

B 2503
N261

B. G. Ralph-Krown. Y. P.
Woking - Surrey

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

ROME OR ATHEISM

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

BY

G. W. FOOTE.



LONDON:
R. FORDER, 28 STONECUTTER STREET, E.C.

1892

LONDON :
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY G. W. FOOTE,
28 STONECUTTER STREET, E.C.

ROME OR ATHEISM.

SINCE the days of famous Tractarian movement at Oxford, which culminated in the secession of Newman, Manning and others from the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church has made great and steady advance in the chief land of "No Popery." It may be true, as Mr. Gladstone remarked, that Rome has grown richer in acres than in men; but this simply means that her converts are made among the rich and well-to-do rather than among the poorer classes of the community. After all allowances and explanations, the fact is palpable that she has vastly increased her strength and improved her position. Her churches, colleges, and schools have multiplied; her priests have become numerous, and they walk the streets with no particular air of humility; her dignitaries are enterprising, astute, and successful; and wealth—the great secret of organisation and influence—appears to flow with ever increasing volume into her coffers.

Meanwhile the "No Popery" cry has died away in England. Occasionally a faint broken-winded protest against the Scarlet Whore sounds from a

Low Church pulpit or a Nonconformist platform; but the Roman Catholic Church is generally recognised as a sound portion of the religious life of the country. It would be false to say that the late Cardinal Manning was respected *because* of his Catholicism; he made himself popular by being, or professing to be, a friend of the democratic movement towards better conditions of life for the masses of the people. Yet the way in which the public tolerated his haughty claims to precedence, shows that the old hatred of Rome is practically dead amongst the English people.

Much of this altered state of things is undoubtedly due to Catholic Emancipation. While the Papists were under a legal stigma, their martyr spirit was necessarily cherished; but something more than this is needed for the success of a Church in an old, complex society. "Respectability" stood aloof, with timidity and vacillation, and all the elements that "let I dare not wait upon I would." But when the legal stigma was removed, those of the upper and "respectable" classes who desired a Faith unadulterated with Reason, a Faith of antiquity and gorgeous ritual and superb dogmatism, were free to gravitate towards the Holy Mother Church from whom their forefathers had parted in anger and contempt.

Cardinal Manning's successor is perhaps indiscreet, but certainly not otherwise wanting in sagacity, in saying that he looks upon the High Church party as an ally of Rome. No treaty has been signed; there is, indeed, a certain attitude of hostility to Rome on

the part of High Churchmen ; but to the eyes of less subtle laymen there is a very slender difference between these ostensible rivals.

Mr. Vaughan, the new Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, has told a representative of *Black and White* that the High Church party is "doing a great service" to Rome. "It is true," he said, "they arrest some who would otherwise come over, yet on the whole they are doing our work." Nearly all the old controversies have died out, and Catholic doctrines "are now taught where they were formerly denounced." "England herself," said Dr. Vaughan, "will never, I think, be Catholic throughout, but her main religion will be so without a doubt."

Such a triumphant note is calculated to arouse reflection. "Twenty years ago," said Newman in a sermon on "The Pope and the Revolution," preached in 1866, "twenty years ago, we were a mere collection of individuals ; but Pope Pius has brought us together, has given us bishops, and created out of us a body politic, which (please God), as time goes on, will play an important part in Christendom." Twenty-six years more have elapsed, and the Catholic Church is playing that "important part" in England. Sermons against her are no longer preached at Court by Protestant divines. Dr. Cumming's name is now antediluvian. Royalty sends a gracious message of condolence on the death of a Manning. Catholic organisations are reckoned with by statesmen, and although we have no ambassador at the Vatican, it is an open secret that

political negotiations have been surreptitiously carried on between the British Government and the Pope.

Looking beyond our own country, we see the Romish Church everywhere holding its own and in some places positively advancing. She is bound but not crippled in France; she has come unimpaired out of her tremendous struggle with Bismarck in Germany; in the United States of America she is already threatening the Constitution.

Was it not Macaulay who remarked that the Roman Catholic Church had survived every shock, including that of the Reformation, and emerged from every trial with her vital powers uninjured. "And she may still exist," the historian exclaimed, "in undiminished vigor when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on the broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

The Roman Catholic Church has an immense advantage over Protestant bodies. She has been troubled with heresies and dissensions, but she has always purged herself and maintained her ecclesiastical and dogmatic continuity. Protestantism, on the other hand, appealing as it does to private judgment, at least in the interpretation of Scripture; and to that extent applying the solvent of reason to the mysteries of faith; is ever breaking up into a wider diversity of sects, and sliding down into the gulf of Rationalism. Nor is this all. Protestantism has its *Churches*, but Roman Catholicism is *the Church*. Her organisation

is a perfect model of strength and efficiency. The celibacy of her priests secures their absolute devotion to her interests. She is republican in the selection of her agents, and imperial in her use of them. She combines the aspiration and enthusiasm of democracy with the power and foresight of a dictatorship. Thus she moves to her ends with incomparable force and decision.

Protestantism has merely abandoned some of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church ; it has added nothing, and its partial appeal to reason only opens the flood-gates of Scepticism. They are grievously mistaken who imagine that either Revelation or Natural Religion can stand upon a purely intellectual basis. Not in any court of reason can miracles, immortality, future rewards and punishments, or even Theism, be successfully established. This is practically admitted by Protestants, or why is Revelation necessary ? But how is Revelation anything but a perplexity and an absurdity, if a book like the Bible is put into the hands of the people for individual interpretation ? Let the discord of Protestantism answer this question. Such a Revelation as the Christian Scriptures is useless, nay misleading, without a divinely appointed interpreter ; and thus the Roman Catholic looks upon his Church as "the living voice of God."

Atheism makes a clean sweep of supernaturalism, of which the Roman Catholic Church is (at least in Christendom) the historic and logical champion. Between these two mortal enemies the war has been covertly

going on for centuries. Where it is most critical, as in France, the struggle is open and undisguised. So it will be everywhere. Protestant sects will fall "between the fell incensèd points of mighty opposites." Some of their members will go over to Rome; others will go over to Atheism. The process in fact is already obvious to men of discernment. Yes, the illogical sectaries will disappear, and leave the field to the two great logical protagonists of Faith and Reason, who march steadily forward to their Armageddon.

The victory of the one or the other will decide the fate of modern civilisation. The combatants will not fight for a platonic triumph, but for practical sovereignty. It is *ideas* that govern the world. Faith moulds society in one fashion, and Reason in another. They cannot sign a treaty or make a truce; they must fight to the bitter end; for the issue involves not only the *beliefs*, but the *lives*, the hopes and fears, the rights and duties, the character and happiness, of a countless posterity.

THE TWO NEWMANS.*

THE death of Cardinal Newman cannot have come as a surprise. A man of ninety holds a precarious tenure of existence. No "blind Fury" is needed to "slit the thin-spur life" with "abhorred shears." Death at such an age is rather the visitor sung by Whitman—

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

For all practical purposes Cardinal Newman had been dead for years. Though the sweet old man's presence was still dear to his friends, to the outer world he was an historic name. His work was long since finished, his books had become classics, and the public thought of him as the protagonist in an ancient battle. No one looked for anything more from his pen, his obituary was docketed in the offices of the daily papers, and except for his writings he was no longer reckoned as a living force.

Some things the newspapers could not help saying about such a man. They were not called upon to

* From the *Freethinker*, August 17, 1890.

form a judgment of their own. There were accessible verdicts on Newman by very eminent writers. We hear, therefore, what is perfectly true, that he was a singularly attractive personality, a great scholar, and a magical master of English. For our own part, we are prepared to go still farther. We will assert that Newman is the purest stylist and the greatest theologian in our language. His perfect eloquence charmed his worst opponents; his subtlety of mind was in itself a fascination; and such was his persuasive power—so keen his dialectic, so consummate his marshalling of resources, so exquisitely urbane his manner—that a confirmed Atheist might almost regret the necessity of differing from him. We have often felt, even when dissenting from him most strongly, that we could kiss the hand that wielded the pen. "Here," we said to ourselves, "is one who is more than a Catholic, more than a theologian; one who has lived an intense inner life, who understands the human heart as few have understood it, who follows the subtlest workings of the human mind, who helps the reader to understand himself, who throws over every page the glamor of a lofty character as well as a capacious intellect."

Knowing Newman through and through, as far as it was possible without personal intercourse; studying his writings carefully as those of the greatest soldier in the Army of Faith; we could never share the distrust of his sincerity. He was a Catholic by temperament. Like Pascal, another profound intelligence, he saw there was no logical halting-place between

Rome and Atheism. Follow reason absolutely, and faith dies ; follow faith absolutely, and reason becomes its slave. Newman saw that no religious dogma has ever been able to resist the solvent power of the human mind. To conserve his faith, therefore, he was obliged to set limits to his intellect. Certain first principles were to be assumed. Reason did not, and could not, prove them ; but once admitted, reason could be exercised in illustrating and defending them. When Newman flung himself at the feet of Father Dominic, the Passionist, and was received into the communion of Rome, he showed his conversion was a matter of temperament. The Father was greatly his inferior, but he represented the Catholic Church, and only within that Church could Newman find rest for his soul. Protestantism acknowledged in theory, though never in practice, the sovereignty of reason. Newman's nature constrained him to square practice with theory. He would hold his faith, but hold it consistently. He told the Protestants, after his conversion, that "reason was the substance of their faith," and that "private judgment does but create opinions, and nothing more." What he required was certitude, and he found it (such as it was) in the Church of Rome. The proof of this is patent to any judicious reader, who perceives the exuberance, the spring, the glow of Newman's writings after he became a Catholic. His genius was depressed by Protestantism. He left it with long pain and travail, but, having left it, he felt a mighty relief.

Properly to understand the elder Newman we must couple his case with that of his brother Francis William. A generous view of both was given by Thackeray in *Pendennis*. The words are Thackeray's, though put into the mouth of Arthur Pendennis. He is answering the old question about truth.

"I see it in this man who worships by act of Parliament, and is rewarded with a silk apron and five thousand a year; in that man, who, driven fatally by the remorseless logic of his creed, gives up everything, friends, fame, dearest ties, closest vanities, the respect of an army of churchmen, the recognised position of a leader, and passes over, truth-impelled, to the enemy, in whose ranks he is ready to serve henceforth as a nameless private soldier. I see the truth in that man, as I do in his brother, whose logic drives him to quite a different conclusion, and who, after having passed a life in vain endeavors to reconcile an irreconcilable book, flings it at last down in despair, and declares, with tearful eyes, and hands up to heaven, his revolt and recantation."

Thackeray was not exaggerating. John Henry Newman had nothing to gain, but everything to lose, from a worldly point of view, in going over to Rome. For some time he did actually serve as a private soldier in the Catholic army, performing all the duties of a humble curate, and wasting his exquisite eloquence on illiterate and stupid congregations. Francis William Newman, on the other hand, was going through the bitter experiences recorded in his *Phases of Faith*. While his brother was moving from Protestantism to Catholicism, he was moving from Protestantism to Rationalism. Bit by bit his creed crumbled away. Doctrine after doctrine went, the divine claims of the

Bible at length disappeared, and with them the "perfection" of Jesus. All that remained was a belief in God, and a somewhat faint belief in a future life. During this process he lost the "private friendship and acquaintance" of his brother, he was "cut off" from other members of his family, and dear friends fell away on every side. "My heart was ready to break," he writes; "I wished for a woman's soul, that I might weep in floods."

Both brothers were honest. They went their several ways, according to the logic of their first principles. The one gravitated naturally to Rome, the other as naturally to Rationalism, or, as it was then called, Liberalism. And what is Liberalism? "Liberalism," said Cardinal Newman, "is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word." This is from the *Apologia*. In the *Grammar of Assent* there is a remarkable passage, tracing the development of three Protestants; one becomes a Catholic, the second a Unitarian, the third an Atheist. The Catholic was entirely logical, and so was the Atheist; but the Unitarian was half-logical. He let his reason play upon the Scripture, but not upon the contents of Natural Religion. He retained his belief in God and a future life simply on grounds of faith.*

* "Thus of three Protestants, one becomes a Catholic, a second a Uni-

Francis Newman has verified this truth. Though still a Theist, he is constrained to admit that the proofs of God's existence are not what he once thought them. He can hardly be said to retain any *positive* belief in a future life. We gather from his later writings that he considers some form of Theism essential to human morality and elevation. But this is not judging according to evidence. It is in every respect *an act of faith*, as John Henry Newman would have shown him.

tarian, and a third an unbeliever: how is this? The first becomes a Catholic, because he assented, as a Protestant, to the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, with a real assent and a genuine conviction, and because this certitude, taking possession of his mind, led him on to welcome the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence and of the Theotocos, till his Protestantism fell off from him, and he submitted himself to the Church. The second became a Unitarian, because, proceeding on the principle that Scripture was the rule of faith, and that a man's private judgment was its rule of interpretation, and finding that the doctrine of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds did not follow by logical necessity from the text of Scripture, he said to himself, "The word of God has been made of none effect by the traditions of men," and therefore nothing was left for him but to profess what he considered primitive Christianity and to become a Humanitarian. The third gradually subsided into infidelity, because he started with the Protestant dogma, cherished in the depths of his nature, that a priesthood was a corruption of the simplicity of the Gospel. First, then, he would protest against the sacrifice of the Mass; next he gave up baptismal regeneration and the sacramental principle; then he asked himself whether dogmas were not a restraint on Christian liberty as well as Sacraments; then came the question, What after all was the use of teachers of religion? Why should any one stand between him and his Maker? After a time it struck him that this obvious question had to be answered by the Apostles, as well as by the Anglican clergy; so he came to the conclusion that the true and only revelation of God to man is that which is written on the heart. This did for a time, and he remained a Deist. But then it occurred to him that this inward moral law was there within the breast, whether there was a God or not, and that it was a roundabout way of enforcing that law to say that it came from God, and simply unnecessary, considering it carried with it its own sacred and sovereign authority, as our feelings instinctively testified; and when he turned to look at the physical world around him, he really did not see what scientific proof there was of the Being of God at all, and it seemed to him as if all things would go quite as well as at present without that hypothesis as with it; so he dropped it, and became a *purus putus* Atheist."

Cardinal Newman dreaded Atheism, but he never argued against it. He knew that was hopeless. His controversial writings were addressed to Protestants. He was always pointing out the intellectual unsoundness of their basis. Reason was their boast, and Newman told them plainly that reason was unable to find half their doctrines in the Bible, that reason affords no proper evidence of a future state, and that the very existence of God could not be rationally proved so as to produce a conviction. He admitted that the "unaided reason," if "correctly exercised," led to these beliefs; but unaided reason had a general tendency to exercise itself *incorrectly*; and considering the faculty of reason "actually and historically," it had nearly always led to "simple unbelief in matters of religion." Thus, when Christ came, religious knowledge was "all but disappearing from those portions of the world in which the intellect had been active and had had a career." And at present, outside the Catholic Church, things are tending rapidly to "atheism in one shape or other."

Here, then, is the reason why many Atheists complained that Cardinal Newman was not in contact with modern thought. He had nothing to say about Darwin and evolution, and so forth; his polemic was antediluvian. The complaint was excusable, but it overlooked two important facts. First, modern science has invented no new *argument* against Theism, and Newman was perfectly familiar with the old ones. Secondly, if Darwinism has triumphed in science,

Catholicism is still living, and seems likely to live. It is as the logical, uncompromising, and infinitely dexterous defender of this citadel of superstition that Newman is worthy of study by those who are engaged in its attack; his other qualities being chiefly interesting to the lovers of literature and psychology. And if the Atheists who study Newman are struck by his saintliness, if they find that the champion of superstition is terribly strong and adroit, it will be a double lesson to them—first, in human sympathy, and secondly, in the perfecting of their own weapons and methods of warfare.

REPLY TO PROFESSOR NEWMAN.*

PROFESSOR F. W. NEWMAN has just issued a little volume, entitled *Contributions chiefly to the Early History of the late Cardinal Newman*. What the venerable Professor has to say about his great brother's career before he left the Church of England may be dealt with hereafter. For the present, I confine myself to his criticism on the article I wrote in this journal

* From the *Freethinker*, February 2 and 9, 1891.

for August 17, 1890. Professor Newman devotes several pages to this criticism. He calls my Atheism "foolish," but he applies the epithet generically to *all* Atheism. On the other hand, he refers to me as "Mr. G. W. Foote, a fine writer, editor of the *Freethinker*, and an avowed Atheist." Personally I am rather careless of compliments, knowing as I do, better than any critic, both my powers and my limitations. But a compliment from such a quarter may bespeak consideration for me, and for this journal, in cultivated circles, and may a little abash those who would persuade persons who never read a line of my writings that I am only an illiterate brawler.

I will not argue whether Thackeray was right or wrong in the passage I quoted from *Pendennis*. Professor Newman says his brother had irrecoverably lost respect and position in the Church of England when it was seen that "his doctrine was fullblown Romanism." Perhaps so, but had he been insincere he might have stopped short of that point. His pressing beyond it is perhaps consistent with Professor Newman's statement of fact, and with Thackeray's statement of opinion. I at least see no essential contradiction.

Professor Newman doubts my accuracy in saying that Cardinal Newman dreaded Atheism, and never argued against it, knowing that to be hopeless. "Is that a fact?" he asks: "I am not *up* in the *Grammar of Assent*, some readers may perhaps correct Mr. Foote's fact." Certainly Professor Newman is not *up* in any

of his brother's writings. He seems to have treated them with singular neglect, though I think he might have studied them to advantage. But I *am* "up" in the Cardinal's writings; and, as a matter of fact, I know that he did not argue against Atheism, and that there are scores of passages in his treatises and sermons which show that he saw the uselessness of doing so. The famous passage in the *Apologia*, which is not too highly praised by Lord Coleridge, at least shows that the Cardinal put faint trust in any argument derived from "the law of gravitation," such as Professor Newman finds so cogent in his *Life After Death?* (p. 11). It was the voice of conscience that sustained his faith in God. "Were it not for this voice," he said, "speaking so clearly in my conscience and heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world." Nor did the arguments "drawn from the general facts of human society and the course of history" satisfy him. "These do not warm or enlighten me," he said. He trusted to the voice within. But he knew very well that the Atheist had a natural explanation of that voice, and he was far too sagacious to risk a battle on ground where, even if he won the victory in the opinion of his disciples, he would certainly display the weakness of his position. Every theologian has some assumption which he will not debate; it is the point from which he starts, the germ of error from which all else is evolved, the "idol" as Bacon called it, which must not be exposed to vulgar criticism.

Cardinal Newman's *dread* of Atheism is affirmed by his personal friend, Mr. Lilly. But it needs no such affirmation. It is a logical deduction from his theories. Given a belief in God, he held that Catholicism was its inevitable development. The thing to be feared, therefore, was Atheism, which struck at the very root of faith. Protestantism he feared as leading to Atheism.

"If the Cardinal avowed [I did not say *avowed*] that it was hopeless to argue against Atheists," writes Professor Newman, "that may merely mean that they are lower than ordinary normal mankind, and he treats them with contempt." For my part, I am not aware of any such *contempt* in his writings. He felt no contempt, but dread, of "the wild living intellect of man," whose "tendency is towards a simple unbelief in matters of religion," so that "no truth, however sacred, can stand against it, in the long run."

Nor do I think Professor Newman displays his usual urbanity in suggesting that Atheists may be "lower than ordinary normal mankind." Coleridge knew human nature and the history of human thought, at least as well as Professor Newman, and he declared that "not one man in ten thousand has goodness of heart or strength of mind to be an Atheist." Cardinal Newman himself, in his tremendous sermon on "Neglect of Divine Calls and Warnings," places a man in Hell, agonising and shrieking, whose friends on earth are praising him as "So comprehensive a mind!" or "so just in his remarks, so versatile, so unobtrusive,"

or "so great a benefactor to his country and his kind."

In the next place, I am taken to task for saying that the Cardinal could not rest without certitude, and could only find that in Rome. (By the way, I added "such as it was.") This is Professor Newman's comment:—

"If he mean that the Cardinal *ever* thought the existence of God our Creator was uncertain, or that greater certitude was afforded by entering the Roman Church, I think Mr. Foote must be wrong in fact. But if by *certitude* he mean a better knowledge of how many Persons co-existed in one God, in short, certitude concerning the inner essence and constitution of Godhead, it is marvellous to me how this can seem commendable to an Atheist."

But when have I said that such speculations are "commendable"? I certainly believe they are very natural. If you have a God behind the curtain you cannot help thinking all sorts of things about him. Nor have I said that Cardinal Newman was ever uncertain as to God's existence. But he wanted, like Othello, to make assurance doubly sure. Besides, the mere proposition of God's existence—some sort of God—was not sufficient. He required a different God from Professor Newman's; and although Catholicism did not prove this being's existence—which, indeed, could not be proved by logic at all—it furnished, as he thought, many and splendid corroborations. And this it was that gave him "perfect peace and contentment," like "coming into port after a rough sea," when he

passed his Rubicon and finally threw in his lot with the Roman Church.

The next point on which the Professor takes me to task is my statement that Cardinal Newman saw there was no logical halting-place between Rome and Atheism. "Delightful news!" exclaims my venerable critic: "Since the days of Isaiah and Micah, have the whole Jewish nation been so gliding" down to Atheism? Now the exclamation is irrelevant, and the question shows a misconception of the Cardinal's argument. The Jews, before the time of Christ, had no choice between Catholic Christianity and Atheism. They lived under a special dispensation, the Cardinal would have said; but when the opportunity arose they rejected the Church that Christ came to establish. No doubt the Cardinal would have included the modern Jews in the category of persons who have no logical alternative but Atheism or Rome. Whether the Cardinal *did* maintain what I allege, and whether I am right or wrong in agreeing with him, I proceed to show in detail.

It is not in the *Grammar of Assent* that we must look for Cardinal Newman's view of Atheism and Catholicity. That volume was written as much for Protestants as for Catholics, and he said nothing in it to alarm any section of his readers. We must turn to his addresses to Catholics, especially to the *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*. In the sermon on "Faith and Doubt" he sketches the case of Catholics who have listened to doubts, and as a punishment lost

their supernatural faith. The weak-minded, irresolute ones hover about the Church, though no longer of it. But "if they are men of more vigorous minds, they launch forward in a course of infidelity . . . till sometimes, if a free field is given them, they even develop into Atheism."

This seems to imply that in "a free field" whoever breaks away from Catholicism is likely to reach Atheism. An explicit declaration to that effect is made in the sermon on "Mysteries of Nature and Grace." The whole passage is worth quoting.

"O my brethren, turn away from the Catholic Church, and to whom will you go? it is your only chance of peace and assurance in this turbulent, changing world. *There is nothing between it and scepticism, when men exert their reason freely.* Private creeds, fancy religions, may be showy and imposing to the many in their day; natural religions may lie huge and lifeless, and camber the ground for centuries, and distract the attention or confuse the judgment of the learned; but on the long run it will be found that either the Catholic Religion is verily and indeed the coming in of the unseen world into this, or that there is nothing positive, nothing dogmatic, nothing real in any of our notions as to whence we come and whither we are going. Unlearn Catholicism, and you open the way to your becoming Protestant, Unitarian, Deist, Pantheist, Sceptic, in a dreadful, but inevitable succession; only not inevitable by some accident of your position, of your education, and of your cast of mind; only not inevitable if you dismiss the subject of religion from your view, deny yourself your reason, devote your thoughts to moral duties, or dissipate them in engagements of the world."

Surely this passage, and particularly the sentence I have italicised, is a plain declaration that there is no logical halting-place between Rome and Atheism. The

whole sermon, indeed, is a wonderful presentation of the difficulties of a belief in God as a wise moral governor of the universe. Reason, the Cardinal urges, is impotent to reconcile the terrible facts of life with the existence of such a deity. If you will be a Theist, you must trust to *faith*; and if you trust to faith, you will find it leads you to the bosom of the Catholic Church.

So far I have established my point. Cardinal Newman did assert that the alternative, to every man who uses his reason freely, is Rome or Atheism. But Professor Newman says I have no right to agree with the Cardinal unless I "uphold the Roman creed as itself logical." "Can we believe," he asks, "that Mr. Foote looks on the Nicene Creed, and the creed falsely called Athanasian, with its Three Divine Persons who are *not* Three Gods, as eminently logical? Unless he does, he is writing *not* sincerely, *not* truthfully, but to support his own foolish Atheism."

Now I have a great respect for Professor Newman. I learnt something from him in my younger days. I admired his learning, his fine spirit, and his beautiful style. I will therefore refrain from saying that he is writing *not* sincerely, *not* truthfully, but to support his foolish Theism. I will say instead that, in my opinion, he has fallen into confusion. His very illustration is singularly unhappy. The Nicene and Athanasian Creeds are recited by Protestants as well as Catholics. Both are appointed to be read in the Church of England service. The three Gods in one

Person are no special part of Catholic irrationality. Even if they were, I do not see that they are specially illogical. Error can be *logical* as well as truth. Its deductions and developments may be a beautiful series of flawless syllogisms. The fallacy will then lie in its original major premiss; that is, in the set of first principles from which it starts. Now it does seem to me that the Roman creed, ay, and the Roman ritual, is a logical development of the primary assumptions of Christianity, and that Protestant sects come short of it in proportion as they sacrifice Faith to Reason. A supernatural book, for instance, is useless without supernatural interpreters; the living voice of God in the Church is therefore a corollary of an inspired Bible, and the Protestant theory of private judgment is an illogical departure from the theory of inspiration.

On his own part, Professor Newman says I am wrong in asserting that he finds the proofs of God's existence are not what he once thought them. He asks *when* and *where* he has made this admission. He declares that, "on the contrary," he has "never ceased to regard Atheism as monstrous folly, and more than ever since in the last thirty years 'a *self-acting Universe*' is talked of."

I admit that Professor Newman has never ceased to inveigh against Atheism, sometimes in very unphilosophical language. I also admit the difficulty of putting my finger on particular sentences that prove his changed attitude as a Theist. But I certainly felt

that his attitude *had* changed, that there was a difference between some of his later Theistic utterances and the early part of his book on *The Soul*. Still I am liable to err, if Professor Newman is not, and I accept his correction.

I must tell him, however, that I fail to see how the *faith*, by which he once (see *The Soul*, chap. ii.) justified the ways of God to man, is quite consistent with the *reason* to which he has since appealed. Let him apply to the existence of God (subject to definitions) the same ruthless criticism he has applied to the doctrine of a Future Life, and see what is left at the end of the process.

I must also tell him that, in my opinion, he strikes at the root of Theism in striking at the belief in a Future Life. Supernatural expectations are at the bottom of supernatural beliefs. God is very much the dot to complete man's "I." All Professor Newman leaves us is a "pious opinion"—to use his words—of a hereafter; and he laboriously shows that this opinion has as little to say for itself as the most foolish of convicted superstitions.

Professor Newman denies that his faith is "crumbling away." "I tell Mr. Foote," he exclaims, "that my faith, my hopes, my joy keep rising, as I see Christian sects vying in *good works*." So do mine. But this is not the faith I referred to. Professor Newman's religious, or theological, faith was what I meant; and as he now expounds it, in the page before me, I am bound to say it does not exceed

what John Stuart Mill regarded as "permissible" in his *Essay on Theism*.

Christian sects are now—after centuries of mutual hatred, persecution and bloodshed—doing "a work which will change the aspect of the world." Professor Newman says—"We are in the beginning only. The awakening of Womanhood is the dawn of a new era, equivalent to the making Christian purity the goal of our civilisation." I also rejoice at the awakening of Womanhood. But what has it to do with Christianity? Is the charter of Womanhood to be found in the strange teaching of Jesus, or in the insolent teaching of Saint Paul? "Christian purity" has expressed itself in foolish asceticism, in the crying up of virginity, in the essential degradation of marriage. Surely Professor Newman forgets some of his own words in the *Phases of Faith*. And surely his use of the word "Christian" has a flavor of subterfuge when we recollect its ordinary meaning. The essential point of Christianity is the divinity of Christ; take that away, and the best Christian teaching becomes merely a part of Humanism.

THE ATHEIST NEWMAN.

THE passage already referred to in Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, respecting the three Protestants who became, the first a Catholic, the second a Deist, and the third an Atheist, is curiously like a piece of family history. John Henry Newman was the Catholic, Francis William Newman the Deist; and there was a third brother, Charles Robert Newman, who was the Atheist.

Professor Newman devotes a page and a half of his volume to this brother. What he says of him seems uncharitable, and is certainly unsatisfactory. Not only was he a "very eccentric character," with "meanness like that of an old cynic," but his "wasted life were better buried in silence." The last sentence is, to some extent, undoubtedly true. Better bury a brother's life in silence than say only what is to his discredit, and to say even that with a baldness that approaches disingenuousness.

Professor Newman writes, for instance, as follows: "He said he ought to take a literary degree at Bonn: his two brothers managed it for him, but he came away *without* seeking the degree." Now the truth seems to

be that he did not offer himself for examination because he knew he would be refused a degree in consequence of his avowed heresy ; which puts a very different complexion on the matter.

Robert Owen is supposed by Professor Newman to have been his brother's tutor in Atheism. This is a mistake. Owen was never an Atheist.

Professor Newman's veracity is unimpeachable, but it is not safe to accept his judgment on either of his brothers. Religious differences caused an "unhealable breach" between him and John Henry, so that they "seemed never to have an interest nor a wish in common." The same religious differences caused a breach between both of them and Charles Robert. And as the Atheist was wretchedly poor, far from robust in health, shy and retiring, and apparently afflicted with occasional lapses of mind, it is hardly surprising that a good report of him does not reach us from his brothers, who may have been apt to regard his Atheism as a kind of ingratitude, seeing they helped to find the small necessities of his very humble life.

A better report of Charles Robert Newman comes from other quarters. All that is likely to be known about him has been collected by the industry of my friend Mr. Wheeler, who wrote a Biographical Sketch for a little volume, which contains all that the world will ever read of Charles Robert Newman's writings.*

* *Essays in Rationalism.* By Charles Robert Newman. With Preface by George Jacob Holyoake, and Biographical Sketch by J. M. Wheeler. London : Progressive Publishing Company ; 1891.

He left a box full of manuscripts which were destroyed as useless. But the essays preserved in this little volume prove him to have possessed an original turn of mind; and had his fate been happier, he might have achieved distinction as well as his brothers. This much, at least, must be said of him: he was true to his intellect, and followed it though it led to a recluse life and a lonely death.

Cardinal Newman dreaded Atheism, and Professor Newman appears to hate it. How would he have been annoyed, had he known that "Recluse," who criticised his Theism in the *Reasoner*, was his own brother. One point of that criticism was extremely shrewd, and deserves a reply from the advocates of the Design Argument. What man produces is designed; he therefore argues that what Nature produces is designed. But this is merely an assumption. Art and nature may, and in fact do, produce orderly arrangements in different ways and by different causes. A photograph or a painted portrait is a work of art; a man's portrait in the mirror is a work of nature. There is design in the one case, and none in the other. Yet the result is practically the same in both cases. Similarly, order and adaptation may be produced *without* a purpose in nature, as they are produced *with* a purpose in art.

No wonder such a keen critic as Charles Robert Newman became an Atheist. No wonder his life was wasted, since he had not the practical qualities that command success, despite the hostility of a bigoted world. Nor is it any wonder that John Henry Newman

became a Roman Catholic. One brother followed Reason to the uttermost; the other followed Faith to the uttermost. Between them stood the third brother, passionately following both, giving each a divided allegiance, and thus typifying the great mass of thoughtful, but not too logical, men in this age of religious transition.



