

**A LETTER ADDRESSED TO HIS
GRACE THE DUKE OF NORFOLK:
ON OCCASION OF MR.
GLADSTONE'S RECENT
EXPOSTULATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649043408

A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk: On Occasion of Mr. Gladstone's Recent
Expostulation by John Henry Newman

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Cover @ 2017

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JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

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A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

His Grace the Duke of Norfolk,

ON OCCASION OF

Mr. Gladstone's Recent Expostulation.

BY

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, D.D.,

OF THE ORATORY.

NEW YORK:
THE CATHOLIC PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
9 WARREN STREET.

—
1875.

c1299.67

1876, March 8.
Gift of
Sam'l^l W. Green, M.D.
of Britain.
(H. 26.1857)

TO
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NORFOLK,
Hereditary Earl Marshal of England,
ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR DUKE OF NORFOLK :

When I yielded to the earnest wish which you, together with many others, urged upon me, that I should reply to Mr. Gladstone's recent Expostulation, a friend suggested that I ought to ask your Grace's permission to address my remarks to you. Not that for a moment he or I thought of implicating you, in any sense or measure, in a responsibility which is solely and entirely my own; but on a very serious occasion, when such heavy charges had been made against the Catholics of England by so powerful and so earnest an adversary, it seemed my duty, in meeting his challenge, to gain the support, if I could, of a name which is the special representative and the fitting sample of a laity, as zealous for the Catholic religion as it is patriotic.

You consented with something of the reluctance which I had felt myself when called upon to write; for

it was hard to be summoned at any age, early or late, from a peaceful course of life and the duties of one's station, to a scene of war. Still, you consented; and, for myself, it is the compensation for a very unpleasant task, that I, who belong to a generation that is fast flitting away, am thus enabled, in what is likely to be my last publication, to associate myself with one, on many accounts so dear to me,—so full of young promise—whose career is before him.

I deeply grieve that Mr. Gladstone has felt it his duty to speak with such extraordinary severity of our Religion and of ourselves. I consider he has committed himself to a representation of ecclesiastical documents which will not hold, and to a view of our position in the country which we have neither deserved nor can be patient under. None but the *Schola Theologorum* is competent to determine the force of Papal and Synodal utterances, and the exact interpretation of them is a work of time. But so much may be safely said of the decrees which have lately been promulgated, and of the faithful who have received them, that Mr. Gladstone's account, both of them and of us, is neither trustworthy nor charitable.

Yet not a little may be said in explanation of a step, which so many of his admirers and well-wishers deplore. I own to a deep feeling, that Catholics may in good measure thank themselves, and no one else, for having alienated from them so religious a mind. There are those among us, as it must be confessed, who for years past have conducted themselves as if no responsibility attached to wild words and overbearing deeds; who have stated truths in the most paradoxical form,

and stretched principles till they were close upon snapping; and who at length, having done their best to set the house on fire, leave to others the task of putting out the flame. The English people are sufficiently sensitive of the claims of the Pope, without having them, as if in defiance, flourished in their faces. Those claims most certainly I am not going to deny; I have never denied them. I have no intention, now that I have to write upon them, to conceal any part of them. And I uphold them as heartily as I recognize my duty of loyalty to the constitution, the laws, and the government of England. I see no inconsistency in my being at once a good Catholic and a good Englishman. Yet it is one thing to be able to satisfy myself as to my consistency, quite another to satisfy others; and, undisturbed as I am in my own conscience, I have great difficulties in the task before me. I have one difficulty to overcome in the present excitement of the public mind against our Religion, caused partly by the chronic extravagances of knots of Catholics here and there, partly by the vehement rhetoric which is the occasion of my writing to you. A worse difficulty lies in getting people, as they are commonly found, to put off the modes of speech and language which are usual with them, and to enter into scientific distinctions and traditional rules of interpretation, which, as being new to them, appear evasive and unnatural. And a third difficulty, as I may call it, is this—that in so very wide a subject, opening so great a variety of questions, and of opinions upon them, while it will be simply necessary to take the objections made against us and our faith, one by one, readers may think me trifling with their

patience, because they do not find those points first dealt with, on which they lay most stress themselves.

But I have said enough by way of preface; and without more delay turn to Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet.

§ 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE main question which Mr. Gladstone has started I consider to be this:—Can Catholics be trustworthy subjects of the State? has not a foreign Power a hold over their consciences such, that it may at any time be used to the serious perplexity and injury of the civil government under which they live? Not that Mr. Gladstone confines himself to these questions, for he goes out of his way, I am sorry to say, to taunt us with our loss of mental and moral freedom, a vituperation which is not necessary for his purpose at all. He informs us too that we have “repudiated ancient history,” and are rejecting “modern thought,” and that our Church has been “refurbishing her rusty tools,” and has been lately aggravating, and is likely still more to aggravate, our state of bondage. I think it unworthy of Mr. Gladstone’s high character thus to have inveighed against us; what intellectual manliness is left to us, according to him? yet his circle of acquaintance is too wide, and his knowledge of his countrymen on the other hand too accurate, for him not to know that he is bringing a great amount of odium and bad feeling upon excellent men, whose only offence is their religion. The more intense is the prejudice with which we are regarded by whole classes of men, the less is there of generosity in his pouring upon us superfluous reproaches. The graver the charge, which is the direct occasion of his writing against us, the more care-