

FRANCIS NEWMAN AND THEODORE PARKER. *R. F. Burns*

We mean not to give the history of the individuals whose names head this article. We introduce them merely as being identified (the one in England, the other in America,) with one of the most recent "phases" of modern infidelity.

It wears the Christian mask, and on this account is peculiarly dangerous. It professes to keep on a good footing with Christianity, but slyly waylays it, stabs it, robs it, lets out its very heart's blood, and reduces it to a shrivelled, mutilated carcase. Its kiss is that of a Judas, to betray; of a Joab, to kill. Sometimes Christ is held up as a mirror of perfection, a model worthy of universal imitation, furnishing the most lovely portrait of all the graces that can adorn humanity. At other times, with singular inconsistency and impiety, unhallowed hands are laid on that character in which his bitterest foes found nothing they could successfully assail, and on which the most lynx-eyed observer could not detect a spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Newman hesitates not to accuse the holy, harmless, undefiled one, of "moral unsoundness," "egregious vanity," "vacillation and pretension," "vain conceit of cleverness," "blundering self-sufficiency," "arrogance and error combined." He calls him "an uneducated man, claiming to act a part for which he was imperfectly prepared," and charges him with having purposely rushed on death to escape the necessity of living as an impostor! Horrible though these railing accusations be, they lie imbedded in a book which, for young men especially, has many attractions, and has already passed through several editions. They must of course recoil with tremendous force on the reckless aggressor, but there is a strange fascination about his history and style, and a startling novelty about some of the views propounded by him, which blind not a few to his mental and moral defects, and lay siege to the faculties of the understanding, through the wayward fancies and feelings of the heart.

The Christian Deist (singular paradox!) reveres the Bible, adopts its language, admires its moral code, even receives in a sense its doctrines. But its foundations are sapped, its language is perverted, its doctrines are wrested. "Original sin is only the necessary limitation of a creature. Justification by Faith is the ready reception of the penitent by God, through simple Faith in the divine willingness to receive him, irrespective altogether of the work of Christ. The New Birth is a change of sentiment and resolution on the part of man, with which the Holy Ghost has nothing whatever to do. The Divinity of Christ is only a higher degree of the universal divinity of man, and his mediatorial work only the ordinary work of a teacher of religion." Modern Deism seems to pay homage to the Bible while (as Mr. Rogers says) "it sponges out nine-tenths of the whole, or, after reducing the mass of it to a *caput mortuum* (a mere worthless residuum) of lies, fiction, and superstitions, retains only a few drops of fact and doctrine, so few, as certainly not to pay for the expenses of the critical distillation." It speaks, too, of *Inspiration*, but not in the sense in which it is declared that "all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God," and that of old time, "holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Inspiration, according to this new light, is but the enthusiasm of a fervid fancy, the stirring of an impulsive genius, like the ravings of a Pythoness, or the flights of a Poet. We are gravely told by Newman's American comrade, that "the wisdom of Solomon and the poetry of Isaiah are the fruit of the same inspiration which is popularly attributed to Milton or Shakspeare, or even to the homely wisdom of Benjamin Franklin; that the pens of Plato, of Paul, and of Danté,—the pencils of Claude and Raphael,—the chisels of Canova and of Chantrey,—no less than the voices of Knox, of Wickliffe, and of Luther,—are ministering instruments in different degrees of the same Spirit."