





FONDS DUBOIS : 4197.



# THE NEW RELIGION;

OR,

Religion founded on the immutable Laws of the Universe, *contrasted* with all Religions founded on Human Testimony,

AS DEVELOPED IN

## A PUBLIC LECTURE,

DELIVERED BY

MR. OWEN,

*At the London Tavern, October 20, 1830,*

"To take into consideration the Advantages and Disadvantages of Religion, *as it has been hitherto taught*, in forming the Character of Man, and in Governing the World."

For modes of Faith let graceless zealots fight;  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

POPE.

Take advice, my good friends, go the Quaker's broad way,  
'Tis free, without turnpikes, so nothing to pay.

GREEN'S *Poem of the Spleen*.

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LONDON:

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HIGHLIGHTS FOUNDED ON HUMAN TESTIMONY.

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taught, in forming the Character of Man, and in Governing the World.

Four modes of Faith let yourself be led;  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

POPE.

Take advice, my good friends, for the Quaker's hand says,  
"I'll give, without intending, so nothing to pay."

GREEN'S POEM, IN THE SPECTATOR.

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## LECTURE ON THE NEW RELIGION.

THE Meeting was called by Mr. Owen, and was respectably and numerously attended, there being upwards of 1090 persons assembled. At one o'clock Mr. Owen took the Chair, and proceeded to address the Meeting as follows:

Under the new circumstances of general political excitement, which have lately arisen throughout the civilized part of the globe, not one practical step can be wisely taken, in the improvement of society, upon a firm and permanent base, until it shall be calmly and temperately decided, whether the foundation of all new arrangements to ameliorate the condition of the human race shall be religion, and what religion; or facts derived from all the past and present experience of mankind.

This is now a vital question of paramount interest to the human race, and must be decided, not by angry feelings, or the violence of passion, or the errors of country, or by prejudices of any kind, but by facts which cannot deceive, and by self-evident deductions from those facts.

In the examination of this subject, so deeply involving the highest interests of humanity, I will endeavour to avoid hurting the feelings of any of my fellow-beings as much as truth will admit; and I trust every speaker to-day will also endeavour to keep in mind, that we do not meet here for personal contest, but to elicit, if possible, high and important truths that may be applied to practice for the permanent benefit of all.

Hitherto the character of man has been formed, and the world has been governed, under the direct influence of what is called religion; and facts to day prove what that character has been formed to be, and how the nations of the earth have been governed.

All will admit that the character of man is no where what it ought to be; and also that no country has yet been rationally governed to promote permanently the general advantage of its population.

It is, therefore, a legitimate object of enquiry to ascertain the real cause of these errors and evils.

Under the arrangements which have hitherto existed for educating and governing man, four general characters have been produced among the human race.

These four classes of characters appear to be formed, under the past and present arrangements of society, from four different original organizations at birth, which may be numbered one, two, three, and four.

No. 1. May be termed the conscientious religious in all countries.

No. 2. Unbelievers in the truth of any religion, but who strenuously support the religion of their country, under the conviction that, although religion is not necessary to insure their own good conduct, it is eminently required to compel others to act right.

No. 3. Unbelievers who openly avow their disbelief in the truth of any religion, such as Deists, Atheists, Sceptics, &c. &c. but who do not perceive the laws of nature relative to man as an individual, or when united in a social state.

No. 4. Disbelievers in all past and present religions, but believers in the eternal unchanging laws of the universe, as developed by facts derived from all past experience; and who, by a careful study of these facts, deduce from them the religion of nature.

Class No. 1. is formed, under certain circumstances, from those original organizations which possess at birth strong moral and weak intellectual faculties. They usually become amiable, honest according to the religious notions they receive, good natured, and what are called in the present defective state of the human character, the good members of society. They very seldom govern any class, sect, party, or country, as individuals, but they have considerable influence when acting in a body as a party, for they are numerous in all civilized countries.

Class No. 2. is composed of those individuals who by nature possess a smaller quantity of moral, and a larger quantity of intellectual, faculty. Of those who have sufficient intellect to discover the most glaring inconsistencies between all religious and undisputed facts, and therefore are compelled to disbelieve the truth of any religion, but who are deficient, under existing circumstances, in intellectual capacity to proceed further in the investigation of the laws of nature, and without sufficient moral faculty to declare their disbelief in the truth of religion. They have also too little intellectual faculty to discover the incongruity of their own opinions or notions; that, although conscientious belief in religion is not necessary to make them good and useful members of society, yet it is absolutely requisite to make other men honest.

They are therefore unavoidably hypocrites upon almost all occasions, or act from thoughts and feelings not publicly expressed. Usually these men, who are endowed with much cunning, called worldly wisdom, and with physical activity, are, under the existing system of the world, at the head of every class, sect, profession, party, and country; and from it, in all nations, the aristocracies are generally formed. The number of this original constitution of mind is considerable, perhaps equal to No. 1.

Class No. 3. is composed of men of strong moral and moderate intellectual faculty; of men who possess as much intellectual faculty as enables them to perceive the discordance between all the religions of the world and the general facts around them; also to discover that if religion is not necessary to make them honest, it is not required to make others conscientious: having at the same time as much moral faculty as to induce them, in opposition to their worldly interests, to express their conscientious convictions in opposition to the religious notions or dog-

mas of the country they inhabit; but yet without sufficient intellect, educated and placed as they have been, to investigate sufficiently for practice the laws of human nature and of society.

These characters are much abused by classes Nos. 1 and 2, and have hitherto suffered all manner of injustice from them, owing to their superiority of intellect to the first, and their superiority of intellect and moral faculty to the second. They are not very numerous, chiefly in consequence of the obstacles which the present system places in the way of moral honesty.

Class No. 4. comprises those who, by nature, possess a high degree of intellectual and moral faculty; who distinctly perceive the opposition which exists between the fundamental notions on which, alone, all religions rest, and the everlasting laws by which man is governed, from his earliest formation to his decomposition at death; who can trace in their minds the necessary results of these laws when they shall be applied in practice, and who can comprehend a highly improved state of human existence, formed in all its parts in unison and perfect accordance with those laws; who have also sufficient moral faculty to discover the vast superiority of truth over falsehood in the intercourse between man and man, and who possess moral courage sufficient to contend openly against what they are compelled to believe are the errors of antiquity. This class of natural minds, under the present ignorance relative to the improvement of human organization, is not numerous; it has, along with some of class No. 3, supplied the martyrs of former days, and they are always prepared to go to the stake if necessary, to promote the advance of general knowledge, and permanently to increase the happiness of the human race. When men shall learn real wisdom, through a rational education, and be taught to understand the laws of their nature, and to act upon them, the original organization of almost all human beings will be formed of these qualities.

We thus see, that as long as the character of man shall be formed under the influences of religion, as it has been hitherto taught to mankind, and as long as the world shall continue to be governed under these influences, the four preceding characters which have been described will, with endless and small varieties, be produced. And the necessary consequence of training the present varied organization of man to acquire these artificial characters is to degrade human nature, and to instil into the human race every conceivable crime, and to afflict it with every conceivable misery.

In the first class are produced not only many amiable weak men, as the modern evangelists of this and other Christian countries, but also in cases where the physical powers are strong, the furious bigot equally conscientious with the former, but who keeps all around him in a continual state of ignorant excitement, which generates endless practical injustice to those who cannot think as he does. And as none of this class are ever permitted to investigate the laws of their nature, but are trained from infancy to believe and not to think, and to talk at random respecting the imaginary notions which they receive in their early years, there is not only a considerable shade of difference among themselves, but there is also a most injurious antipathy created in their minds to the members of the other three classes, but more especially to the 3d and 4th class, who have too strong a feeling of morality to become hypocrites, and express their assent to their irrational dogmas.

In the second class, religion, as it is now taught, implants not only hypocrisy, but the worst feelings and passions that unnatural restraints upon nature's laws can generate; and thus produce endless crimes and evils throughout society.

A disbelief in religion by those who possess by nature weak moral faculties engenders selfishness, jealousy, revenge, hatred, anger, cunning, and every human depravity. Upon this class of natural minds, it is calculated to create every possible variety of bad character, and they are found to be very numerous in every class, sect, and party, in all countries.

Nothing can be more melancholy than the effects which religion produces upon this class; it destroys all that can be called honest principles in them, makes them enemies and opponents to each other as well as to the other three classes, and they thus considerably contribute to keep all mankind at enmity, and prevent the existence of charity for the infinite diversity of opinion or feeling, which under the present system is unavoidable. It is from this class that the far greater part of the evils and miseries of human life proceed.

Upon the third class religion produces the most unfavourable impressions. The individuals of which it is composed cannot avoid detecting the inconsistent notions on which all religions are founded, and of tracing the endless errors to which they lead in practice. They are quite satisfied that of themselves, they cannot alter their convictions relative to these inconsistencies in principle and errors in practice; and their moral sense is too strong to admit of them becoming hypocrites, and saying, to please others, that they believe in the dogmas of religion when their convictions are directly opposed to them. They therefore feel that they are honest; and when the conscientious religious and those who have no conscientious religious feelings, but who pretend to have them, apply abusive personal epithets to these moral opponents of religion, and call them deists, atheists, sceptics, and endeavour to traduce their characters by every unfair and unjust device that they can invent, they instil hatred and anger, and every evil passion and feeling into these men, who naturally are thus taught to consider all pretensions to religion to be hypocrisy, and that religion itself is a monster of cruelty and injustice. Thus, instead of kind feelings and genuine affection being engendered between man and man, through which dispositions alone the world can ever be reformed and rendered happy, both parties are regularly trained to become not only the secret, but the open enemies of each other; keeping the world in a state of perpetual discord, and affording no hope of its termination. Were it not for the irrational feelings and conduct of the classes Nos. 1 and 2 with respect to this class, the latter would always become honest, well disposed, and comparatively intelligent members of society. As



it is, the mass of the unthinking part of every population is in direct hostility to them, and consequently they are opposed to this mass, and the worst passions and feelings of human nature are thus made to be the every day practice of mankind.

Upon the 4th class religion produces the deepest commiseration for the ignorance, poverty, weakness, and crime, which it inflicts upon the human race. They cannot avoid seeing the regular steps by which it is made to disorganize and disease the moral sense and intellectual faculties of all who are subject to its influence. They are compelled to discover the gradations by which it generates anger and discord throughout society, and perverts all the superior qualities of our nature into curses instead of blessings. They are penetrated with the keenest regret to perceive the earth, which might be, with ease and pleasure to every one, made a terrestrial paradise, remaining a vast, a wild, and a desert, solely for the want of cultivation; and its inhabitants generally, which might be formed into beings of a far superior order to any hitherto known in the history of the human race, poor, weak, irrational creatures, asking for bread, while they are surrounded by the most ample means, if properly used, to supply an inexhaustible store of every good thing that the heart of man could require, and while he himself, with equal ease and gratification, may be formed into a being of high intelligence, possessing the finest moral sense, filled with the purest affection and most genuine charity for all of his kind, and with perfect good feelings for all that has life in the universe.

It is therefore impossible for this class to know and witness this desolation of the earth, and this degradation of their fellows, and not to feel an irresistible impulse to forego every private feeling and consideration, that they may assist the nations of the world to emancipate themselves from the depth of error in which they are now involved, and from the crimes and misery with which, in consequence of this thick mental and moral darkness, they are now overwhelmed.

It is solely for these purposes that we now, in the face of all nations, and in the centre of this great metropolis, hold these public meetings, to which we invite all those who have moral courage sufficient openly to meet error, under whatever specious name it may possess, or whatever garb of disguise it may assume.

We are well aware of the hold which what is called religion, varied and opposed as it is to itself over the whole earth, has upon the confiding and upon the unthinking part of the population of the world. We know that for numberless years men of the second class of mind, who have hitherto governed mankind in all their affairs, have adopted every device they could conceive to make men not to think, but implicitly to confide in their *ipse dixit* upon the most important questions connected with their intellectual improvement and happiness, and especially upon the subject of religion.

We cannot therefore be unconscious of the difficulties which we have to encounter, even at the threshold of our proceedings, in placing before the public the real advantages and disadvantages of religion, as it has been hitherto taught, in forming the character of man, and in governing the world.

I have endeavoured to explain the general effects produced by religion on the four most prominent divisions of our natural organization at birth, namely—

1st. The weak of intellect, with a strong moral sense, which religion makes amiable and conscientiously honest in their belief and dealings, as far as the inconsistencies of a weak intellect, rendered still more weak by religious mysteries, will permit.

2d. Those with higher intellectual faculties, but having a weaker moral sense, these religion makes into moral hypocrites, into selfish and designing men, whose business through life is to take advantage of the intellectual weakness and moral sense of class No. 1. and to make them their tools or instruments by which they oppress the members of all classes, but especially those of No. 3, who have been always most unjustly treated by this class for their opinions, when honestly and openly expressed.

3d. Those who have a moderate share of intellect, and a large proportion of moral sense. Upon these religion produces the most unfavourable results, by creating in them the greatest enmity to the conscientious religious, and to the pretenders to religion; and, in consequence, their lives are usually passed in endless and fruitless contests with those in their families and neighbourhood, who belong to classes Nos. 1. and 2. Finding that they are most unjustly abused for expressing the convictions which they are compelled to entertain, and that they are grossly ill-treated for being conscientiously honest, the worst feelings of our nature are engendered within them; they imagine the whole human race to be their enemies, and that every man's hand is against them. They are almost always reduced to poverty, and, by a continuation of unjust and merciless oppressions, they are goaded on from irritation to irritation, until their opposition to the professors of religion and the institutions of society knows no bounds. A state of society is thus created most unfavourable to an honest enquiry after truth, and to a condition of charity and kindness between man and man, and nation and nation; and endless cruelties are devised and practised for the insane purpose of attempting to make men think alike upon imaginary notions in opposition to facts, and to the evidence of our senses. By this irrational conduct, engendered solely by religion as it has been hitherto taught, men have been educated, from infancy to become open or covert enemies to each other, and thus the millions are made to fall and remain an easy prey to a few, otherwise most weak, oppressors.

4th. Those who have a large share of intellect, and whose moral sense is strong. Upon this class of men, as soon as their faculties are sufficiently ripe to observe, compare, reflect, and to judge with accuracy, religion produces many painful conflicts in their minds. They ardently and sincerely wish to retain the belief forced upon them in childhood, in the divine origin and

untainted truth of the religion which they have been compelled to receive before their minds could comprehend any part of it.—They begin to investigate its principles or dogmas, and are forced, by the facts around them, and with the strength of their intellectual faculties, to compare these dogmas with the facts around them, and with the laws of their own nature which they feel within them; and to their grief and dismay, they can discover no connection whatever between the dogmas of any religion, and the facts around them, or with the feelings of their own nature. They shrink from these first impressions of doubt as though they were committing the most heinous of all crimes; yet they cannot, by any effort they can make, prevent their recurrence. As their intellectual powers and moral sense increase with their years and experience, the discordance between the doctrines of religion and facts, or the laws of nature, become daily more and more evident. Their first fears subside, their moral courage gradually increases, by degrees they investigate the foundation on which all religion rest; they compare these with the unchanging laws of human nature, and to their utter surprise and astonishment, they are obliged most reluctantly to come to the conclusion, that there is not only no agreement between them, but that they are in direct opposition to each other. They are therefore compelled to entertain the conviction, that the facts of nature as they are presented to our senses, are not facts but delusions; and that all the religions in the world, as hitherto taught, are the inventions of human creatures before they had acquired sufficient knowledge from experience to govern man except by the hopes and fears of future endless happiness or misery: devices which they formed before they had discovered that man could be far better trained and governed by real knowledge than by inconsistent notions invented by men weak, but cunning, to keep the mass of mankind in the very infancy of ignorance, and to retain them in mental helplessness.

Ascertaining these important results, the men possessing by nature strong intellectual faculties and a high moral sense, cannot avoid feeling an irresistible desire to set their fellows free from the mental bondage which enslaves all their superior faculties and feelings, while their inferior mental qualities and their worst passions are cultivated most successfully. These men therefore look around in every direction to ascertain in what manner they must commence their task.

With their knowledge of human nature and of the laws which govern it, they cannot have any hostile or unkind feeling for any portion of mankind; they therefore desire to perform their task with the greatest mildness and gentleness that will permit them to accomplish the great and good objects which they have in view.

But after every attempt not to wound the feelings of their weak bretheren, they discover that while the imaginary notions relative to religion shall be forced into the infant mind, they can make little or no progress; and however unwilling they may be to hurt the artificial conscience which has been formed in their fellow-creatures by the dogmas taught to children in all countries, they find that it is utterly impracticable to benefit the human race without destroying all the errors of all the religions in the world.

This difficult but most important task must be effected to enable them to lay a solid and permanent foundation for that knowledge which can alone train man to have genuine charity and pure affection for all mankind. They know it is not only an easy but a delightful employment to teach the human race truth, without any error from infancy. But they also know, from all past experience, that it is the most difficult and dangerous of all tasks in which man can engage, to attempt to unlearn or disabuse the adult mind of those errors and prejudices on the subject of religion, which have been with the greatest care and industry taught to them from their birth.

We are now prepared to enquire what are the advantages of religion, as it has been hitherto taught, upon the four classes of original organization. But first it is necessary to state what religion is, as it has been hitherto taught under all the various sectarian names and forms, which the priesthood in different countries have given to it.

Religion then, as it has been hitherto taught, is an attempt to force mankind to think against the evidence of their senses and of all facts, that there is merit of the highest order in believing what the priests say their votaries ought to believe, and the deepest of all demerits in not believing these dogmas, which they one and all, whatever may be the name and form which they support, agree to call divine truths. And also in a similar attempt to compel mankind to believe, against the evidence of their senses and of all facts, that there is equal merit in loving real and imaginary beings and things, such as they recommend to love, and in hating real and imaginary beings and things, such as they recommend to be hated; and likewise, that their votaries, whatever name they may bear, shall be eternally rewarded or punished for so believing or disbelieving, and for so loving or hating.

Whatever sectarians may say to the contrary, this is the religion, stripped of all mystery, which alone has ever yet been taught to the inhabitants of the earth.

It is the religion, in all its naked deformity, which is, at this day, alone, taught in every country in the world where any religion is known. It is against this religion I have contended, and it is probable I shall contend against it to the last hour of my life.

Now when the eyes of men shall be opened, when they shall acquire the power to investigate facts, to observe with accuracy, cause, and effect, and to see all things within the range of their senses as they really are; all well know that this religion could not originate with a wise and good power, but that it must proceed from an ignorant and malevolent power.

Because each of these notions have necessarily a most demoralizing influence over the four general classes of organization which are given to mankind at birth, under the present neglect of forming a superior organization for the human race.

Upon the class of minds No. 1. this religion has a direct tendency to weaken the intellectual faculties; and it often does so to an extent which reduces the rational part of those faculties to the lowest state—sometimes, indeed, to their utter destruction. Experience teaches us that religion, in all countries, is one of the most common causes of insanity. But religion upon this class of minds also perverts the moral sense, and instead of forming it to become tenacious or conscientious in supporting real virtue, it is made by it to countenance many of the worst vices under the specious name of virtue. They are forced by it to love those who have been taught to believe the same errors which they have been made to imbibe, and to dislike or hate those who have been compelled to believe some other dogmas different from their own, or perhaps even truths free from all error. They are by this religion trained and educated to believe almost every thing in opposition to the evidence of their own senses, and at the same time to have their reasoning faculties so far destroyed as to be wholly unconscious of the existence of any incongruity between facts and their belief. They are very generally formed by it to become irrational conscientious beings, which is the least injurious character that superstition is capable of producing out of the four great divisions of human organization.

Upon the class of minds, No. 2, religion, as it has been hitherto taught, produces the most mischievous results in forming their character. It gives the worst possible direction to their intellectual faculties by preventing them from acquiring a knowledge of truth, and receiving ideas only from facts, and all therefore consistent with each other; to the acquisition of a species of false knowledge known by the term cunning, which in all situations in life enables them to take advantage of the honest or conscientious class No. 1. and, through their ignorance and simplicity, to overwhelm with injustice and every kind of abuse class No. 3, and to make a formidable stand even to the open, disinterested, and magnanimous proceedings of class No. 4. Witness the persecutions, and punishments, and often violent deaths, of many of the greatest minds that the world has produced through all the past ages. In consequence of this class of mind being thus trained to become cunning, instead of being rationally educated, as it might be, under other arrangements, and made to become truly wise, and to possess real knowledge, valuable for a superior practice among mankind, the world is governed by the most intricate and crooked policy. The government of all nations is therefore unavoidably under the direction of cunning and craft, instead of sound wisdom or real knowledge; and this must continue, until some minds possessing a large portion of intellect and a high moral sense, shall unite their efforts, and by a generous enthusiasm in the cause of universal humanity, shall induce the governments of the most civilized nations also to unite their efforts to adopt decisive practical measures to change this wretched state of human existence for one governed under rational institutions. Were this change to be effected, the class of minds No. 2, now under consideration, would not only have its intellectual faculties greatly improved by proper cultivation, but its naturally weak moral sense daily rendered weaker under the present irrational Institutions of Society, would be continually strengthened and enlarged until, at matured age, it would be equal to every useful practical purpose, and become greatly superior to any immoral temptations that could exist under the proposed change of principle in governing the affairs of mankind.

While this delusion, under the name of religion, produces over the whole world these melancholy results upon the class of minds of Nos. 1 and 2, it has a most unfavourable influence upon class No. 3, who, under a rational system for the moral government of mankind, would become very valuable members of society. Having a strong moral sense of right and wrong, having sufficient intellect by nature to perceive many of the inconsistencies of what men call religion, and being by their nature strongly impelled to act right, according to their best conceptions of it, they honestly avow their disbelief in religion, and, by so doing, they make themselves most obnoxious to their fellow-beings belonging to classes Nos. 1. and 2. For those of class No. 1, being trained to be conscientious believers in the religion which they have received from their infancy, and being taught that all those who do not believe as they do, upon what they call the fundamentals of religion, are dreadfully wicked, dangerous, and bad men, they shun those of class No. 3 as though they were a pestilence. The necessary result of such treatment is not only to injure the moral sense of No. 1, but also to stifle and pervert all the natural good qualities of class No. 3, and to create within them feelings of the strongest hatred and dislike to every one that possesses any religion, all of whom they deem hypocrites and bad men; and they usually make very little distinction in these respects between classes No. 1 and No. 2. But their real persecutors are very seldom of class No. 1, who are not only sincere in their belief, but often really kind and amiable in their manners, dispositions, and general conduct. But class No. 2, who are necessarily hypocrites, and who almost always appear to be the greatest sticklers for, and the most violent and boisterous in support of, the forms and ceremonies of what may happen to be the religion of the country in which they live, are the greatest enemies of class No. 3; for not being restrained in consequence of their weak moral sense from committing acts of injustice when custom and law support them, and believing that all men ought to think and act as they do in sustaining all old institutions, they devise all manner of vexatious proceedings by which to injure and torment their hitherto unfortunate neighbours, No. 3. In this manner does religion render the lives of these poor oppressed and depressed individuals an existence of continued misery, making them, through their sufferings, detest the very name of religion, as well as its votaries. These hostile feelings act and re-act upon the respective classes, until they lose all feeling of affection and charity for each other, as much as though they did not belong to the same but to opposite species of beings; and thus is hatred, crime, and misery made to pervade those minds, which, if formed under rational institutions, would be free from crime, full of charity and love, and unacquainted with misery of any kind.

Religion as it has been hitherto taught to class No. 4, inflicts upon them, in the early part of their lives, great evils of another description. As they possess by nature superior intellectual faculties and moral sense, they are forced to receive certain doctrines taught in the country in which they are born, and live, as divine truths; and in all cases they ardently desire to think and act most conscientiously in accordance with those supposed heavenly instructions for which they are fully prepared by their strong natural moral feelings. As soon, however, as they are put in possession of a certain number of these said to be divine truths, their intellectual faculties cannot avoid comparing them, first, with each other, and then with the facts which their senses have made known to them. This natural and necessary progress of their minds compels them to perceive the glaring incongruities between these so called divine truths, one with another, and between all these divine truths, and all the ascertained facts and known laws of nature. These oppositions and contradictions alarm their moral feelings—they dread unbelief in divine truths—they compare and examine again and again—they investigate with all the order and honesty natural to such minds; but the farther they extend their inquiries after real truth, the greater distance they are compelled to discover, is, between it and what they have been educated to call—divine truths.

Their minds are then perplexed; they become full of alarming anxieties about what has been called the soul, and while they remain in this state of doubt and darkness their misery is great indeed.

But as their intellectual faculties increase towards maturity—as their moral sense becomes more enlarged and tenacious of what is true and right, and as their knowledge of undisputed facts, or their experience advances day by day, they, at length, acquire sufficient moral courage to ask themselves what is truth, and where is it to be found free from error? They become conscious that there can be no discrepancy in truth; that one truth, of necessity, can never be opposed to another truth. That it is a necessary law of nature that each individual truth must be in harmony, and in strict accordance, with every other truth in the universe. That, consequently, the universe is one great truth, and that every single fact is a part, and a necessary part, to form that one great truth, which is alone the essence of all power and knowledge. When the minds of this class have advanced thus far, they distinctly perceive the intensity of the darkness in which the intellectual faculties of men have been enveloped. That they have been, as it were, confined within an impenetrable shell of ignorance, and they become filled with an irresistible desire to break that shell, and to burst forth into the full light of intellectual and moral day, and enjoy all the advantages of its vivifying influence. They desire knowledge for their fellow-beings; they desire superior dispositions and habits for them; they desire their permanent happiness. They discover the means by which this knowledge, these dispositions and habits, and this happiness may be given and secured to them. They occupy themselves in preparations to aid their fellow-beings in acquiring these advantages; and they speedily find that religion, which, in their infancy and childhood, they were forced to receive as divine truth, and which had nearly perverted all their rational faculties, and given a false direction to their moral sense, is now, *alone*, the obstacle which stands in their way to prevent their making one step in practice, in a rational course, to accomplish these objects. They wish not to offend any of their weak brethren who remain conscientious in the superstitions of their forefathers. They know they are not just subjects for blame or punishment, but for commiseration and pity. These men of the 4th class cannot, however, allow their feelings of sympathy and pity for a small part of the present population of the world to arrest their efforts for a good of all their fellow beings who are now alive, and for those who shall exist through future generations. No, they are deeply impressed with the magnitude and importance of the duty which they have to perform. They know that it is utterly impracticable that truth and error can be advantageously intermixed; that one or the other of them must now, under some new form, prevail and direct the future proceedings of mankind.

They are convinced, that whatever attempts may now be made to compel men to remain in their present ignorance will be unsuccessful, and that the time is at hand when error must give place to truth. They therefore deem it best for the real interest of all parties, now to come forward and meet error openly in the field of reason and fair argument. And meet it, too, with kind feelings; that the changes, which to them appear inevitable, may be effected beneficially for all parties; and that the spirit of anger and violence, which ignorance alone generates on account of a difference of opinion and of feeling, should be allowed to die a natural death, and be for ever allayed. Religion, therefore, as it has been hitherto taught, materially injures the intellectual faculties of this class during their childhood and youth, and would effectually destroy them for all superior or rational purposes, were it not for their strong moral sense, which, united with a daily growing intellectual faculty, enables them to overcome all the obstacles which religion places in their way; and in defiance of it, they become, in their matured age, the conscientious open advocates of truth without any admixture of error.

Thus have I endeavoured to explain without prejudice or passion the real effects unavoidably produced by religion, as it has been hitherto taught, upon the four great general divisions of human nature, or of man's organization at birth.

The reflecting and intelligent in all countries know, that man from the hour of his birth becomes materially the creature of the external circumstances which are allowed to act upon his organization, and that the religion of his district is the most material of all those circumstances, in influencing the formation of his matured character.

I have fairly and honestly stated to you my most deliberate and conscientious convictions relative to the advantages and disadvantages, which religion, as it has been hitherto taught, has had in forming the past and present character of the human race under its chief divisions. Let me not, however, be misunderstood, as though there were no apparent exceptions to these general results.



The natural variety in the individual character of man is so infinite, as well as the varied circumstances under which each one is placed from birth, that no general principle can be stated upon this subject, that will not admit of a few apparent exceptions; but, I may add, if all the circumstances forming the original organization, and if all the external influences acting upon it were known, these few apparent exceptions could be easily explained, in conformity to the general principles stated.—For the principles of natural things, or, in other words, the laws of nature, never change for man, or for any earthly affairs or proceedings whatever.

Now, when the effects of religion, as it has been hitherto taught, and impressed upon the human race, shall be followed through all their ramifications, it will be discovered that the religion of the world is the sole cause now of all the disunion, hatred, uncharitableness, and crime, which pervade the population of the earth; and that, as long as this ignorant and worldly religion shall be taught to mankind, it will be utterly impracticable to train men to love one another, or to have common charity for each other. And all who reflect, know, that until practical measures shall be devised to make them love each other in reality, and to have pure and genuine charity, without any unkindness in their dispositions for the whole family of mankind, there will be no hope on which to rest for the general permanent amelioration of the condition of our species. No: the happiness of man never can be secured, until he shall be trained from infancy in a knowledge of true religion, derived from the everlasting and unchanging laws of nature, undefiled by any errors opposed to those laws, which, when understood, and honestly acted upon, will be sure to produce universal love, charity, and harmony throughout the population of the world.

Do you ask me the source of this true and undefiled religion, from which these all-important practical benefits are to arise?—I reply,—from the daily and hourly declaration of all those facts around us which announce the never to be misunderstood laws of that Power at present hidden from our senses, but which our intellectual faculties assure us pervade and govern all the movements of the universe.

These facts declare that man is not formed to decide upon his own individual convictions or his feelings; that these ever have been, and from his nature, ever must be formed for him; that it is an error of the most lamentable description, involving the human race in unceasing perplexities and contradictions, and which engender all manner of injustice and crimes, to attempt to make him in any degree accountable for the one or the other; and that any institutions founded on notions opposed to these eternal facts, can lead only to the destruction of the rational faculties of the human race, and fill them, as they are at this day, with every evil thought and feeling, and stimulate them to the most perverse and injurious actions.

But are there no advantages derived from the religion which has been hitherto taught to the world to counterbalance these disadvantages?

I have been ardently engaged in searching for these advantages; I have been most conscientiously desirous of discovering where they could be found, and in what manner they act upon the human race. My search however for this purpose has been fruitless, for the more I have investigated the subject, the greater are the number of its disadvantages, and the advantages perpetually diminish; and these convictions, facts, compel me to receive contrary to my will and wishes.

All the advantages which I am enabled to discover from this religion in any part of the world are, that after it has confounded and perplexed the intellectual and moral faculties of the human race as I have described, and sown the germs of every evil thought and bad feeling, and injurious action, it does, by its artificial present rewards and punishments; by its promises to weak minds, of eternal rewards and punishments, which none but the most ignorant and simple can be made to believe; it does, I say, in some slight degree, counteract a part of the dire effects which the hatred, jealousy, revenge, malice, and every evil passion which it engenders, would otherwise make absolutely insupportable; and destroy even the desire for the continuance of life among any portion of mankind.

It first of all creates evil of an incalculable magnitude, but which we will suppose to be represented by a million; this having been found by experience too much for human nature to sustain, it has been relieved by rewards and punishments, threats and promises, to make the practice of the system it generates in some degree bearable; and these effect a counteracting relief which may be in comparison of the million denoting the extent of the evils which it brings upon mankind, be fairly estimated by a number considerably under one hundred.

Man, from want of the means of acquiring real knowledge from infancy, instead of spurious and false notions, is unconscious of the incalculable extent of his degradation, or of the miseries which he is condemned to endure.

And yet, my friends, neither priesthood or laity, patrician or plebian, ignorant or learned, poor or wealthy, or even the governors of the world, are benefitted by this wretched state of human existence! Yes, my friends, one and all are abject slaves to a false and artificial system of ignorance imbecility, rapacity, and crime.

Let us NOW, for ever, put an end to it, by reason and firmness and moral courage, directed by justice and untiring kindness to all who have the misfortune to be made our opponents.

I have thus very briefly, considering the nature of the subject, endeavoured to explain to the meanest capacity the advantages and disadvantages of religion, as it has been hitherto taught, in forming the character of man—as an individual, as one of a congregated mass, as one who is not, but who ought to be, a member of the great family of mankind, having a sincere affection for each of its members, and a pure and genuine charity for every variety of thought and feeling which nature and education have forced them to receive.

I ought now to explain to you the advantages and disadvantages of religion, as it has been hitherto taught, in governing the world; for the world has been governed under the direct influences of the religion which I have described. But your time upon this occasion will not admit of entering upon this also highly important part of the subject. It shall be entered upon at the first convenient season. Now for the application of these principles to practice.

You have been often told, my friends, that my views of human nature, and of human society, are visionary and impracticable, but you have been always told so by men who have been trained from infancy solely in imaginary notions, and who know nothing about the practice, beyond the common individual proceedings of domestic life, or some favourite theory regarding it, of some inexperienced modern political economist, who himself knows little of practice, beyond his books and his closet, and the immense store of useless, and very often mischievous, learning which his library possesses.

On the contrary, my life has been a life of continued practice directed by principles derived from or formed by, extensive practice. I attend, therefore, to the sayings of these men, many of whom are learned and well intentioned, as I would to those of a man born blind, who had been taught to believe he could give valuable knowledge respecting shades of colour to those possessing the full use of their eyes.

Those who are truly intelligent, practical men, know that the population of the world is woefully deficient in arrangements to give the rising generation a useful or good education, to give them beneficial employment, or to create sincere affection and pure charity among them. Until those who profess to be your teachers shall instruct you in the knowledge of the principles and practices by which you can attain these—the first and most important objects of human existence—they are not prepared to be your instructors; they only waste your time and talents in giving you much useless lore respecting antiquity, or some modern absurdities directly opposed to the every day experience of every reflecting practical man.

They think it practicable to well educate a human being, while, from infancy, they endeavour to force him to believe that he must think, feel, and act, contrary to his nature; that if he does not so think, feel, and act, he becomes an IMMORAL being, and that he will be ETERNALLY punished if he will not become an UNNATURAL BEING. This, my friends, is a sure and certain mode of compelling man to become an inconsistent irrational being, and they thus admirably succeed in making him to think and act from birth to death most irrationally.

And this is the high-sounding term EDUCATION which is now given, at the most enlightened era of the world as it is called, to all of human kind, or they are allowed to remain without any but BRUTE education. And as to the employment of the human race, under the direction of modern wisdom, allowing, as they term it, every individual to act right in his own eyes, while each one is well trained in ignorance, and no man has any real freedom of speaking his thoughts, or acting as he feels and knows would be beneficial for all, he is irresistibly carried forward in the midst of the irrational circumstances in which he is placed, to aid in making the already too rich more wealthy, and sinking the already too poor into a lower state of poverty.

These enlightened men of modern days, who say to the rich public (who, if they were really well-informed, could immediately, and beneficially to themselves, put an end to the poverty, or fear of it, which exists), leave human affairs alone; they will, sometime or other, right themselves; every thing is going on well; the wealthy are enjoying themselves, and are becoming daily more wealthy by the improved powers with which new mechanism aids the producer to toil for them, and at the same time to render it less necessary for the labourer to be paid as much as he had before for his labour. It is true that many of the producers will be starved to death for a few centuries under this system, and all of them will have continually increasing difficulties to encounter; but never mind that, the rich will always be doing well, and in due time every thing will find its level.

Yes, my friends, these economists are right, every thing will find its own level by wise measures or by violence. And their principles, if much longer continued, will indeed find their level, for they will be sure to lead to violence; while the principles and practices which I recommend for your adoption will remove all cause for, and therefore fear of, violence.

The absurdity of the manner in which the people of the united kingdom are now employed, can be equalled only by the absurdity of the folly which is forced into the minds of the population of the world from infancy, under the name of some sect or other of religion.

Then, my friends, we have been told through thousands of generations, and truly told, that the world will never be at peace, or in a rational state of existence, until the means shall be discovered and introduced into general practice, to make men love one another, and to have charity for one another.

I ask you, my friends, whether you think men have more charity and love for each other now than they had four, five, or six thousand years ago?

For my own conscientious belief is that they have much less. Two days ago I was told in company of some very respectable conscientious religious persons, and a clergyman of the Evangelical persuasion or sect, and by a very good, humane, and worthy Christian, who I am sure felt a deep interest in my conversion to his faith, that if I did not believe as he did, or if I continued to believe, as I publicly declare to all men I do believe, that I should be eternally burned in hell flames, and for ever tormented by the devil and his angels.

So, I thought, this is Christian knowledge and Christian charity in the nineteenth century. A pretty specimen this, truly, of credulity, imbecility, and inconsistency. To imagine, for one moment, that an Existence, said to be infinitely wise, good, and powerful, should create a being called man, and give him an organization which compels him to believe according to the strongest conviction made upon his faculties, and which belief he, of himself, has no power to change; and yet



for that belief, and this all wise, all good, and all powerful Existence, who gives belief and disbelief, shall punish the work of his own hands by torments which shall have no end!!

Yet, my friends, while from my inmost feelings I pitied the mental weakness of my host, I loved the man the more for the warmth and honesty of his expression, and for the deep interest which he evidently felt in my welfare and eternal happiness.

This party were of the class of minds, No. 1: they are amiable, possess the best intentions, will make many sacrifices to do good in their own way, and are what are called the best moral men in society; and this is the highest and best character that religion, as it has been hitherto taught, can create for man. And yet, my friends, you see it is full of the most glaring defects.

Now, if it be possible to make men love one another as they love themselves, and to imbue them from infancy with real charity, pure and genuine as it ought to exist in every created being, it must be effected through very different principles, and by a very different practice from any which the world has yet seen or known.

These heavenly results can be attained only through a knowledge of the religion of nature, the only religion that ever has been or can be true. And this religion, when it shall be developed to the world, and when it shall be fully understood, and when it shall be fairly and honestly applied to practice, will be found competent to make every man love his neighbour as himself, and to have like charity for others that he feels others, to be just, ought to have for him!!

When this religion, of high intelligence and perfect purity, shall be introduced, and not before, there will be "peace on earth and good-will to man;" then shall the lion lie down with the lamb, and war and famine and pestilence and poverty and evil speaking among men shall be known no more!

When next we meet, I will explain to you this religion of consistent principle and practice, that all men may fully understand it, and understanding its principles, may, without delay, introduce it into universal practice for the well being and happiness of the whole human race.

Mr. OWEN then proposed the following Resolutions; after which some persons, and particularly Mr. OSGOOD, attempted to address the Meeting against the reasoning of Mr. OWEN, but it was impossible for them to obtain a hearing:—

#### RESOLUTIONS.

1. That the thoughts and feelings of all men are by their organization, or human constitution, formed for them.

2. That the thoughts and feelings of all men create their will, and that the union of their thoughts, feelings, and will, in all cases, stimulate to action and form the moral character and conduct of every individual.

3. That consequently, it does not belong to the constitution of man, or the original nature of his constitution, that there can be merit or demerit in the opinions or feelings of a single human being.

4. That to force a belief of an opposite character, or that there is merit or demerit in the individual for his opinions or his feelings, is directly calculated to produce disorder and confusion over the world; to engender all manner of crime, and especially to render it impracticable to produce love and charity among the human race.

5. That therefore true principles in accordance with human nature, and all nature, are now imperatively demanded to relieve the world from ignorance and crime, and violent feelings of hatred and anger, threatening to exterminate those who hold opposing opinions in religion and policy.

6. That these principles declare that full and perfect liberty of conscience is the birthright by nature of every human being.

7. That consequently moral truth consists alone in the plain undisguised expressions of our real thoughts and feelings.

8. That moral truths, however, or the conscientious convictions of individuals, and the everlasting truths of nature, have no necessary connexion with each other, but are now generally opposed to each other.

9. That this opposition between the moral truth of individuals and the everlasting truths of nature, necessarily produce an irrational state of human existence.

10. That the unavoidable condition of this state of society is to disorganize all the rational faculties of human nature, and to convert them into wild and discordant imaginations.

11. That, in consequence, the human race is, at this moment, over all the earth, involved in universal perplexities, contradictions, and feelings directly hostile to their well-being and happiness.

12. That, every where, poverty, or an excess of injurious wealth abounds.—That ignorance and selfishness form the chief qualities in the character of every individual; and misery pervades the earth.

13. That this is the true state of society, which these fundamental errors have produced in all countries deemed the most civilized.

14. That, at this moment, this is the true state of the British Empire.

15. That there is no possibility of changing this lamentable condition of the human race, except by the discovery of the means by which moral truth, or the conscientious convictions that men are now compelled to receive from their birth, shall be, in every instance, made in full accordance with all the everlasting truths of nature.

16. That as moral truth is now in almost every instance directly opposed to all ascertained facts or real knowledge, the progress of the knowledge of facts, lately made by scientific men, will now enable us to unite all moral with all the everlasting truths of nature, and thus, out of mental and moral chaos, produce mental and moral order and harmony, and thereby obtain and secure, for the human race, that genuine charity, pure affection, and permanent happiness which the comparatively wise and good, in all ages, have darkly foreseen and foretold, would, at some future period, be the condition of mankind.

# MR. OWEN'S

## SUNDAY MORNING LECTURES

*On a scientific Arrangement of Society, founded on the Laws of Human Nature, and necessary to be generally known and adopted, before a superior State of Society can exist.*

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The Sunday Evening Lecture and Conversation, 7 o'clock.—Admission, Twopence.

On Thursday Evenings, at 8 o'clock, Non-Subscribers are admitted to, and may partake in, the Discussions of the Society, on payment of Threepence.

N. B. Twelve of Mr. OWEN'S Sunday Morning Lectures are just published, price Threepence each, and may be had as above, or of any of the Booksellers.

Mr. OWEN has also published,

"A NEW VIEW OF SOCIETY, or ESSAY ON THE FORMATION OF THE HUMAN CHARACTER,"—4th Edition, 1818.

TRACTS relative to the new View of Society. By JOHN BELLERS. REPORT to the Committee of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor. A BRIEF SKETCH of the Religious Society of People called Shakers, with an Account of the Public Proceeding in London in July and August 1817, connected with the Subject.—1818.

AN ADDRESS delivered to the Inhabitants of New Lanark January 1, 1816, at the opening of the Institution established for the Formation of Character.—4th Edition, 1819.

TWO MEMORIALS on behalf of the Working Classes; the first presented to the Governments of Europe and America: the second to the Allied Powers assembled in Congress, at Aix-la-Chapelle.—1818.

REPORT to the County of Lanark, or a Plan for Relieving Public Distress. A Quarto Pamphlet, Glasgow, 1821.

REPORT of the Proceedings at the several Public Meetings held in Dublin by ROBERT OWEN, Esq. on the 18th March, 12th April, 19th April, and 3d May, &c. &c.—Dublin, CARRICK and SON, 1823.

TWO DISCOURSES on a New System of Society, as delivered in the Hall of Representatives at Washington in the presence of the President of the United States, the President Elect, Heads of Departments, Members of Congress, &c. &c. The first the 25th of February, the second on the 7th March, 1825.—London: WHITING and Co. 1825.

THE ADDRESSES of ROBERT OWEN (as published in the London Journals) preparatory to the development of a Practical Plan for the Relief of all Classes without injury to any.—London: STEPHEN HUNT, 1830.

Mr. OWEN'S SYSTEM, as delivered in a Public Lecture by himself at the Freemason's Hall, Sept. 6, 1830. No. LXI. LXII. of THE UNIVERSAL PAMPHLETEER.

The following Works on the same Subject by Mr. MORGAN.

THE REPROOF OF BRUTUS, 8vo.

THE REVOLT OF THE BEES, 2d Edition.

DIAGRAM relating to the Formation of Character.

LETTER TO THE BISHOP OF LONDON ON THE SABBATH, 2d Edition.

THOMPSON ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH, 8vo.

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PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF COMMUNITIES.







