

**A DEFENCE OF "THE ECLIPSE OF
FAITH", BY ITS AUTHOR; BEING
A REJOINDER TO PROFESSOR
NEWMAN'S "REPLY"**

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HENRY ROGERS & FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN

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OF

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“REPLY.”

Second Edition, revised.



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P R E F A C E

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

THE demand for a second edition of the "Defence" has given me an early opportunity of correcting a few verbal errors, and smoothing two or three uncouth constructions, which, from the unusual rapidity with which the work was composed and printed, escaped the Author's eye. It is one of the disadvantages under which all such controversial pieces are written, that they must be given to the world at once or not at all. Most of the few inaccuracies referred to (and which are now corrected) would be rectified by the reader as soon as his eye detected them; but in three instances the sense was affected. Of these — now of course properly corrected — I have given the *corrigenda* at the close of the Appendix, that the purchasers of the *first* edition, who may feel so inclined, may insert the correction in their copies. And here I should have dismissed the volume, had not a recent article in the "Prospective Review" (to a former article in which the 15th section of the present volume refers) required a few "last words." As the following sheets were printed off before its appearance, I could not insert the remarks in the proper place, and they are therefore added to the Appendix.

June 1. 1854.

such practices than myself,) without making the accusation recoil on his calumniator; and this I pledge myself to do. Mr. Newman may rest assured that I will reckon with him on all such points, to the uttermost syllable.

But this would occupy only a few of the following pages; and I have gone a little further. I have answered every statement of the least moment which I can find in Mr. Newman's strictures: nor have I contented myself even with that. I have felt tempted to re-state the argument of Harrington D——, from which Mr. Newman so preposterously infers that I believe in an "immoral Deity";—to make a few remarks on the inexplicable explanations and obscure *éclaircissements* of his former statements, respecting the relations of man's religious nature to the external organon which develops it,—which last it still seems may, somehow, come from man, but cannot come from God;—to offer some observations on his new chapter on the "Moral Perfection of Christ"—strange mistle, since it is to prove his Moral Imperfection;—and to give my young Christian countrymen a few words of counsel in reference to the Deism of the present day. Meantime in the present section, I will afford them an opportunity of judging how far they prefer the charity of the new spiritualism to that of the New Testament, and how far they can trust the "free criticism" which asserts the moral deficiencies of Christianity, and the moral defects of its Founder.

Mr. Newman calls his little chapter a "Reply to 'The Eclipse of Faith.'" One would think the whole book professed to be formally and exclusively directed against him! The slightest inspection of its very various contents will show that a multitude of topics are taken up in which he has no concern in the world; and that his

opinions, like those of Parker, Strauss, and others, were introduced, only so far as they affected the particular topics under discussion. He is pleased even to say that one magical "sentence," which I have *not* allowed "Mr. Fellowes to press," would have sufficed "to crush the whole treatise of 450 pages!"* This sentence, so far from being neglected, Harrington makes (as I think), pretty good use of, only, of course, in a very different way: I mention it here merely to show the extravagance of Mr. Newman's assertions; since half at least of the volume is occupied with topics which have no reference to his peculiar speculations. But it is Mr. Newman's privilege to speak hastily, and to speak largely.

Again, Mr. Newman seems to suppose that there was some special animosity towards him, in selecting some of his opinions for comment in "The Eclipse"; if so, he is much mistaken. I felt none then; I may add, I feel none now. I had nothing in the world but his *opinions* in view; and I should not have commented upon them at all, had he not been a perfect stranger to me. Had he been either a friend, or an enemy, nay, had he been at all known to me, then, as in all cases in which I have been impelled by conscience or induced by importunity to enter into controversy, (which, whatever Mr. Newman may think, I thoroughly hate,) I should have refrained from noticing *his* writings at all; since I should have distrusted my own impartiality. It was easy to find others. I selected his writings, because I thought that from their half views and quarter views, and sometimes *tenth* of quarter views, they were likely to do mischief among the young. The "Phases," in particular, appeared likely to have this effect, by that volatile transition from subject to subject, and that summary and slashing treatment of all, which characterise that

* Reply, p. 199.

singular book. It seemed likely to leave as confused an impression on the mind as those exhibitions of "dissolving views," where we see mountains and lakes advancing upon us through receding cities; rocks and grottoes obtruding into the ruins of a cathedral; and a waterfall just tumbling out of a vanishing turret window.

Mr. Newman, having combined in his system the strangest eccentricities of opinion, seems resolved to try whether he cannot finish by one or two practical paradoxes quite equal to any of his theoretical; and certainly he promises to be perfectly consistent in inconsistency.

For example; he has said more in *one* chapter in this new edition of the "Phases"—to say nothing of his "Soul," and nothing of his "Hebrew Monarchy,"—to wound and shock the religious feelings of his countrymen—to jar their inmost sense of all that is most sacred—than any other writer of his day. Yet no sooner does any one proceed to expose his own religious system, which seems so unreasonable to the world that probably not twenty people in it would profess adherence to it, than he looks grave, and protests against levity in the treatment of *sacred* things! I must answer, like Pascal when the Jesuits brought against him a similar charge, that "I am far enough from ridiculing *sacred* things, in ridiculing such notions." Mr. Newman warns me with much solemnity against thinking that "questions pertaining to God are advanced by boisterous glee."* I do not think "The Eclipse" is characterised by "*boisterous glee*;" and certainly I was not at all aware that the things which *alone* I have ridiculed—some of them advanced by him, and some by others,—deserved to be treated with solemnity. For example, that an authoritative external revelation, which most people have thought possible enough, is *impossible*,—that man is

* Reply, p. 200.

most likely born for a dog's life, and "there an end,"—that there are great defects in the morality of the New Testament, and much imperfection in the character of its Founder,—that the miracles of Christ might be real, because Christ was a *clairvoyant* and mesmerist,—that God was not a Person, but Personality;—I say, I was not at all aware that these things, and such as these, which alone I have ridiculed, were questions "pertaining to God," in any other sense than the wildest hypotheses in some sense "pertain" to science, and the grossest heresies to religion.

Again; in theory nothing can be more delightful than Mr. Newman's charity; in practice nothing more grotesque. He is full of fierce anathemas against bigotry, and declaims most passionately on behalf of charity and loving kindness. In "The Eclipse of Faith?" I, with my poor "Pagan" notions of morality—so he is pleased to consider them,—carefully abstained from questioning the *sincerity of his motives*; for I had nothing to do with his motives—I had to do with his *arguments*. These I exposed, and sometimes ridiculed; I acknowledge it with becoming impenitence; I shall repeat the offence, if offence it be; and I am prepared presently to justify my conduct. What course does Mr. Newman take? While enjoining charity, deprecating "personal antagonisms," and talking in a most edifying strain about opening "the mind to truth, and the heart to love," he indulges in the most acrimonious imputations of "blasphemy," "dishonesty," "stealthy misrepresentations," "gross garbling," "dealing unscrupulously," and I know not what.

He tells me in one place that unless I mean what he says, I *must* mean—and which I certainly do *not* mean, if *he* means what he seems to mean, for it is arrant nonsense,—that my words are "palpably and inex-