

**GEORGE BLACKBURN; OR, THE LAST
HOURS OF A SECULARIST. WITH
REFLECTIONS ON UNBELIEF, AND A
BRIEF VIEW OF THE EVIDENCE OF
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION**

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George Blackburn; Or, the Last Hours of a Secularist. With Reflections on Unbelief, and a Brief View of the Evidence of the Christian Religion by Elizabeth Blackburn & Henry Fry

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ELIZABETH BLACKBURN & HENRY FRY

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GEORGE BLACKBURN;

OR,

THE LAST HOURS OF A SECULARIST.

BY

HIS WIDOW, ELIZABETH BLACKBURN.

ADDRESSED TO

WORKING MEN.

**With reflections on Unbelief, and a brief
view of the Evidences of the Christian
Religion.**

BY

THE REV. HENRY FRY, D. D.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS tract is addressed to the working men of London, by the desire of George Blackburn. It was his last request that they should be made acquainted with his dying sentiments. To many of them he was sincerely attached; and having laboured long and earnestly to convince them that the soul would die with the body, and that there was nothing to be dreaded, or hoped for, beyond the grave, he naturally wished that they should know whether his convictions remained unaltered in his dying hours.

Many working men will remember how earnestly he lectured and argued at Meetings, and how great were his triumph and delight when any of his companions were persuaded to renounce religion. It seemed as if the great object of his life was to form societies of secularists among working men. Having been brought up among Christians, and himself once a preacher of religion, his opposition to the Gospel was regarded as a triumphant evidence in favour of unbelief; and being very acute, and thoroughly acquainted with the objections against the Bible, he was long a popular and successful advocate in the cause of secularism. That desire to persuade others to embrace his principles which he displayed in life, was felt by him far more deeply in his dying hours. He often sent for his companions, to tell them his last convictions; and, although gasping for breath, he strove with tears and entreaties to persuade them to attend to his dying testimony and advice.

Not once, but many times, did he beg that his last words of affectionate warning might be told to them. "Oh tell them," said he, "the state in which you see me,—tell them how I die."

The only object he could have had in desiring to reveal to them the condition of his soul, and the convictions with which he was entering eternity, was to declare what he felt to be the truth. He had nothing to gain,—the world was passing away, and with it every earthly object of desire. To him there was but this one question of importance, “Is there another life?—is there a spiritual existence in the presence of the supreme Being? or, is the soul in a moment to perish for ever? It is to this, the most important of all considerations, that he would invite the attention of those who were once his friends and companions. They readily listened to him when he laboured to prove that they were the same as the beasts of the field, and he anxiously hoped that they would listen to him, while from the brink of the grave, he told the sentiments in which he died.

There never was a more determined unbeliever than George Blackburn.—For many years he opposed the Christian religion,—persuaded that it was not only untrue, but injurious to mankind; and that the annihilation of the soul was so certain, that there could be nothing to dread beyond the grave. Death, by an incurable disease, stood before him for many months. In pulmonary consumption the powers of the mind are seldom impaired; and often, as in his case, appear greater than in health. Neither his prejudices nor his pride, his interest nor his associations, could then pervert or mislead his reason in considering the nature of his own soul, and in comparing religion with unbelief. The result of his long and serious examination must be of deep interest to those working men who have been led to doubt the truth of the Gospel, for it certainly affords them the means of judging how far unbelief, in a clear and reasoning mind, can endure serious consideration in a dying hour.

In the case of George Blackburn, they have the two great advantages of his being well known to them as a friend and companion, and of there being no doubt respecting the truth of the account of his dying convictions. His condition

and sentiments were known to many; several of his unbelieving companions, at his earnest desire, visited him—and witnessed the extreme anxiety which he felt to communicate to them the state of his mind. The account of his death is written by his widow, and is given in her own simple language: I have added the substance of many conversations which I had with him, on the evidences and principles of the Christian religion.

Long and familiar intercourse with working men has convinced me, that in general, they possess a strong understanding, with much common sense and honesty of purpose. I know, and lament, that the arrangements and services of Christian Churches sometimes afford them reason for discontent. They consider themselves neglected or excluded, and that the rich alone are considered and provided for. It seems to them sufficient that wealth should have its distinctions and advantages in the things of this world; they know their own value in the community, and animated with a strong sense of independence, and that natural feeling that all men are equal in the sight of Him who is no respecter of persons, they turn away from everything in religion which has the appearance of a preference for the rich—in affording them peculiar privileges or accommodation. The clergy are regarded as disconnected from them in rank and association; and even the services of the Church too often appear designed only for the highly educated. These things sometimes create aversion in the minds of working men against public worship, and alienate them from religion. But I would submit to every sensible working man, whether it is reasonable to reject or neglect the Christian religion on such grounds. Let it be considered, in the first place, that no one can attribute any want of regard for the poor or the working man to Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter who had no place wherein to lay his head, and whose whole heart and teaching are full of sympathy for the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted. Let it be remembered also, that the