

**CHARITY AND THE CLERGY:
BEING A REVIEW BY A
PROTESTANT CLERGYMAN OF
THE "NEW THEMES"
CONTROVERSY**

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Charity and the Clergy: Being a Review by a Protestant Clergyman of The "New Themes"
Controversy by Stephen Colwell

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STEPHEN COLWELL

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BEING

A Review,

BY

A PROTESTANT CLERGYMAN,

OF THE

"NEW THEMES" CONTROVERSY;

TOGETHER WITH

SUNDRY SERIOUS REFLECTIONS UPON THE RELIGIOUS PRESS,
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES, ECCLESIASTICAL AMBITION,
GROWTH OF MODERATISM, PROSTITUTION OF
THE PULPIT, AND GENERAL DECAY
OF CHRISTIANITY.



PHILADELPHIA:

LIPPINCOTT, GRAMBO & CO.

1853. *m*



A REVIEW.

NEW THEMES FOR THE PROTESTANT CLERGY, ETC. By
STEPHEN COLWELL. Second Edition, Revised. Phila-
delphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co. 1852.

A REVIEW, BY A LAYMAN, OF A WORK ENTITLED
"NEW THEMES, ETC." Philadelphia: Lippincott,
Grambo & Co. 1852.

POLITICS FOR AMERICAN CHRISTIANS. POLITICS OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT. SOME NOTICES OF A REVIEW
OF "NEW THEMES, ETC." Philadelphia: Lippincott,
Grambo & Co. 1852.

SELF-COMPLACENCY.

REFORMERS have usually met with a surly
reception at the seats of power. The com-
fortable classes fear change, lest their comforts
depart. Dives, Diotrephes and Demetrius,
Caiaphas, Laud, and Leo X., represent classes

always existing, and always arraying themselves against the Pauls, and Wickliffes, and Miltons, and Luthers, and Galileos, and Knoxes; against the Puritans, and Protestants, and Waldenses, and other truth-finders and truth-tellers, whom after ages enshrine in the Temples of Love, Fame, and Gratitude.

But many oppose Reformers from motives much more innocent. They honestly love the present, and cannot see the truth of the Reformers' criticisms or proposed amendments. The world is only aggregate man, and what man is there that knoweth himself? The heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it? The world flatters and cheats itself. The chief characteristic of every age is self-complacency. "Surely we are the people!" No doubt, Tubal-Cain teaching his apprentices to work in brass and iron, often reflected on the perfection of art in his age, and the "old fogyism" of the days of his grandfather Adam. Self-glorification, too, is a form of human weakness which

has characterized every generation, every country, every party, every sect. And more than this, men are prone to identify themselves with certain ideas and institutions so entirely, to cluster around them such tender associations and sweet recollections, that an intimation of imperfection in those ideas or institutions is instinctively resented, like an insult to a mother. And this is specially true with regard to a man's religion. He very properly feels the most jealous guardianship over this sacred and eternal interest, and very naturally identifies his interpretation of religion with religion itself. In the eyes of the Pharisees of old, an attack upon their traditionary interpretation of Moses and the Prophets was impugning the authority of the sacred writers themselves; or an attack upon the lives of them, the acknowledged illustrators of divine truth, was denying the divine origin and the sanctifying power of that truth. Hence, in the eye of Judaism, Jesus and his Apostles were infidels. And

so has it ever been in the history of Christianity; Christians have been prone to stake Christianity upon their understanding and exemplification of it. If they understood the Bible to teach that the sun revolves around the earth, the poor Galileo who asserted the contrary was a vile heretic, if not a downright infidel. So of the doctrine of antipodes, of an old pre-adamite earth, of pre-existent death, and such like conflictings with traditional interpretations; to assert them was to raise from a thousand quarters the cry of *infidelity, infidelity*. But when the people had time to reflect and examine, they saw that the innovators were only infidel to their beloved grandmothers' *explanation* of the Bible.

“NEW THEMES” NOT INFIDEL.

Knowing these characteristics of our species, whether out of the Church or in it, the author of “New Themes” should not be sur-

prised (however much he may feel wounded) at hearing the cry of infidelity raised when he ventured to declare a difference between the Bible and the traditionary expositions of the Bible, and the corresponding conduct of the expositors. But of all the instances recorded in history, never has that cry been so *senseless* and *illiberal* as in this case. The author himself is not prepared to justify all the forms of expression which he has used in his writings; but we say with deliberation that we have never read an author who seemed more profoundly smitten with the truth, and beauty, and practical value, of Christianity than the author of *New Themes*. We are certainly disposed to find fault with the grouping which he makes of its doctrines, seemingly depreciating some of prime consequence in his zeal for those which he thinks have been neglected; but that ought not to prejudice our minds to the fact that in the whole drift of his writings he is paying the highest homage to Christianity. He

has done what few others have ever done—cast the *entire hopes* of the world *for time* and *for eternity* upon Christ and his teachings.

And he does this in such a way as ought not to offend the most rigid orthodoxy. For he not only acknowledges the truth of Christianity, but he acknowledges the truth of the orthodox interpretations of it. Not a single item in the Confession of Faith or the Thirty-Nine Articles does he dissent from. He affirms only their incompleteness. He finds in them all a *missing element*—one which is largely present in the Bible. Why should an attempt to enthrone that element as high in the creed as it is enthroned in the Bible, be met by such a storm of orthodox frowns as have been visited upon the head of poor New Themes?

It is no New Theme to the pulpit to discourse of the imperfection of all human performances. It is certainly a favourite theme, and a very proper one. Now though Chris-