At last came a man, healthy and strong, and asked the measure of his days. "Will thirty years content thee?" "How short a time!" exclaimed man; "when I shall have built a house and kindled a fire on my hearth; when the trees I shall have planted are about to bloom and bear fruit; when life will seem to me most desirable, I shall die! O, Nature, grant me a longer period!" "Thou shalt have the eighteen years of the ass besides," "That is not enough," replied man. "Take likewise the twelve years of the dog." "It is not yet sufficient," reiterated man; "give me more!" "I give thee, then, the ten years of the ape; in vain wilt thou claim more!" Man departed unsatisfied. Thus man lives seventy years. The first thirty are his human years, and pass swiftly by. He is then healthy and happy—he labors cheerfully, and rejoices in his existence. The eighteen years of the ass come next, and burden upon burden is heaped upon him; he carries the corn that is to feed others; blows and kicks are the wages of his faithful service. The twelve years of the dog follow, and he loses his teeth, and lies in the corner and growls. When these are gone, the ape's ten years forms the conclusion. Then man, weak and silly, becomes the sport of children.

Many receive a thing because it is generally believed; others receive it because it has not yet been received.

A BIBLICAL CRITIC.—The best specimen of original criticism we ever heard, was in a stage coach ride. Three of us were talking about Adam and his fall. The point of discussion was the apparent impossibility that a perfect man like Adam could commit sin.

"But he wasn't perfect," said one of the three. "Wasn't perfect?" we ejaculated, with astonishment.

"No, sir, he wasn't perfect," repeated the commentator.

"What do you mean?" we asked. "Well," answered the authority, "he was made perfect, I admit, but he didn't stay perfect."

"How?"

"Why, was not one of his ribs removed? If he was perfect with all his ribs, he was not perfect after losing one, was he, say?"

Our say was silence. We were convinced, then, that woman was the cause of man's original imperfection.

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

In the physical sciences, much accuracy has been attained. The mathematical sciences have acquired the appellation of exact sciences, and all departments of science deduced from external Nature, have commended themselves to the respect of the world. Not so with intellectual and moral sciences. No reliability has yet been attained. Every thing is yet in doubt, and in dispute. Not one fact has been fully settled. The world is divided and distracted on every point in religion and morality. Should it be affirmed that a God exists, very great authority can be adduced to contradict the assertion. Let the opposite be affirmed, and the authority is still more ponderous.

Should it be alleged, that the world was created, very respectable authority can be arrayed against it. On the contrary, let it be asserted that the world was not created; but always existed as at present; and the opposition is still greater.

The greater portion of mankind never entertained a doubt that some acts are morally right, and others morally wrong; but respectable authority is not wanting to dispute the proposition. It has been both learnedly and ingeniously contended, that man necessarily follows the stronger motive; that for those motives he is not responsible, and has no control over them; that his character is formed by circumstances—is formed for him, not by him; that "God foreordains whatever comes to pass," without the agency of man. All these issues are yet open, and have not been placed beyond the sphere of logical disputation.

Should it be affirmed that man will exist beyond the grave, the answer is returned that death is an eternal sleep, and that future existence cannot be proved. Affirm that there is such a place or state as heaven, and it is denied; affirm the contrary, and it is also denied. Affirm that there is a hell, a devil, or a state of future misery, and the proposition is largely admitted and largely denied.

That the consequences of any acts committed here, can reach beyond the grave, is matter for animated and bitter dispute. Should it be contended that the marriage institution is proper, it can be disputed on learned authority. So of every proposition that can be started in the whole range of religious or moral disquisition.

Now why is this so? Is it because every moral or religious principle is equally true or false? Are moral acts both right and wrong? and either equally indifferent? Are they equally true and equally false; equally right and equally wrong; equally useful and equally unuseful? This is impossible. Then why is so much confusion permitted to distract and bewilder the human intellect? What has occasioned this dreadful perplexity? Is it true that not one fact is yet settled beyond dispute in the whole range of morals? Yes, it is really so; and it is equally true of every idea that the human intellect has ever conceived.

What has logic settled? What has it really demonstrated beyond the power of disputation? Has it demonstrated that any thing can be proved? Has it demonstrated that demonstration is possible—that any one exists to demonstrate?—that any one exists to whom a demonstration could be made; or that any thing exists to form a subject of demonstration? Can logic prove that logic exists? No; all these things are acknowledged to be hopeless. Is there no remedy? Is this uncertainty always to continue? If so, where is human progress? Where the fondly anticipated and fondly hoped for day of deliverance?

How were these difficulties surmounted in the physical sciences? How did mathematical truths arise to the reputation of "exact sciences"? Simply by adopting a set of "axioms." But for these axioms, mathematical demonstrations would be as unreliable as metaphysics; and it becomes of the gravest importance to inquire if mathematical axioms are any more reliable than metaphysical. Can we not form a set of metaphysical axioms, that will inspire the same confidence and lead to as reliable results as the mathematical truths which lead to exact science? If so, the demonstrable principle may be applied to metaphysics with reliable results, and dispel much of the darkness and gloom that now rest on all moral subjects.

One of the mathematical axioms is the following: Part of a thing is less than the whole.

But this is true only by virtue of the antecedent axiom, that—

SOMETHING EXISTS.

If this axiom is not true, then the whole science of mathematics falls to the ground. Neither the part nor the whole of a thing exists, and all science is false.

What is it that gives the mathematician confidence that when he has made a demonstration, and brought out a result, that the same process will again produce the same result? Simply his confidence in the fidelity of cause and effect. Take away the immutable relation between cause and effects, and all confidence must cease in any of the operations of Nature. The physical sciences would be destroyed, and all philosophy must cease; mathematics would be untrue, and all that is now cherished would be destroyed. Then, on the authority of mathematics, we have the axiom that

THERE IS SUCH A RELATION AS CAUSE AND EFFECT. Why does the mathematician accept the proposition, that the three angles of a triangle equal two right angles? and reject the proposition that all the angles of a triangle equal four right angles? Simply because he has proved that one is right and the other wrong.

What object would any one have in attempting to prove that there is no such thing as right and wrong? Simply to show that he was right and his fellow wrong. Then, on the authority of mathematics, we have the antecedent axiom, that there is such a thing as "RIGHT AND WRONG."

With the same reliability we can deduce a set of axioms as true in morals as in mathematics.

We shall have occasion to make use of these inductions, in connection with some very important discussions, in which we cherish the hope that it will appear that the theological and moral questions are not so vague and unsatisfactory as they have seemed to be. We feel assured that greater exactness is attainable. In this hope we propose to discuss many of the great questions that disturb the Christian world. We feel no disposition to excite controversy, but to ascertain

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

Spiritualism has thus far been devoted in its paths, and incongruous in its results.

It has been on all sides of all questions, and has led to no positive results, except the fact that Spirits of all kinds communicate on all kinds of questions, and in every possible manner, and teach all kinds of doctrines, and leave us to ascertain

WHAT IS TRUTH?

By this we do not mean to say that Spiritualism

is unreliable or uncertain, or that it can lead to no specific results. We would be understood to say, simply, that both falsehood and truth may be taught, and it becomes our duty to ascertain as far as possible

WHAT IS TRUTH?

SPIRITUALISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS.

Although Time has the reputation of working wonders, we venture the assumption there are few, if any, who have not been astonished at the development and the progress of Spiritualism, simply because its unlooked for phenomena have entered as a new force into the drama of life, while few, very few, were prepared to receive it, and fewer still to comprehend its mission.

The explanation for this assertion must be found in the characteristics of the age, it being practical and external, instead of Spiritual and internal. It follows therefore as cause and effect, for where the sources of culture are materialistic in character, none but the prophet or Spiritual seer would look for more light, or a new development of Spirit-life in such circumstances.

That Spirit-life has been in a negative state for many years, few will doubt who know the reports of the churches and the general issues of the times,—but, while the fact was obvious to the observing mind, few were Spiritual enough to come to any conclusion beyond the fact that we were, as a people, about to have a great change. This conclusion was so general, however, that it gave consolation alike to all kinds of *isms*, from "Nothingism" to Millerism, and therefore could be of no actual good in directing the mental energies that work for the present and model the future. Spiritualism has, however, in four or five years, fashioned into life a philosophy, theology, and a scientific detail of all the facts and phenomena connected with life; which has done more than any revolution of the past, to quicken thought, expand reflection, and develop the general energies of the whole man. Nevertheless, we have many Spiritualists who are as impatient of progress, as if there was nothing done, because the development of Spiritual philosophy is not as general as the acknowledgment of its facts.

Impatience has expanded into complaint, and with so marked a *long*, that men who ignored Spiritual existence, and for many years have been active with pen and tongue in developing the dogma of *nothingness*, find consolation in the issue, if we are to believe the language of the Investigator of July 13. To be sure the writer needs some consolation, considering that his comments have been called forth by the acknowledgment of his surprise at the conversion of Robert Owen to Spiritualism, which the writer is pleased to call "a religious decision."

We can fully comprehend the feelings of the writer, but have little consolation for him beyond the assumptions which he has given to his readers in the following. He says:—

"Why, the fact is, Spiritualism is using itself up so fast by the folly of many of its own deluded votaries, that we expect in about five years the whole bubble will explode and vanish into the oblivion of the other religious monomaniacs which have arisen, lived their little hour, and then were blown out of existence by the breath of common sense in as effectual a manner as when insects, fluttering gaily around a candle, get their wings scorched, and, falling into the blaze, burn up."

No doubt this conclusion is natural to the writer, for while he considers Spiritualism a "religious delusion, and Spirit-life an impossibility," such must be the character of all his conclusions, no matter how *facts* authorize other and different beliefs.

But, while such language may be very natural to the Investigator, we cannot very well understand how it comes to pass that the writer of the above should find authority in Dr. J. H. Robinson for such an issue with facts; for if the Doctor should come out to-morrow and say or write that Spiritualism as a whole was absurd and impossible, the *facts* would be no less facts, because of such a change of mind. Nor can we comprehend the philosophy of all that's in the following, although it has this approbative comment from the Investigator:—

"Read, if you please, the following from the Spiritual Telegraph of July 8, written by Dr. J. H. Robinson, one of the most intelligent and candid Spiritualists in this country. Speaking of the absurdities into which a large portion of the Spiritualists are diving, Dr. R. says:—

"Observation and experience have convinced me that there is no absolute safety out of one's own common sense. Common sense is a very good angel, but she has been banished from many Spiritual circles as well as other circles. Would to Heaven she would arise in potent night and grapple with the imbecile monster of fanaticism, and bind him a thousand years!"

"There is a pseudo-Spiritualism, much overgrown by over-feeding, who has got on his 'seven leagued' fanatical boots, and goes fast for one who carries weight—of absurdity. But his course is erratic, first this way, and then that—no fixed object in view—leads on excitement, and thirsts for wonders. I believe that seventy-five per cent. of the *professing* Spiritualism is spurious or useless, or both. Many well-meaning persons are expecting mighty revolutions, sudden change in governments, and a speedy overthrow of the present order of things. We have 'governmentizers,' 'electrifiers,' 'educationizers,' and all kinds of *isms* you can mention, which do not affect the great questions of the age in the smallest possible degree. They are simple follies, which will fall away, leaving only regretful remembrances behind, coupled with some wonder that such things should have been. The poorer these eccentric and puerile fancies are dispelled, the better for the growth of a healthy Spiritualism. I make this assertion because I think truth demands it, and not from a captious spirit. He who aspires to be a genuine reformer is sometimes obliged to speak plainly, with one great object in view—the best interest of that cause which he considers sacred. A thousand times better are a few words of sense from the mundane sphere, than pages of folly from an original professed Spiritualist. It is *what* is communicated, and not *who* communicates, that gives value to that which is received. The world will be never revolutionized by Spirits out of the body,—that task is reserved for those in the flesh. It is useless for 'Spirits' to tell what they are going to do on the earth—they may, all, but the *work* of all reformations falls on us."

We repeat our inability to comprehend the philosophy of Dr. Robinson in the above, because the estimate of "seventy-five per cent." is not only extravagant in number but reckless in conclusion; as it is by no means follows that because a *fact*, or a *phase* of belief is of no use to Dr. R., that *per se* it must be "spurious, useless or both" to every one else. Nor can we understand such *impudence* in a Spiritual philosopher, since the conviction is nearly universal in the Spiritual family, that Nature has called into being and developed "many men of many minds" who must, both from natural capacity, as well as from education, place different estimates on the same thing, be it Spiritualism or any other philosophy. We had for a long time lived in the belief that among the happy and healthy results to be developed and made popular by Spiritualism, was the fact that impatience with and fretting at Human Nature is not only bad philosophy, but a great waste both of time and energy; since

the same effort made to develop a true and harmonious belief would attract by the *good sense* of its issue; while all else will end in fault-finding, displeasure and annoyance.

That Dr. R. has the cause of Spiritualism at heart, and is its warm friend, no one can doubt who has read his "Religion of Manhood;" still it often happens that the indiscretions of friendship are as injurious and offensive as the antagonisms of an enemy.

We find reflections of the above character more or less present with us, whenever we meet with Spiritualists, as there is a strong desire on the part of some to apply the principles of the Harmonic Philosophy to something "substantial" and "useful," which means, in particular, Socialism, or the reorganization of society. It may be, when the time comes, we will have a few words to say on the subject; but at present we feel free to remark that any and all such issues are unwise and unproductive of any good, because as yet little has been developed by the many attempts at association, Communism, Socialism, &c., but disappointment and loss of faith.

Whether society is not to be purified and harmonized by such enterprises, we cannot now assert; but of this we are *sure*, that before any such thing will be developed, men will have to be blessed with *two* things they have not at present in common, viz: a *practical* philosophy of the human mind, by which character will be understood and appreciated, and a living "*charity*" whose function of *PATIENCE* will not only develop hope in practice, but keep the more radical and thoughtful from *impatience* with their less fortunate brothers and sisters.

Spiritualism must so harmonize life and its developments as to preserve their *equilibrium*, or else their philosophy will be of little value,—since the "world" by sad experiences knows that "a house divided against itself can't stand." Nor can anything grow into powerful activity, good, bad, or indifferent, that has in itself the seeds of division and disunion. What Spiritualism mostly needs is, that the religious element be brought into action, and a concentration of effort be made to impress the age with its philosophy and light. We have no apprehension, however, but the time is near at hand, when the mass of mind now in the Spiritual family, will develop something worthy of itself—so that Spiritualists shall be known as "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

While, however, we hope and pray for this time, we shall not become impatient at any phase of life which progress may throw to the surface; no, not even "folly" itself, as we expect in the reaction from *doubt to faith*, from "folly" to philosophy, there will be much done and much said which will not only make the "judicious grieve," but be a subject of offence to others.

And if Spiritualism cannot comprehend and harmonize such cases, there must be some defect in it—since it is not "the whole" that "need a physician but those that are sick"—and getting *impatient* with progress we are very confident is neither philosophy nor prudence. Besides, it is nearly time to give up the practice of calling our brother a "fool," whether there be "hell fire" or no; because such intimations, however delicately done, are not very graciously accepted, and seldom do good to any.

It were well, that our "moderation should be known to all men."

INTUITION, OR CONSCIOUSNESS.

Thus far, Intuition has held but a doubtful position in the walks of science. The intellectual process has commanded large respect, and has been the theme of the orator, the statesman, the poet and the divine, till all science is deeply tinctured with the supremacy of logic over Intuition. How far this is correct, we trust the following article will show.

Consciousness is that by which we know.

Should any one ask what evidence we have that we exist, the answer must be that we know it. Should we be asked how we know that, or any other fact, all we can say is, that we are simply conscious of it.

Should we be asked how we know that the sun shines, we must say, that we are conscious that we have seen it. Should we be asked how we know that Columbus discovered America, our reply must be, that we are conscious that we have been told so. The only evidence we have of the fact, that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third side, is that we are conscious of the fact that we have passed through a process which shows that it is so.

Thus it is evident that consciousness is the only means of knowing even mathematical truths. The exact sciences prove nothing till we admit the truthfulness of consciousness. A mathematical demonstration proves nothing till we are conscious of the fact that we exist; that our proposition exists; that we have reasoned; and have passed through a process of thought, conducted according to certain laws; that we have remembered the whole process; and that we regularly draw our conclusion from the premises, according to the laws of mathematics. Until all this is admitted, on the simple dictates of consciousness, mathematics prove nothing, and cannot be considered truthful.

A popular opinion prevails to a very mischievous extent, that reasoning is the only means of knowing. All science is imbued with this Spirit, and though it is not directly affirmed in science, yet it is uniformly implied, and made the basis of all philosophizing. Even those who have admitted the truthfulness of consciousness, have still made reasoning the test of consciousness; thus implying the false axiom, that reasoning is the most reliable source of knowledge.

Reasoning proves nothing, till we are conscious that we exist, that we can think, that we can compare things by means of known laws, and draw correct conclusions from premises known to be true without reasoning. Consciousness is the final court of appeal. Suppose a man chooses to doubt his own existence, and to plant himself on the proposition that everything requires proof. Let him try to prove his own existence. He must do it by reasoning; but he cannot reason till he first exists. Therefore he must admit the existence before he begins the reasoning. This fact is indispensable to the validity of the proof. Take this away, and the proof means nothing; or let this be in doubt, and the whole proof is without foundation, and void. Therefore a man in trying to prove his own existence, assumes it in the premises, and cannot prove it in the conclusion. He cannot make it any part of the conclusion, because the conclusion must not be involved in the premises.

Suppose a man wishes to prove the fact of his thinking. How will he do it? He must do it by reasoning. But he cannot reason without thinking, and thinking is the thing to be proved. Therefore the fact of thinking must be admitted, before the proof can begin; and the conclusion must be assumed in the premises; and therefore it cannot be proved.

Now reason is in an awkward predicament. She cannot begin to reason without consciousness, and she cannot have consciousness till she can begin to reason, and prove consciousness and its truthfulness. What will she do? Can she ever surmount this difficulty? She cannot. She is eternally at rest, till she will proceed on the authority of consciousness, and evil no more. She must make an entire surrender, and be content with the conditions. Should she, like a fickle child, grow petu-

made the conclusion. It is hopeless, therefore, to attempt to prove it.

Should a man attempt to prove the fact of his own memory, he must not assume the point in dispute; and therefore he must not use his memory till he has proved its existence. How will he prove it? If he does not use his memory, he can have but one object in his mind at once. Let that object be memory, the thing to be proved. Then he can have nothing in the mind, at the same time, to prove it with. On the contrary, if he has anything in his mind to prove it with, he cannot have memory in his mind at the same time, to be proved.

Consequently, as soon as he has something in his mind to be proved, he can have nothing in his mind to prove it with; and as soon as he has something to prove it with, he has nothing to be proved. Therefore, the existence of the human memory must rest on the evidences of consciousness, without any hope of proof.

If we attempt to prove the freedom of the will, we must lay the will aside till we make the proof. But we cannot make the proof without reasoning, and we cannot reason till we will to reason; therefore the proof is forever beyond our reach. We cannot reason at all, till we admit the declarations of our consciousness that the will is free.

We assume the freedom of the will, the moment we begin to reason; and therefore it cannot be proved. Neither can it be disproved for the same reason. We cannot disprove it till we will to do so; therefore we must assume the freedom of the will, before we can deny, or attempt to disprove the fact.

The existence of such a thing as a law, defies all human proof. We cannot reason without laws. Our only means of proving is to appeal to some law of science or of thought. Before we begin to reason, we must admit the reliability of the laws employed in the process; and therefore the point to be proved must be known and admitted before reasoning is of any value. Consciousness alone can inform us that there is such an entity as law.

We shall find ourselves in the same difficulty, if we attempt to prove the existence of such a thing as cause and effect. To prove a thing is to produce an effect. Therefore we cannot attempt to reason without attempting to produce an effect; and therefore we cannot prove that there is any such thing as cause and effect; because we must assume that relation of things before we begin the proof.

We cannot prove that there is any such thing as truth or falsehood, because we must know that there is such a relation of things, before our proof amounts to anything. All proof is derived from fixed laws, which must be known to be true, or we could not know whether a point were proved or not. The very fact of truth pre-supposes a knowledge of the laws on which the proof is based.

No man can prove that he derives any happiness from the exercise of benevolence. He feels the sweet emotions running through his soul, and there the matter ends.

We cannot prove that the sweet melodies of music awaken emotions of delight. We feel it, and those who have also felt it, may know how to sympathize with us; but to those whose souls do not respond to music, we can impart no proof by logic.

The Christian cannot prove that he feels a joy which surpasses all that philosophy can explain, or that the imagination can paint, or eloquence unfold. He feels the sweet consciousness of it, raising him higher in the scale of happiness, and extending his perceptions into regions of

"Permanent delight—
Full above measure."

But those who have not felt it, must forever remain ignorant of its happy power.

The principal sources of human happiness are those which consciousness alone reveals to us, independently of the powers of logical demonstration.

The extreme absurdity of attempting to verify consciousness by reasoning, will be apparent if we make the attempt.

In the first place, we must lay aside all the objects of consciousness. We must not use them in our proof; because their reliability is the point in dispute; and if we use them, we cannot tell whether our proof is correct or not. We must not use doubtful facts in our proof, or the proof itself must be doubtful.

We must lay aside everything that rests on our consciousness. We must reject our own existence, the evidences of our senses, the freedom of the will, the exercise of reason, thought, memory, and all the first truths in reasoning. We must reject the relation of cause and effect, and right and wrong. We must not be conscious of anything. We must suspend all that we know, and then attempt to construct an argument. What can we do? Of course nothing. We could no more test the truthfulness of anything, than a tree or a rock.

And yet philosophers will tell us that we are bound to prove our own existence, the existence of such a thing as cause and effect, of right and wrong, the existence of the external world, etc. The wisdom and learning of the world have been expended on the freedom of the will, which is affirmed by simple consciousness; and, therefore, all that can be written to try to verify it, must proceed in a circle.

Every man is conscious of existence. Now, suppose we appeal to reasoning to know whether this declaration of consciousness is correct. Let our reasoning bring us to the conclusion that we do not exist. Would any man accept and act upon this deduction of reasoning? No; every one would still be conscious of existence, would act accordingly, and would refuse to act on any other supposition. The business of life would still go on, and no one would perceive that the world had lost a particle of confidence in the declarations of consciousness. It is evident, therefore, that men confide in the teachings of consciousness more strongly than they do in the deductions of their own reasoning.

Consciousness is a necessary pre-requisite, or antecedent to reasoning. We cannot reason till we are conscious that we exist, that we think, that we have facts to reason with, and subjects to reason upon. All these things must be antecedent to reasoning; and from them, reasoning derives all its authority. Take them away, and reasoning would prove nothing. But if we attempt to prove the truthfulness of consciousness by reasoning, we must take it away, till we can prove them by reasoning; otherwise we shall assume the point to be proved.

Now reason is in an awkward predicament. She cannot begin to reason without consciousness, and she cannot have consciousness till she can begin to reason, and prove consciousness and its truthfulness. What will she do? Can she ever surmount this difficulty? She cannot. She is eternally at rest, till she will proceed on the authority of consciousness, and evil no more. She must make an entire surrender, and be content with the conditions. Should she, like a fickle child, grow petu-

lent and troublesome again, she will be at once arrested in the midst of her most daring enterprises, and held in bonds till she learns her weakness.

Therefore reasoning is forever arrested in her progress, till she confides in the superior authority of consciousness.

Now, since reasoning depends on consciousness, it cannot be applied as a test to consciousness; because that would be making consciousness depend on reasoning, instead of reasoning on consciousness; and, since reasoning derives its authority from consciousness, it cannot be applied as a test to consciousness; because that would make consciousness a test of itself, which is absurd.

To make reasoning prove or disprove consciousness, would be to make consciousness prove or disprove itself. Consciousness would become the prover, the proof, and the thing to be proved; because all would depend upon it as a foundation. Now if reasoning could disprove the existence of consciousness, and consciousness could be taken away, or be out of existence, as the thing disproved, it would still exist as the prover and proof, and be out of existence in one form, and would still be in existence in two forms, which is ridiculous and absurd.

It is evident that the teachings of consciousness must be confided in before reasoning can begin; therefore they cannot be established by reasoning; and if they could be established by reasoning without the aid of consciousness, we could not know it; and therefore we should be obliged to prove that we had reasoned; we should be obliged to prove our proof, and prove that we had proved the point in dispute; all of which would be impossible without the sanction of consciousness. It is therefore impossible to apply reasoning as a test to consciousness, until we can reason independently of consciousness; and therefore reason without being conscious that we exist, or that any thing else exists; that we reason, or that any one else reasons.

In order to prove or disprove the authority of consciousness, we must be unconscious at the time, and must not let consciousness be in any way necessary to the proof; but in order to know that we had proved any thing, we must be conscious of what we had done.

Therefore we can neither prove nor disprove the authority of consciousness, till we can be unconscious of existence, and yet conscious of it; unconscious of the teachings of consciousness, and yet conscious of them; unconscious of the proof of the truthfulness or untruthfulness of consciousness, and yet conscious of it, which is absurd.

Therefore it is impossible for reasoning to be employed as a test of consciousness. But consciousness is the only test of reasoning; because we cannot judge whether an argument is correctly conducted or not, nor whether the conclusion is correctly drawn from the premises or not, without our consciousness. Now, since consciousness is the test of reasoning, it follows that reasoning cannot be the test of consciousness.

We have also seen, that should reasoning lead to the conclusion that we do not exist, and that consciousness is fallacious, no one would believe the deductions of his own reasoning. The consciousness of his own existence could not be overruled. The active currents of life would still flow on. The lamp of life would still burn. The ocean of thought would heave with restless commotion. Consciousness would whisper into the ear of being, and the devotee at the shrine of reasoning, after he had confessed his nonentity, would rise up and affirm—"I still exist."

Hence, in every aspect of the case, it is impossible to make reasoning a test of consciousness. The almost universal practice, therefore, of making reason the test of every thing, is evidently absurd. Hence the vast amount of ingenious effort that has been expended in trying to verify the teachings of consciousness, has been worse than lost. It has unsettled every fact known to man. There is not one fact in literature, art, or science that has yet been settled by reasoning. Every thing is open for discussion. Philosophers have taught us to demand proof of our own existence, of the existence of the external universe, of the existence of such a thing as cause and effect, of right and wrong, and all the truths on which human knowledge depends.

Philosophers have entirely overlooked the fact, that it is beyond the power of reason ever to settle one fact. We have shown that reasoning cannot confirm the truthfulness of consciousness; and, of course, it cannot confirm any thing else; because every thing else depends on consciousness. Hitherto we have found ourselves wandering amazed in a universe of unknown, disputed, and disputable things, either real or imaginary, and unable to find a solid and settled point on which to erect a standard by which to test any thing. By reasoning alone, the human family have never had one thing in common, except the uncertainty of every thing.

Now, why is it so? Is it because the universe is an *ignis fatuus*, and reason a bright luminary, "Which leads to bewilder, and dazzles to blind?"

No; it is because reason has been wrested from its true office, and been amused, like the infant and unpractised spectator, on first looking up to the brilliant hosts of worlds on high. It holds up its little hands to catch the stars, thinking them quite within its reach.

For the ten thousandth time, consciousness has been arraigned at the bar of reasoning, and required to give an account of the rectitude of her doings. She has been obliged to face the most powerful array of counsel, headed by Des Cartes, and backed up by the most profound learning, and ingenious logic that the world could furnish; but she has found herself quite equal to the occasion. She has never yet been compelled to lower her dignity, by acknowledging accountability at the bar of reasoning. She is the rightful sovereign of the realm of thought, seated on an eminence too high for genius to ascend, and too firm for logic to disturb.

With what success her authority has been disputed, we shall see. Among the first and foremost of her opponents, we may mention Des Cartes. Being disgusted with the looseness of the philosophy of his times, he took the opposite extreme, and resolved to discredit his own existence, till he could confirm it by reasoning. He was unwilling to trust his consciousness, and therefore resolved to establish his existence by the force of logic. In searching for proof he found nothing which appeared to him entirely free from doubt, except the fact that he *thought*.

Delighted with the idea that he had found a reliable foundation on which to build, he constructed the argument, "Cognito, ergo sum." "I THINK, THEREFORE I AM." He thought he had proved his own existence, from the fact that he thought; and he made this the foundation of his philosophy. It is a little surprising, however, that he did not discover, that the conclusion of his argument was assumed in the premises. When he had said, "I think," he had presupposed the proposition, "I am." If I affirm that I think, I do not prove that

I AM, as a necessary *consequent*; but I assume or presuppose that I am, as a necessary antecedent, without which the proposition, "I think," cannot be true. If he had said, *I do not think*, he would have assumed the proposition, I am, as the only condition on which he could say, *I do not think*. The act of speaking or acting at all, presupposes the existence of the person who speaks or acts. The argument of Des Cartes amounts to this, "I AM, THEREFORE I AM," which is ridiculous and absurd.

But how did he know that he thought? Simply by his consciousness. Then he assumed the teachings of consciousness to be reliable, and made that fact the foundation of his proof. But that was the point he set out to prove. Therefore he assumed the point to be proved, and made that assumption the foundation of his philosophy.

Let us should be thought to draw out conclusions unfairly, we beg that the reader may notice, that the proposition, *I think*, is without meaning, unless the subject *I* represents some person who thinks, and the predicate *think* is affirmed of some person who thinks. The existence of this person must be known before the affirmation can be made, that he thinks. Des Cartes, therefore, could not have truthfully affirmed, "I think," unless he previously knew his own existence. When he said, "*I think, therefore I am*," he ended exactly where he began. He began and ended with the fact of his own existence, and this he received on the authority of consciousness, which is the thing he resolved not to do.

He therefore made consciousness the foundation of his philosophy, while he professed to build upon proof.

Why did that deep and acute philosopher fall into such a mistake? It was the unavoidable result of the false axiom on which he attempted to build, that NOTHING MUST BE RECEIVED WITHOUT PROOF. It was an unavoidable result; because the moment he attempted to prove his own existence, he assumed it; and he finally built on consciousness, because that is the only foundation on which he could build. He who attempts to avoid it, will find himself planted upon it, the moment he begins to think, speak, or act. The teachings of consciousness are the only reliable things known to man—the only foundation on which we can build, even if we attempt to reject it. It is, indeed, the only foundation.

If any differ from us in adopting this foundation, we ask him to take any other, and risk the consequences. What will he do?

He cannot think a thought, speak a word, perform an act, nor recognize his own existence, nor that of any person or any thing else. He cannot eat nor drink, can neither affirm a thing nor deny it, admit, assume, nor attempt to prove. He must consent to be a nonentity—must not be at all. His very existence will be a standing refutation of his theory.

He cannot be allowed to assume his consciousness, and to act upon it; and make that the only means of doubting it, as has universally been the case with those who have distrusted their consciousness. But the doubter may say, as objectors are fond of saying, that he is on the negative, and it devolves on the affirmative to make the proof. But he must recollect, that in the absence of consciousness, there is neither affirmative nor negative. If there is such a relation of things, and if it is a settled rule of logic, that the affirmative is bound to make the proof, it follows that the point in dispute is admitted; because these distinctions can exist only among conscious beings, who have a very considerable knowledge of men and things, and of the rules of logic, and the settled principles of science; all of which must be kept out of sight, till the truthfulness of consciousness is settled.

He cannot throw the burden of proof on his opponent, because neither he nor his opponent yet exists, as far as the argument is concerned. Their very existence is involved in the question, and must not be assumed. Let no one flatter himself that we are anxious to persuade him to adopt the platform which we have laid down. We ask him, rather, to reject it if he can. We cannot conceive how an objector can exist; because the moment the reliability of consciousness is denied, it is admitted; and therefore the objectors in instantly converted into a defender of our platform. Therefore an opponent can never be found. Professed opponents are the best defenders of what we contend for.

It is sufficiently demonstrated that the veracity of consciousness is a truth which cannot be proved, denied, nor questioned.

It is an astonishing fact, that in any conceivable mode of proof, the conclusion would be assumed in the premises.

No one can reason on the subject without admitting to himself the proposition, I REASON. But we cannot reason without thinking; therefore the admission, *I reason*, is an admission of the proposition, *I think*, which is the elementary proposition of Des Cartes.

OLE NOEL.