

THE NEW INFIDELITY

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The New Infidelity by Augustus Radcliffe Grote

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AUGUSTUS RADCLIFFE GROTE

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INFIDELITY**

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Religion is not a Trap set by Knaves to catch Fools, as certain Unbelievers appear to think. Neither is it a perfect Plan, as some of the Orthodox conceive. Rather is it a Feeling and an Expression to which we are all subject and accessory, and therefore something to be reformed, not abolished.



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By G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

TO
M. S. H.

PREFACE.

IN this Book, written for to-day, and probably rather embodying some of the current shades of opinion, than discussing the merits of the state of affairs between Religion and Science, the author has endeavored to show that there is an essential difference between the religious temper of the Aryan races and the Semitic. Our villages to-day are Aryan settlements in their vital points, not Semitic enclosures; and it is so with our Religion—at bottom it is Pagan still. He has also tried to show that Revealed Religion is not directly attacked by the discoveries of Science. Only Natural Religion, which is regarded by him as the foundation of Paganism, is now assailed in her own house, by her own children, and with her own weapons. This has come to pass through the further development of that race-tendency, which seeks in Nature for the proof of the existence of God. In Nature, Paganism

found at first many Gods; and our present monotheistic idea (outside of Christianity) seems to be the result of the gradual extinction of the belief in diverse Deities, by the process of discovering a single Force moving the Universe of Matter. The author draws attention to the increasing numbers of educated persons who have been led to reject Supernatural Religion, and believes that, while they are anxious to aid in the moral progress of the race, their power for good in the community would be increased by their coöperation with the churches. To this end Christianity might assist by understanding their position, and exercising a more liberal charity towards them.

"A good jest, truly!" replied Don Quixote, "that books printed with the license of kings and approbation of those who are appointed to examine them, read with universal delight, celebrated by great and small, rich and poor, knights and plebeians—finally by persons of all ranks and degrees whatever—should contain nothing but lies, notwithstanding the appearance of truth which they maintain in mentioning the father, mother, country, relatives,

condition, birthplace"— and thus the dispute between the Knight and the Canon went on. It is to be read now with interest, and applies well to the miraculous in the Scriptures, which are a mixture of truth and fiction. What is plainly not fiction in their pages is the life and character of Christ, as they can be studied from the accounts of the sacred writers ; yet the whole value lies in the extraction of the true Saviour from the statements as they have come to us. While one school of writers divests Him entirely of the supernatural, and even represents His mind as opposed to the miraculous, the other clothes Him throughout with Divinity, Mystery, and Miracle, and adds, by inventions of its own, to the wonders of the sacred story. If we regard Christ as an historic personage, full of zeal for the revelation of Jehovah (which had gradually come to the Jews) as the Father of His people, and anxious to restore purity of worship and to elevate the standard of morality, we shall not go far wrong. The last of the great Jewish Prophets, Christ stands in the half-light between myth and history, and, as the founder of a Religion, has