

THE  
JOURNAL  
OF  
SACRED LITERATURE.

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VOLUME VII.

LONDON:

ROBERT B. BLACKADER,  
ALDINE CHAMBERS, 13, PATERNOSTER ROW.

AND SOLD BY  
SAMUEL BAGSTER & SONS, 15, PATERNOSTER ROW.  
EDINBURGH: W. OLIPHANT & SONS. DUBLIN: SAMUEL B. OLDHAM.

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1851.

## MODERN 'SPIRITUALISM.'

*Phases of Faith, or Passages from the History of my Creed.* By FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN. Chapman. London, 1850.

THIS is one of the most recent publications of a new school of sceptical literature which has sprung up among us. For of the existence of such a school none, we think, can entertain any doubt, who are at all familiar with the somewhat handsome volumes ever and anon issued by Mr. Chapman, in whom its writers seem to have found an available centre and sympathising patron of their literary activity. Diversified as are the titles of these volumes they have all, more or less, the same aim. They bear all more or less directly against the authority of Christianity in any orthodox form in which it is received. This clear *drift* combines the otherwise dissimilar topics which they embrace.

It is not very easy to characterise in any general terms this *modern infidelity*, ranging, as it does, the whole gamut of unbelief, from the extremes of a bare deism on the one hand to those of a sublimated pantheism on the other, and often dissolving into the vague and indefinite utterance of an unintelligible mysticism. Proteus-like it changes its hue and shape under any careful attempt to fix its features and analyse their meaning. With an affectation of novelty, it is yet, when its pretensions are fairly sifted, found to be very much the same old adversary that was satisfactorily demolished more than a century ago. It has refurnished itself, no doubt, from the armoury of German rationalism, and learned a somewhat different nomenclature; but the more familiar one becomes with its mode of argument and dialect, the more is it perceived to be essentially just the same meagre and worthless thing. Deism and rationalism, we know, are names which, for the most part, it repudiates. *Spiritualism* is its watchword: but when we come to examine this spiritualism, we find it just to be the old thing under a new name. The sufficiency of man's natural powers to instruct and guide him in all that pertains to his religious faith and duty is equally its conclusion. With our older race of unbelievers, it is true, the appeal was more commonly to the adequacy of man's natural reason for this purpose, while with the present race it is rather to an *inner religious light*, or higher soul, in every man. But even so far, there is nothing really original in the writers of this school, as all are well aware who have

have any acquaintance with the works, either of our own Deists or of the German Divines; for what is the 'natural instinct' of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and the 'inward sentiment' of such writers as Jacobi and De Wette, for example, but just the spiritual light, or 'soul,' to which Mr. Newman appeals? We readily own that, in contrast with many of the deistical productions of a past age, and especially of the Voltairean scepticism of last century, a higher and more moral spirit characterises the present sceptical writers.\* They manifest, upon the whole, neither the savage vehemence of hostility to Christianity which have rendered infamous the names of Toland, Chubb, and Paine, nor the unscrupulous dare-devil spirit of mockery and piquancy and profligacy which stamped the labours of the patriarch of Ferney and many of his *confrères*; but if their tone be thus improved, their dislike of the Christian truth is evidently no less intense, and there is something to us occasionally even more dreadful in their blasphemy, from the quiet decency of expression in which it is uttered.

It is to be feared that the class of writings of which we speak is exercising a considerable influence, especially upon many young minds of our day. Nothing, perhaps, is more characteristic of the present age than an excited spirit of inquiry about religious subjects with a great shallowness and deficiency of religious knowledge. Questions, which our fathers were content to ponder with a patient humility, and in regard to which they have transmitted to us a vast store of profound learning, are now hastily entertained and as hastily dismissed by minds utterly incompetent to the task, either from their own previous training, or from any adequate measure of acquaintance with the past literature bearing upon the points in discussion. A self-conceited incredulity—an unsettledness even as to the very foundations of religious belief, is, as a consequence, widely prevalent,—a fact of which such books as the one before us are at once an evidence and a cause. We have thought it right, therefore, to look a little into the pretensions of this school, by passing under our review the present volume, among the most recent, as we have said, and, certainly, one of the most plain-spoken and intelligible of its class.

Francis William Newman, its author, is, indeed, if not the Coryphæus, (a character which we believe he would honestly disclaim,) yet one of the most prominent and noticeable of the group of writers comprising this school. And it is certainly a singular

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\* This is constantly asserted in their behalf, as something that quite distinguishes them from past infidel writers, and renders their scepticism peculiarly formidable. And we readily concede it so far, although such writings as those of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, mentioned in the text, show that the present writers are by no means singular even in this respect.

enough circumstance, and one strikingly indicative of the religious disorganisation of our day, that the two brothers Newman, whose early educative discipline, it is presumed, must have been very much the same, should be found, at this moment, occupying such opposite and extreme positions in the religious world. If we mistake not, very much the same mental tendencies, the same characteristic indecision and restlessness of intellect, amounting even in both occasionally to positive weakness, have conducted them by divergent paths to such widely-apart conclusions.

The volume before us is of the nature of a spiritual autobiography. It professes to detail the successive 'phases of faith' through which its author passed to his present position of downright infidelity—for it is no other. And there is at times an air of candour and simplicity about the narrative very *unique* and interesting. We smile, involuntarily, as we read, at the *naïveté*, or the ignorance, which, in the character of so many of its disclosures, furnishes their own best and most effectual answer. The narrative is divided into 'periods,' and the first period, which bears the title 'My Youthful Creed,' thus opens:—

'I first began to read religious books at school, and especially the Bible, when I was eleven years old; and almost immediately commenced a habit of secret prayer. But it was not until I was fourteen that I gained any definite idea of a "scheme of doctrine," or could have been called a "converted person" by one of the evangelical school. My religion then certainly exerted a great general influence over my conduct, for I soon underwent various persecutions from my school-fellows on account of it; the worst kind consisted in their deliberate attempts to corrupt me. An evangelical clergyman at the school gained my affections, and from him I imbibed more and more distinctly the full creed which distinguishes that body of men—a body whose bright side I shall ever appreciate, in spite of my present perception that they have a dark side also. I well remember that one day, when I said to this friend of mine, that I could not understand how the doctrine of election was reconcilable to God's justice, but supposed that I should know this in due time if I waited and believed his word—he replied, in emphatic commendation, that this was the spirit which God always blessed. Such was the beginning and foundation of my faith—an unhesitating, unconditional acceptance of whatever was found in the Bible.'

Here we have obviously a very honest statement. The passage, in truth, bears strongly that air of *naïf* and undisguised confession to which we have already adverted: and we have extracted it as furnishing, in our opinion, a not inappropriate key to the whole volume,—as pointing in some measure to the explanation of all the subsequent 'phases' of the spiritual history which it records. The religion of his youth Mr. Newman describes as an '*unhesitating, unconditional*

*unconditional* acceptance of whatever was found in the Bible,' which, according to his own previous statement, clearly means of *whatever his spiritual instructors taught him was found in the Bible*. Now this, which was the only religion possible to him as a boy, appears in our humble judgment to have been the only religion which Mr. Newman ever possessed. He seems to us never to have got beyond the leading-strings of teachers of some sort or another. In youth, of course, he could have no other basis of his creed than authority, but there is, so far as we can see throughout the volume, not the slightest evidence that he ever attained a more intelligent and profound basis for the Christian convictions which he professes to have abandoned. There is no evidence that he ever verified for himself any of the Christian doctrines. This, with his present views, Mr. Newman might perhaps say was impossible,—alien and abhorrent as he conceives these doctrines to be to the genuine spiritual consciousness. But it is of great importance thus to remark in the outset his exact relation to Christianity. He is not at all, it appears to us, in the position of one who having once fully seen the reasonableness and worth of the Gospel, has yet, by the strong incursions of a dark spirit of doubt, been driven from the 'good hope' which he cherished. For this is no doubt a possible case, apart from all controversy, as to whether it can ever happen that one who has really known the truth, can yet be *ultimately* alienated from it. Many of the noblest minds are known to have passed through such periods of bitter and hopeless perplexity, when they could no more find 'rest unto their souls' in the 'old paths' in which they had once trod with security. And the sceptical difficulties of such minds, laid, as it were, on the rack of their own too curious questioning, must ever engage our deep sympathy and pity. But we cannot reckon Mr. Newman amongst this class. For not only does he seem to us never truly to have apprehended the Gospel in its deeper, spiritual meaning, and in the vital peace which it imparts to all who thus know it, but not even to have apprehended, with any measure of logical coherence, the 'scheme of doctrine' which in his youth he identified with it. Nothing can be more crude and undigested than some of his 'evangelical' notions, showing how little he ever understood even the right *form* of the truth which he had been taught. The views imbibed from his teachers seem not even intellectually to have been in any *thorough sense* appropriated by him,—so as ever to have exhibited to him a consistency of outline and detail—but only to have been stored away in his mind as separate fragments of theological opinion not thereby necessarily inoperative upon his life—as indeed he says they were not,—but hence incapable of sustaining any sudden shock of argument or speculation. This may seem a strong conclusion

clusion to build upon the slender data which we have yet presented ; but it is a conclusion which has been irresistibly suggested to us in turning to the opening paragraph after a perusal of the volume, and we shall be able, if we mistake not, to furnish many proofs of it as we proceed. Mr. Newman has seemed to us, in the words we have quoted, to indicate sufficiently the *secret* of his subsequent abandonment of his 'youthful creed.' That creed appears never to have been to him anything more than a set of intellectual notions, imperfectly understood, and received on the *authority* of this or that teacher, or of this or that evangelical book. There is no evidence that it ever had a vital hold on his spiritual being ; but, as we shall afterwards see, decided evidence, from his own confession, to the contrary. It was the inevitable fate of such a creed to fall to pieces before a real spirit of inquiry once awakened within him. We are especially struck with the evidence furnished to the truth of what we say by the fact—a singular one certainly—in such a book as this, professing to be the history of an earnest mind under religious conflict—of the total absence of any trace of those dark and upheaving struggles so natural to a mind in such a case. If Mr. Newman has known such struggles he has kept them to himself. But our own strong conviction is that he has not known them. Quick and lively as may be his emotions, his is evidently not one of those strong comprehensive natures which powerfully own the moral necessities to which the Gospel addresses itself. Even when professedly evangelical in his creed, the great mystery of *guilt* seems little to have touched him. The awful question, 'How shall a man be just before God?' seems never to have really moved him : and having never lain under these dark shadows he is of necessity singularly free from all profound spiritual perplexity in abandoning the Gospel. It is true that he speaks of perplexities enough, but only such perplexities, it appears to us, as naturally arose from the disturbance of the amiable relations in which he had hitherto lived, caused by his wayward and erring course. There is much about the alienation of old friends, and the social and personal sacrifices he endured ; but no trace almost can we find of those fearful inward struggles which might be supposed to toss, as on fiery billows, one who daily felt as he did, 'the God and immortality of his childhood disappearing from before his doubting eye ;'<sup>b</sup>—*none* of those *sospiria de Profundis*—those strong cries from the depths of an unutterable sorrow, which, we cannot help conceiving, must ever wring the soul of one in such an *awful* predicament ;—nothing of these do we find in Mr. Newman's volume, but only, as it honestly appears to us, the amiable

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<sup>b</sup> Schleiermacher.

difficulties of a good and evidently sweet-tempered man, who, having been trained in evangelical principles, without having ever yet mastered them, feels himself compelled under the impulses of an unrestrained scepticism to abandon them one by one. We do not for one moment deny the thorough truthfulness of the course which Mr. Newman has run, nor undervalue the earthly sacrifices which it may have cost him. All we would imply is, that to us and to the world in general it is *nothing*. It gives us no insight; it teaches us no lesson: and just because we do not see that Mr. Newman has ever really lain under the burden of those questions which his book is yet meant to decide. There *may* be much in this volume of interest in reference to what is sometimes taught as Christianity, or as to the manner in which it is taught; but in reference to the truth or worth of *Christianity itself* it has, we conceive, absolutely no bearing—Mr. Newman having traversed only in *dreams* that divine land of promise of which he gives us such empty and beggarly tidings.

With such religious views and feelings as we have seen, Mr. Newman went, at the age of seventeen, to Oxford. There, apparently, with the very first exertion of his intellect began the demolition of his 'youthful creed:' and we cannot help feeling that there is something almost amusing in the facility with which the clumsy and ill-assorted fabric tumbles down. He had been taught by evangelical books so and so; a friend suggests a doubt of what he had thus learned, and, after showing fight for a little,—he says, after a 'rather sharp controversy,'—he takes to the study of the matter for himself; and by and bye acknowledges his conversion to the views of his friend. In case it should be thought we are drawing a caricature, we give his own words in reference to his 'first effort at independent thought against the teaching of his spiritual fathers:—

'I had learned,' he says, 'from evangelical books, that there is a *twofold* imputation to every saint, not of the sufferings only, but also of the "righteousness" of Christ. They alleged that while the sufferings are a compensation for the guilt of the believer and make him innocent, yet this suffices not to give him a title to heavenly glory, for which he must over and above be invested in active righteousness, by all Christ's works being made over to him. My new friend contested the latter part of the doctrine. Admitting fully that guilt is atoned for by the sufferings of the Saviour, he yet maintained there was no further imputation of Christ's active service, as if it had been our service. After a rather sharp controversy, I was sent back to study the matter for myself, especially in the 3rd and 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; and some weeks after, freely avowed to him that I was convinced.'

Now,

Now, not to insist upon the evidence which this passage bears to our statement, that he seems never really to have apprehended with any degree of consistency and penetration the scheme of Evangelical doctrine which he professes to have abandoned—how very clear is it that the moment in which he lays aside the peculiar view in question is just the moment when he first really begins to think of it. Previously it is as evident as possible that he had never exercised his mind on it at all; but simply received it, with much more undigested stuff, we dare say, on the authority of the Evangelical books to whose teaching at this time he entrusted himself. Only when the view is questioned does he first seriously turn his thoughts upon it. Only after a breach has been actually made in his belief does he begin to examine the stability of its foundations. There is thus the latent spur of scepticism in the very first movement of his religious inquiries. And all along it is singular to remark how much he owns this spur; how entirely his successive investigations seem to be called forth by the interrogatories of doubt; how little by the spontaneous suggestions of a patiently inquisitive mind in quest of deeper and more comprehensive views of the truth.

Having so briskly begun the 'effort at independent thought,' our author proceeds apace. In opposition to the rigorous notions in which he had been trained, he embraces what he calls the 'Oriental heresy' about Sunday; and he gives up Infant Baptism. We cannot dwell upon these opening manifestations of the sceptical spirit which at last so entirely subdues him, farther than to point out another marked feature of mind with which they have impressed us, and which has an important bearing upon the whole character of the volume. Mr. Newman seems never content to rest in any medium position. No sooner is he unsettled at one extreme than he rushes to the other with a self-confidence and a seeming amazement at the absurdity of his former position, which, under all his semblance of truth-seeking, conceals a powerful habit of dogmatism. Ceasing to believe any point, he at once comes to consider it as unquestionably false and incredible, and must always pass to the very opposite pole of opinion. This Mr. Newman and his fellow-labourers may call 'independence of thought;' but it appears to us truly in a very different light. These same questions, for example, of the observance of Sunday and the validity of Infant Baptism, are, to say the least, questions of grave moment and considerable difficulty, and have given rise to a vast deal of learned and forcible argument on both sides. It might be supposed, then, that the candid and earnest examination of these questions would have occasioned our young student not a little perplexity, and that he would have felt himself for a time moved, now to the one side and

now to the other, of the controversies respecting them. Nay, we venture to say that the higher and more comprehensive the mind engaged in such an examination the more likely would it be thus to oscillate for a little between the two sides, feeling their respective strength. Such a grave hesitancy and humble distrustfulness in the investigation of difficult and important subjects, so far from being, as the vulgar opinion is sometimes apt to regard it, a mark of incapacity, is one of the most characteristic traits of genuine mental power. But little, if anything, of this do we find in Mr. Newman. Scarcely, if at all, does he pause amid the conflict of the controversies which he presumes to settle, so as to leave any impression upon the reader's mind of his having really entered into and pondered the opposing arguments; but with a strange and astounding agility, he clears the barriers of the most formidable reasoning, and having got to the very opposite side, where he must always be, looks round in wonder, apparently, that he should ever have been on the other. This may indicate a certain kind of dexterity, but not exactly the dexterity we should choose in a religious guide; the dexterity of a quick and lithe, yet not strong or masterly intellect; and whatever may be Mr. Newman's qualifications otherwise, he is not, therefore, exactly the man, we should say, to lead on a new 'phase' of the religious sentiment in this country.

This conclusion, which is already forced upon us by the disclosures of the first 'period,' is confirmed still more strikingly by those of the second, which bears the title of 'Strivings after a more Primitive Christianity.' One of the most remarkable features of the author's history during this period is the strange ascendancy acquired over him by 'one powerful mind, and still more powerful will.' This powerful mind and will are embodied in the person of a young relative of a gentleman in Ireland, in whose house Mr. Newman spent fifteen months as private tutor. There is something so racy and piquant in the mere sketch of this person, apart from the illustration it gives of Mr. Newman's character and his relation to Christianity, that we present it at some length:—

'His bodily presence,' he says, 'was indeed weak. A fallen cheek, a bloodshot eye, crippled limbs, resting on crutches, a seldom shaven beard, a shabby suit of clothes, and a generally neglected person, drew at first pity with wonder to see such a figure in a drawing-room. It was currently reported that a person in Limerick offered him a half-penny, mistaking him for a beggar; and if not true, the story was yet well invented. This young man had taken high honours in Dublin university, and had studied for the bar, where, under the auspices of his eminent kinsman, he had excellent prospects; but his conscience would

would not allow him to take a brief, lest he should be selling his talents to defeat justice. With keen logical powers he had warm sympathies, solid judgment of character, thoughtful tenderness, and total self-abandonment. He before long took holy orders, and became an indefatigable curate in the mountains of Wicklow. Every evening he sallied forth to teach in the cabins, and roving far and wide, over mountain and amid bogs, was seldom home before midnight. By such exertions his strength was undermined, and he so suffered in his limbs, that not lameness only but yet more serious results were feared. He did not fast on purpose, but his long walks through wild country and indigent people inflicted on him much severe deprivation; moreover, as he ate whatever food offered itself—food unpalatable, and often indigestible to him—his whole frame might have vied in emaciation with a monk of La Trappe. Such a phenomenon intensely excited the poor Romanists, who looked on him as a genuine "saint" of the ancient breed. The stamp of heaven seemed to them clear in a frame so wasted by austerity, so superior to worldly pomp, and so partaking in all their indigence. That a dozen such men would have done more to convert all Ireland to Protestantism than the whole apparatus of the Church establishment, was ere long my conviction, though I was at first offended by his apparent affectation of a careless exterior. But I soon understood that in no other way could he gain equal access to the lower and lowest orders, and that he was moved not by asceticism, nor by ostentation, but by a self-abandonment, fruitful of consequences. He had practically given up all reading, except that of the Bible; and no small part of his movement towards me soon took the form of dissuasion from all other voluntary study. In fact, I had more and more concentrated my religious reading on this one book; still I could not help feeling the value of a cultivated mind. Against this my new eccentric friend (himself having enjoyed no mean advantages of cultivation) directed his keenest attacks. I remember once saying to him, in defence of worldly station—To desire to be rich is unchristian and absurd; but if I were the father of children, I should wish to be rich enough to secure them a good education. He replied: "If I had children, I would as soon see them break stones on the road as do anything else, if only I could secure to them the Gospel and the grace of God." I was unable to say, Amen, but I admired his unflinching consistency; for now, as always, all he said was based on texts aptly quoted, and logically enforced. He more and more made me ashamed of political economy and moral philosophy, and all science; all of which ought to be "counted dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." For the first time in my life I saw a man earnestly turning into reality the principles which others confessed with their lips only. . . . I once said: "But do you really think that *no* part of the New Testament may have been temporary in its object? for instance, what should we have lost if St. Paul had never written the verse: 'The cloak which I have left at Troas, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.' He answered with the greatest promptitude: "I should certainly

certainly have lost something ; for that is exactly the verse which alone saved me from selling my little library. No ! every word, depend upon it, is from the Spirit, and is for eternal service.”

The person thus described, Mr. Newman says, ‘rapidly gained an immense sway over me.’

‘For the first time in my life I found myself under the dominion of a superior . . . . Henceforth I began to ask, what will *he* say to this or that ? In his reply I always expected to find a higher portion of God’s Spirit than in any I could frame for myself. In order to learn divine truth, it became a surer process to consult him than to search for myself. . . . Indeed but for a few weaknesses which warned me that he might err, I could have accepted him as an apostle commissioned to reveal the mind of God.’

If our readers were not already sufficiently impressed with the peculiar *facility* of Mr. Newman’s character; and his most imperfect conceptions of Christianity, the above extracts must, we think, more than convince them of both. We can scarcely imagine a more innocent and *telling* betrayal of amiable weakness and ignorance. That the portrait he here draws should have so powerfully affected him, and the view of Christianity he here exhibits should have so engaged his sympathy, may be creditable to his heart; but what a mere child and dreamer do they show him to have been as to Christianity itself. We know nothing more noble or beautiful than the picture of a high and devoted enthusiasm in the cause of religion. It claims our highest admiration and honour. But who does not see in the sketch before us, besides the glow of enthusiasm, the traits of a pure, downright fanaticism ? The idea of any one gravely arguing in the nineteenth century, as this ‘Irish clergyman,’ for the neglect of the cultivation of the intellect, and the contempt of science, is something peculiarly preposterous ; but when, as we read subsequently, we find him believing that the doctrine of the second advent of our Lord *totally forbids all working for earthly objects distant in time*, we can only smile at such sheer insanity :—

‘Let the dead bury their dead,’ he would say ; ‘and let the world study the things of the world : they know no better, and they are of use to the Church, who may borrow and use the jewels of the Egyptians ; but such studies cannot be eagerly followed by the Christian, except when he yields to unbelief. In fact, what would it avail even to become a second La Place, after thirty years’ study, if in five-and-thirty years the Lord descended from heaven, snatched up all his saints to meet Him, and burned to ashes all the works of the earth.’

When Mr. Newman could stumble at such sentiments as these, uncertain whether or no they were demanded by Christianity, it is really no wonder that he should by-and-bye have come to

discard a religion associated in his mind with such gross absurdities.

But we must now somewhat more rapidly trace the development of his scepticism. An intervening mission to Persia, in company with some friends, which furnishes in its conception and execution on his part some further striking indications of the peculiar simplicity of his character, was the means of ripening within him the sceptical tendencies which had already at the university manifested themselves, but which had been restrained under the sway of 'the Irish clergyman.' Freed from the somewhat magical control of this influence, he makes rapid progress in unlearning his 'youthful creed.' After a two years' residence in the East, he returns to England an unbeliever in the doctrines of the Trinity and of the personality of the Holy Spirit. We cannot dwell upon his slight attempts at reasoning in the former of these subjects, being, as they are, the mere repetition of the supposed intellectual contradictions involved in the doctrine. Mr. Newman might have learned better than this from some of his German teachers. They might have taught him how much deeper than any mere difficulties in its logical explication the truth of such a doctrine *necessarily* lies. But while Mr. Newman has imbibed much from Germany, his affinity is invariably to the negative and not to the positive side of its theology.

On his return home he found himself immediately in a crowd of difficulties from the report of his heresy having preceded him: and at this period, if at any, he seems to have been powerfully and deeply affected by a sense of the career upon which he had entered. But the repeated perusal of his narrative does not leave the impression upon us that the perplexities which now beset him, painful as they may have been, were of that purely spiritual kind which we have desiderated. They may in some degree have been so. God forbid that we should judge him harshly in the matter. All we say is, that there is *to us* no evidence of this in the confessions of the volume. We see no trace of the spontaneous workings of a soul in conflict and agony under the burden of so momentous a crisis in its history. No doubt he suffered bitterly; this is fully seen. The reproaches of friends, and the social ban which seems to have pursued him, must have been sore trials to one of so sensitive and affectionate a nature. But all this is a very different thing from what we mean. The petty persecution of which he conceives himself to have been the object, had, however, a very decided effect in stimulating the sceptical spirit which now so fully possessed him. Recovering from a temporary prostration, he speeds onwards on his course, with a haste and confusion which render it no longer easy to follow him. 'Calvinism

is abandoned : ' then the ' religion of the Letter renounced : ' then ' Faith at second hand found to be vain : ' and long before he has reached the conclusion of these successive periods he has laid aside all that is distinctive or positive in Christianity. It were idle for us to attempt to trace Mr. Newman minutely through these downward stages of his career. It is often very difficult for us, in fact, to catch any continuous thread of development in his progress henceforward. There is no longer the same natural and spontaneous flow in the narrative, but rather a continual aspect of special pleading. All manner of objections, critical and moral, are brought together against the Gospel, and set out in a sort of pell-mell array, in which we have utterly failed at times to see the least glimpse of coherence or intelligible succession. We can only endeavour, therefore, to test the general character of his reasoning by specimens selected here and there.

We are not concerned to defend against him the mere peculiarities of Calvinism. It has, however, we may say, little to fear from such an assailant as Mr. Newman. His mental grasp is altogether too slight, and his moral penetration too superficial to enable him to cope for a moment with the many theological masters who have stood forth in its defence. All we would observe in reference to this period of his spiritual history is that, in abandoning Calvinism, he seems virtually to have abandoned the Gospel. The ' revolution,' which in his own words laid the one ' prostrate in his mind,' seems also to have left in ruins the other ; so that at the close of this period, not only the peculiar formulæ of Calvinistic doctrines, but the great *facts* of Christianity seem to have become dim and uncertain to his apprehension. Nor can we forbear noticing further, in illustration of all we have already said as to his most inadequate conception of the Gospel, how entirely from the beginning he has failed to deal with these facts as appealing to the spiritual consciousness. This, the real question as to the adaptation of Christianity to our moral necessities, and its consequent worth as a system of divine education for training our moral powers to their highest bent and richest fruitfulness, is never once touched by him, and simply because he himself has never felt this adaptation. The spiritual depths which respond to the Gospel have never been fully stirred in him : and hence he has never really entered into its essential meaning. How true all this is, let the reader judge from what he records at the close of this period. ' I can testify,' he says, ' that the Atonement may be dropped out of the Pauline religion without affecting its quality.' . . . ' In all the workings of my mind about Tri-Unity, Incarnation, Atonement, the Fall, Resurrection, Immortality, Eternal Punishment, how little had any of these to

do with the inward exercises of my soul towards God.' How little could one who has thus written, have ever understood the Gospel! How little could he have comprehended its significance or felt its power when he could conceive, nay, aver, that he had certified in his own experience the fact, that the Atonement may be eliminated from the religion of St. Paul without affecting its quality; and that the inward exercises of his soul towards God had little or no dependence upon the views he entertained of the Fall, Redemption, and Immortality. And seeing Mr. Newman could write thus, how should he have ever thought of recording the phases of his faith? how should he have ever thought that 'passages' from the history of his creed which were of so little consequence to himself, could possess interest or consequence to others—*passages* which appear, from his own confession, to have been virtually *in vacuo*, the great elements of Christian truth having as much, or rather as little, vital relation to his spiritual being at the beginning as at the end?

It may seem, perhaps, to some, that we have made too much of this ignorance of the Gospel on the part of Mr. Newman, as bearing upon the worth of his testimony regarding it, especially as it is a matter which cannot well be absolutely determined. We have dwelt upon it, however, simply because so strongly and repeatedly forced upon us in the perusal of his volume. It betrays itself so remarkably, that in urging it, as we have done, we have merely obeyed the most vivid impression which the book has left upon us. Mr. Newman himself seems clearly to have anticipated such a mode of reply to his confessions. Nor is he anxious to repel it; he is rather content to have it urged, as it were a poor sort of answer that can only prove satisfactory to the 'evangelicals' who make it. 'I know,' he says, towards the close of his volume, 'that many evangelicals will reply, that I never can have had "the true" faith, else I could never have lost it: and as for my not being conscious of spiritual change, they will accept this as confirming their assertion. Undoubtedly I cannot prove that I ever felt as they now feel.' It is always very easy to escape, under such sort of contemptuous indifference; from the stress of an uncomfortable objection brought to bear against us. But whatever be the merits of the ready-made test which Mr. Newman conceives the so-called evangelicals would apply to him, it is not, evidently, such a test that we have applied. It is by no means merely from the simple fact of his having abandoned the truth that we have concluded him never to have really known it, but from the actual evidence which, to our minds, his pages bear to this effect. It is an induction which we have legitimately drawn from the phenomena of the case as exhibited by himself, and not an *à priori* conclusion grounded on its

its mere statement. And if the induction should seem in any degree harsh, or even be false (for the question, from its nature, cannot, as we have said, be *absolutely* determined), it may yet be a perfectly fair and well-founded one, from the facts before us. Of its being so we cannot, indeed, entertain any doubt.

Having got quit of Calvinism, and virtually, it appears to us, of Christianity, Mr. Newman still professes 'to have held fast an unabated reverence for the moral and spiritual teaching of the New Testament, and not to have had the most remote conception that anything could ever shatter his belief in its great miracles.' It was obviously impossible, however, that he could long remain in this position, and accordingly he soon began to impeach the veracity of Scripture. He first came to recognize circumstantial inaccuracies in the sacred record, then to doubt of its inspiration, and then to question the miraculous element in it altogether. We feel at a great loss to select specimens of his mode of procedure in his now rapidly downward course. His mixed confessions and arguments are such a confused jumble, and often start in the most flimsy and superficial manner questions so important, that to deal with them effectively would lead us into long detail. This, however, we do not feel we are called upon to do, even did our space and inclination permit us. Of the cool confidence, and most uncritical assumption with which Mr. Newman *settles* things, let the following examples suffice:—

'About this time,' he says (p. 127), 'the great phenomenon of these three Gospels, the casting out of devils, pressed forcibly on my attention. I now dared to look full into the facts, and saw that the disorders described were perfectly similar to epilepsy, mania, catalepsy, and other known maladies. Nay, the deaf, the dumb, the hunch-backed, are spoken of as devil-ridden. I further knew that such diseases are still ascribed to evil genii in Mussulman countries; nay, a vicious horse is believed by the Arabs to be *majnun*, possessed by a jin or genie. Devils also are cast out in Abyssinia to this day. . . . The devils cast out of two demoniacs (or one) are said to have entered into a herd of swine. This must have been a credulous fiction.'

It would be difficult, we think, to find a more consummate specimen of unwarranted allegation in the shape of argument, than the foregoing. Observe, 1st, how, without a shadow of proof, he at once identifies the demoniac possession of the Gospels with epilepsy, &c., a question which *per se* is one of the most difficult of the Gospel history, and the common orthodox opinion of which is, in the main, confirmed by the most thorough recent views.\* Observe, 2ndly, how by a mere side stroke he would leave it to

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\* Neander, in his *Denkwürdigkeiten*, &c.

be inferred that the cures performed by Jesus were nothing more than those which are performed in Abyssinia to this day. And lastly, notice his summary mode of disposing of the miracle of the devils cast out and entering into the swine. '*This must have been a credulous fiction.*' Does Mr. Newman really suppose this to be reasoning? Our readers, we feel, must think that we are expending any sort of reply unnecessarily upon one who pretends to argue in such a fashion against the credibility of the Gospel miracles.

But here again see how he disposes of the Old Testament record. The paragraph really admits of no answer save itself. It is impossible, however, to conceive any more adequate:—

'After this it followed,' he says, 'that the so-called canon of the Jews could not guarantee to us the value of the writings. Consequently, such books as Ruth and Esther (the latter indeed not containing one religious sentiment) stood forth at once in their natural insignificance. Ecclesiastes also seemed to me a meagre and shallow production. Chronicles I now learned to be not credulous only, but unfair, perhaps so far as actual dishonesty. Not one of the historical books of the Old Testament could approve itself to me as of any high antiquity, or of any spiritual authority; and in the New Testament I found the first three books and the Acts to contain many doubtful and some untrue accounts, and many incredible miracles.'

After these specimens of Mr. Newman's powers as a scriptural critic we do not think our readers will thank us for any more; they must feel satisfied that the Bible stands in no jeopardy at his hands. We must not, however, pass by some samples of a more general kind of reasoning in the concluding 'periods' of the volume.

The 'religion of the letter' having been renounced by him, he next finds 'faith at second hand to be vain.' He is led to engage in an entirely new inquiry as to what he calls 'the essential logic' of the investigations which had hitherto employed him; and the result is, that he comes to discredit the validity of all miraculous testimony to moral truths. The following illustration really embraces the sum and substance of his argument upon the subject:—

'I conceived of two men, Nathaniel and Demas, encountering a pretender to miracles, a Simon Magus of the Scriptures. Nathaniel is guileless, sound-hearted, and of strong moral sense, but in worldly matters rather a simpleton, and mistakes a juggler's tricks for supernatural wonders. Demas is a sharp fellow, who gets on well in the world, quick of eye and shrewd of wit, hard-headed, and not to be imposed upon by his fellows, but destitute of any high religious aspirations or deep moral insight. The juggleries of Simon are readily discerned by Demas, but thoroughly deceive poor Nathaniel: what then

then is the latter to do? If we enact the rule that men are to "submit their understandings" to authoritative miracles, and that revelation is a thing of the outward senses, we alight on the undeniable absurdity that Demas has faculties better fitted than those of Nathaniel for discriminating religious truth and error, and that Nathaniel, in obedience to eye and ear, which we know to be very deceivable organs, is to abandon his moral perceptions.'

Apart from the taste of this illustration, which we shall leave to speak for itself, how completely false and inapplicable is it! How ludicrously does it conceal and distort the real question as to the *character* of the miracles performed—insinuating, as it were, the level of the Gospel miracles to that of those of ordinary jugglery. Can Mr. Newman really so deceive himself, and are we to believe him sincere, in drawing such a parallel as the above? We are very reluctant to doubt his perfect honesty. It is a matter with which we would rather not concern ourselves. But there are many indications in the latter half of the volume besides those we have already given which leave a painful impression upon us that we are no longer listening to a Nathaniel confessing himself, but to a Demas making out a case. There is a degree of perverse misstatement and sleight of argument, which, while it can mislead none who know anything of the subjects, has all the air of throwing dust in the eyes of the young and unwary reader. Whether this be really a clumsy trick of jugglery, or arise simply from Mr. Newman's incapacity to enter into the real merits of the question, and conduct a high argument, we leave to others to determine: for ourselves, we are fully inclined to believe the latter.

Meanwhile, during the progress of his inquiry into the possible validity of miraculous testimony, 'new breaches,' he says, 'were made in the citadels of his creed which had not yet surrendered.' He begins to see that it is all a mistake as to the Reformation being the result of the re-awakened study of the Bible. It was, on the contrary, all owing to the intellectual excitement which followed the revived cultivation of Greek and Latin literature. Not only so, but at length he perceives—

'how untenable is the argument drawn from the inward history of Christianity in favour of its superhuman origin. In fact, this religion cannot pretend to be a *self-sustaining power*. Hardly was it started on its course when it began to be polluted by the heathenism and the false philosophy around it. With the decline of national genius and civil culture it became more and more debased. So far from being able to uphold the existing morality of the best pagan teachers, it became barbarised itself—from ferocious men it learned ferocity.'

Nay, more, it seems, 'the facts concerning the outward spread of Christianity have also been disguised by the party spirit of Christians.'

Christians.' All that we have hitherto believed on this subject turns out to be the most monstrous delusion. Even Gibbon, with his enumeration of secondary causes, did not half see the truth, according to our advanced infidel of the present day. The fact is, and the statement well deserves the italics Mr. Newman has given it (such an *eureka* cannot be proclaimed too significantly): '*It was the Christian soldiers in Constantine's army who conquered the empire for Christianity.*'

After this we may well say anything: and we feel that our readers' patience must be getting exhausted under such a mingled exhibition of inconclusive reasoning and presumptuous assertion; we will, therefore, only delay them by a single extract farther, and it shall present, as it were, the culmination of Mr. Newman's unbelief—the rank consummate weed that has sprung from the bitter root of his scepticism. Speaking of the argument drawn from the character of Jesus to the truths of Christianity, he says—

'I do not at all see how the uneducated can judge of the literary question, "Whether it is or is not for the portrait of Jesus to be imaginary and unreal?" Heroes are described in superhuman dignity; why not in superhuman goodness? Many biographies overdraw the virtues of their subject. An experienced critic can sometimes discern this; but certainly the uncritical cannot always. I remember, when a boy, to have read the *Life of Fletcher of Madeley*, written by Benson, and he appeared to me an absolutely perfect man; and at this day, if I were to read the book afresh, I suspect I should think his character is a more perfect one than that of Jesus.'

We have given these extracts almost without comment, as needing none. They serve to exhibit very strikingly the fatal restlessness and facility of Mr. Newman's intellect, of which we have already spoken, and which totally incapacitates him for the impartial and comprehensive discussion of religious questions. That any man in our day should speak as he has done of the influence and spread of Christianity, whatever might be his speculative opinions, argues either the most deplorable perversity or the most deplorable ignorance. He has once or twice made mention of the venerated name of Neander, although in a way calculated to leave upon the mind of the reader a very erroneous impression as to the import of his theological labours. We commend to his perusal the *Church History* of that great teacher, if it may yet be that any historical exposition, however exhaustive and convincing, would avail against such hapless and feeble *bigotries* (for they are nothing else) of scepticism as the above. As to the last quotation, we refrain from characterising it. It has filled us with a very peculiar feeling of revulsion, which we hesitate to express,  
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in pity for the spirit which animates it and the fearful blindness in which alone it could originate.

And now we must take leave of Mr. Newman in a word or two of general remark. Having descended as he has done with such a sad acceleration into the gulf of what he calls Spiritualism, but which is neither more nor less than pure Deism, what reason has he for believing that he will not descend further into the yawning pit of Pantheism, which he still professes strongly to repudiate at the close of this volume? Having gone on, ever changing and exhausting his creed, what assurance has he that he has at length stopped? We see no guiding principle under which his course has been hitherto run; why then should he not run on, impelled by the unrestrained spirit of negation, to which he has yielded till he sunk into the absolute *nihilism* of some of his German friends? We see no reason why he should not; and certain we are that all the tendency of his book is towards the dark and barren abyss of utter Scepticism. The 'Progress' he speaks of is sheer destruction.

But, again, Mr. Newman professes, under all his changes, to have retained unimpaired his moral perceptions, and even to have advanced their pure development. And it may be so. There may be (it is barely possible) something so peculiar in his idiosyncrasy, that such has been the result in his case. But how little can he know that the same result will take place in others. Nay, if he is not absolutely blind to all the ordinary phenomena of history, must he not feel it to be a most critical and dangerous thing in a *moral point of view* to unsettle the faith of the young—that faith associated with all the holiest lessons of a mother's love and a father's wisdom; a thing so awful in its possible consequences as to make any man who cares for the well-being of his fellow-creatures to pause ere he attempt it? Has Mr. Newman thus considered the evil of his present sedulous task? Has he, a teacher of youth in one of our metropolitan institutions, realised the fearful responsibility he is incurring in the issue of such a volume as the above? Does he really believe the fancied modicum of truth he professes to have reached, after all his wanderings, to be of such value as to lead him to encounter any moral evil to his readers in its dissemination? Has he pondered these questions? If he has, he is certainly more bold than he is wise. If he has not, he has certainly need to do so.

But are our fears withal extensive on the score of this modern infidelity? There can be no doubt that it is meanwhile exercising a considerable influence for evil upon the young especially, as we have already expressed our belief in the outset, and for some time longer it will probably continue its mischief; but so flimsy and

and borrowed an affair cannot long stand an intelligent scrutiny. So soon as the aspect of novelty wears off, even the young will begin to learn its meagre pretensions and to see the emptiness of its boastful generalisations, and it shall be literally buried in the obscure grave which itself has prepared; while the old truths shall shine out more radiantly than ever, in renewed loveliness and strength, acquired in the wholesome process of conflict and victory.

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### PARALLELISTIC POETRY.

THE earliest poetry, that we know of, we find in the inspired records; and to the peculiar rhythmical form in which it is cast has been given, in later times, the name of parallelism; and its general characteristic features are so sufficiently recognized under that name, as not to need a particular description. That this arrangement constituted the poetry of the Hebrew people there is no doubt, and it pervaded their literature from the commencement of their existence as a nation until their dispersion; yet still to designate it as the Hebrew metre, is not a correct mode of expression. Of course the Hebrew books are the most ancient existing documents, and we have none that can lay any claim to authenticity that are prior to, or contemporaneous with, the writings of Moses, which can throw light upon the subject;\* on investigating those writings, however, it seems plain that the system of parallelism, or, as it is variously called, 'the metre of things,' 'verse-rhythm,' or 'thought-rhythm,' was not the invention of the Hebrews, nor was the use of it confined to them; but that it both constituted the form of poetry among the nations that were their contemporaries, and was prevalent as a means of

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\* We ought perhaps to make an exception in the case of the hieroglyphical writings of the Egyptians, which doubtless, if they could be interpreted with certainty, would illustrate in many respects the poetry of the earlier times, as being a written language of things or ideas, as that was a poetry or rhythm of things. Plato, in his second book of 'The Laws,' ascribes an antiquity of ten thousand years to some of the Egyptian μέλη, or poems, which he speaks of as being 'written, or delineated,' *τετυπωμένα*, meaning, of course, hieroglyphically written: and he also says, that having been preserved for a long course of time, they were called the Poems of Isis. This hieroglyphic writing, being a written language of things, was probably always understood, or read, rather by traditional interpretation than grammatical instruction. Some of the above remarks may perhaps also apply to the recently-discovered inscriptions at Nineveh.

pleasure,