

to ask this question and expect an answer, for surely the expressions "belief on the Son," "salvation by faith," do not explain themselves.

I know that faith in incantations is not altogether a thing of the past, and I quite believe that there are some, perhaps many, who simply want the teacher to utter some pious words at the opening of the school, leaving the scholars to take them—so far as they listen at all—in whatever conventional sense they may be accustomed to apply to them. It is quite needless to say that I do not place the Rev. Mr. Macdonnell in this class. He shows that he does not belong to it by specifying the particular views he wishes to have brought forward in the schools, and I am sure he will go further and tell us how he would have some of these views developed and illustrated. The effects, I may remark, of the incantation plan are visible on every hand—visible in the shocking ignorance of Biblical phraseology, Biblical history, Biblical everything on the part of people who hear the Bible read, if not daily, at least once or twice a week their lives through. To my mind it is little short of miraculous how amazingly small a tincture of Biblical knowledge is to-day possessed by thousands who, if they followed with the least shade of interest the Bible readings given in their hearing, would necessarily have a most extensive acquaintance with the sacred writings. My critic himself speaks of "the ignorance of the contents of the Bible which is now so lamentable." He might have said "phenomenal" as well as "lamentable," for it is phenomenal; and the only explanation I can offer is that to a vast number of people, old and young, Bible readings are regarded as mere incantations—the utterance of words which, by some intrinsic virtue quite independent of their meaning, are expected to work good results,

and the mere listening to which—quite independently of any effort to catch the sense—is in itself a meritorious act. I have thought of the matter a good deal, and I know of no theory except the incantation theory that will explain the facts.

I note with much pleasure the liberal stand taken by my critic upon one or two points raised in my "Open Letter." He sees no reason in the world why the same kind of information which we give in regard to Homer should not be given in regard to the Bible—"why an intelligent child (query, not the average ones) should not be told that there is uncertainty as to the authorship of some of the books of the Bible, and different opinions as to the dates at which some of them were composed." "We need have no fear," he proceeds, "as to all the facts that have been ascertained about the Bible being made known." But how about the facts that have not been "ascertained?" Are they to be taught or must teachers confine themselves rigorously to such facts as have been conclusively established. The Rev. Mr. Macdonnell puts in a caution against troubling the minds of the children with "the unverified theories and speculations of clever men, or about unconfirmed suspicions or assertions of inaccuracy on the part of Biblical writers as to matters of science or history." This is good as far as it goes, but how about unverified theories that have become incorporated with current beliefs. Will Mr. Macdonnell say there are none such? I do not believe he will. How then, I ask, in regard to such unverified matters? How about "unconfirmed assertions," not of inaccuracy, but of *accuracy*, on the part of the authors of the books of Scripture. Is the rule to be that whatever antiquity, greedy of marvels and destitute of all canons of scientific criticism, has handed down to us