

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

THE
"BEAUTY OF HOLINESS,"
AND
THE HARP OF HELL.

BY
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AUTHOR OF "GOD AND HIS BOOK," ETC.



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THE CONFSSIONAL:

ROMISH AND ANGLICAN.

An Exposure.

By SALADIN.

CONTENTS:—Introduction—Licentiousness of the Pre-Reformation Church—Lechery of the Confessional—Ritualism: “The Priest in Absolution”—The Anglican Confessional—Ineffectual Efforts to Suppress Reforming Tendencies in the Anglican Church—Confessions of an Escaped Nun—Extracts from Dens and Liguori—Examination of the Church’s Claim to have Fostered Learning: Her Attempts at Continency even more Ruinous than her Self-indulgence—The Relative Criminal Statistics of Catholicism and Protestantism—Appendix.

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“*The Beauty of Holiness.*”

“BIBLE Extracts and Assertions in Proof of its Origin” is the title of a brochure which I have received by post. Like all works which feel their position before the law rather shaky, no printer’s or publisher’s address is given; and thus, to escape the possibility of prosecution, by doubtful means this work has leapt into the greater evil of making successful prosecution certain, should any one feel it to be his mission to set the law in motion. The compiler’s name is not given; but the author from whom the compilation is made is well known; he is none other than the Christian deity, and, as he is the author of one literary production only, and every babe in this country knows the name of his book, and as my *forte* is not supererogation, I need not name it here.

When I was a boy I read a work entitled “Dodd’s Beauties of Shakespeare,” this anonymous brochure should be entitled “Somebody’s Beauties of Deity.” I confess I do not know much of Deity; but, from the extracts from his writings which are before me, he must be a very plain-spoken sort of person, who certainly calls a spade a spade, and that with a vengeance too. Judging from modern standards of etiquette, he must evidently have spent a good deal of his life among costermongers and the rest of it as bully in a *maison-de-joie*. Should any of his own well-paid priests resent this as an aspersion upon the culture and gentlemanly bearing of “the Lord,” I have the pleasure to refer them to what “Rabshakeh said unto them,”* and to the pleasing little anecdote anent Judah and his daughter-in-law.† “The

* 2 Kings xviii. 27.

† Genesis xxxviii., *passim*.

Lord," judging from the extracts from his book, may be a decent enough body in his way; but he can hardly be described as a cultured writer, and he would certainly be very questionable company at a young lady's tea-party. He has not had the advantage of having James Boswell for a biographer; but he has got along remarkably well without him; and I make bold to say that Dr Johnson and Jehovah-jireth are the most minutely-biographed persons in the temple of Fame, and Jehovah has the advantage of Johnson in this—he himself is the recorder of his own life and achievements. It must be admitted that these achievements evince a remarkable versatility of talent. In his autobiography I find that he "created the heavens and the earth," but that all that he did subsequently was not on so magnificent a scale. After creating the heavens and the earth he did not "live up to it," for I read that, condescendingly, he spued and sent scabs and winked, and chatted with the devil, and was troubled with his bowels, and took no pleasure in men's legs—neither do gentlemen who go to the Alhambra to see the *ballet*; they have no pleasure in *men's* legs, and in this they resemble "the Lord."

I should be inclined to think that talents that range from world-making to spueing and winking are of an order to which the Admirable Crichton could not have held a candle. The compiler of the "Bible Extracts" has arranged, with loving care, a list of the feats of the "Almighty Maker of heaven and earth." With a pious hand, I transcribe them here for the refutation and discomfiture of such as allege that of Deity nothing can be known. I transcribe chapter and verse, which proves to demonstration that a great deal can be known about him:—

- God walks—Gen. iii. 8.
- God talks—Deut. v. 24.
- God smells—Gen. viii. 21.
- God works—Gen. ii. 2.
- God rests—Gen. ii. 2.
- God repents—Gen. vi. 6.
- God flies—2 Sam. xxii. xi.
- God sits—Psalm xcix. 1.

- God stands on a wall with a plumb-line—Amos vii. 7.
 God spues—Rev. iii. 16.
 God laughs—Psalm xxxvii. 13.
 God runs like a giant—Job xvi. 14.
 God roars like a lion—Hosea xi. 10.
 God curses—Gen. viii. 21.
 God changes his mind—Exodus xxxii. 14.
 God sends lice—Exodus viii. 16.
 God sends scabs—Deut. xxviii. 27.
 God wrestles with Jacob—Gen. xxxii. 24, 26, 30.
 God a tailor and clothier—Gen. iii. 21.
 God writes on stone—Deut. iv. 13.
 God afraid of man—Gen. iii. 22, 23.
 God is a husband—Isa. liv. 5.
 God shows his back parts—Exodus xxxiii. 23.
 God shaves with a razor that is hired—Isa. vii. 20.
 God winks—Acts xvii. 30.
 God chats with the devil—Job. i. 7, 8.
 God hardens men's hearts—Exodus xiv. 4.
 God takes no pleasure in men's legs—Psalm cxlvii. 10.
 God argues—Job xxiii. 4.
 God graves on his palms—Isa. xlix. 16.
 God delivers men into the devil's power—Job ii. 6.
 God charges his angels with folly—Job iv. 18.
 God distrusts his saints—Job xv. 15.
 God causes adultery—2 Sam. xii. xi.
 God causes suicide—Jer. viii. 3.
 God causes cannibalism—Jer. xix. 9.
 God causes desecration of the dead—Jer. viii. 1, 2.
 God causes indecency—Isa. xx. 4.
 God orders the slaughter of men, women, and children—1 Sam. xv. 3.
 God causes lying—1 Sam. xvi. 1, 2.
 God punishes the guiltless—1 Sam. xv. 3.
 God uses low language—Jer. xxv. 27.
 God is said to possess foolishness—1 Cor. i. 25.
 God makes Moses a god—Exodus vii. 1.
 God sanctions borrowing without repaying—Exodus xi. 2; xii. 36.
 God creates evil—Isa. xlv. 7.
 God is a merchant—Hosea xii. 7.
 God loves to oppress—Hosea xii. 7.

- God is troubled in his bowels—Jer. iv. 19.
 God smites his hands together—Ezek. xxi. 17.
 God speaks to fishes—Jonah ii. 10.
 God breathes—Gen. ii. 7.
 God's breath causes frost—Job xxxvii. 10.
 God asks questions—Gen. iii. 9.
 God is a baker—Exodus xvi. 4.
 God works with his fingers—Psalm viii. 3.
 God swears—Deut. xxxiv. 4.
 God bares his arm—Isa. lii. 10.
 God is in hell—Psalm cxxxix. 8.
 God considers some men as a smoke in his nose—
 Isa. lxxv. 5.
 God gives bad laws—Ezek. xx. 25.
 God finds rest refreshing—Exodus xxxi. 17.
 God rewards transgressors—Prov. xxvi. 10.
 God creates the wicked for the day of evil—Prov.
 xvi. 4.
 God is a man—Exodus xv. 3.
 God rewards fools—Prov. xxvi. 10.
 God is a consuming fire—Deut. iv. 24.
 God orders men to drink, be drunken, and spue—
 Jer. xxv. 27.
 God blasts through his nostrils—Exodus xv. 8.
 God requests Moses to "let him alone"—Exodus
 xxxii. 9, 10.
 God came down to earth in form of a bird—Luke
 iii. 22.
 God is like soap—Mal. iii. 2.
 God takes away nose jewels, etc.—Isa. iii. 21.
 God hisses—Zechariah x. 8.
 God visits the earth to inspect buildings—Gen. xi. 5.
 God was born—Colos. i. 15.
 God is weary with repenting—Jer. xv. 1.
 God spreads dung on men's faces—Mal. ii. 3.

And His Son

- Jesus orders us to hate our parents and all belongings
 —Luke xiv. 26.
 Jesus ordered swords—Luke xxii. 36.
 Jesus tells us to be improvident—Luke xii. 24.
 Jesus sent devils into pigs—Mark v. 13.

Jesus says he came to cause war, not peace—Matt. x. 34.

Jesus rode upon two animals at once—Matt. xxi. 7.

Jesus supped after resurrection on broiled fish and honeycomb—Luke xxiv. 42.

Jesus says all who disbelieve him shall be damned—Mark xvi. 16.

Jesus says all who ever came before him were as thieves and robbers—John x. 8.

If the work before us had been a chemical, instead of a literary, production, it might have been put into a phial and labelled "Pure Essence of Dunghills." Only a stern sense of duty could have induced the compiler to engage in such a labour of disgust. I have gone through the Greek and Roman classics, Boccacio, and "The Merry Muses," as well as the pages of "Thomas Little," and Tobias Smollett; but "the Lord" beats all of them at writing clean dirt.

The worst of "the Lord" is, he has few traits to redeem his coarseness. We find in Psalm xxxvii. 13 that he laughs; but it certainly cannot be at his own jokes. Wit will redeem much; but pure coarseness is irredeemable. However, let me say it to his credit (I have always tried to give the very devil his due), he never seems, to me, to indulge in a libidinous tale just for the mere love of the thing. At a moment's notice he will go off from his dirt into a rigmarole about breeches and candlesticks and fringes, which shows that he does not deal in dirt for dirt's dear sake, but that he is such an unsophisticated old innocent that he does not know dirt when he sees it. In this age and country we have come to be æsthetic and fastidious; and, as for "the Lord," "his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts," and, for this same fact, those who glance at the "Bible Extracts" will be devoutly thankful.

Again, in the interests of "the Lord," I willingly admit that there is no absolutely fixed standard of taste, more than there is an absolutely fixed standard of morals. The England that accepted the English Bible of 1611 was leagues away from the England of to-day. Its English is that of the Shakspearian era, and, upon the whole,

Shakspeare is just about as indecent as "his maker." The tastes of England and Heaven were, at that time, about on a par ; and, with the then standard of taste, the Bible did not strike any one as indecent. The Blackfriar's theatre, in which Shakspeare himself had a share, has been described, and, from the description, we can gauge the state of public taste and morals. There was no *chalet* to which the playgoers could retire ; but, as substitute, a big tub stood on the floor, serving an exceedingly useful, if not over-ornamental, purpose. Plain old Jah, in 1 Kings xvi. 11, and elsewhere, refers to a "wall," and the English playgoers, who used their tub and cracked their now unspeakable jokes, did not see anything improper in Jehovah-jireth and his "wall." So much for the manners of England about the time when the country was first made acquainted with the manners of Heaven.

Gadzooks and marry-come-up, Jehovah could get along well with Queen Elizabeth ; but he is out of all harmony with Queen Victoria. Elizabeth could have read these "Bible Extracts," and had a good guffaw over them with Cecil or Raleigh ; but the sight of the very first page would drive Victoria into the hands of Sir William Gull. The truth is, modern intellect has not done so much as modern sentiment to knock a hole in the drum of Holy Writ. The flames of hell still roar and sputter away at Spurgeon's Tabernacle, and at one or two Bethels of the vulgarian order ; but nowhere that cultivated nineteenth-century men and women do congregate is the doctrine of hell now preached. Hell has not been reasoned out of the Christian creed ; it has simply been rejected because it is revolting to the moral sentiment of modern times. When you reason Hell away, you will reason away Heaven also ; for, in theology, they are correlated, and stand or fall together. Heaven still stands, not because it is more reasonable than Hell, but simply because it is not so repugnant to the moral sentiment of this latter quarter of the nineteenth century. Æstheticism has not reached a very high level even yet. It can stand wing-flapping and "holy, holy !" but it draws the line at chain-clanking and yelling and brimstone.

The "Bible Extracts" is far from commendable reading; but the disagreeable task of noticing it, and what must have been the still more disagreeable task of compiling it, will be served if it, to some extent, help to rend away the veil of pseudo-sanctity which hangs around the book which is the Protestant fetish. It cannot be urged that it is a small matter that the Bible offends against the canons of taste; for, had I space, I could show that this is only another way of saying that it offends against the canons of morals. True, the standard of morals differs in different ages; but the standard of morals which obtains in any particular epoch is, practically, fixed and immutable for that epoch, and to attempt to roughly and hastily upset that standard is more than a venial offence against Mrs Grundy and Mrs Gamp—it is treason against the best interests of mankind. Such treason Holy Writ is perpetrating in Europe to-day wherever it is read; but the saving clause is, it is *not* read by one in a thousand even of those who pretend to regard it as infallible and associated with the highest solemnities of their career in life, and their destiny when life is over. The principal part of the Bible with the ordinary Protestant John Smith is the fly leaf in front of it, on which are inscribed the date of his marriage with Janet, and the dates of the births of all the young Smiths which were the result of the union of John and Janet. If the book be big enough and gilt enough, it is also useful for laying on the window-sill with a small antimacassar over it, the whole surmounted with a little vase of flowers. The ordinary chapel-goer is as ignorant of the Bible as he is of the Koran or the Zend-Avesta. And it is through this very ignorance of it that it has been possible for him to rise to an elevation of purity and delicacy of word and deed which leaves "the Lord" and his crude and plain-spoken book far behind—a landmark nearly out of sight, away back in the wilderness through which the human race has marched to the comparatively green pastures and relatively still waters that are now theirs to enjoy.

The Harp of Hell.

ROBERT BURNS wished, in the interest of the deil himself, as well as in the interest of others concerned, that he (the deil) might—

“Aiblins tak’ a thocht and men’.”

The deil has certainly followed the suggestion. He is not the malefic fiend he once was ; and, as I have said, he is the most interesting character in the Christian drama, and he has the most “go” in him. His personal friend, Burns, wrote an address to him, distinguished by great candour, and John Lapraik responded on behalf of the deil ; but I should say the deil had not authorised him to do so, as the “answer” is but poor, and has nothing devilish in the ring of it.

As I am more of a heretic than “blithe Lapraik” was, and, in consequence, presumably more of a personal friend of the deil, I will take the liberty of replying to Burns on the deil’s behalf. My reply is based upon an anonymous and fugitive performance which fell into my hands some years ago.

THE DEIL’S ADDRESS TO ROBERT BURNS.

OH, wae’s me, Rab ! hae ye gane gyte ?
What is’t that gar’s ye tak’ delight
To jeer at me, and ban, and flyte,
 In Scottish rhyme,
And falsely gie me a’ the wyte
 O’ ilka crime ?

“Auld Hangie’s” no a bonnie name,
 But just the warst word in your wame,
 But I forgie ye a’ the same ;
 I’ll let ye see
 Quite plain what’s what, when ye come hame,
 And live wi’ me.

An’, Rab, fu’ frankly let me tell,
 Ilk ane o’ mettle like yoursel’
 Had far, far better mop and mell
 Wi’ rattlin’ chiels
 Sic as ye’ll fin’ down deep in hell
 Amang the deils

Than ye had lie in Abram’s lap,
 Or hingin’ on by Sara’s pap,
 Giein’ yer wings an extra flap,
 A heevenly hen,
 And leavin’ aff the milky drap
 To scraich “*Amen!*”

O’ auld nicknames ye hae a fouth,
 O’ sharp, sarcastic rhymes a routh,
 And as you’re bent to gie them scouth,
 ’Twere just as weel
 For ye to tell the honest truth,
 Just like the deil.

Rab, far mair lees are tauld in kirk
 By every bletherin’, preachin’ stirk
 Wi’ whinin’ theologic quirk
 Than deils daur tell
 Down in the blackest brumstane mirk
 O’ lowest hell.

I dinna mean to note the whole
 O’ your unfounded rigmarole ;
 I’d rather haud my tongue, and thole
 Your clishmaclavers,
 Than try to plod through sic a scroll
 O’ senseless havers.

O’ warlocks and o’ witches a’,
 O’ spunkies, kelpies, great or sma’,
 There isna’ ony truth ava’
 In what you say ;
 For siccan frichts I never saw,
 Up to this day.

The truth is, Rab, that wicked men,
 When caught in crimes that are their ain,
 To find a help, are unco' fain
 To share the shame ;
 And so they shout, wi' micht and main,
 The deil's to blame.

Thus I am blamed for Adam's fa' ;
 You say that I maist ruined a' ;
 I'll tell you ae thing, that's no twa,
 It's just a lee ;
 I fasht nae wi' the pair ava',
 But loot them be.

I'd nae mair haun in that transgression,
 Ye deem the source o' a' oppression,
 And wae, and daith, and man's damnation,
 Than you yoursel' ;
 I filled a decent situation
 When Adam fell.

I was a god o' the first water,
 An' wad tae Heeven's auldest daughter ;
 But, by my sooth, the dad that gat her
 Trode on my taes—
 I took my sword an' tae the slaughter,
 Amang his faes.

For I could neither thole nor dree
 Or god or deil to tramp on me ;
 An', Rab, in this I'm like to thee,
 Fu' croose and bauld,
 Wha car'd na no a single flea
 For Daddy Auld.

Nae doot I hae o' sins enoo,
 But lees, an' neither sma' nor few,
 A tail like dragon, foot like coo,
 Hae gien to me,
 As, Rabbin, mony an evil mou'
 Has spak' o' thee.

And, Rab, gin ye'll just read your Bible
 Instead o' blin' Jock Milton's fable,
 I'll plank a croon on ony table
 Against a groat,
 Tae fin' my name ye'll no be able
 In a' the plot.

Your mither, Eve, I kent her brawly ;
 A dainty quean she was, and wally,
 But destitute o' prudence haly,
 The witeless hissie ;
 Aye bent on fun, and whiles on folly
 And mischief busy.

But, by my saul, she was a limmer
 At ever kittled heart o' kimmer ;
 Nane were bonnier, some were primmer,
 For, gif ye please,
 She jinked about, through a' the simmer,
 Without chemise.

The loesome lassie wadna bin',
 Just whaur forbidden she wad rin,
 A' Natur' sought her smile to win,
 An' deil may care,
 Up tae her bonnie waist in sin,
 She jumpit fair.

An', Rantin Rab, I tell ye true
 There's much o' mither Eve in you ;
 So rein ye up, or ye sall rue,
 I rede ye weel,
 An' tak' a wad o' warnin' noo,
 Though frae the deil.

Eve had a leg like Bonnie Jean ;
 She was a wily, winsome quean,
 Wi' rosy mou' an' pawky een,
 Airms warm an' saft,
 She needit only to be seen
 To drive ane daft.

Had Jah himsel' been in that yaird
 An' tae that witchin' lassie pair'd,
 As sure as daith he'd kissed the swaird
 E'en Jah himsel' ;
 E'en *he* wad no hae better fared
 Whaur Adam fell.

An', Rab, my birkie, gie's yer haun',
 Now whether ye be deil or man,
 If *she* says *Na* ye winna stan'
 Her wiles ava,
 But like a tree by wind up-blawn
 Ye feckless fa'.

As for that famous serpent story,
 Tae lee' I'd baith be shamed and sorry ;
 It's just a clever allegory,
 An' weel writ doon ;
 The wark o' an Egyptian Tory—
 I ken't the loon.

Your tale o' Job, the man o' Uz,
 Wi' reekit claes, and reested guiz,
 My hornie hooves and brocket phiz,
 Wi' ither clatter,
 Is maistly, after a' the bizz,
 A moonshine matter.

Auld Job, I ken't the carl richt weel ;
 An honest, decent, kintra chiel,
 Wi' heid to plan and heart to feel
 And haun tae gie—
 He wadna wrang'd the verra deil,
 A broon bawbee.

The man was gey and weel tae do,
 Had horse, and kye, and ousen too,
 And sheep, and stots, and stirks enoo,
 Tae fill a byre ;
 O' meat and claes, a' maistly new,
 His heart's desire.

Foreby, he had within his dwellins
 Three winsome queans, and five braw callans,
 Ye wadna, in the hale braid Lallans,
 Hae fund their marrow,
 Were ye to search frae auld Tantallans
 Tae Braes o' Yarrow.

It happened that three breekless bands
 O' caterans cam frae distant lands,
 And took what fell amang their hands,
 O' sheep and duddies,
 Just like your reivin' Hielan' clans,
 Or Border bodies.

I tell thee, Rab, I had nae share
 In a' the tulzie, here or there ;
 I lookit on, I do declare,
 A mere spectator,
 Nor said, nor acted, less or mair
 About the matter.

Job had a minstrel o' his ain,
 A genius rare, and somewhat vain
 O' rhyme and leir ; but then, again,
 Just like yersel',
 O' drink and lasses unco fain,
 The ne'er-do-well.

So wi' intention fully bent,
 My doin' to misrepresent,
 That book o' Job he did invent,
 And then his rhymes
 Got published in Arabic prent,
 Tae suit the times.

You poets, Rab, are a' the same,
 O' ilka kintra, age and name ;
 Nae matter what may be your aim,
 Or your intentions,
 Maist o' your characters o' fame
 Are pure inventions.

Your dogs are baith debaters, rare,
 Wi' sense galore and some to spare,
 While e'en the verra brigs o' Ayr
 Ye gar them quarrel—
 Tak' Coila ben tae deck your hair
 Wi' Scottlsh laurel.

Haith ! Michael ne'er laid haun's on me ;
 Your tale, Jock Milton's, a' a lee,
 Tak' tent, puir crater though ye be,
 Puir Roundhead loon,
 Had ye had but had een to see,
 I'd crack ye're croon.

I like Rab's deevil mair than Jock's,
 A hamely deil for hamely folks ;
 He swirls his tail, his bonnet cocks,
 An' aff he goes
 To sup among the preachers' "flocks,"
 His Scottish brose.

Yet, Rabin, lad, for a' your spite,
 And taunts, and jeers, and wrangfu' wyte,
 I find, before you end your flyte,
 And win your pirn
 Ye're nae sae cankered in the bite
 As in the girn.

For when ye think he's doomed to dwell
 The lang for ever mair in hell,
 Ye come and bid a kind farewell,
 And guid be here,
 E'en for the verra deil himsel'
 Let fa' a tear.

I own it, Rab I like it weel
 To be auld Scotlan's ain auld deil,
 An' I'll stan' by her staunch and leal,
 Whate'er may be,
 An' ne'er a son o' hers sall "squeal"
 That comes to me.

An' I hae brimstone for their yeuk,
 An' down in hell I'll hae your buik,
 An' *agua vita* in the neuk
 In kegs galore,
 An' never parson, plague, or spook
 Shall vex them more.

When e'er I hear the Scottish tongue
 I'll frae the barrel knock the bung,
 Sing "Scots Wha Hae" wi' lusty lung,
 An' by the urns
 O' a' the great wha Scotlan' sung
 The deil an' Burns

Sall stan' the rough burr thistle by,
 An' haud the drinking quaich on high
 Wi' heather wreathed frae Ayr or Skye,
 Frae Clyde or Dee.—
 "Lo, Dogma perish, Priestcraft die ;
 Scotlan' !—Tae thee !"

