

**PHASES OF FAITH: OR,
PASSAGES FROM
THE HISTORY OF MY
CREED. FIFTH EDITION**

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Phases of Faith: Or, Passages from the History of My Creed. Fifth Edition by Francis William Newman

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FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN

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THE HISTORY OF MY CREED.

BY

FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN,

FORMERLY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE,
OXFORD.

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THIS is perhaps an egotistical book ; egotistical certainly in its form, yet not in its purport and essence.

Personal reasons the writer cannot wholly disown, for desiring to explain himself to more than a few, who on religious grounds are unjustly alienated from him. If by any motive of curiosity or lingering remembrances they may be led to read his straightforward account, he trusts to be able to show them that he has had *no choice* but to adopt the intellectual conclusions which offend them ;—that the difference between them and him turns on questions of Learning, History, Criticism and Abstract Thought ;—and that to make *their* results (if indeed they have ever deeply and honestly investigated the matter) the tests of *his* spiritual state, is to employ unjust weights and a false balance, which are an abomination to the Lord. To defraud one's neighbour of any tithe of mint and cummin, would seem to them a sin : is it less to withhold affection, trust and free intercourse, and build up unpassable barriers of coldness and alarm, against one whose sole offence is to differ from them intellectually ?

But the argument before the writer is something immensely greater than a personal one. So it happens, that to vindicate himself is to establish a mighty truth ; a truth which can in no other way so well enter the heart, as when it comes embodied in an individual case. If he can show, that to have shrunk from his successive convictions *would* have been "infidelity" to God and Truth and Righteousness ; but that he

has been "faithful" to the highest and most urgent duty;—it will be made clear that Belief is one thing and Faith another; that to believe is intellectual, nay possibly "earthly, devilish;" and that to set up any fixed creed as a test of spiritual character is a most unjust, oppressive and mischievous superstition. The historical form has been deliberately selected, as easier and more interesting to the reader; but it must not be imagined that the author has given his mental history in general, much less an autobiography. The progress of his *creed* is his sole subject; and other topics are introduced either to illustrate this or as digressions suggested by it.

March 22nd, 1850.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

I HAVE expanded a few passages in the later portions of this book, where, by reason (I suppose) of my too great brevity, I have been greatly misapprehended. For the same reason I have enlarged a short discussion into an entire new chapter, on the Moral Perfection of Jesus. Disagreeable experience warns me, that hostile reviewers will endeavour, as before, to excite prejudice against me, by picking out my *conclusions*, and carefully stripping off every *reason* which I assign, as also every qualifying and softening addition; preparatory to turning on me, and charging me with "inconsistency," for *not* being as one-sided as they have told their readers that I am. I now say: not only is this careful suppression of my arguments a cowardly trick, and a mark of their conscious weakness; but, as they well know that every word whispered against the personal perfection of Jesus is intensely offensive, I charge them, (if they have *some* conscience, as I hope,) not to outrage their readers and pretend it is I who do so. To give my reasons, as well as my conclusions, may aid to a true and stable result, whether I prove convincing or unconvincing. To give my conclusions alone and inadequately, can proceed from none but a malignant intention.

I have also added a chapter at the end, chiefly in reply to the "Eclipse of Faith," a book which has been highly extolled as a refutation of my writings.

May, 1853.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. MY YOUTHFUL CREED	1
II. STRIVINGS AFTER A MORE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY .	16
III. CALVINISM ABANDONED	41
IV. THE RELIGION OF THE LETTER RENOUNCED	65
V. FAITH AT SECOND HAND FOUND TO BE VAIN	88
VI. HISTORY DISCOVERED TO BE NO PART OF RELIGION .	124
VII. ON THE MORAL PERFECTION OF JESUS	139
VIII. ON BIGOTRY AND PROGRESS	164
IX. REPLY TO THE "ECLIPSE OF FAITH"	176

PHASES OF FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

MY YOUTHFUL CREED.

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 persecution from my schoolfellows 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 with 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. While I am far from saying that my *whole* moral conduct was subjugated by my creed, I must insist that it was no mere fancy resting in my intellect: it was really operative on my temper, tastes, pursuits and conduct.

When I was sixteen, in 1821, I was "confirmed" by Dr. Howley, then Bishop of London, and endeavoured to take on

myself with greater decision and more conscientious consistency the whole yoke of Christ. Every thing in the Service was solemn to me, except the bishop: he seemed to me a *made-up* man and a mere pageant. I also remember that when I was examined by the clergyman for confirmation, it troubled me much that he only put questions which tested my *memory* concerning the Catechism and other formulas, instead of trying to find out whether I had any actual faith in that about which I was to be called to profess faith: I was not then aware that his sole duty was to try my *knowledge*. But I already felt keenly the chasm that separated the High from the Low Church; and that it was impossible for me to sympathize with those who imagined that Forms could command the Spirit.

Yet so entirely was I enslaved to one Form,—that of observing the Sunday, or, as I had learned falsely to call it, the Sabbath,—that I fell into painful and injurious conflict with a superior kinsman, by refusing to obey his orders on the Sunday. He attempted to deal with me by mere authority, not by instruction; and to yield my conscience to authority would have been to yield up all spiritual life. I erred, but I was faithful to God.

When I was rather more than seventeen, I subscribed the 39 Articles at Oxford in order to be admitted to the University. Subscription was “no bondage,” but pleasure; for I well knew and loved the Articles, and looked on them as a great bulwark of the truth; a bulwark, however, not by being imposed, but by the spiritual and classical beauty which to me shone in them. But it was certain to me before I went to Oxford, and manifest in my first acquaintance with it, that very few academicians could be said to believe them. Of the young men, not one in five seemed to have any religious convictions at all: the elder residents seldom or never showed sympathy with the doctrines that pervade that formula. I felt from my first day there, that the system of compulsory subscription was hollow, false, and wholly evil.

Oxford is a pleasant place for making friends,—friends of all sorts that young men wish. One who is above envy and scorns servility,—who can praise and delight in all the good qualities of his equals in age, and does not desire to set himself above them, or to vie with his superiors in rank,—may have more than enough of friends, for pleasure and for profit. So certainly had I; yet no one of my equals gained any as-