The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Lysander Spooner
The Deist's Immortality
and An Essay on Man's Accountability for His Belief
1834

Retreived on 2020-04-29 from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55a3c833e4b07c31913e6eae/t/55a52521e4b08dcc060bdbcf/1436886305889/Deist%27s+Immortality.pdf
Boston, 1834. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1834, by LYSANDER SPOONER, in the Clerk's office of the District Court of Massachusetts.

theanarchistlibrary.org

The Deist's Immortality

and An Essay on Man's Accountability for His Belief

Lysander Spooner

1834

Contents

The Deist's Immortality. 5
An Essay, On Man's Accountability For His Belief. 10

taken down for dead, (at three o'clock or later in the afternoon,) he, as soon, at the farthest, as the next night but one, (not "three days" after, be it remarked) and how much sooner we know not, returned to life, (as men are very apt to do who have been but partially executed,) and had the extraordinary courage to lurk about for several days, and shew himself, not openly to the world, but in the evening, and within closed doors, to some dozen who had before been his very particular friends. This is altogether the strongest and most material part of the evidence in the case,[2] and the question, which arises in relation to it, is, whether it be sufficient to sustain such an impeachment, as has been alluded to, of the character of the Almighty? — A question, which, if the march of mind continue, men will sometime be competent to settle.

[2] It will be recollected that no one of the twelve ever speak of having witnessed, or heard of, any ascent into heaven. Return

The Deist's Immortality.

Deists are led to believe in a future existence, by the consideration, that, without it, our present one would seem to be without aim, end or purpose. As a work of Deity it would appear contemptible. Whereas, by supposing a future life, we can imagine, in our creation, a design worthy of Deity, viz.. to make us finally elevated intellectual and moral beings.

They are led to this belief by the further facts, that our natures appear to have been specially fitted for an eternal intellectual and moral advancement; that we are here surrounded by means promotive of that end; and that the principal tendency of the education and impressions, which our minds here receive from the observation and experience of what exists and takes place in this world, is to carry them forward in that progress.

Again, — we are gifted with a desire of knowledge, which is stimulated, rather than satisfied, by acquisition. We are here placed in the midst of objects of inquiry, which meet that desire; and there is still an unexplored physical, mental and moral creation around us. Here then are supplied the means of our further intellectual growth. We are also the constant witnesses of actions, objects and occurrences, which call into exercise our moral feelings, and thus tend to to improve our moral susceptibilities and characters. Analogy, and all we know of nature, support the supposition, that, if we were to continue our existence in the universe, of which this world is a part, we should always be witnesses of more or fewer actions, objects and occurrences similar to these in kind. Here too then we may see evidence of means and measures provided and adopted for our future moral culture. Our natures therefore are capable of being eternally carried nearer and nearer to perfection solely by the power of causes, which we see to be already in operation. The inquiry therefore is a natural one-what means this seeming arrangement? Does it all mean nothing? Is a scheme capable of such an issue as our creation appears to be, and for the prosecution of which

every thing seems prepared and designed, likely to be abandoned, by its author, as its commencement? If not, then is the evidence reasonable, that man lives hereafter.

This evidence too is direct; it applies clearly to the case; it is based on unequivocal facts, such as have been named; it is not secondary; it does not, like that on which Christians rely, depend upon the truth of something else which is doubtful.

An argument against the probability that this theory of Gods intention to carry men on in an intellectual and moral progress, will be executed in relation to alt mankind, has been drawn from the fact that many appear to have chosen, in this world, a path opposite to "this bright one towards perfection;" and it is said to be reasonable to suppose that they will always continue in that opposite course. Answer-There is, in every rational being, a moral sense, or reverence for right. This seminal principle of an exalted character never, in this world, becomes extinct; it survives through vice, degradation and crime: it sometimes seems almost to have been conquered, but it never dies; and often, even in this world, like a phenix from her ashes, it lifts itself from the degradation of sensual pollution under which it was buried, and assumes a beauty and a power before unknown. How many, whose virtuous principles had been apparently subdued by temptation, appetite and passion, have suddenly risen with an energy worthy an immortal spirit, shaken off the influences that were degrading them, resisted and overcome the power that was prostrating them, become more resolutely virtuous than ever, and had their determination made strong by a recurrence to the scenes they had passed. This has happened in multitudes of instances in this world.

It should be remembered that nearly or entirely all our errors and wanderings from virtue here, proceed from the temptations offered to our appetites and passions by the things and circumstances of this world. The sensual indulgences, which follow these temptations, at length acquire over many a power, which, while exposed to those temptations, they would probably never shake

verse a Hell — a Hell for a portion of the beings to whom he was about to give life — a Hell for his children — a Hell that should witness the eternal reign of iniquity, misery and despair — a Hell that should endlessly perpetuate the wickedness and the wo of those who might otherwise have become virtuous and happy; that he then, after having created men, and given them a nature capable of infinite progress in knowledge and virtue, by placing them in a world full of enticement and seduction, deliberately laid the snare, made the occasion, fed the desire, and instigated, invited and seduced to the conduct, which he knew certainly would issue in the moral ruin of that nature, and the endless wretchedness of the individuals: and, finally, that all this was right, that such a Being is a good Being, and that he merits from us no other sentiment than the highest and purest degree of filial and religious emotion.

And what is the evidence, on which we are called upon to believe all this ? Why, it is this. Some eighteen hundred years ago, a few simple individuals, from among the most ignorant class, in a most unenlightened, superstitious and deluded community, where a supposed miracle was but an ordinary matter, where miracle-working seems often to have been taken up as a trade, and where a pretended Messiah was to be met, as it were, at every corner, said that they had this story from one of the wandering miracle-working Messiahs of the day, who performed many things, which appeared to them very wonderful; although they admit that these same things, as far as they were seen by others, (and nearly all the important ones, except such as were studiously concealed, were seen by others,) did not, to those others, appear very wonderful or unusual. They also expressly admit that, of those who had once been induced to follow him, nearly all very soon changed their minds in relation to him, and deserted him. They also, by themselves deserting him when he was apprehended, virtually acknowledge that their own confidence in him had then gone to the winds, and would never have returned, had it not been, that, after having submitted to a part of the usual forms of an execution, and being

If he would not, then, according to the best judgment, which the perceptions he has given us will enable us to form, he must be what I will not name.

But this is not all. The Bible requires of a certain portion of mankind, not only, that they believe it a revelation from God, but that they violate their consciences in order to believe it. For example, by requiring all men, without exception, to believe it or be damned, it requires the believers in the Koran and the Shaster to renounce those books as false. This it is impossible for them to do, unless they first investigate the evidences against their truth. Now, I think no candid man will pretend, either that those believers would not feel as much horror at the supposed impiety of disbelieving those books, as a Christian does at that of disbelieving the Bible, or that it would not require on their part as great a struggle with their consciences to go into the investigation of the evidences against the truth of those books, as it would on the part of the Christian to go into the investigation of the evidences against the truth of the Bible. Yet the Bible, by demanding of them that they believe it, virtually demands that they thus violate their consciences in order to go into such an investigation as is necessary to lead them to disbelieve those systems, which they now revere as too sacred to be doubted; and it demands this of them too on the threatened penalty of eternal damnation.

If there be any conduct more wicked than any other which can be conceived of, that, which is here ascribed to Deity, must, it appears to me, exceed in wickedness any other that the human mind ever contemplated. Its wickedness is, in fact, no less than that of hereafter punishing men through eternity, for not having done in this world that which they most religiously believed to be wrong.

And what is it to believe the Bible, that men should merit the everlasting vengeance of the Almighty for not believing it ? Why, setting aside its secondary absurdities and enormities, it is to believe in these giant ones, viz.., that when Deity created an universe, in pursuance of a design worthy of himself, he created in that uni-

off. But here we see the beneficent interference of our Creator, for when we are removed from this world, we are removed also from the influence of those particular temptations, which have here mastered us. We have then (without supposing any thing unnatural or improbable) apparently an opportunity to set out on a new existence — released from those seductions, which had before proved too strong for our principles-having also the benefit of past experience to warn us against the temptations which may then be around us, and inspired by a more clear developement of the glorious destiny ordained to us.

If many have chosen and resolutely entered upon a course of virtue while in this world, and while exposed to all the temptations which had once acquired a power over them, is it not natural to suppose that the opportunity offered to men by an exchange of worlds, will be embraced by all whose experience shall have shewn them the weakness, unhappiness and degradation of a course opposite to that of virtue?

But since many are removed from this life before their moral purposes are decided by their observation and experience of evil, may we not suppose, that, to effect that object in such, and to strengthen those purposes in all, enticements and temptations will be around us in the next stage of our existence ? And who knows whether, if those temptations should ever become too strong for our virtue, the same measure of removal may not be repeated again and again in our progress-at each advance, a new and wider horizon of God's works, and a more extensive developement of his plans, opening before, and corresponding to, our enlarged and growing faculties-our intellectual and moral powers nourished and expanded by such new exhibitions of his wisdom, benevolence and power, as shall excite new inquiries into the principles, measures and objects of his moral government, and call forth higher admiration, and purer adoration, of his greatness and goodness? Was ever a thought more full of sublimity ? A thought representing all rational beings as possessing the elements of great

and noble natures, capable of being, and destined to be, developed without limit — a thought representing Deity, in the far future, as presiding over, not merely an universe of matter, or such limited intellects as ours are at their departure from this world; but as ruling over, occupying the thoughts, and inspiring the homage, of a universe of intelligences intellectually and morally exalted, and constantly being exalted, towards a state high and perfect beyond our present powers of conception.

Compared with these views and prospects, how puerile is the heaven of Christians — how enervating to the mind their languishing and dreamy longings after a monotonous and unnatural bliss. Many of them do indeed believe in the eternal progress of the soul-but they obtain not this belief from the Bible. It was the much scoffed at theology of reason and nature, that taught to them this doctrine, which is, above all others connected with the future, valuable to man while here, and honorable to Deity.

The impression, made by the representations of the Bible, is, that men are removed from this world to a state, in which their intellectual faculties will always remain the same as they were immediately after their entrance thither. They are there represented as eternally praising Deity for a single act, viz.. their redemption — an act, which, if it could be real, could have been performed only in favor of a part of the human race, and which could, neither from any extraordinary condescension, benevolence or greatness in the act, entitle Deity to an homage in any degree proportionate to what he would be entitled to, if the theology of reason, on this point, instead of the theology of Christianity, be true. H ow absurd too is it to suppose that Deity, who must be supposed to have willed the existence of our homage towards him, should will only that which should spring from so scanty a knowledge of his designs, and which should be offered by intellects so incapable of appreciating his character, as Christianity contemplates.

Finally the Christian's heaven is an impracticable one, unless God shall perform an eternal miracle to make it otherwise. The na-

their eternal happiness or misery to depend, and yet that he has made such an one, and has made it in such a manner, that men may reasonably disbelieve it to be genuine?

Even if we attribute men's unbelief to the perverseness of their dispositions, still, the greatest of sinners are the very ones whom this system professes to be more especially intended to save — and would these then be left unconvinced ? How absurd is it to suppose that Deity would go so far as to violate the order of nature in order to save men of perverse minds by bringing them to a knowledge of the truth, and that he should then fail of doing it by reason of the very obstacle, which he had undertaken to remove. To say that he has done all in his power to convince men, is to say, that, in a comparatively momentary period from their birth, minds of his creation have become too powerful for him to control. To say that he has not done all in his power, is to attribute to him the absurdity of adopting means for the purpose of accomplishing the greatest object (in relation to this world) of his moral government, when he must have been perfectly aware that those means would be insufficient.

Is it credible that, if God have made to men a communication, on a belief in which depends all their future welfare, he would have interlarded it with so much that is disgusting and improbable, as that the whole would be disbelieved, rejected and trodden underfoot, by well-meaning men ? On the contrary, would he not have made it so probable as to have carried conviction to every mind that could be benefited by it? Was he not bound by every principle of parental obligation to have made it self evidently true? Ought he not, when such tremendous consequences were at stake, and if need there were, to have written this communication over the whole heavens, in letters of light, and in language that could not be misinterpreted, that man of every age, nation and colour, might read and never err? Would he not have completely established, in the mind of every accountable being, by a sufficient and immoveable proof, the truth of every syllable essential to their salvation ?

disprove that fact, than they do that men's hearts or intentions are intrinsically wicked. But Christians believe the contrary, and simply because it has been dinging in their ears from their childhood; because they have habitually read it in what they supposed the word of God, from a period prior to the time when they were capable of judging of men's characters; because they have thus been taught to attribute every wrong action of men to the deplorable wickedness of their hearts; and because they have been taught to consider it a virtue to look upon their own and others' characters, through the dingy medium of the Bible.

The humiliation therefore of believing the Bible, is principally the humiliation of believing a detestable falsehood for the sake of holding one's self in abhorrence — an humiliation calculated to destroy that self respect, which is one of the strongest safeguards of virtuous principles — an humiliation, to which no person ought to submit, but into which many of the young, the amiable and the innocent have been literally driven.

Again. The facts, that many honest, enlightened and religious men have disbelieved Christianity; that many, who saw the supposed miracles, disbelieved it;[1] that the inconsistencies of the Bible have given rise to hundreds of different systems of religion; that every sect of the present day, in order to support its creed, is obliged to deny the plain and obvious meaning of portions of the Bible; and that the truth or importance of almost every theological doctrine contained in it is denied by one sect or another, which professes to believe in the inspiration of the book itself; if they are not proof that this pretended light from God is but the lurid lamp of superstition, are, at least, sufficient evidences that a man may reasonably disbelieve it to be what it pretends to be, viz.., a special revelation of luminous truth. But is it credible that Deity has made to men a communication, on a belief or disbelief in which, he has made

[1] John 12–37 — "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him." Return

ture of our minds is such that they cannot always dwell upon, and take pleasure in, the same thought or object, however glorious or delightful it may be in itself. — There is in them an ever-restless desire of change, and of new objects of investigation and contemplation, and it is by the operation of this principle that our eternal intellectual advancement is to be carried on. But Christianity offers to us, in its promised heaven, one prominent subject only of reflection and interest — a subject, which, if it were real, although calculated perhaps to excite gratitude for a time, could never, without the aid of a miracle, operate upon our present natures so as to produce an eternal delight.

But it will probably be said that our natures will be so changed, as to be fitted to forever receive pleasure from the same source. Answer 1st. Such a change would be a degradation of our present natures, and that we cannot believe that Deity would ever cause. Answer 2d. If our natures are to be so essentially changed as always to rest satisfied with one subject of contemplation, to always receive their highest and constant pleasure from one fountain, and to have their intellectual thirst forever quenched, we should not then be the same beings that we were. Answer 3d. Such a change in, or rather annihilation of our mental appetites, is inconsistent with our further progress, because the principle, which is to urge us on, will then be removed-therefore a belief in the Christian's heaven is inconsistent with a belief in the eternal progress of the soul.

The theory of successive existences is rendered probable, by the obvious necessity of having our situations, and the objects of investigation and reflection, by which we are to be surrounded, correspond to the state of our capacities. The same condition, which, like this world, is stilted to the infancy of our being, would not be best adapted to the improvement of one who had existed for a series of ages.

Further — it is difficult to account for the temporary character of our present existence, otherwise than by supposing it the first

of a series of existences. The idea that it was intended as a state of probation is one of the most absurd that ever entered the brains of men. It is absurd, in the first place, because the fact, that so large a portion of mankind are removed from it before their characters have been deter-mined by influences calculated to try them, is direct evidence from Deity himself that he did not intend it for that purpose; and, in the second place, it is absurd, because the utility of a state of probation is not the most obvious thing in the world, when it is considered that the consequence of one is admitted to be, that a part of mankind become eternally miserable and wicked, whereas, without one, it must be admitted that all might become such beings as I have previously supposed them designed to be.

An Essay, On Man's Accountability For His Belief.

The Bible threatens everlasting punishment to such as do not believe it to be true-or to such as do not believe that a certain man, who grew up in the town of Nazareth, was a Son of the Almighty! Is it just to punish men for not thinking that true, which is improbable almost beyond a parallel? If not, the Bible defames the character of Deity by charging him with such conduct.

Is our belief an act of the will ? If it were, the threat might operate as a motive to induce us to believe, or to persuade us to make up our minds that we would believe. But no one pretends that a man can believe and disbelieve a doctrine, or think it true and false, whenever occasion seems to require.

Our minds are so constituted that they are convinced by evidence. Sometimes too they believe a thing, and in perfect sincerity too, without being acquainted with any real evidence in favor of its truth. Such a belief comes naturally of the impressions, which the minds of some persons receive from the circumstance that the thing is generally believed by others with whom they are

theless be intrinsically only a sort of moral negative — he would not be at heart positively wicked.

But the very reverse of the doctrine of intrinsic wickedness is true of every man living, for every man's character is more or less positively good — that is, he has some regard to right — and that regard is as inconsistent with wickedness of heart, or a desire to do wrong, as love is with dislike. — In a large portion of mankind, this regard to right is one of their cardinal principles of action, and shows itself to be too strong to be overcome by any but an unusual impulse or temptation. Now is a man, who, as far as he knows, and as far as he thinks, means to do right, whose general intentions are good, and who is generally on his guard lest he should do wrong, to stultify his intellect, and discredit the experience of his whole life, in order to believe a book, written two thousand years ago, in scraps by various individuals, and whose parts were collected and put together like patchwork, when it tells him that be is a "desperately wicked," depraved and corrupt villain ? A man might as well tell me that I do not know the colour of my own skin, or the features of my own face, as that I do not know the moral character of my own intentions, or, (if theologians like the term better,) of my heart-and he might as well tell me that my skin is black, or my eyes green, as that my inclination is to do wrong, or that my heart is bad. He would not, in the former case, contradict my most positive knowledge any more directly than in the latter.

Were I to say that all men's bodies were corrupt and loathsome, every one would call me a person who had been in some way so far deluded (and what greater delusion can there be?) as that I would not believe the evidence of my own senses. Yet, had I always been told by my parents, my friends, and by every one about me, and had I read in a book, which I believed to be the word of God, from my earliest years, that such was the fact, and that corporal substances were above all things deceitful, there can be no doubt that I should have partially believed it now, or, at least, during my childhood and youth. Still, my senses, and my experience do not more clearly

They are accustomed to say that the doctrines of the Bible are too humiliating for the pride of men to acknowledge. But Deists acknowledge as strong religious obligations, and as pure moral ones, as Christians. As for the humiliation of believing Christianity, there certainly is nothing more humiliating in believing that Jesus performed miracles, or that he was prophesied of before his coming, than there is in believing any other fact whatever. If it be humiliating to believe one's self that wicked animal, which the Bible represents man to be, it is because it is contrary to nature and reason to be willing to consider, ourselves wretches worthy of all detestation, especially when our own knowledge of the moral character of our intentions gives the lie direct to any such supposition. Every human being knows, or may know, if he will but reflect upon the motives which have governed him, that he never in his life performed a wrong act simply from a desire to do wrong. No man loves vice, because it is vice, although many strongly love the pleasure which it sometimes affords. Men are induced to wrong actions by a variety of motives, and desires, but the simple desire to do wrong never inhabited the breast, or controlled the conduct, of any individual. Yet in order to prove that men's natures are in the slightest degree intrinsically and positively wicked, it is necessary to prove that individuals are, at least, sometimes, influenced by a special desire of doing wrong. To prove that men are led, by any other desires, to commit wrong actions, only proves the natural strength of those desires, and the comparative weakness of their virtuous principles, or, in other words, it proves the imperfect balance of their propensities and principles — an imperfection, which, of course, ought to be guarded against, because it often leads men to do wrong, and which may need, though not deserve, the admonitory chastisement which God applies to men-but it does not prove any positive wickedness of the heart. So that, even if a man were (as no man ever was) entirely destitute of all regard to right, still, if he had not any special desire of doing wrong, whatever other desires he might have, and to whatever wrong conduct they might lead him, he would never-

acquainted, or from the fact that it has long been believed by others. These circumstances, although they can hardly be considered as evidence, yet have the effect of evidence in satisfying many. There is a fashion in religion, by which men's minds are carried away. We may see it every where. Such, it will be admitted on all hands, is the case in Pagan countries, and it is also more or less the case in civilized and enlightened nations. Although the evidence of Mahomet's having been a Prophet of God, is probably insufficient to convince any enlightened, impartial mind, possessed of common strength, still, it entirely satisfies the mind of a Turk of the strongest intellect. The reason is, that the little real evidence is aided in its influences by the associations and impressions of his whole life.

When the mind is thus completely satisfied of the truth of a thing, is there any obligation of morality, which requires a man to look farther? If it were so, men could never safely come to a conclusion on any subject; it would be their duty never to consider any timing to be settled as true. But God has so constituted our minds that when they are convinced, they rest satisfied until their doubts are excited by opposite evidence or impressions. Until then it is not in the power of man to doubt. If therefore there be any moral wrong in resting satisfied in a belief, of which the mind is convinced, there is no alternative but to say that God, by having so constituted our minds, has made himself the author of that wrong.

One, who is entirely satisfied of the truth of a matter, al-though he be in reality mistaken, feels no moral obligation to inquire further into its evidences, and, of course, violates no moral obligation by not inquiring — therefore he cannot be morally guilty. In such an instance, if there were any wrong on the part of any one, it could be only on the part of God for having so constituted the individual, as that, in such a case, he would have no moral sense to direct him aright.

It is only when a man's doubts are excited, that his moral sense directs him to investigate. Supposing then a Pagan or Mahometan were to feel entirely satisfied that his system were true, is there any

moral obligation resting upon him to spend his time in inquiring into other systems ? Is he not acting uprightly in considering his faith as certain until his doubts are excited ? Is it then just to punish him? If not, then Jesus could never have been authorized by Deity, in the manner he imagined, to threaten punishment to such an one on account of his belief.

It is so likewise, when men are entirely convinced that a narrative, for example, is untrue — they have then no moral sense that commands them to inquire into its evidences, and, of course, do not violate their moral sense in not inquiring. Christians feel no moral obligation to investigate the evidences of Mahometanism, because, without any investigation, they are convinced that it is untrue. Mahometans are in the like condition in respect to Christianity; and whether Christianity, or Mahometanism, or neither, be true, the Mahometan is as innocent on this point as the Christian.

If a man read the narratives of the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, and his mind be perfectly convinced that the evidence is insufficient to sustain the truth of such incredible facts, his moral sense does not require him to go farther-it acquits him in refusing his assent. So if he be not entirely satisfied, and his moral sense dictate further investigation, and he then make all which he thinks affords any reasonable prospect of enlightening him, and his mind then become entirely convinced of the same fact as before, his conscience is satisfied, and he is innocent.

How many have done this, and have become Deists. We have the strongest evidence too, that, in their investigations, no unreasonable prejudice against Christianity has operated upon their minds. Vast numbers of men, living in Christian countries, where it was esteemed opprobrious to disbelieve Christianity — men, whose parents, friends and countrymen were generally Christians, and whose worldly interest, love of reputation, love of influence, and even the desire of having bare justice done to their characters, must all have naturally and strongly urged them to be Christians; and whose early religious associations were

all connected with the Bible — men, too, of honest, strong and sober minds, of pure lives and religious habits of thought, have read the Bible, have read it carefully and coolly, have patiently examined its collateral evidence, and have declared that they were entirely convinced that it was not what it pretended to be-that the evidence against it appeared to them irresistible, and that by it the faintest shadows of doubt were driven from their minds. Their consciences rest satisfied with this conclusion — their moral perceptions tell them that their conduct in this matter has been upright — they know, as absolutely as men can know any thing of the kind, that if they are in an error, it is an error, not of intention, but of judgment, not of the heart, but the head; and yet the sentence of the Bible against such men is, “the smoke of your torments shall ascend up forever and ever!” The enormity of the punishment, and the monstrousness of the doctrine, are paralleled by each other, but are paralleled by no doctrine out of the Bible, in which enlightened Christians believe. Men can hardly be guilty of greater blasphemy than to say that this doctrine is true. And yet the Bible employs these unrighteous and fiend-like threats, to drive men to believe, or to close their minds against evidence lest they should disbelieve, narratives and doctrines as independent of, and as unimportant to, religion and morality, as are the histories of Caesar and Napoleon-narratives, which set probability at defiance, and doctrines, which do injustice to the characters of God and men.

Many Christians say the reason, why men do not believe the Bible, is, that they do not examine it with an humble mind — and an humble mind, as they understand it, is one which has prepared itself, as far as it is able, by prayers, and fears, and a distrust of its own ability to judge of the truth of what it ought to believe, to surrender its judgment, to suppress its reasonings, to banish its doubts, and then believe the Bible on mere assumption, in spite of the incredibility of its narratives, the enormity, impiety and absurdity of its doctrines, and the contemptible character of its evidences.