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ON

BLASPHEMY.

A

Reprint of an Article Contributed

to the

"Westminster Review" for July, 1824,

Occasioned by the Prosecution of Richard Carlile.

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PREFACE.

The pamphlet to which these words are a preface, is a reprint of an article that appeared in the third number of the Westminster Review—date, July, 1824. Although the article is unsigned, there can be no doubt that it was written by John Stuart Mill. It was called forth by the prosecution of Richard Carlile; and Alexander Bain, in his criticism on Mill (p. 33), refers to the article in question as one of the thirteen contributed to the Westminster Review between the years 1820 and 1829. At such a time as this, when such living sceptics as Professor Huxley, Professor Tyndall, and Matthew Arnold, are afraid to speak, let this dead man’s words put them, if possible, to shame.
"About this time there arose a set of men who denounced the prevalent system of religion as superstitious and idolatrous; who believed themselves destined to be its reformers, and aimed at reducing it to certain simple principles; who pursued this object with fearlessness and perseverance, although they had to encounter the opposition both of public opinion and of the constituted authorities; and many of whom, when tried for blasphemy, scrupled not to repeat, in the face of their judges, the obnoxious expressions for which they had been arraigned, and were about to suffer. They gloried in addressing themselves to the multitude; and the sympathy which was excited by the proceedings against them induced many to listen with a favorable ear to their opinions."

In looking over the manuscripts of a person lately deceased, a slip of paper dropped out containing the above passage. There were no marks by which to ascertain whether it was original, or an extract; and much speculation was immediately excited among the persons present about the parties to whom it referred. One said, without hesitation, that it described the first Christians; another, contended for the authors of the Reformation from popery; a third held that it was a correct notice of Carlile and his deistical associates; and a fourth observed that it applied alike to all, and that so nearly allied, in one point of view, were glory and infamy, servitude and criminality, the Catholic Calendar and the Newgate Calendar, a niche in St. Peter’s Church and a dungeon in Dorchester Gaol.

It is assuredly no recommendation of the recent prosecutions of unbelievers in Christianity that their occasion, their object, the manner in which they have been met, and the effects which they have produced, are capable of being described in terms which accurately narrate the conduct, sufferings, and success of those who are so deservedly the objects of veneration and
gratitude. Christianity can be under no obligations to those who, while they profess to support her cause, enable her enemies to say, as she recounts the tale of her early struggles with persecution, mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.

Yet if such prosecutions be necessary for the well-being of the community; if the prosperity of England require that some martyrs should be made by the religion for which so many have been made in former times; then, by all means, let them continue and be multiplied, and let Christianity, which benefits the country in so many other ways, also benefit it by the sacrifice of its own character for mercy, toleration, and consistency. It is, however, well worth considering whether we be reduced to this dilemma.

Does the welfare of a country indeed demand that attacks upon the prevalent religion of that country should constitute a legal offence? Of course we mean by "attacks," speaking or writing against it, and not molesting the persons, invading the property, or interrupting the worship, of its professors. The Christian, whether Catholic or Protestant, cannot answer this question in the affirmative; for even if he should go so far as to say of those who accomplished the subversion of Druidism, or the reformation from Popery, that they were criminal, although, out of their evil, Providence enabled the good of making him a Christian and a Protestant, neither of which he could else have been; yet must he allow that the Apostles preached and wrote against Judaism, as taught by the rulers of the Jews, and against that idolatry which was the established religion of the Roman empire. He cannot maintain that they were rightfully incarcerated; or that the suppression of their doctrine had been practicable, would have been a public benefit.

The legislators of England cannot answer this question in the affirmative; for, by voting grants, or affording facilities to societies for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts, to missionary societies of various descriptions, and to Bible societies (for what is the Bible but a continued denunciation of idolatry in all its forms?), they are lending their sanction to attacks upon the prevalent religions of half the nations of the earth. This is not done as a mode of annoying countries with which we are at war; as the forgery of assignats may have been rewarded, while that of bank-notes brought men to the gallows. It is considered a moral and philanthropic act; not a suborning of crime, or a violation of the law of nations. A British subject would be punished for firing into a Turkish vessel; but he is not punishable for attacking the captain and sailors with Bibles or tracts, which, if they read and believe, will make them apostates from the faith of Mahomet, and blasphemers of the Koran. While on terms of amity with the Sublime Porte, the laws of England
restrain us from despoiling them of their property, but not from
despoiling them of their religion.

Whoever believes that Christianity is of divine origin, and
consequently more benignant in its tendency than any other
religion, must also believe it to be for the interest of a large
majority of the inhabitants of the earth that their present
religious systems should be assailed and overturned for that to
be planted in their stead.

Unless men had acted on this principle, the most absurd and
debasing superstitions which have existed must have been per-
petuated; and unless they continue to act upon it, those which
now exist must be perpetuated. An eternal limit is fixed to the
progress of the human mind in reference to the most important
subject upon which it can be exercised. All unchristian coun-
tries are condemned to remain unchristian, and the introduction
of that which we esteem our own best blessing is declared worthy
of punishment at their hands, as an invasion of their safety and
their happiness.

The existing religion of any country either is, or is not, sus-
ceptible of improvement. If the former, allowing it to be the
province of the government to decide what is an improvement,
and how it should be made, the freest discussion of its merits
should be authorised as the best mode of furnishing materials
for a reformation. Only thus can be ascertained what will,
and what will not, abide the test of reason and utility, and
where alteration, omission, or addition is expedient. And if the
latter, if it be already absolutely perfect, still should the attempt
to controvert it be lawful, for the result can only be a more general
and vivid perception of its worth, and consequently the strength-
ening and extension of its influence.

External conformity with the requisitions of a religious sys-
tem is the utmost that can ever be enforced; and, constituted as men
are, it is all the uniformity that is ever likely to exist, except in
the very lowest stage of mental cultivation. How much it costs
to produce this uniformity, and what it is worth when produced,
are points pretty well ascertained by history; and so ascertained
as to render argument unnecessary.

The question may then be narrowed to whether Christianity
be an exception to the general rule. Is it, upon the whole, for
the good of the community that the denial of the truth of Chris-
tianity should be an offence against the law?

Nothing can be more desirable, nothing could be more felici-
tous, than for every member of a civil community to be com-
pletely under the influence of Christian principles. If every
one loved his neighbor as himself, and did unto others as he
would that they should do unto him, and practised that universal
benevolence which beholds a brother in every human being,
whatever his color, country, or religion, the result would undoubtedly be a sum of happiness immensely larger than any nation ever has realised, or perhaps ever will. But whatever Christianity may be in the New Testament, or may have been in its earlier days, this is not the practical Christianity of our age and country. The Church of England, the most approved manufactory of believers, turns out few finished specimens of this pure workmanship. Our spiritual machinery produces, in general, a very inferior article; and still less can be expected from the power which is merely temporal. Penal laws can have very little efficacy for such a purpose. They may make the “outward sign” imperative, but they never can bestow the “inward grace.” An Act of Parliament for the abolition of human depravity would have very little chance of being carried into execution. This species at least of radical reform is remote and chimerical. It is useless to legislate for an object which the very nature of things renders unattainable. Whether we take the theological or the philosophical estimate of man, it is alike hopeless to speculate, even with the wisest employment of all the powers of Church and State, on annihilating unbelief, and making every Christian a paragon of goodness. Legislation must proceed on the supposition that, do what it may, the country cannot be made completely Christian, however devoutly to be wished may be that consummation.

The effective prohibition of a public denial of Christianity, and the prohibition if made at all is meant to be effective, is then morally certain to produce a quantum of hypocrisy commensurate with the infidelity which it coerces into outward conformity. How this hypocrisy should improve the national character, or increase our national prosperity, or in what way it is more to be desired than so much open and honest unbelief, is out of our power to imagine. Several reasons may be assigned for regarding it as the greater evil of the two. First, granting that in some instances a defective faith may be the source of vicious conduct, still hypocrisy is a vice in itself—a mean, detestable, and polluting one, and to the full as likely to produce and polluting unbelief to generate a brood of vices with all the rapidity of the geometrical ratio. The avowed unbeliever may become a bad man; the hypocrite is a bad man. Had Sheridan made Charles Surface a sceptic, he still would not have levelled him with Joseph. It is pleasant to see people’s faces, though they be ugly ones, than always to meet them in masks; and more comfortable for them as well as for ourselves. Sincerity is one of the last things on which penalties should be levied. The great spiritual physicians who would vaccinate the nation with hypocrisy to prevent the eruption of infidelity are not acting on a true Jennerian analogy. The preventive disease is too loathsome to be volun-
tarily induced for any such purpose. Again, the prohibition of avowed unbelief increases the most tangible evil ascribed to infidelity, viz. that it enfeebles, or destroys, the security of an oath. "Where," demands Mr. Whitehead, "among such as have abandoned the gospel, are we to look for the binding sanctity, and the security of those oaths which depend entirely upon a reverential belief of it in the persons who take them? How could public justice ever be safely administered, with the aid of the gospel sanction alone, between the assertions of infidel and of believing witnesses?" There are not many witnesses, we apprehend, the credibility of whose testimony is much enhanced by the introductory ceremony so irreverently performed in our courts of justice and in other places. A character for veracity, and a safe passage through the perils of a skilful cross-examination, would be satisfactory make-weights with an intelligent jury for an unsworn infidel testimony against an unsupported Christian deposition. Let it be, however, that the oath of an unbeliever is worth no more than his word, and that his word is worth but little; surely the ends of justice are most in danger from a system which, by making avowed unbelief an offence, keeps both judge and jury in the dark as to what class of witnesses they have to deal with. In proportion as the difference is magnified which believing that Christianity is true or false makes in the value of men’s testimony, exactly in that proportion is it desirable that a conviction of its falsehood should, where it exists, be legally avowed. The unbeliever would then come into court quasi unbeliever, and experience would soon ascertain whether any and what deduction from his credibility should be made on that account. And, if unbelief be so intimately connected with vicious conduct as is represented, then to identify its votaries with Christians by the penal suppression of their dissent must tend to lower the practical standard of Christian morality, both in appearance and in reality. If Satan be numbered among the sons of God, we shall strike a lower average of the moral worth of the assembly. The evil communications of the hypocritical few will corrupt the good manners of the believing many. Christianity will obtain a less triumphant verdict when judged by its fruits; and the leaven which it covets will leaven the whole mass with an immoral taint. The interdiction, too, of open denial and direct attack will compel unbelievers to employ that insidious and undermining system which is so much more dangerous, because it is less obvious, and more difficult to encounter. The man who buys a book professedly Deistical, which carries hostility to Christianity on its title-page, and goes manfully into the argument against revealed religion, knows what he is about. He reads it with his mind on the alert; and if he makes a parlor guest of such a book, it is because he
thinks it not dangerous for his family; and not because both he and they are imposed upon by specious appearances, and a forged letter of introduction. The case is very different when the history, the novel, the poem, the metaphysical essay, the scientific treatise, are employed as vehicles of scepticism: here distorting a fact, there neutralising an argument; never allowing the object, but always pursuing it; sapping the foundations of faith without noise, and leaving the building to fall of itself ("thou canst not say I did it"); leading the reader, almost unconsciously, to the relinquishment of opinions, without having ever gone into a full investigation of the evidence, because that evidence has been frittered away in detail without having ever been fairly met, and avowedly controverted. Against this no vigilance can guard, and it greatly augments the difficulty both of escape and refutation. This is not the best form of that hostility which will exist in some form or other. There is little wisdom, little friendliness to religion, in making its adoption compulsory on the unbeliever. If his flag were recognised, he would be much less disposed, if at all, to fight under false colors. And finally, unless the effective prohibition of a denial of Christianity be accompanied with an equally effective suppression of any diversity of interpretations of Christianity, the evil is probable of a great corruption of Christian doctrine. It is useless to say that the whole shall not be controverted, if every part may, separately, be assailed and destroyed. The conflict will, in many cases, be transferred from the evidence of Christianity to the meaning of Christianity. The hostility which must not vent itself in contradicting a proposition will be exercised in the perversion of that proposition. Should avowed infidelity be slain by the sword of the law, a thousand heresies would soon swarm in its carcasse.

Were infidelity effectively prohibited, a very wholesome check upon the conduct of the professors of Christianity, and especially upon that of the clerical order, would be removed. Whatever influence upon the mind may be ascribed to the future judgment of a superior Being, it cannot be denied that the present judgment of our fellow-creatures has an effect too salutary to be despised, or lightly parted with. A zealous writing and publishing unbeliever is as formidable to a bishop as an attorney-general to a political libeler. The honor of the Church is better looked after when all her faults are "set in a note-book, learned and conn'd by rote, to cast into her teeth." Whatever contempt may be poured upon the assailant, the highest dignity or the poorest Methodist parson, if the attack be on the score of immoral conduct, would rather that it were not made, and will sacrifice something to prevent its being made with justice. Men linked together by a common profession are, by that very fact, ren-
dered more liable to degeneracy. We continually witness the perpetration of iniquities by bodies of men, from which the individuals of whom they are constituted would shrink with abhorrence. There is also a conventional sanctity about the priest, an ex officio parity, which is very apt to satisfy his own conscience, and dim the observance of his followers, and which requires, for the good of both, that some who are untouched by the spell should overlook their proceedings, and report things as they are. Christianity originally discharged this useful office for heathenism, and made it much more moral in self-defence. Protestantism stood in the same relative position towards Popery. There was a great reformation amongst those who remained in the old Church as soon as a new Church sprang up to watch and accuse it. The new Church begins to grow old, and may not be the worse for a flapper. The service is not the less valuable even should it be rendered in a less amiable temper (if that be possible) than heretofore. The morally deformed may still be transformed, though by the agency of an evil spirit. If it be good that there should be the devil as an "accuser of the brethren" in the other world, by parity of reasoning it must be good that there be the infidel to accuse them here. Whatever be the character of his vocation, it is for the public interest that he should labor in it. The abuse is easily prevented, as bearing false witness may be punished without suppressing bills of indictment. The toleration of a variety of Christian sects may perhaps be alleged, as sufficient to provide this wholesome stimulus to good works in each and all. Their hostility is undoubtedly keen enough to make them pretty severe censors upon each other. But common faults may produce mutual indulgences, which the unbeliever would not feel, and out of which they may be shamed by his exposure. With all the uniformity and individuality of the Catholic Church, there were plenty of parties in it before the Reformation, but their beneficial agency, in this particular, was very feeble compared with that which was afterwards exercised by their common enemy. It would be some benefit to Christian sects should the presence of avowed unbelievers only teach them to moderate their mutual animosities, and estimate more correctly their common principles; but we are much mistaken in the perfection to which the Christian world has attained, if it would not do more than this, and lay open some common failings also. Besides, the general denial of the truth of Christianity can only be prohibited on principles which imply the expediency of not tolerating sectaries. Very many heresies are "blasphemous and damnable," as well as infidelity. They are on the authority of the ablest and soundest divines, as pernicious to the morals here, and to the soul hereafter, and their open toleration, consequently, as inconsistent with the well-being of a
All the reasoning against the denier of Christianity applies equally to the denier of its essential doctrines; and what are essential doctrines depends upon which sect is uppermost. The lowest grade of heresy, whatever it may be, succeeds to all the antipathy which else would light upon infidelity. When faith had sunk no lower than to the creed of the Homoiousians, the Homoiousians persecuted them to death as blasphemers. That terrible term will always designate those who have least faith comparatively, whether positively it be much or little. Where such beings are allowed to exist, it means unbelievers; wanting them, it means Unitarians; wanting them, it means Arians; wanting them, it means Arminians; and wanting them, it means Protestants. It always catches those who are hindmost in the race of faith. Till Christians lose the knack of using it there can be no toleration unless some who are called blasphemers be tolerated. When Unitarianism was unknown, Non-conformity was a crime. Till infidelity began to assume a popular form, Unitarianism was a crime. The good policy of toleration, as to each, has only been discovered when, from an extreme party, it became an intermediate one, and the odium theologicum was transferred to the new comers. So long as we keep this tiger somebody must be thrown to it for food, and in case of need its stomach will digest a heretic as easily as an infidel.

If, then, there be no consistent medium between allowing that all theological tenets should be controverted and prohibiting the discussion of any, the question takes a yet simpler form and is of still easier solution. That freedom of discussion has generally the happiest effects on the mind and manners of the people, on the progress of intellect, and the diffusion of knowledge; or, in other words, that it is a powerful means of increasing happiness, will scarcely be disputed. That all religions, unless Christianity be an exception, ought to be subjected to such discussion, if the public be good be consulted, will also be allowed: or if not, the arguments have been already indicated by which, we think, that proposition is established. An exemption for Christianity can only be contended for, on one or all of the following assumptions: 1st, That it is the only true faith; 2nd, That it is the only faith by which men can be saved; and 3rdly, That it is a faith eminently useful to society in its immediate effects. Let us inquire how far the premises will warrant the conclusion.

Christianity is the only true faith in our opinion and that of the great majority of our countrymen, but the works to which the firm and general conviction of that fact must, in great measure, be ascribed, would never have been written had its denial been effectively suppressed, and will cease to be read when it ceases to be controverted. The defence pre-supposes
the attack. A Tindal produces a Leland, and a Paine calls forth a Watson. If it be a great public good that the multifarious proofs of the Christian religion should be fully collected, and ably stated, and clearly arranged, and simplified, and adapted to the modes of thinking of all classes; and that they should reappear from time to time, and be read with interest, and produce that intelligent conviction, which if not alone valuable, is yet most valuable: then is it a great public good to allow the gospel to be controverted, for without this, little or nothing of the kind will be done; religion divorced from reason will sink into a mere prejudice, losing the power of truth as the proofs of its truth are unregarded, and becoming feeble for resistance and worthless in its influence. Such even Christianity always has been, and always must be where discussion is suppressed.

It is with theological truth, as with all other truth: legislative interference can have no effect in increasing either the extent or the force of conviction; but may have much in diminishing both, by the prevention of that full investigation from which they result. Besides, every opinion is truth to him who believes it. The unbeliever likes his truth as well as we like our truth. What he reckons our error annoys him, in like manner as what we reckon his error annoys us. He thinks his arguments ought to convince us, as we think our arguments ought to convert him. Now, although we are in the right, yet experience has shown, that it is very useful even for those who are in the right, to act as if there remained the possibility of their being in the wrong. They are wise to leave the means of correction in existence, even for the very remote chance of that very improbable possibility. Such caution would have been very serviceable for many who were full as confident as we are of possessing the only true religion, but whose religion is out of fashion now. If it cannot be that we have occasion to provide, against that danger, there is yet another, and that is, the assumption of our own infallibility, which is a sufficient evil, and much the same in its pernicious effects, whether our religion be true or false.

That Christianity is the only true faith by which men can be saved, is a position of which we share the doubts which some divines have expressed, although they will assuredly give way to the demonstrations of the advocates of that orthodox tenet, when advanced. There is no objection to arguing the question on that principle. It is very laudable in the legislature to compel all subjects to be saved, even by the heaviest penalties; but unless a hypocritical faith be as availing for that purpose as a sincere faith, the attempt can only inflict the present evil, and not accomplish the future good. Now is it for the public weal that all men who are not to be saved, and who will not be
dungeon into hypocrisy, should be banished or hanged; for to that we must come at last, unless they be tolerated? Such measures would deprive the state of many valuable citizens whom it can ill afford to spare. As the law now stands in this enlightened country, reckoning the Book of Common Prayer, or episcopal authority, for "one long act of Parliament," the exclusion from salvation falls not only on those who deny Christianity, but on all who deny a single iota of the Athanasian Creed. They are, of course, very bad men; they must be so, as they deserve everlasting punishment; and this circumstance confirms what we are told of the evil tendency of heresy and infidelity. Our position is only, that, however bad they may be, their badness is perfectly consistent with their being useful and excellent citizens, and therefore not of a description to be legally proscribed. Hume and Gibbon are damned, according to law; and yet it is to be presumed that they "did the State some service," for they were allowed to dip their fingers in the public purse. There was Sir Isaac Newton, master of the Mint, and the glory of our country; there was Dr. Lardner, the Presbyterian heretic, whose "Credibility of the Gospel History" is a kind of theological "Principia," at least in the Deistical controversy: they too are damned according to law, but their names and works are of great worth in Christian orations. Then there is Mr. W. Smith, a very useful member of the House of Commons; and Mr. Robert Owen, with his parallelograms, who, though he may not succeed in squaring the circle of society, yet is the very personification of benevolence: we should be loth to spare them, or any like them, though they have both said enough of their opinions to show that they will be damned according to law. Without, therefore, intimating the least doubt of the correctness of the information possessed by his Majesty's Ministers as to the terms of final salvation, on which they have the benefit of bishops for advisers, we submit that both beasts and men who will have no place in heaven, may yet be by far too useful on earth for the nation to wish for their extinction.

The remaining plea for prohibiting a denial of Christianity is the benignant character of its temporal influence. But we have already shown that its influence is circumscribed and deteriorated by that prohibition. That would happen even if the prohibition were completely effective, which it is not in the nature of things for it to be. So far as it is effective it makes hypocrites: when it ceases to be effective martyrs are produced. It then becomes a powerful means for spreading infidelity. The course recently pursued in this country has been the most hostile to Christianity which could possibly have been devised. It has elevated men from the obscurity in which, if unprosecuted, they must have always remained, to make them the champions and the victims of
unbelief, and formidable champions only because they were victims. It has made infidelity more popular than it ever was before, or than it ever can be when let alone. These facts are a volume of argument.

Deistical works have only of late years been addressed to the multitude, because it is only of late years that the multitude has begun to read. Before the French Revolution scepticism was one of the privileges of high life. Religion was reckoned a vulgar prejudice, much beneath the dignity of a gentleman, and utterly incompatible with the pretensions of a wit. The complete change of fashion which has taken place is chiefly owing to the alarm excited by that catastrophe. Christianity has been warmly patronised in the hope that it would help to keep people quiet, teach them to pay their taxes without grumbling, and restrain them from subverting the established order of things. This naturally drew upon Christianity the suspicions of those who were most discontented and desirous of change, predisposed them to doubt or deny its truth, and prompted them to commence a theological conflict in that public arena, where even the political conflict which already raged was a comparative novelty. To the "Rights of Man" succeeded the "Age of Reason," and with the publication of the "Age of Reason" commenced the regular Deistical persecution which has now been carried on for some years, with the usual results of persecution. A bookseller, named Williams, was prosecuted and convicted, for publishing the first and second parts of that work in 1797, soon after its appearance, and suffered twelve months' imprisonment in Coldbath Fields. Daniel Isaac Eaton, for publishing the third part, in 1812, was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment and the pillory; and in the following year escaped another sentence, by death, for the publication of "Ecce Homo," the author of which, a Mr. Houston, was imprisoned in Newgate for two years, and fined two hundred pounds. In October, 1819, Carlyle was tried for publishing Paine's Theological Works, and Palmer's "Principles of Nature," and condemned, for the first, to two years' imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, and a fine of one thousand pounds; and for the second, to one year's imprisonment, and a fine of five hundred pounds, and to find securities for good behavior for life, himself in one thousand pounds and two others in one hundred pounds each. His wife and sister have both been since convicted of similar offences, and suffered heavy sentences. Upwards of thirty other persons, many of them journeymen to Carlyle, and the rest small booksellers, have also been subjected to fine and imprisonment in various degrees of severity. At the late Old Bailey Sessions there were three cases in which the punishment for selling a single copy of an obnoxious work


was three years' imprisonment in Newgate, and security for good behavior for life in one hundred pounds. The experiment has been fully and fairly tried of the efficacy of prosecutions; the severity of the sentence has been gradually increased, and the number of indictments multiplied; and what are now the results?

One has been a tenfold, perhaps we might almost say a hundredfold, increase of the circulation of the obnoxious publications. Notwithstanding the original prosecutions, we understand from persons engaged in bookselling that it has never been difficult to procure "The Age of Reason." There was always a steady though very limited demand sufficient to carry off a moderately-sized edition in the course of several years. In December, 1818, Carlile ventured to do that openly which had been done surreptitiously. He brought out an edition of Paine's theological works, with all the advantages of advertisements and placards and a previous discussion in the newspapers. The edition consisted of a thousand copies, and was completely sold off in about two months. That is to say, one hundred in the month which elapsed before the determination to prosecute became known, and nine hundred in the month which followed. From that time to the present the sale has averaged four thousand per annum. Now the first month's sale of a book which had been well advertised, and which had also excited a newspaper controversy, would in ordinary cases be at least half its probable sale for a twelvemonth. Take it at one-fourth, we then owe to the prosecutions the circulation of upwards of twenty thousand copies of "The Age of Reason"; and as among the poorer classes it is notorious that there are several readers to one purchaser, it may be estimated that at least one hundred thousand persons have thus been led to the perusal of that work under circumstances highly favorable to its making an impression on their minds. What confirms our ascription of this increase solely to the prosecutions is that there has been no such demand for Paine's political works, but that a similar extension of the sale has taken place with every work which has been made the subject of prosecution, whether political or theological.

Another result has been to enlist on the side of infidelity that sympathy which human nature will generally feel with those who are, or seem to be, persecuted. People will not take their notion of the culpability from the severity of the punishment, but, where the latter is striking, will be led to question whether the former was so great as they might otherwise have imagined. "Pity is akin to love," and when their sense of injustice is roused by the treatment of the accused they are in a fair way for regarding him as innocent, and even as meritorious. An
obvious attempt to put a man down on account of his opinions raises up for him coadjutors who would else never have thought or cared about those opinions. A little army of volunteer shopmen has kept up the sale of Carlyle's publications, and still keeps it up. Every one enters the house well knowing that his next removal will be to gaol, but knowing also that he shall have a successor. The Vice and Constitutional Societies and the Attorney-General have co-operated for a most portentous creation; they have generated the fanaticism of Infidelity. Its spirit has wholly changed, and now exhibits all the proselyting enthusiasm of a sect. The means which have formed this power cannot be the best to look to for its destruction.

A third result deserves notice, although it is only what would be anticipated by those who have observed the tendency of violent controversies to drive the parties to extremes in their opinions, especially where one of them is backed by political authority. If a persecuted man modifies his notions it will almost infallibly be to distance them still more from those of his persecutors. Dorchester Gaol has converted Carlyle, it appears, from Deism to Atheism. "The Age of Reason" was his creed at the time of the trials, but now his motto is "The Politics of Paine and the Theology of Mirabeau." So by attempting to suppress the denial of Christianity on principles which admit the existence of a god and a future state, we have occasioned the open profession and zealous promulgation of Atheism, a thing unknown in America, where there are no prosecutions for blasphemy. A goodly work indeed, and a hopeful course for those to pursue who are really desirous to preserve and extend the influence of Christian principles.

Let the abettors of these prosecutions look for a moment at the primum facie case which they are creating against Christianity. The history of all ages and nations shows that man is a religious animal, and will generally have a religion of some sort or other; Christianity is allowed even by its enemies to be one of the best systems of religion, if not the most excellent; it descends to the present generation from their forefathers, and the rising generation is educated in its faith; it has been and is professed by the most excellent men, defended by the most learned, and recommended by the most eloquent; we have an established clergy of about 18,000 educated men for its defence, and a dissenting ministry of about 8000 more, who have thus far a common cause; our public seminaries are universally Christian; independently of the conditions attached to filling public offices, the state of opinion is such as to render avowed or even suspected unbelief anything but favorable to a man's progress in society; religious periodical publications are sent forth in immense numbers—the sale of the Evangelical and Methodist
magazines is upwards of twenty thousand each monthly, and they can scarcely be more than a moiety of the whole; and we have Bible, tract, and prayer-book societies, whose annual distribution is literally reckoned by tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and millions. It may be mentioned as a sample that in the year of Carlile's trials the Religious Tract Society added a million and half of tracts to its issue, which was four millions in the preceding year; the average revenue of this Society is about £9,000, that of the Christian Knowledge Society above £50,000, and that of the Bible Society about £100,000. Now if religion with all this extensive aid, all these immense advantages in addition to its proper evidence, cannot stand its ground without prosecutions for its support, we hesitate not to say that it ought to fail. Were it the grossest imposture that ever existed, here is force enough to enable it to fight a long and hard battle with truth and common sense. If with these fearful odds there be the slightest occasion for penalty and imprisonment to secure its ascendancy, falsehood may be at once branded on its front. Those who contend for their infliction are the real missionaries of infidelity, and by far its most successful propagators.

It is often said that fair and decorous argument against Christianity ought to be allowed, but not ribaldry, contumely, reviling, blasphemy, etc. Such language having been held in Parliament and on the Bench may seem entitled to some attention. If it were uniformly held, much of the foregoing argument might have been spared; but that is far from being the case. On the trial of Mr. Wright, the Lord Chief Justice is reported to have said, "the defendant was not called on to answer any reasonable or fair discussion on the truth of Christianity in general, or any of its particular tenets. The law permitted that every subject, however sacred, should be freely, yet moderately and temperately discussed; but it would not yield its protection to gross and scandalous calumnies on the established faith." And again, "If the jury thought these passages were only parts of a fair and temperate discussion of the sacred topics to which they had reference, they might acquit the defendant; but if they considered them as gross and indecent attacks on religion, they must find her guilty." Declarations to the same effect have been repeatedly made during the more recent trials; yet if they rightly expound the Common Law, it is at variance with the statute; for that of 9th and 10th William and Mary enacts: "That if any person having been educated in, or at any time made profession of the Christian religion within this realm, shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advising speaking, deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures to be of divine authority, he shall etc." Nay, this language is at variance with the precedent con-
tually referred to, of Rex v. Woolston, when the offence was not a direct denial, but an allegorical interpretation of the New Testament, which, in the opinion of Lord Raymond, "struck at the very root of Christianity"; the court declared "they would not suffer it to be debated whether to write against Christianity in general, was not an offence at common law." As this, however, was law made by the judges, we should not object to its being repealed or mitigated by them; only let them know their own minds upon the subject. Notwithstanding the legal allowance of a temperate discussion of the truth of Christianity declared on Mrs. Wright's trial, the same judge had declared, on that of Carlile, that "the court was bound not to hear the truth of the Christian religion questioned:" and that "if the defendant wished to produce authors to show that the Christian religion might be denied, that could not be allowed." The charge on that trial completely exemplifies the vacillation we are exposing. The following passages are quoted from it in the order in which they appear in the Times newspaper of October 15th, 1819. The Lord Chief Justice said "that he had then (during the defence) determined, and he did not regret that determination, that it was not competent in a Christian court, in a court of law, to rise up and say that the Christian religion was not a religion of truth." Soon after this he expressed himself as follows: "Another topic of defence, strenuously, and in some degree properly urged, was the danger of restraining free discussion and free inquiry. God forbid that any such restraint should take place! But they had to distinguish whether the present publication was an instance of the free inquiry and discussion, or a work of mere calumny and ridicule." Again: "The Christian religion forming part of the law of the land, it was not fit that he (the defendant) or any other person, should openly deny its truth." And to complete the second vacillation, the summing-up concluded thus: "The whole question turned on the character of the work, and that must now be collected from it as a whole. Was it a fair and candid inquiry? Look at those epithets applied to the Scripture, "a book full of lies," "a dangerous heresy," "an impious falsehood." These were all specimens, and he had found none other to soften their effect, or that indicated any other object, than to defame the Bible and bring it into universal disbelieve and contempt. So thinking it was his duty, sitting where he did, to express his opinion to the jury: and that opinion was that this publication was a work of calumny and scoffing, and therefore an unlawful publication." We say nothing of the legal trap in which a defendant might complain of being caught, if he acted upon the one set of dicta, and was condemned by the other. We say nothing of the disingenuousness of claiming merit for tolerating argument, while there is a pros-
pect of obtaining a conviction on the score of calumny, and still retaining as a dernier ressort the illegality of everything which tends to the disproof of Christianity. Our object is merely to point out the inconsistency and mistiness of the language held by the highest authorities on this subject; and our inference is that the line between argument and reviling is too difficult even for legal acuteness to draw; that he who disbelieves and attempts to disprove Christianity can put his arguments into no form which may not be pronounced calumnious and illegal; and that therefore the only mode of securing free inquiry from that restraint, at the bare idea of which his lordship was so laudably and piously horror-struck, is to tolerate the one as well as the other: a conclusion which, as it may not be generally agreeable, we proceed to strengthen by other considerations.

To declare that an act is legal, but with the proviso that it be performed in a gentle and decorous manner, is opening a wide door for arbitrary discretion on the one part and dissatisfaction on the other. The difficulty is greatly increased when the act itself is offensive to those who sit in judgment upon the manner of its performance. Suppose that it were made expulsion from the House Commons to address the Chair ungracefully. What a clamor there would be for the unconditional allowance or prohibition of speech! Could the distinction be accurately ascertained it would be hard to debar the man of ungainly habits from doing that which he might think required of him by duty to his constituents and his country. But it is infinitely more unjust to debar a man who may have a comprehensive and vigorous, though a coarse and vulgar, mind from publishing his speculations on theological topics because his style partakes of his own rudeness and lacks the polish of that of Hume or Gibbon. If the proposition that Christianity is untrue may be legally conveyed to the mind, what can be more absurd than to say that to express that proposition by certain undefined and undefinable selections of terms shall constitute a crime?

So far as we can understand the distinction set up in this case between discussion and reviling, it seems to be this: the one is a mere statement of a fact or argument, the other an expression of the indignation or contempt excited in the writer's mind by the doctrine to which he is opposed. Now the reason why men dislike doctrines is that they discern, or fancy they discern, an evil tendency in those doctrines. If such a tendency be demonstrated to the conviction of the reader he will participate in the writer's dislike, whether the latter have expressed it or not. And if the reader be not so convinced, all that the writer says of his own dislike will go for nothing, or more probably make both himself and his argument disagreeable. It is surely inexpedient that such an appendage should constitute all the difference be-
tween crime and no crime, the enjoyment of the common right of citizenship, and a ruinous sentence of fine and imprisonment: and the more so on account of the extreme difficulty of avoiding some expression of feeling in the discussion of moral subjects. There is no mathematical indifference in theological controversy. The believer has it not, nor ought he to exact it of the unbeliever. The expression of indignation at what is deemed false and perilous should be a crime in all or in none.

The Bishop of St. David's describes the Unitarians as "God-denying apostates and heretics," "blasphemers," "not entitled to the name of Christians," who "wilfully falsify the truth." "The Book of Homilies," the yet authoritative manifesto of the Church of England, describes the Catholic worship as far exceeding gentile idolatry "in all wickedness, foolishness, and madness"; characterizes its practice as "the blasphemous bold blazing of manifest idolatry," and wonders that its votaries should not "at the least have chosen them a time of more darkness, as meeter to utter their horrible blasphemies in." ("Against Perils of Idolatry," part iii.) Christian blasphemers then are tolerated, as is Christian reviling. Let Justice be even-handed.

Where the feelings are so deeply interested as they always must be on theological subjects, it will necessarily happen that the party attacked will call that reviling which the party attacking deems fair discussion. In the debate on the presentation of a petition against the prosecution of unbelievers, July 1, 1823, Mr. Wilberforce observed that "he entirely denied the truth of the argument which the honorable member (Mr. Hume) had drawn from the employment of missionaries abroad. Those individuals never proceeded to insult the prejudices of the natives of other countries by any gross and indecent reflections. They adduced nothing but fair and sober argument to effect their purpose." Now what think the Hindoos of these temperate and unimpeachable reasoners? In the first number of the Brahmanical Magazine, published at Calcutta in 1821, in both Bengalee and English, is the following account of them: "During the last twenty years a body of English gentlemen, who are called missionaries, have been publicly endeavoring in several ways to convert the Hindoos and Mussalmans to Christianity. The first way is that of publishing and distributing among the natives various books, large and small, reviling both religions, and abusing and ridiculing the gods and saints of the former." Mr. Wilberforce's character of the missionary publications is probably correct. It is looking at the same object from different positions that makes all the difference. Suppose one were to describe the orthodox party in the Church of England as "a generation of vipers," and another to characterise the established
priesthood as "hypocrites," "fools and blind," men who "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel," what would Mr. Wilberforce call it? It would not be true, but that is not the question. The objects of such accusations never admit their truth; nor would similar expressions indicted would an English court allow evidence of their truth to be adduced. Or suppose that in any publication of the present day it were affirmed that "we know that" the god of the established religion "is nothing in the world." Would not this be reviling? Let such men as Mr. Wilberforce reflect on the lengths to which their principles would extend in a different age and country, and under a different establishment.

The effect of even just censure is commonly to rouse indignant feelings, much more so of that which is known to be altogether groundless. The more abusive an unbeliever is, the less likely is he to make an impression even on the most uninformed. If unable to judge of the controversy in any other way, they will decide on the same principle as the honest countryman, who was present at a disputatio in Latin, and knew which of the disputants had the worst of it by his falling into a passion. Indeed, in proportion to the want of information is generally the disposition to resent any attack upon opinions which are held in reverence. That disposition is sufficiently strong in all, to make every appearance of insult operate as a deduction from the force of the argument with which it is blended. To allow the publication of infidel works, cleanse of passages which are liable to that imputation, especially while Christian works undergo no such expurgatory process, would obviously place unbelief in a far more advantageous position than it now occupies. So to contrive, that in any controversy, all the writers on one side should publish only the effusions of pure intellect, thoroughly weeded from all indications of human frailty, of prejudice and passion, of misrepresentation, acrimony, and reviling, would be, to give them a most undue and undesirable advantage. Their arguments might be few and feeble, but the tone of candor and moderation in which they were urged would give them adventitious force. They would glide along like the American serpent divested of its rattle; no more nuisance from their noise, but more danger of their bite.

A libel is a crime because it tends to a breach of the peace. With personal libels this may be the case, but there is something rather preposterous in applying this position to theological discussions. Who is likely to be embittered to outrage by the publication of the "Age of Reason"? The Christian—one of whose objections to that work is that it denies the obligation of loving our enemies, and doing good to them that despitefully use us, and turning the right cheek when the left is smitten? Was it ever
apprehended that any of our bishops, priests, or deacons, would invite Mr. Carlyle to meet them at Chalk Farm? Or is the danger on the other side from his converts? If so, it can only be aggravated by proceedings which tend to increase their numbers, and inspire them with the zeal and hatred of a sect persecuted for its opinions. Tendencies are best ascertained by facts. The increased circulation of Deistical works commenced in 1810, and the country has certainly not been since more disturbed than in the five preceding years, nor have we heard of breaches of the peace actually traced to their influence. Were it so, Government is quite strong enough to keep the peace, without resorting to the very questionable and, on other accounts, inexpedient means of persecution for opinions.

The primary argument for these prosecutions, that they are needful to protect the poor and ignorant, has been kept in view through the foregoing remarks, and we think refuted. If their effect be to excite sympathy with the persons, and give increased circulation to the works prosecuted; if the poor have that ability to judge, which is implied in the enlarged supply of religious publications for their use; if the clergy, established and non-established, have any tolerable portion of that zeal, talent, and respectability of character, which is supposed in order to justify the expenditure of supporting their profession; if the poor and ignorant be not less likely than others to be irritated by the language of insult towards their opinions, and soothed by that of respect; then are the prosecutions not necessary for their defence, nor do they act as a defence at all, but, on the contrary, multiply the existing perils and create new ones. If fears still remain, give them education. Let them have it as extensively and as rapidly as possible. Everybody allows that there is no danger now to the educated class. Let there be no other class. This may not be an immediate remedy, but it is the only effective and permanent one. It is already in active operation, and its force must continually increase. But at the same time that popular education holds forth a pledge of the triumph of truth over error, the redemption of that pledge can only be postponed and impeded by the suppression of discussion. To give the one and attempt by legal violence to withhold the other, to enlighten the poor and yet continue to treat them as if they were in the grossest ignorance, must infallibly make matters worse. When the appetite of knowledge is excited, to refuse its gratification is most perilous. We borrow a few sentences on this point from a work which, on account of the continuity of the argument, can scarcely be quoted without injury to its merits, but which we are glad of this opportunity to notice, being convinced that it only requires to be generally read for its author to take his place in the very first rank of the intellectual
benefactors of his species: "The universal education of the poor, which no earthly power can prevent, although it may retard it, is loudly demanded by the united voices of the moralist and politician. But if the people are enlightened at all, it is unavailing and inconsistent to resort to half measures and timid expedients; to treat them at once as men and as children; to endow them with the power of thinking and at the same time to fetter its exercise; to make an appeal to their reason and yet to distrust its result; to give them the stomach of a lion and feed them with the aliment of a lamb. The promoters of universal education of the poor ought to be aware that they are setting in motion, or at least accelerating the action of, an engine too powerful to be controlled at their pleasure, and likely to prove fatal to all those parts of their own systems which rest not on the solid foundation of reality. They ought to know that they are necessarily giving birth to a great deal of doubt and investigation; that they are undermining the power of prejudice and the influence of mere authority and prescription; that they are creating an immense number of keen inquirers and original thinkers, whose intellectual force will be turned in the first instance upon those subjects which are dearest to the heart and of most importance to society."—"Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions," p. 148.

Independently of the vagueness of the law itself under which unbelievers have been tried, which law seems to be nothing more than inference from the fact that several judges have declared Christianity to be parcel of the common law; there have been various circumstances attending its enforcement which were ill-adapted to promote the avowed object. Arguments for the truth, and panegyrics on the excellence of a system of religion, do not read pleasantly in a trial, during which the accused is authoritatively silenced should he attempt their refutation. Not that courts of justice are meet places for theological discussion; but if they be so employed to cast odium on the opinions of a defendant, it seems reasonable to men unlearned in the law that he should have equal privilege of speech. Simple interruption is, however, a much less evil than that of being repeatedly fined by the judge during a defence, as was the case on Davison's trial before Mr. Justice Best. And even this is more tolerable than being tried by the very jury which, only two days before, had convicted a defendant for the sale of the same work, as in the case of Barkley, and whose deliberating for three-quarters of an hour upon their verdict, although they had not hesitated at all upon the former trial, has very much the appearance of a conflict between what consistency was supposed to require of them on the one hand, and the effect of the eloquent and admirable plea for toleration delivered by the defendant's counsel, Mr.
Hill, on the other. And this is still less offensive than the manner in which the Zetetic Society in Edinburgh was treated. That society consisted of persons whose opinions were too free for the kirk, and whose habits were too orderly for the tavern. They neither printed, sold, nor publicly delivered anything hostile to the religion of their country, but associated to form a library, read a philosophical or theological essay in turn, and discuss its subject and arguments. A few strangers came to their place of meeting and occasionally spoke; the first being allowed under the notion that it was not legal to exclude them, and the second, when claimed, to avoid the imputation of unfairness. Every variety of opinion was allowed, and the preservation of order, temper, and the necessary restrictions as to time, were all the restraint imposed. Would that every infidel, and every believer too, in the British empire employed his Sunday morning as injudiciously! Thus they went on for about two years and a half, till November 1822, when, in the middle of a debate, in rushed the sheriff with a number of policemen, took down their names, searched them all for books and papers, seized their little library—part of which being in his opinion libellous was never returned—and carried off to prison the president and two members, who were detained for three days and then liberated on bail, with an accusation of blasphemy hanging over their heads for six months. This was the more formidable, as they were not aware, any more than the Lord Advocate himself or almost anybody else at the time, that the Scotch Acts against blasphemy were totally repealed by 53 Geo. iii., c. 160; although it merely altered the law as to England, in favor of Unitarians. The administration of justice assumed a yet more portentous form during the recent trials at the Old Bailey, when not only was a prisoner obliged to close his defence prematurely in consequence of physical exhaustion, a few moments for refreshment being refused him, although the court was so fatigued as to adjourn immediately after the trial, but the sentence varied from six months' imprisonment to three years for the very same offence, as the court happened to be pleased or displeased with the course of argument pursued by the defendant. But the inflictions on Carlyle himself surpass all the rest in severity. Fines to the amount of £1,500 and imprisonment for three years; his stock and furniture immediately seized, and, with a trifling exception, neither sold nor restored; his wife and sister suffering with him, and in addition to the privation of liberty, enduring treatment for which, if a tenth of what he says be true, brutality is too soft a term; his stock again seized as it again began to accumulate; and his imprisonment prolonged (apparently it will last for life), because he cannot pay fines when the very means for doing so have been wrested from him. Is
this a process either to make him, or others, admire the benignant
spirit of that religion, whose name is, we had almost said, blas-
phemously connected with it? This man's moral character, be it
remembered, is wholly unimpeached. A public scrutiny of it has
been dared, and no doubt private ones have taken place. His
sole offence is the publication of two books which assail
Christianity, it may be in an abusive, but therefore in an ineffect-
ive manner, and which nobody is compelled to read. Why,
according to the usual treatment of offenders, Mr. Carlile might,
for this amount of punishment, have revelled in crime. He might
have debauched half the ladics' boarding-schools in London by
the introduction of obscene pictures. He might have committed
adultery with all the tradesmen's wives in Fleet Street. He
might have practised cheating and robbery in twenty different
forms. He might have been repeatedly guilty of manslaughter,
if the circumstances were not of a very aggravated description.
In short, he might have been that nuisance to society which
divines say unbelief tends to produce; but which, if it be pro-
duced, is easily and effectively suppressed by the legislature,
whose powers are vainly or mischievously exerted against mere
opinion.

To the phrase, so frequently parroted, that Christianity is part
and parcel of the law of England, it is difficult, if not impossible,
to affix any definite meaning. We can make no sense of it, but
what is fatal to the purpose for which it is repeated. Chris-
tianity consists of facts, doctrines, and precepts. A profession of
belief in the divine authority of the whole may be made part of
a code; but unless belief were a voluntary act, or falsehood a
Christian duty, such an enactment would be rather the exclusion
than the incorporation of Christianity. Legal authority may be
conferred on its precepts—at least, so far as they relate to actions;
but Carlile in Dorchester Gaol, stripped of his property, and after
the three years of his confinement, to which he was sentenced,
have expired, kept there till he shall pay £1500, is rather a
singular commentary upon doing as we would be done by. Is
the Old Testament part of the law as well as the New? If so,
we gain a clear definition of blasphemy, and that is more than our
law books can furnish. The Mosaic Code has but one clause upon
this offence (Leviticus xxiv., 14-16), and that restricts it to cursing
the deity—an offence presupposing belief in his existence—and
malignant feeling towards him; and, therefore, an offence, the
perpetration of which is scarcely possible in the present state of
opinion, either by believer or unbeliever. Nor did the Mosaic
Code require any belief in a future state, without which, it is now
affirmed, society cannot exist. The Sadducees, who denied that
doctrine and publicly argued against it, were not only tolerated
but had their full share of the government. And because this is,
in some sense or other, parcel of our law, it follows that penalties should be profusely levied on all who hold their opinions. Will intolerance fly from the Old Testament to the New? From a system of severity to one of mercy? The author of the "Address to Deists" follows her there, and we shall give some extracts from his summary of this part of the common law of England. After commenting on the total absence in the New Testament of any warrant for having recourse to any other means than those of argument and persuasion, even with the most virulent opponents, he thus proceeds:—

"It is sufficient to exculpate Christianity from the charge of intolerance, to show that the New Testament contains nothing to authorize its adherents to inflict punishments on its opposers; but it is expedient to add that if it says nothing in favor of such a course, it says much against it. To employ secular force for its advancement is equally inconsistent with the example of Christ, and with his instructions.

"When the apostle Peter was representing the propriety of suffering patiently, even when suffering for doing well, he enforced his ideas by a reference to the personal demeanor of him who was regarded by his readers with the highest reverence. "Hereunto," says he, 'were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps.' And what were the particulars of that example thus exhibited for their imitation? The apostle continues thus: 'Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.'

"In his case offences against the individual were offences against religion. Christ and Christianity are inseparable. He who reviled the redeemer dishonored the doctrine which he delivered, the miracles which he wrought, and the god from whom he came. 'He that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.' But though offences against him were attended with this extraordinary aggravation, he has left us an example of the weakest endurance. Was it not, it may safely be asked of any man who has once read the memoirs of Jesus, given by the evangelists,—was it not a trait in his character, which perpetually forced itself upon your attention, that he was remarkably patient under injuries, and ready to forgive? Was it not a fact, that 'as a lamb that is led to slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' Did he not, even when greatly displeased at the harshness of heart, and inveterate wickedness of disposition which his adversaries displayed, withhold any vindictive exercise of the miraculous powers attributed to him by his historians: which if real, he might have really employed
against them; which if feigned, might have been feigned for purposes of terror, as easily at least, as for purposes of kindness? Did he not with his dying breath offer a prayer for those who, according to Christian belief, had committed the stupendous crime of hunting down, and through malicious misrepresentations and perjured witnesses, causing to be condemned the benevolent Jesus, the lord of glory? Can we imagine the same Jesus going on a certain day to Pilate, to complain that the Rabbis had represented him as a colleague of Satan, who cast out devils by the assistance of Beelzebub, and requesting that they might be committed to prison? Can we conceive of him as sending his disciples to the Roman governor to demand punishment on those who had spoken such blasphemous words against their master? If such a record were found in one of the gospels should we not look on it with a suspicious eye, on account of its dissimilarity to the rest of his deportment?"

Again:—

"The evangelists testify that Jesus Christ gave his disciples reason to expect that, after his decease their principles would be aspersed, their characters vilified, and their persons exposed to persecution. The evils which they state him to have predicted, all history assures us came upon them. Whether deservedly or not, the first Christians received from those among whom they dwelt the most decisive tokens of enmity. Pagans were incensed against the men who impugned the deity of their gods; and Jews maddened with rage against the worshippers of the crucified Nazarene. 'That worthy name by which they were called' was stigmatised in their hearing as the symbol of whatever was to be contemned or detested; and when they delivered their most solemn and affectionate discourses, their auditors, not unfrequently 'were filled with envy,' and spake against the things which they delivered, 'contradicting and blaspheming.' Something of the spirit of Christianity towards its opponents may be ascertained through these circumstances. If we can learn what was the duty of a Christian then, to the utterer of blasphemous speeches, we may thence infer the duty of a Christian now, to the publisher of blasphemous tracts. Now the sum of the directions given by Jesus to the Apostles in prospect of these scenes, and by the Apostles to their fellow Christians who were suffering in them, seems to be, that they should leave their cause with god as their sole avenger; and in the interim instead of retaliating on their opponents, should seek their welfare. The language of Christ was 'love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.' The language of the Apostles to their fellow sufferers was in the same temper: 'Not render evil for evil, or
railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

"Could it have been thought that they acted in the spirit of these injunctions, had they hastened to the nearest tribunal and there preferred accusations against their adversaries for having ridiculed their scriptures or reviled their master?"—p. 16, 17.

The whole of this pamphlet does credit to the writer's head and heart. While he labors earnestly and successfully to exculpate Christianity from the charge of countenancing persecution, he is equally solicitous to win the unbeliever to a serious examination of its evidences.

That Christians, the author of whose religion was tried and executed for blasphemy, his own words during the trial being pronounced sufficient evidence against him by his sacerdotal judge; Christians, whose prophetic books are full of the most biting sarcasms on the gods and worship of the mightiest empires; Christians, who boast a noble army of martyrs, whose lives were the penalty of their avowed departure from the religion of their country; Christians, whose missionaries are striving in every region of the earth to bring other religions "into disbelief and contempt;" Christians, Protestant Christians, whose reformers perished in the dungeon, or at the stake as heretics, apostates, and blasphemers; Christians, whose religion breathes charity, liberty, and mercy in every line; that they, having gained the power to which so long they were victims, should employ it in the self-same way, and strive to crush the opposition of opinion, or of passion even, by vindictive persecution, is most monstrous. The inconsistency shall not remain for want of being exposed. That indeed, is certain, without our efforts. Mr. Hume has repeatedly drawn the attention of the House of Commons to the subject; and we hope will continue so to do. The disgrace is felt, and always has been felt; and had we aimed to impress by authority rather than by argument, our pages might have been filled with appropriate extracts. Archbishop Secker, Bishops Lowth, Warburton, and Watson, of the Church of England; Drs. Campbell and Gerard, of the Church of Scotland; Drs. Chandler, Lardner and Kippis, of the English Dissenters, have all deprecated the prosecution of unbelievers. Their tolerant spirit, their enlightened view of the real interests of religion is not extinct. Mr. Hume last year presented a petition to the House of Commons, and it was only by accident that a similar one was not presented to the
Lords by the venerable Bishop of Norwich, signed by upwards of 2000 members of Christian congregations, and about 100 ministers, including clergymen of the Established Church, dissenting preachers, and persons of the most opposite theological opinions. We heartily join in its concluding prayer, that the House would "take into consideration the proceedings carrying on, and the punishments already inflicted upon unbelievers, in order to exonerate Christianity from the opprobrium and scandal so unjustly cast upon it, of being a system that countenances intolerance and persecution;" and not only, we will add, in order so to exonerate Christianity, but also to render equal justice to believer and unbeliever, and not add to the misfortune of infidelity the privation of civil rights and the endurance of legal penalties.