

*ANOTHER LOOK AT  
JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN*



Newman, 1861

# ***John Henry Cardinal Newman***

[ 1801 - 1890 ]

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## **Introduction**

There can be no doubt that the greatest figure of Catholic history in England, and perhaps in the entire world, since the French Revolution is John Henry Newman. Can the Bishops Challoner, Milner, and Allen, or even the famous Alban Butler, be compared to John Newman in influence, eloquence and universal acclaim? Might it even be said that Catholic reverence for Newman exceeds that of any of the great men that succeeded the tempestuous post-Reformation days? Certainly more attention has been given him than even, say, St. Thomas Aquinas who rarely, if ever, gets a hearing in public controversy.

His renown and influence, as we shall see, is both unjustified and menacing, and has come to pass for two reasons, both of which are aspects of the same tendency. The first reason is that ever since the eras of the Glorious and French Revolutions there has been a steady decrease of religion within the English Catholic body, a spiritual decline not peculiar to England alone; for it is evident that an equivalent disaster has occurred in every quarter of the globe. A careful and serious study of Catholic history since the so-called Reformation causes one to wonder just how the Bride of Christ has lasted this long in the midst of so many vicious and diabolical attacks. We know, of course, by faith that She will continue to the very last day of time, even if Her Creed and Grace be confessed and possessed by a mere handful of persons; and seminarians used to be taught this great truth — in the days when seminarians were taught Catholic truth. Then it was a mere hypothesis, agreed and assented to in the abstract, but unimaginable in the concrete. Today it is otherwise.

The second reason is that following upon this general spiritual decline there existed an ascendancy of heterodox and heretical teachers and a slow but constant loss of hold by Catholic authorities over their unruly subjects. Theologians were losing their strength and ability, as the Church was losing true theologians. Catholics became forgetful of the traditions of the Church and Her heritage. Instead of resuscitating the ancient practices and devotions, they were turning their eyes away from the past and resting them upon the present, and, to a considerable extent due to the modern media and Masonic control of states and nations, they become more interested in meeting the demands of pagan society. This impurity of vision created a false need in Catholic society: a need for men who are renowned and accepted by the so-called intellectual movements of modern society.

It is important to realize this when one considers the case of John Newman; for without these conditions Newman could surely never have gained in the English speaking Catholic world the respect and admiration which has been his for over a century. There had been a great deficiency in the Catholic intelligentsia in England for decades, if not for centuries, and it was this sad state of affairs that opened the hearts and minds of Catholics to Newman.

In spite of his talents and the nobility of his stated aspirations Newman was not the Catholic hero and intellectual that the modern Catholic world has made of him, and it is the contention of this paper that an investigation of his life will show conclusively that John Newman was neither a saint, eminent theologian, nor champion of orthodoxy, epithets often applied to him. To establish this, a look at his life, work and writings is in order.

## Life and Character of John H. Newman

The main outlines of Newman's life are well known and can therefore be summarised briefly. He was born in 1801 in a business district of London where his father John had moved with his wife Jemima. Canon Barry asserts in his *Biography of Newman* that his father was a banker, a Dutch Jew and Freemason who reaped the financial advantages that were normally available to bankers of such background<sup>1</sup> and attributes Newman's love of mathematics, experimental science and law, and his passion for Beethoven, to the Jewish blood that flowed in his veins. From his mother, Jemima Foudrinier, Newman inherited French Huguenot characteristics. His earliest education began at a boarding school in Ealing, with such classmates as Thackeray and the son of John Quincy Adams, then American minister for Great Britain and afterwards President of the United States. Newman's early life was reckless and wicked, or as he himself in later years put it: "I was more like a devil than a wicked boy." The collapse of his father's bank in 1816 was a shock and caused in the young Newman a dreadful fever that brought his mind to think about God. He consequently turned his mind to more serious studies by reading Tom Paine's attack against the Old Testament and the essays of Humo. At this time he copied some French verses denying the immortality of the soul and thought to himself, "How dreadful, but how plausible",<sup>2</sup> and his most recent biographer, Meriol Trevor, says that he then decided that he would be virtuous but not religious — the classical ideal.

The first conversion of Newman brought him to an Evangelical clergyman, Walter Mayers, who impressed upon his young mind the doctrine of a trinitarian God, and gave him Mimer's *Church History* where he first met the Fathers of the Church. Another book, Thomas Scotts' *The Force of Truth*, convinced him that personal development is the key for interpreting the world, whether natural or supernatural. "Growth is the only evidence of life" became his lifelong axiom, as his chief work *The Development of Christian Doctrine* amply testifies. The importance of these early impressions cannot be underestimated since they provide explanations for his mature thoughts and aspirations.

In 1816 Newman entered Trinity College at Oxford and met his lifelong friend, John William Bowden, whose father was director of the Bank of England and had business connections with the West India Company. M. Trevor says that Trinity "was certainly gentleman-like — nobody did much work and everybody drank a lot of wine", and Newman was known to bring his violin to the wine parties and provide entertainment. (In later life Newman enjoyed the musical company of Blanco White, an apostate priest from Spain who reveled in throwing mud at the Church and Her ministers.) In his second year at Trinity Newman attended lectures on minerology and geology with Shelley, the author of *The Necessity of Atheism*, and when his nervous disorders surfaced he failed his final examinations of 1820. His recurring nervous attacks would also be consistent with his Jewish heritage.<sup>3</sup>

His father's bank finally went bankrupt in 1821, forcing the Newmans to sell all their possessions. His father's attitude toward religion became evident when the two of them clashed because of John junior's religious activities. His father warned him: "Have a guard. You are encouraging a nervous and morbid sensibility, and irritability, which may be serious. I know what it is

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting, and perhaps casts a revealing light on the editorial policy of the publishers of the Catholic Encyclopedia, that Canon Barry, in his article in it on Newman, sees fit to deny this fact and thus contradict his biography.

<sup>2</sup> *Apologia*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> It is not implied that nervous disorders are only suffered by Jews. It is however true that the foundations of modern psychiatry were laid by a Jew, Sigmund Freud, whose patients were exclusively Jewish. Many surveys, including ones conducted by Jews, have shown that nervous disorders occur in far greater proportions of Jews than of non-Jews (cf. *Jewish Chronicle*, 10th June 1977) and this phenomenon was even more pronounced in the nineteenth century.

myself. It is a disease of the mind.” Newman’s sensitiveness and irritability gave him considerable problems in later life with Catholic priests and bishops.

In 1825 Newman was made Vice-Principal of St. Alban’s Hall where he was ordained a minister in the Church of England, and in 1828 he became Vicar of St. Mary’s at Oxford, a position he held until 1830 when he resigned after a clash with the Provost. In 1833 he embarked upon a Mediterranean tour, during which he composed his famous poem “Lead Kindly Light”, and afterwards, in 1841, he published his famous Tract 90 during the height of the Tractarian Movement in Oxford. At this time he began his advance towards the Catholic Church. In 1845, after Newman composed the Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, Saint Dominic Barberi, C.P, received him into the Church, and in 1847 he was ordained a Catholic priest in Rome joining the Oratory of St. Philip Neri.

From this time onward Newman propagated the Oratorian community in various places until he finally founded the Birmingham Oratory where he spent the greater part of the remainder of his life. From 1854 to 1857 Newman was Rector of the Catholic University of Ireland where his ambitions failed due to his liberal views on education; and in 1859 he became involved with the Rambler, an episode which added to the suspicion with which ecclesiastical authorities already regarded him. In 1867 Newman attempted to introduce Catholicism into Oxford University, a scheme which was prohibited by the bishops, after which he wrote his Essay in Aid of Grammar of Assent in defense of his liberal views. After the death of Pope Pius IX, who refused to raise him in the ranks of the clergy, Newman was created a cardinal at the instance of the Duke of Norfolk; and on August 11, 1890, at 8:45 p.m. he died.

The difficulty in understanding Newman’s character is not due to lack of historical material, but rather to the complexity of the man himself. Alfred Fawkes in *Studies in Modernism* characterised him as

...a great man of letters, and a master of English prose; his knowledge of certain sides of human nature was instinctive; he was subtle and, within limits, an acute thinker; and he was one of the most consummate advocates that ever lived. He possessed the temperament of the artist in an exceptional degree... He was not easy to live with; Manning’s view of him -- and it was shared by more friendly judges -- was that he was "difficult to understand". His transports of emotion were tempestuous. (p.26)

After relating the incident of Ambrose St. John’s death and Newman’s throwing himself on the bed by the corpse, and spending the night next to it, Fawkes states that “such a temper is not normal; one cannot mistake the overstrain.”

Unquestionably Newman was an exceptionally talented writer, capable of analyzing conceptions, terms and fine shades of meaning that few have since been able to match; yet underneath and behind his writings there is an ambiguity, which many have noticed, that gives the impression that Newman was more clever than straightforward.

Never consciously insincere, he constantly gave the impression of insincerity. You could not detect the fallacy, but a true instinct told you it was there. Hence the distrust inspired by that subtle rhetoric by which you are led downwards on an exquisitely elaborated inclined plane, from a truism to a probability, from a strong probability to a fair probability, from a fair probability to a pious but most improbable belief! (p.27)

With such a technique Newman could assuage the ire of ecclesiastics who frowned upon his writings.

Newman’s belief that the first principles of thought are rooted in personal traits reveals his own *modus operandi*, for it was not *per se* an objective principle that motivated his likes and dislikes but

rather his own temperament.

It would have been truer to say that temperament was the key to his career. It was temperament that led him to the Tractarian Movement, to Rome, and to anti-Vaticanism;... the vulgarity of Ultramontaniam offended him; he was not of that world. The entourage of Plus IX left a bad taste in his mouth... he was repelled by the "Univers", under Veillot, and the "Tablet", under Herbert Vaughn. He saw the policy of the Vatican was overreaching itself; it was in the interest of Catholicism that he minimised the *Syllabus* and opposed the Definition of 1870. (p.45)

## Catholics on Newman

Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England and you will see that he will make use of the laity against your grace.  
— Msgr. Talbot

Newman's popularity was not as universal in his own day as after his death. Indeed, until the Newman Clubs permeated the universities his fame was anything but glorious in the eyes of contemporary Catholics, and there is a considerable amount of recorded history to indicate that Newman was looked upon by fellow Catholics as recalcitrant, ambitious, scheming, disobedient, an innovator and generally a continual problem for the authorities. As Meriol Trevor said: "Newman was thought a crypto-Roman while he was in the Church of England, as a crypto-Protestant when he was in the Catholic and Roman communion" (p.58), and it will be useful to relate a few incidents and the reaction of various Catholics so that we can see Newman as Catholics did in his own day.

On one occasion Newman wrote about his supposedly profound mystical experience of grace when he received Anglican communion, in order to defend the Catholicity of the Church of England: "...if your soul has been, as it were, transfigured within you, when you came to the Most Holy Sacrament...O! pause ere you doubt that we have a Divine Presence among us still, and have not to seek it..." Lord Shrewsbury, a convert to Catholicism, wrote about Newman's experience:

Does this not sufficiently prove Newman's Vision to be an illusion of the Father of Lies, since they take it in evidence of the truth of their system and in Justification of Schism?

On another occasion, Newman brought upon himself the disrespect of Bishop Ullathorne.

Their popularity with the parishoners did not altogether please Bishop Ullathorne, who had heard a report., as Newman wrote with amusement to Faber, "that we were so familiar with our female penitents that they said they could marry us next morning..." At this period, Ullathorne, unable to believe that the converts were a real religious community, never called Newman "Father".

Here we see not only an example of ecclesiastical disapproval of Newman but also a piece of his well-known humour which was more often risqué than not. Among Englishmen today who know better than others what Newman was really like, Newman's zesty and pungent humour is a truism.

In *Newman's Journey* by Meriol Trevor, a recent publication evidently written to acquit Newman of his liberalism, we learn about Newman's failure and loss of prestige among his contemporaries:

During the rest of the fifties... Newman was losing his prestige with the Catholic authorities in London and Rome, so that by 1863, ruminating in his journal, he could feel that his work had been wasted and himself regarded as a crypto-heretic and disloyal to the Pope, while among Protestants he was almost forgotten, a fanatic who had outlived his reputation. This strange reversal of fortune is the critical period of Newman's life, for the understanding of his mature character and the nature of the influence he was to exercise after the success of his *Apologia* in 1864, which still continues. (p.156)

On the occasion of his Letter to Dr. Pusey in which he simultaneously pointed out Anglican misconceptions concerning the Blessed Virgin and denounced "Catholic excesses" in their devotion to the Mother of God, Newman called down the ire of Msgr. Talbot, the Papal Chamberlain, as well as

Manning. "Talbot thought every Englishman naturally anti-Roman. 'Dr. Newman is more English than the English. His spirit must be crushed!'", said Msgr. Talbot. (p.224) Manning held the same view, for he replied that he saw much danger of

...an English Catholicism, of which Newman is the highest type. It is the old Anglican, patristic, literary, Oxford tone transplanted into the Church... In one word, it is a worldly Catholicism, and it will have the worldly on its side, and will deceive many. (p.225)

These words of Cardinal Manning are very accurate, for he reveals the reason for the beautiful eloquence of Newman's prose, "the old Anglican, patristic, literary Oxford tone" that appealed to so many Catholics. If one reads carefully the writings of Newman, putting aside his attractive style, one is surprised to find how little dogma is actually contained in them. One writer pointed out that Newman never once quoted St. Thomas in support of any of his views.

Finally, another opponent of Newman's heterodoxy, E. R. Martin, who was the Roman correspondent of *The Weekly Register* and who did not hesitate to assail Newman for causing so much trouble in Rome, went so far as to argue that Newman's books should be placed on the *Index*.

## Newman and Manning

That Cardinal Manning, along with the majority of old Catholics, considered Newman to have departed from orthodox belief is agreed to by all biographers and historians who treat of their antagonism. J. E. C. Bodley in *Cardinal Manning And Other Essays* dispels in unbiased terms the mythical status of Newman's grandeur. "Mr. Ward" -- Wilfrid Ward who wrote a biography of Newman --

...forcibly exposes the suffering endured by Newman from such intellectual and social miseries. His book is an enduring monument to the most attractive and most colossal egoist that ever lived. It seems to reveal Newman as primarily neither a great Englishman, nor a great Oxford-man, nor a great Catholic... but a great Newmanite. Newman's measure of men was regulated not by their faith or their good works, but by their devotion to John Henry Newman.

Bodley was an intimate of Cardinal Manning and knew the Cardinal's mind about Newman, as he knew Newman himself:

If it had been given to him to choose who should sit on his right hand and who on his left in the kingdom of heaven, he would have preferred the agnostic Mark Pattison to Cardinal Allen and Archbishop McHale or any of the Ultramontane Irish bishops who afflicted him; and the Catholics admitted to the celestial band would have mostly been kind Oratorian fathers who were friends of Oxford days, or their affectionate successors. (p.22)

This is no exaggeration, for there was a cult around Newman in his day, as there is today by the remnant of Oratorians at Birmingham who run a virtual museum of *Newmaniana* containing such articles of devotion as Newman's shoe laces. The cause for his beatification, incidentally, was opened in 1954 and is being propagated by his disciples; but to this day not one miracle has been reported.

Bodley continues to describe Newman's outlook on himself and others:

...Newman's conception of Paradise was a beatific Oxford Common-room where he elected the members, and also chose the wines — as he did at Oriel — which in that sphere would symbolize the cordial virtues of friendship. But he cannot have conceived a heaven without the survival of human affection and sympathy. '*Ego diligentes me diligo*'<sup>1</sup> was the rule which formulated the first instinct of his nature, earthly and spiritual: though sometimes he followed a more strictly apostolic precedent in his treatment of those who loved him not: *Alexander aerarius multa mala mihi ostendit; reddet illi*

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<sup>1</sup> I love those loving me.

*Dominus secundum opera ejus.*<sup>1</sup> (p.23)

Bodley, a protestant, is a worthy witness of Newman's character since his own thinking naturally tended to coincide more with that of Newman's than Manning's, and it is therefore remarkable that his experience of the two men drew him to Manning rather than Newman.

In the spiritual domain Newman's Gallicanism, for historical reasons, would have attracted me more than Manning's Ultramontanism, and his liberalism would have appealed to a mind not insensible to scepticism. But I know Manning. He was the only good man I have known intimately... (p.24)

The hypocrisy of the liberal lies in his reluctance and inability to help the poor for whom he incessantly raises the banner of religion, whereas the virtue of the orthodox Catholic consists in his doing the work of Christ without fail or fanfare. The same contrast was found in Newman and Manning.

Manning's love for the suffering poor was higher and deeper than the specious altruism of politicians; for he had no material recompense to gain from philanthropy. While Newman with his pen had given joy to a select number of cultivated minds, and with his sympathetic amenity had bound in friendship the few who were admitted to his circle, compassion for the multitude was gradually absorbing all the genius of Manning. If there had been half a dozen Newmans born in this realm, England would have enjoyed the goodly gift of five more illustrious writers in the Victorian age. If there had been half a dozen Mannings, England would have run the risk of being converted... to Christianity. (p.25)

Whereas Newman wrote, spoke, traveled a great deal and failed in his projects more often than not, Manning wrote comparatively little, always for a definite purpose, refrained from appearing at social events and brought immense help to the poor. "Yet to the ordinary mortal it would seem that by the rules which regulate the commerce of human beings, Mannings policy was more honest than that of Newman." Although one might think, considering Newman's teaching about the superiority of the practical and concrete over the speculative and abstract, that Newman would have been the more practical of the two, nevertheless Manning prospered in many of his projects while he rarely spoke of them. Newman, on the contrary, was forever writing about his projects and defending himself in the newspapers; he always had a new idea which was frequently just an idea. Prosperity in good works, it must never be forgotten, always depends upon the recognition that the contemplative virtues are superior to the practical virtues, for "Wisdom is the more active than all things", and it is an ironical fact that those who deny this by eulogizing the practical life of man without reference to the speculative will inevitably fail in their plans, or simply continue talking and talking.

J. E. C. Bodley held the same view as the old English Catholics:

It has always been incomprehensible to me why Manning's hostility to Newman should be imputed to him as a sin, while Newman's hostility to Manning is held to be a virtue. (p.15)

One evening while Mr. Bodley and Cardinal Manning recalled the Oxford Movement that brought so many Anglican converts into the Church, Manning repudiated all connection with the movement thinking there was something insincere about the whole thing.

"I became a Catholic off my own bat" he exclaimed to indicate the lack of conviction in the Oxford converts. Afterwards the conversation moved to theological ground, and Manning's tone changed. "From an observation you made", he said, "I gather that you are under the impression that Doctor Newman is a good Catholic." I replied that such was my vague belief. He retorted: "Either you are ignorant of the Catholic doctrine, or of the works of Doctor Newman" - he always said 'Doctor Newman' in Oxford fashion, and never gave him the title of Cardinal. After asking me which of Newman's books I had read, he proceeded to tick off on his tapering fingers, in his usual way, ten distinct heresies to be found in the most widely-read works of Dr. Newman.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander rendered many evils to me: may the Lord render unto him according to his works!

Manning, indeed, had read Newman carefully in the light of Catholic theology and judged his writings accordingly. Mr. Bodley concluded the story of his conversation with Manning with a remark that all Catholics of conservative persuasion who regard Newman as the greatest thinker since St. Robert Bellarmine ought to keep in mind, for his remark is relevant to our own day:

Yet at the present hour, when the Modernists have claimed Newman as their precursor, supporting their contention with many a passage from his writings, it would seem that Manning, as the exponent of orthodox doctrine, was justified in his appreciation of Newman's teaching. (p.17)

Another influential writer during the last century was Lord Acton. who was famous for his critical historicism and also renowned for his friendship with Dollinger. Acton was almost excommunicated, as Dollinger was, but managed to maintain the appearance of orthodoxy and remain in the Church. As liberal as Lord Acton was, and although he sided with Newman in fighting the dogma of Infallibility, he came to the same conclusion as Manning regarding Newman's heterodox position. In a letter written by Acton a few weeks before Manning's death, after mentioning the 'personal aversion to Manning' displayed by Newman he said,

Many will wonder how anybody who saw much of him could remain a Catholic — assuming that Newman really was one. (p.17)

Acton, although an ally of Newman in editing the liberal journal *The Rambler*, was not baffled by Newman's prosaic tact: "Acton went much further than Manning in his strictures on his old ally. He described Newman as 'a sophist, the manipulator and not the servant of truth.'" When men of diametrically opposed beliefs, as Acton and Manning, agree in their judgment of another man whom they so well knew, the assumption that they are not both in error is not unreasonable.

Of Newman and Manning, Manning, on the external evidence, was clearly the more sincere. His conversion occurred at a time when he enjoyed immense respectability and success in the Anglican Church, whereas Newman entered the Church only after "being castigated by Oxford and considered by all as a moral failure. Bodley speaks of Manning's sincere conversion:

This is shown by the willingness with which he threw aside ambition, comfort, and prosperity, when as the high road to the foremost and pleasantest preferments in the Church of England, to enter upon the tedious life of a Roman Catholic mission priest. His new duration called forth from him no moaning such as Newman poured out when he was sent to work in Ireland..., (p.22)

Manning had everything to lose by becoming a Catholic, Newman had everything to gain. Mr. Bodley was more than impressed by Manning's religion:

He was free from all pious affectation, Yet in close contact with him one felt that he was always living in the presence of an unseen Power, not as a pompous agent, but as its simple and humble messenger. It has been my lot to witness some of the most imposing religious ceremonies of modern Christendom; but nothing so impressive, so faith-inspiring has ever met my eyes as the sight of the noble old Englishman in his threadbare cassock kneeling alone before the altar of his bare chapel. (p.29)

After noting Manning's austerity, reservation, and his refusal to eat anything whenever he attended social banquets, Bodley testifies to his suspicion of Newman and his followers:

Apart from the mutual antipathy of their temperaments, his dislike for Newman had a similar basis to that of his dislike for other residents of Birmingham -- the politicians of the Education League; he believed their influence to be dangerous to Christianity... (p.32)

## Newman on Education

In a recent book entitled *The Death of Christian Culture* John Senior asserts that Newman failed



in his university plans in Ireland because he was “too serious” to perform the functions of an administrator. If we consider the records of that time, however, the case seems to be otherwise. Too much seriousness was not Newman’s problem; on the contrary he was not serious enough. His views about the purpose of education clashed with the traditional view held by the Irish authorities who were unwilling to yield to his novel innovations.

Newman’s idea of education was that Catholic laymen must be educated in the classics and theology to prepare them to enter Protestant society in polished form. He did not want to nurture staunch and unswerving Catholics who would make pleasant society with heretics impossible. He wanted broad-minded men who could converse on most topics with erudition and attractiveness. He promoted in every one of his educational endeavours liberal views that would promote “personal development”, the really important thing for Newman. “Thus in starting both the Oratory and the University he made it his business to plant the right ideas in the basic minimum of structures which should ensure freedom of development; he did not create or try to maintain a detailed plan for the future.” It was Newman’s lack of *disciplina* that angered the Irish bishops.

The historical records of that period in Newman’s life manifest the existence and nature of Episcopal opposition to him,

...evidence has only recently come to light in the Archives of the Propaganda, which are opened, like a ‘serial judgment day, a hundred years after the arrival of letters, manifesting the words of the dead to the world. There are (Archbishop) Cullen’s letters persuading the Roman officials not to make Newman a bishop because of the jealousy of Englishmen in Irish affairs... In later letters Cullen complained of Newman’s own behaviour and methods, which shocked him by the freedom he allowed the students and the laymen he appointed to the staff. (p.162)

Archbishop Cullen himself was willing to compromise in establishing a kind of lay seminary controlled by priests, “but Newman expected the young men to keep horses and went riding with them himself, he encouraged music and debating societies and even supplied them with a club room and a billiard table.” Newman’s idea of undergraduate education was novel indeed, and the Newman Clubs of the twentieth century finally realized his secular dream of integrating Catholic students in heretical institutions, a practice which before then was condemned as a mortal sin due to the proximate occasion of losing the Faith.

Newman wanted to increase “lay participation” in the Catholic universities and seminaries and to secularize the religious education. “But Newman’s attitude to laymen was one of the principal causes of Cullen’s suspicion; he appointed clever young laymen as professors and lecturers, sometimes men who had been associated with the Young Irelanders; he was on friendly terms with these dangerous fellows, and they were devoted to him, rallying to his aid in any emergency.” Not only did he promote laymen to participate in positions normally held by religious but his comrades were of the Masonic-Irish sort who belonged to ‘the Young Irelanders. As time went on the lay ‘sector’ quite naturally came to predominate, thus severing the natural and supernatural relationship between priest and layman. Consequently, the secular sciences took on primary importance while the sacred sciences, architectonic by nature, were reduced to servitude. “And then Newman’s educational aims seemed startlingly modern — scientific faculties and a school of medicine (which became the most flourishing of all his foundations) sprang into being. What was more, Newman gave lectures to the faculties assuring them a proper intellectual freedom, just as he allowed the students a proper moral freedom.” Newman had no scruples about invoking Mary, Seat of Wisdom, as patroness of all these harmful liberties.

For moral and intellectual discipline Newman substituted a fatherly, pastoral approach to his students. Instead of encouraging an ascetical self-discipline so compatible with the precepts of Christ and the life of grace, Newman promoted the Vatican II father-image with which we are all familiar

today. An ex-Brother, Thomas Godwin, recalled Newman's family at the Birmingham Oratory:

Little does the outer world know how beautifully the family was managed — I think I can see the Father sitting in his little room receiving first this one and then the other, directing, guiding, calling each by their names as if he were their very father. Then there were the jolly recreations which might be termed musicals or *extempore* plays or charades, we never lacked amusement... (p.166)

Later, when the troubles crystallized between Fr. Faber and Newman and their respective Oratories, Newman decided to resign from the university after a three-year term of office. He was asked to remain as a figurehead and choose a compatible Vice-Rector, but he shocked the authorities by his suggestion that a layman be appointed. Silence alone followed his suggestion. Years later Newman recalled his endeavors in Ireland and determined the cause of his failure and unhappiness:

It was not Ireland that was unkind to me. The same thing would have happened in England or France. It was the clergy, moved as they are in automaton fashion from the camarilla at Rome. (p.184)

Newman's principles of education were too liberal for the hierarchy, and they let him know it; but the seeds of pastoral personalism were planted and germinating and would some day find fruition in Catholic universities the world over, and finally in an ecumenical council of which he would be called the 'invisible father'.

Newman spoke with unusual clarity and force in a sermon called "Intellect, The Instrument of Religious Training".

I wish the intellect to range with the utmost freedom and religion to enjoy an equal freedom... (p.184)

Most Catholics quite naturally refused to heed Newman's liberalism but he continued to propagate his ideas. After failing in Ireland he tried to get an Oratory established at Oxford, where Fr. Faber believed young Catholics would lose their souls. In 1864 a five-acre plot was offered to Newman, and Bishop Ullathorne agreed to send him there to open the Oxford Mission; but Newman neither expected nor wanted the parochial responsibilities as his real hopes lay in setting up an Oratory at Oxford "to influence, as far as an old man can, the tone of thought in the place, with a view to a distant time when I shall no longer be there."

The *Apologia* had just appeared and was enjoying immense success among Catholics and Protestants alike. Bishop Manning commented that the *Apologia* was "like hearing a voice from the dead" and when he heard that Newman was returning to Oxford

...he became alarmed at the effect this voice from the past might have on the future, and immediately began to take steps to prevent it, acting through Wiseman and Talbot in Rome. There was a bishops meeting on 13th December and on 19th December Ullathorne called on Newman to tell him that Wiseman wanted the universities prohibited under censure to Catholics, and had become very excited when Ullathorne opposed him.

Up to this time Catholics were bound under pain of mortal sin to stay out of heretical institutions but Newman's actions changed matters. "In the end, the prohibition was reduced to a dissuasive and its publication was postponed till the matter had been referred to Rome." The laymen who came under Newman's influence quite naturally reacted in protest and sent petitions to Rome to make their claim, but Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of the Propaganda,<sup>1</sup> rejected their pleas without discussion. As time went on, however, the dissuasive was reduced to a warning, the warning was transformed into acceptance, and acceptance finally became a social obligation. The importance of this initial move of Newman to laicize and mix Catholic education cannot be overestimated.

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<sup>1</sup> The Propaganda was the highest organ of the Church for combating heresy and propagating the Faith in mission countries.

Newman continued to fight to get an Oratory into Oxford University. The success of the *Apologia* uplifted his crushed spirit and he was determined to get into Oxford no matter what:

...and because its success has put me in spirits to look out for some other means of doing good, whether *Propaganda* cares about them or no. (p.222)

Instead of following the will of the Church in this matter, Newman, consistent with his personalism, acted in light of his illative sense. As he once said,

In all these separate actions of the intellect, the individual is supreme, and responsible to himself... (*Grammar of Assent*, p.353)

To enhance his position and acceptability he published *The Dream of Gerontius*, and in time he would eventually succeed.

After the first plot of land was purchased by the university the lay disciples of Newman acquired another site, and Manning, now Cardinal of Westminster, endeavored to block and even crush Newman's scheme. "On 26 June Manning was writing to Talbot urging him to get strong declaration from Rome against Protestant universities. 'I think Propaganda can hardly know the effects of Dr. Newman's going to Oxford'", he said. So suspect was Newman that when Cardinal Reisach was sent to England to inquire into the state of Catholic education, his visit was deliberately managed to exclude him.

To the Church and Her authorities Newman reacted quite violently to their trying to stop him from diluting Catholicism. He wrote to a Miss Bowles and most prophetically summed up the situation by anticipating

... with equanimity the prospect of a thorough routing out of things at Rome — not till some great convulsion takes place (which may go on for years and years, and when I can do neither harm nor good) and religion is felt to be in the midst of trials...

Let he who reads understand. We today are witnesses of the great convulsion that Newman may well have anticipated, a convulsion that his own dissident sentiments may have generated.

That Newman was promoting an insane and dangerous ecumenism is evident. "Instead of aiming at being a world power, we are shrinking into ourselves, *narrowing the lines of communion, trembling at freedom of thought*, and using the language of despair", the kind of language that Our Lady of La Salette used in 1846 (which apparition, incidentally, he never spoke about) to warn the world away from its apostasy from God. Newman's idea of the Church being a world power, without exercising its dogmatic and juridical powers, was not the one shared by Rome - who has always desired to be the universal power to govern the nations, as Christ commanded Her to be. Newman wanted the Church to be 'pastoral' and personal, using as little authority as possible to draw men to the truth, a sentimental view that has always finally put Peter in chains. There are only two possibilities in the relationship of the Church to the State: either the governments of the world are obedient to Her or She is made subject to them. .

Temporarily, Newman succeeded.

On Christmas day 1866, Ullathorne sent Newman a copy of a letter from *Propaganda*, granting permission for an Oratory at Oxford. But he had left out of it an injunction that Newman himself should not be allowed to go there.

Unfortunately for Catholics, one of their shepherds omitted the ban on Newman and the first door for entering a heretical institution was opened. Cardinal Manning did what he could to stop Newman and even tried to get Newman to accept a bishopric, thereby hoping to bring the jurisdictionally independent Oratorian under his authority. Newman, determined to Anglicanize the

Church, refused:

I declined — I wish to have my own liberty... He wanted to gain me over; now, he will break me if he can.

By 1867, £5,000 had been subscribed to launch the Oxford mission and both Cardinal Barnabo and Manning were at their wits end over the matter. Cardinal Barnabo had never experienced such a successful troublemaker, and a certain Herbert Vaughn reported that

Barnabo said Newman gave him the stomach ache and added that if Newman wanted to found a Catholic College "one could hardly feel a scruple at removing him from Oxford with a pitchfork." (p. 229)

These are not light words coming from the Prefect of Propaganda. After a volley of attacks and excuses in the Catholic press the indignation of Newman's lay supporters increased and began to put into practice their prophet's doctrine outlined in On Consulting the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine! They resented the priestly authority in Westminster and Rome and demanded appeal over the latest directive from Rome, just as did the German and Dutch Catholics in the case of Hans Küng in 1980<sup>1</sup>. An article in *The Rambler* summarized the movement of the laity:

They wish to govern the Church in England by public opinion.

Finally, after an Oratory was functioning at Oxford, Newman heard that a rescript was coming from Rome

...declaring Oxford university to be approximate occasion for mortal sin; parents who dared to send their sons there would come under the censor. (231)

Anticipating the decree, Newman resigned from the Oxford mission, packed his bags, and returned to Birmingham to wait for news of the First Vatican Council.

## Grammar of Assent

Dr. Fairburn continued to believe that Newman distrusted Reason because his own intellect was sceptical. He might have been surprised 'to know that Cardinal Manning agreed with him — he told friends that Newman's works were riddled with scepticism.

In Newman's *Grammar of Assent* are found all of the elements that determined the character of Newman's thought. The basis of his-peculiar form of liberalism that troubled Church authorities in his day manifests itself in this his most mature essay, written in 1870, five years after the *Apologia*. The underlying current of the entire essay reveals an aversion for the traditional methods of philosophy and theology on account of their being, as he would say, too abstract and impersonal. Newman's preoccupation with personalism was a lifelong sentiment: he wrote, for instance, in the *Apologia* about the development of his idea about angels:

My preference of the Personal to the Abstract would naturally lead to this view, (p.29) the view, that is, that governments, states and religious communities are assemblages that "had their life in certain unseen Powers.

It was also Newman's liberal personalism that made him reluctant to accept the definition of Infallibility in its fullest sense and import, as can be seen from a letter he wrote in 1871 (after the dogma of infallibility was defined) to Mr. Mashell, an Oxford convert who had published a pamphlet against Cardinal Manning. After writing "I never; expected to see such a scandal in the Church." He

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that Hans Küng appealed to Newman as his predecessor, invoking the same liberal principle of tolerance in his behalf.

then congratulated Mashell and added:

Such scandals, I know, have been before now, ... but I thought we had too many vigilant and hostile eyes upon it, to allow even the most reckless, tyrannical and heartless ecclesiastics, so wounding, so piercing religious souls, so cooperating with those who wish the Church's downfall. (p.242)

That is, so impersonal! These are the purest sentiments of liberal personalism which elevates the human person above law, dogma, and doctrine so that these may dutifully serve the "development of the human person". It must be remembered that Thomas Scott's book, *The Force of Truth*, implanted this lasting impression upon young Newman: "Growth is the only evidence of life", and he never mentions a retraction from this obviously erroneous statement.<sup>1</sup>

An entire thesis, if not a small book, is required to do justice to the topic of Newman's position in the *Grammar of Assent*; here only the chief position will be discussed and contrasted with the philosophy of St. Thomas and those who follow him and the exigencies of reality. The philosophical principles which the Church from time immemorial has upheld and which Newman rejected, or seems to reject, are as follows:

(1) that the abstract and speculative is superior to the concrete and practical;

(2) that true science depends upon the admission that the nature of things can be known by the mind by abstracting from the here and the now;

(3) that the natural order and the moral law are independent of men's perception of it and are not based upon a man's personal characteristics;

(4) that causation in nature is discernable by the human mind without an *a priori* reference to itself;

(5) that the existence of God is demonstrable by an investigation of nature and not merely by examining a man's consciousness and his awareness of his conscience;

(6) that final causes are operative in the whole of creation and that God is the final cause, or purpose, of all things;

(7) that logic is a noble and useful art which is grounded upon reality and aids the human mind to understand the conspectus of reality without falsity;

(8) and that the dogmas and doctrines of the Church are apprehended by 'believers as they are in themselves, and not in an uncertain personalist fashion.

I hope that the reader untrained in the fundamental principles of philosophy will be able to perceive that Newman's thinking, however subtly and elegantly expressed, is opposed to and incompatible with true Catholic philosophy.

In his own words, Newman relates the purpose of his treatise:

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<sup>1</sup> The Greeks, including Plato and Aristotle, spoke of two predominant characteristics of life; motion and knowledge (sense perception), and they realized that of the two, knowledge is the more perfect manifestation of life. Growth, in its primary sense, is classified under the category of motion; for a thing is said to grow when its body increases in quantity in various directions; and it must be remembered that of the three modes of life - the vegetative, sensitive and intellective - growth belongs to the first which is the most imperfect of them all. Hence, to equate life with growth is to reduce it to its lowest possible level. St. Thomas, following Aristotle, makes the preceding distinction and then determines knowledge to be the highest operation of a living being. And God, who is superabundant and infinite life, cannot grow, for growth is the process of something from an imperfect to a perfect stage, and God is from eternity supremely perfect to a perfect stage, and God is from eternity supremely perfect. Only when a thing finishes growing does it reach its perfection. And the Holy Spirit has taught us in the Scripture that eternal life consists in knowing the one true God.

I have wished to trace the process by which the mind arrives, not at a notional, but at an imaginative or real assent to the doctrine that there is One God, that is, an assent made with an apprehension, not only of what the words of the proposition mean, but of the object denoted by things. (p.7)

And:

...what I am directly aiming at is to explain how we gain an image of God and give a real assent to the proposition that He exists. (p. 103)

Newman is very cautious in choosing his words; he knew their power and used them with purpose. The importance of this cannot be overestimated, for he wanted to avoid every resemblance to holding a demonstrable position; a position based upon first principles and logically springing from them; a scientific position capable of reproof and rebuttal.

Indeed, the purpose of the *Grammar of Assent* is, ironically, to “demonstrate” that there is another way — a way other than demonstration and syllogistic inference — for arriving at knowledge of God which is unquestionably certain. The purpose of the treatise is to support personalism and liberty of conscience; for by establishing a ‘personal’ mode of assenting to truth which cannot be experienced by other men in exactly the same manner, Newman has entered into the world of individual ‘idiosyncrasies’, personal perception, and sceptical relativism. He continually says that he is concerned with the concrete as opposed to the abstract, in the full knowledge that demonstration is impossible in concrete matters (p.8). He is outlining a manner of assent that is not based upon abstract and universal laws, principles and reasons, but vivid impressions and images that produce “feelings” in a man at the moment of assent. “Experience and images strike and occupy the mind, as abstraction and their combination do not” (27).<sup>1</sup> He calls this assent to the concrete accompanied by vivid images a real assent,’ and contra-distinguishes it from notional assent, which is characteristic of theology, philosophy and science, which are based upon mere abstract notions. Real apprehensions and assents are stronger; and by stronger Newman means more vivid and forcible (11). They stimulate the passions and affections and make things closer and more real to us. Real apprehension produces depth of mind; notional apprehension causes the mind to be shallow (34), and real apprehension always takes precedence over notional apprehension because it is the scope, end, and test of the notional (p.34). Real apprehension has things for its objects (p.32). Real apprehension strengthens Assent; notional apprehension weakens it (p.41). Theology is always notional; religion should always be real, because it is personal. Notional assents contemplate the creation of our minds; real assent is directed towards things, because things can only adequately be represented by images (75). Real assent is proper to the individual and thwarts the intercourse of men (83). Real apprehension attains God Himself by means of the imagination and the illative sense, as the Sovereign Judge of men. This is the substance of Newman’s thinking.

The consequence of Newman’s artificial dichotomy between notional and real assents are enormous, and deadly. Consider the following statement on page 119:

The proposition that there is One Personal and Present God may be held in either way; either as a theological truth or as a religious fact or reality. The notion and the reality assented-to are represented by one and the same proposition, but serve as two distinct interpretations of it.

Here we have the essence of Vatican II ambiguity and non-doctrinal pastoralism. Theological truth and dogma are one thing while real, living, personal religion is another. What theologians perceive is one thing; what the “living” faithful understand and interpret are quite another. Theology is one interpretation of dogma; living religion is another.

The effect of this false dichotomy is to open the door for a Catholic to think one way and act in

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<sup>1</sup> This proposition contains the seed of existentialism for it implies that personal experience is superior to objective truth.

another, for it divorces the contemplative and speculative mind of man (which for Newman is governed only by notional assents) from his practical intellect (the realm of Newman's real assents). Hence, a dangerous independence of the practical mind from the speculative mind is created so that what one thinks about something in the abstract can be different from what one thinks about the same thing in practical terms: there are two distinct interpretations of the same proposition. If this is not what Newman is implying then what could he mean when he says "the notion and the reality assented-to are represented by one and the same proposition, but serve as two distinct interpretations of it"?

According to this view a man can interpret the 'dogma "Jesus Christ is the Son of God"' in two ways; either as an abstract doctrine which is objective and indifferent to the person believing it, or as a concrete religious "fact" that is meaningful to the person accepting it. The error of this position lies in defining a theological truth *in relation to the person*, as if something of the believer enters into the definition of theological truth. Truth, consequently, becomes dependent on the person; that is, relative.

A very dangerous consequence of Newman's dichotomy is that real assents are confined to realm of the concrete and imaginary so that a person cannot, simply speaking, make a real assent to a theological truth as such. In other words, the act of faith is impossible; for an act of faith has immaterial realities and truths for its primary object, not religious "facts".

This throws a great deal of light on Newman's hostility to the *Syllabus* and the Definition of Infallibility, for he could not conceive how someone could unreservedly make an absolute and unconditional assent to a rigid and unchangeable theological truth. Real assents do not have theological truths, *qua* theological, as their object. It is no wonder, then, that he spoke of the speculations of theologians as "subtle hallucinations of the intellect".

Another dire consequence of this position is that "living" religion, or religion in the concrete, takes on primary importance while dogmas and theological truths become secondary. Hence there arises the modernist heresy that dogmas are merely provisional formulas whose utility is determined, not by themselves, but by their relevant and practical application to the here and now; and the norm of their practical application is the person. The entire order of things is turned upside down, so that the things that are naturally and supernaturally above man and demand his obedience become inferior and subservient to "the development of the human person". It is as if the person becomes God.

This divorce<sup>1</sup> of the practical intellect from the speculative intellect produces what we might call a schizophrenic Catholic who will assent to Catholic dogma when sufficient pressure is applied, yet acts in direct opposition to what he says he believes.

Springing out of this dichotomy flows every other monstrous divorce: councils without Popes, experts without faith, and pastoral endeavors with shepherds that cannot feed. "Theology, properly and directly, deals with notional apprehension; religion with imaginative" says Newman. Theology is no longer the science of God, the real God, but only of our notions of God; and religion is no longer a thing of the reason, but rather of the imagination. One error produces the other, since by severing the mind and its science from things, the will sinks into the imagination. (All error, incidentally, begins by distortions in the imagination which force the mind to view things through its own spectacles. Temptations from the devil can work only on the imagination, not the intellect. Only one thing can exist in the mind — the truth).

Newman asserted, however, that devotion must draw its inspiration from dogma: "...religion

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<sup>1</sup> "Divorce" is an apt term, for the speculative part of the soul has traditionally represented man the husband, while the practical mind represents the woman as wife. Just as the wife is naturally subordinate to her husband, so is the practical mind naturally and supernaturally subordinate to the speculative mind. Their union enjoys the blessing of God who makes them fruitful; their divorce calls down a curse from heaven which produces havoc in everything.

cannot maintain its ground at all without theology.” (120) He also asserted that “devotion is excited doubtless by the plain, categorical truths of revelation, such as the articles of the Creed; on these it depends; with these it is satisfied. It accepts them one by one; it is careless about their intellectual consistency...” (146) Yet the reason for accepting the articles of the Creed, or any dogma, is not so clear. Both the motive for assenting to revealed dogma and the faculty that accomplishes this assent will determine what Newman means by religion and devotion.

Our guidance in all reasoning and devotion, says Newman, is the business of the Illative Sense.<sup>1</sup>

It is the mind that reasons, and that controls its own reasonings, not any technical apparatus of words and propositions. This power of judging and concluding in its perfection, I call the Illative Sense... (353)

This Illative Sense is the sure and supreme guide for determining our moral actions and each man is bound to heed its instructions despite all reasonings and authority.

...how does the mind fulfill its function of supreme control, in matters of duty... In all these separate actions of the intellect, the individual is supreme, and responsible to himself... (353)

Newman continually takes pains to express his disdain for logic, which for him is mere words. He says that absolute proof, or demonstration, “can never be furnished to us by logic of words” (345); personal growth cannot rely upon “formulas and contrivances of languages” (349); in times of doubt we cannot turn “to the dead letter of a treatise or code” but to a “living” authority; reasoning upon any subject necessitates that “we proceed as far as we can by the logic of language” and then supplement that with “the more subtle and elastic logic of thought; for forms by themselves prove nothing”. (358) (Here we meet the modern error that words never signify our ideas adequately, nor are ideas the things they represent. Newman fully assented to this, as we shall see later on.) Language and logic can help us communicate with others, but “the mind is more versatile and subtle than any of its works, of which language is one...” (36); when the mind detects the first principles of thought it “contemplates them without the use of words, by a process which cannot be analyzed” (361); and “logical formulas could never have sustained the reasoning involved in such investigations” (361); and finally, since the Illative Sense is a rule to itself, it must forego “verbal logic” because unwearied diligence of the mind “is impossible to a cumbrous apparatus of verbal reasoning”. (361).

All of these statements savour of nominalism since they identify logic with language and concepts with names. The truth of the matter is that logic is not a mere “verbal reasoning” (whatever that is) but a science about our ideas and concepts and their relationship to one another *as they reflect and represent things*.

If logic is severed from its foundation in reality, if it is not about things as conceived by the mind, then it becomes an arbitrary mental gymnastics wholly dependent upon the *fiat* of each particular person, as is the case of modern symbolic logic. By denying this and confining logic to the realm of language Newman quite naturally asserted that there is a more subtle and elastic process of reasoning that transcends the logic of scholasticism.

It is a kind of gnostic-logic that breaks through the defined limits of reality to directly communicate with higher realities, which, more often than not, is nothing but the ego and consciousness of the individual person. Newman’s personal logic is scandalized by the mediation of rules and definitions of traditional logic, a typical attitude of the gnostic who condemns the created instruments God has given us to find, know and love uncreated truth. A person who holds such a position (and today their number is legion) ridicules the proposition that words can be instruments of

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<sup>1</sup> "Illative" is a derivative of the Latin verb *infero, inferre, intuli, illatus* which fundamentally means "to infer".



conveying truth, or that ideas are instruments for knowing reality.<sup>1</sup>

The above statements of Newman illustrate both his sceptical distrust of logic and his misapprehensions about the real nature of logic, the great "*ars artium*". He asserts that logic is nothing more than a linguistic tool, and creation of the mind, incapable of exerting any powerful influence upon a rational mind. Newman probably inherited these false notions from Oxford where he first learned logic from Protestant professors who sat in the Oriel Room all day long hurling sophistries at one another. Newman himself said that the Oriel "stunk of logic".

When Newman says he wishes to show how, by means of an image of God, we can make a real apprehension of, and a real assent to God, what he is in fact saying is that we cannot make a real assent to God by means of our idea of Him, for if this is not what he means, why did he write the treatise? What he says means in effect that because notions are not real objects, assents to notions and assents based upon notions are not assents to things, but only to notions.

The following question could be put to Newman: If you call assents based upon notions notional and deny they are real, why should assents based upon images be any more real? What hinders us from calling assents based upon the imagination imaginary assents? And, in the final analysis, which of the two, -- images or ideas -- is more real? Which of the two -- images or ideas -- is the better representation of things? The answer to this depends upon solving a prior question: what about things themselves? Are they mere collections of qualities and quantities, without an underlying substance and nature; or are they substances with natures whose proper and adequate effect upon the intellectual soul of man is 'to produce ideas and universal concepts'?

This, indeed, is the primary and important question. Newman's view of things was empirical. In other words, he was an empiricist in the tradition of Francis Bacon and John Locke: what he says is just what they say about things and their representations in the soul. Things, for the empiricist, are accidental assemblages of perceptible qualities, so that their proper representation in the soul consists in images, which in turn are also mere conglomerates of sensible qualities.

Undoubtedly Newman is following the erroneous assumption that notions and ideas are not about things, but are merely abstract creations of the mind useful only for purposes of communication. Real assent to anything, Newman says, requires an image, because images are about objective things. Besides, they are vivid and forceful — just like things.<sup>2</sup>

But, we must ask, are not ideas much more powerful than images? Does not their power derive from their immateriality and universality, their unchangeableness and absoluteness which images do not possess? Are not ideas more like God than images and do they not therefore serve as more suitable instruments for the will to assent to and love Him? There is an hierarchical order among images, ideas, the will and the intellect that Newman seems to be ignorant of, namely that images are the immediate representations of sensible things and only after they are possessed does the intellect form ideas and supply the will with its object.

If images were the instrument of the assents made by the will and intellect then the latter could not have truth and goodness for their objects, since their objects are represented by ideas and not by images. The Good cannot be represented by an image, and the Good as conceived by the intellect is the formal object of the will. So much are ideas like God, that Plato even thought that God Himself was an idea; and generations of Catholic thinkers followed him, although leaving behind the gnostic

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that the "scandal of mediation" is the age-old root of all heresy, for all heretics deny that creature can be an instrument of the Creator.

<sup>2</sup> According to St. Thomas, the difference between ideas and images consists in the fact that images are representations of things, in their singularity, particularity, and concreteness, whereas ideas are representations of things in their universality.

elements of Platonism that contradicted Revelation.

Ideas certainly exist in God, ideas identical with His essence, and all things are governed by them. Christ Himself is the Divine Logos, the Word or Idea of the Father, and man is said to be made in the image and likeness of God, not because of his imagination, but because of his intellect. Images have no place in God and their absence from the Divine nature assures the unlimited omnipotence of his knowledge. The imagination is also the root of all deficiencies in devotion and spiritual life since they are the root of our peevish conceptions of God, confining, as they do, the uncreated God to the limitations of the imagination. If Catholics today had the idea of God that Catholics had in previous times, things, no doubt, would certainly be different. Do we realize — that is, can we conceive — what it means to believe that God is present on our altars?

The influence of empiricists, like Bacon and Locke, upon Newman is easily discernible. Revealingly he has high words of praise for these forerunners of atheism and scepticism; for realizing and appreciating Bacon's rejection of final causes (the final cause is the "*causa causarum*", the cause of causes, without which no other causes would even exist) and his acceptance of only efficient, or agent, causes in nature, Newman says of Bacon:

He took firm hold of the idea of causation... as contrasted with that of design, refusing to mix up the two ideas in one inquiry, and denouncing such traditional interpretations of facts, as did but obscure the simplicity of the aspect necessary for his purpose. He saw what others before him might have seen in what they saw, but who did not see as he saw it. In this achievement of intellect, which has been so fruitful in results, lie his genius and his fame. (372)

Newman's appreciation of Bacon's "achievement of intellect", nothing less than the first impetus of an ever-growing avalanche of philosophical scepticism and consequent loss of touch with reality, was opposed by more than three-hundred years of Catholic traditional theology (2,000 years, to be more precise). How did it come about that Newman was apparently unaware of this?

The origin of Newman's scepticism can be traced in a few of his ideas about the nature of knowledge. We have seen that Newman posited between real and notional apprehensions and assents an artificial dichotomy or division, supposedly based upon the difference between ideas and things. This erroneous division is itself based upon the twofold error that the mind itself cannot know things in themselves, and that the proper object of knowledge is not universal truth, but concrete facts.

Firstly, Newman believed that empirical 'science' is the proper way of knowing things. Here are some of the things Newman said about rational thinking:

We do not reason one way in chemistry or law, in another in morals or religion; but in reasoning on any subject whatever, which is concrete, we proceed, as far as we can, by logic of language. (358)

Thus, Newman will not allow that there are various methods of reasoning proper to the various disciplines.<sup>1</sup> The kind of reasoning that he believed is found in each discipline is revealed in another statement, when he speaks of the use of the Illative Sense:

...in coming to conclusions, it proceeds always in the same way, by a method of reasoning, which is the elementary principle of that mathematical calculus of modern times, which has so wonderfully extended the limits of abstract science. (359)

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<sup>1</sup> The method of a particular science is determined by its subject matter and the light under which it is considered. Where there are different subjects, there are different methods. Mathematics is concerned with abstract quantity wherein contingency has no place, and so its method is properly *a priori*, precise and exact. In Ethics, on the other hand, human actions are considered and in them contingency abounds. Hence, the method of moral science must be different than that of mathematics. Spinoza refused to make the distinction and wrote an absurd treatise on ethics using geometry as his mode. For him free will was a myth.

Newman does not describe the method “of reasoning which is the elementary principle of that mathematical calculus”, but he does assert that it is this sort of reasoning (and there is serious doubt whether true scientific reasoning actually occurs in calculus<sup>1</sup>) that is the universal method of arriving at a conclusion in any field of knowledge. This is *par excellence* the thinking of an empiricist who reduces all substance to qualities, all qualities to quantities, all quantities to numbers, all numbers to symbols, and all mathematics to an arbitrary manipulation of symbols, each stage progressively resulting in less being known about the subject under investigation until the point is reached when any meaning whatever is lost. And just as the empiricist places the ultimate test of truth in man himself, so did Newman place his ultimate test of truth in his Illative Sense:

...in no class of concrete reasoning, whether experimental science, historical research, or theology, is there any ultimate test of truth and error in our inferences besides the trustworthiness of the Illative Sense that gives them its sanction.

For Newman there is indeed objective truth, there is a Catholic Creed, but their interpretation, their sense and their ultimate personal test depends upon our personal illative sense. As he said on page 361:

(*The Illative Sense*) is a rule to itself, and appeals to no judgment beyond its own...

Newman’s Illative Sense is a most dangerous thing. There is not, in fact, any such thing as an illative sense in the nature of man, although there is something in man similar to it. The best way of describing the Illative Sense is to call it a moral sense; but St. Thomas and all other conscientious theologians were very careful never to call any personal trait or ability by a proper philosophical term, since such a thing could never belong to the nature of man as such, and therefore to every man; and consequently could never be a fit subject for science. The Illative Sense is a personal thing. It “supplies no common measure between mind and mind, in being nothing else than a personal gift of acquisition...” Here lies its danger, and Newman’s personalism also. The moral man, he says, always goes to himself for guidance and judgment and to find the ultimate norm for conduct. Laws, moral treatises, and right reason are too abstract and impersonal, Newman says, for learning what we should do in the concrete.

The danger lies in making the person the rule. Newman asserts:

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<sup>1</sup> Calculus is the invention of certain modern mathematicians, like Isaac Newton and Leibnitz, devised to give the scientists a toll for a more precise measurement of physical bodies and their motions. In general terms it can be said that modern methods of calculation (an employment, incidentally, which the learned Greeks assigned to their slaves; they believed it was below the dignity of a man whose business is to know the natures of things, rather than to calculate their measurements, to pursue such matters in earnest) are concerned exclusively with measurement which can be achieved by means of equations. Simply speaking, an equation per se does not tell us anything about what a thing is but only what it is equal to. The modern mathematician consequently confuses the equal sign (=) with the copulative “is”, thinking, for instance, that three plus four is seven, which is false. Three plus four is simply equal to seven; the former is not a definition of the latter, nor are they identical. Otherwise two people of equal weight could be the same person. Just as a bronze statue of Caesar is not defined by the bronze material it is made from, but rather by the form that makes the bronze be what it is, i.e. a statue of Caesar, thus nothing is defined merely by the materials that constitute it. A man is not flesh plus blood plus bones and nerves, but a rational animal; otherwise he would be the same as an ape, and finally all things would be nothing but atoms and electrons. “Equality” expresses a relation of one thing to another; a definition expresses the essence of a thing. Leibnitz, the father of differential calculus, consistent with his view ‘about mathematical entities, posited ‘monads’ as the essential elementary constituents of things, and his monads were conceived as relative to everything else. Each thing comprises within itself a relation to the whole universe such that in order to know the whole universe each monad would have to be known; and conversely, in order to know each monad the entire universe would have to be known. Here we see someone taking calculus and equations to their extreme. When by means of calculus a mathematician determines the ‘instantaneous velocity’ (whatever that is) of a moving body he is not demonstrating to us anything about the nature of the thing. And demonstration, which requires and searches for definitions, is what real science is all about. To realize how convinced some modern physicists are about the utility of calculus, the reader is referred to the lecture series of the Institute of St. Thomas wherein one enthusiastic calculator gives his equation for the creation of the universe!

Moreover, all reasoning being from premises and those premises arising in their first elements from personal characteristics, in which men are in fact in essential and irremedial variance one with another, the ratiocinative talent can do no more than point out where the difference between them lies, how far it is immaterial, when it is worthwhile continuing an argument, and when not. (362)

Such an astounding assertion ought certainly to have brought Catholic theologians and censors beyond the point of suspicion. What Newman is saying is that personal characteristics, varying with each individual, are the ultimate source, and therefore the ultimate norm, of rational thinking, since from personal characteristics spring the first principles of all thought. This is intellectual anarchy, and virtually the complete denial of objective truth.

Newman describes the first principles earlier on page 65:

These so-called first principles, I say, are really conclusions or abstractions from particular experiences; and an assent to their existence is not an assent to things or their images, but to notions, real assent being confined to the propositions directly embodying those experiences... in themselves they are abstractions from facts, not elementary truths prior to reasoning.

Newman is saying two things here. First, the first principles of knowledge acquired by notional abstraction are inferior to the empirical concrete facts themselves because they depend in the first instance upon the real apprehension of those concrete facts. How could abstract notions, which the first principles are, be superior to concrete facts if they depend upon them? This is the sentiment of scepticism which denies the validity, the excellence, and the superiority of any knowledge that transcends the concrete things of experience.

Secondly, Newman is saying that the first principles are not “elementary truths prior to reasoning”, that is, real reasoning, because real reasoning must be about concrete experiences and facts. Just why he calls them first is bewildering if they are not “elementary truths prior to reasoning”. His added epithet “so-called” qualifying his use of the terms “first principles” indicates his scepticism not only regarding their validity and power, but perhaps their very existence, and there is no evidence that he considers them to be principles at all, whether first or otherwise.

The upshot of all this is that he believes that our reasonings and judgments are conditioned by our personal traits and characteristics; he believes, in other words, in moral relativism. Although Newman apparently did believe in an objective moral law (as he conscientiously admits after his treatment of the first principles), nevertheless when he says “I am not of course dreaming of denying the objective existence of the Moral Law”, it reads either as if he fully realizes that his position tends in the direction of denying an objective moral law or as if he at any rate suspects that the Catholic theologians and ecclesiastical censors might believe that that is what he is doing.

His quotation about Cardinal Manning, who was the greatest obstacle to Newman’s life-long ambitions, bears unmistakable witness to this fact.

Another distinction that Newman confused was the difference between objects and the apprehension of those objects.

I do not think it unfair reasoning thus to take the apprehension for the object. The mind is ever stimulated in proportion to the cause stimulating it. (36)

Newman is saying here that although objects and apprehensions are different in reality, nevertheless we are free to think of them as the same as one another. Apprehensions, therefore, are objects.

Since we cannot draw the line between the object and the act, I am at liberty to say, as I have said, that, as the thing apprehended, so is the apprehension. (37)

Catholic philosophers, on the other hand, have ever been careful to distinguish things and the powers and acts by which we apprehend things. The consequence of this is the identification of things in the soul with things outside the soul.. As a young man Newman's mind agreeably conformed to all of this:

I used to wish the Arabian Tales were true... my imagination ran on unknown influences, on magical powers, and talismans. I thought life might be a dream, or I an Angel, and all this world a deception, my fellow angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, *and deceiving me with the resemblance of a material world.* (C 12)

Newman's thesis becomes clearer in another statement:

We may call it then the normal state of Inference to apprehend propositions as notions; and we may call it the normal state of Assent to apprehend propositions as things.

The latter part of this statement — Assent is to apprehend propositions as things — sums up the doctrine of the *Grammar of Assent*. A double inversion of the natural order of thinking occurs when this is granted. First, propositions are taken as the things themselves, an error which Newman supposedly tried to evade in the first place. The entire basis of his belief is that notional propositions cannot be apprehended as things, but only as abstract notions, and yet for some unknown reason he believes the same propositions, when accompanied by images that produce strong feelings in the soul, are apprehended as things.

Secondly, Catholic philosophers have never taken any kind of proposition as the thing itself. Ideas, notions, concepts, images, perceptions and propositions are about things; they refer to, stand for, represent and describe things. Theology, philosophy, poetry and ethics are about things, not about notions. Even logic, at once both a science and an art, is not about the notions of notions, or the notions of propositions, but about notions and propositions as things, otherwise it would not be a science but merely an arbitrary creation of the mind, akin to calculus. "In its notional assents as well as in its inferences, the mind contemplates its own creations instead of things," (75) Newman says, and this is where he is wrong; this is the basis of his personalism.

A host of other errors arise from these, some of which Newman fell into. If the passages in which he discusses causation are read we find more errors of empiricism.

The assent which we give to the proposition, as a first principle, that nothing happens without a cause, is derived, in the first instance, from what we know of ourselves; and we argue analogically from what is within to what is external to us. (66)

That is to say, our knowledge of causation derives ultimately from ourselves, not from things — a reasonable conclusion for someone who takes apprehensions for things. This position is, ironically, the view not of the empiricist but of the idealist since it posits an *a priori* awareness of causation in the soul. Ultimately it is not paradoxical that an empiricist tend to idealism, or *vice versa*, since they are both symptoms of the same disease; both reflect one another.

This belief of Newman is compatible with another one of his positions: "Our consciousness of self is prior to all questions of trust or assent." (61) While it is true that at a particular moment of time we can be aware of ourselves before we make acts of trust or assent, this fact is of no importance worth mentioning. This is because it is in the first experience of things and ourselves that we are first aware of things, and it is only afterwards that we are aware of ourselves. I can be aware that I am seeing, or thinking, only if I have already seen something or thought about something.

Further on, Newman enunciates similar sceptical notions about causation:

It is to me a perplexity that grave authors seem to enunciate as an intuitive 'truth, that everything must have a cause, (66)

Again he says:

Physical phenomena, as such, are without sense, and experience teaches us nothing about physical phenomena as causes. (66)

To the very degree that someone assents to this proposition are the sciences, including philosophy and theology, uprooted from reality. If we do not directly apprehend in nature things as causes then there can be no knowledge or morality. How then do we come to think that there are causes in nature? Newman relates his answer:

Since causation implies a sequence of acts in our own case, and our doing is always posterior, never contemporaneous or prior, to our willing, therefore, when we witness invariable antecedents and consequents, we call the former the cause of the latter, though intelligence is absent from the analogy of external appearances. At length we go on to confuse causation with order; and, because we happen to have made a successful analysis of some complicated assemblage of phenomena, which experience has brought before us in the visible scene of things, and have reduced them to a tolerable dependence on each other, we call the ultimate points of this analysis, and the hypothetical facts in which the whole mass of phenomena is gathered up, by the name of causes, whereas they are really only the formula under which those phenomena are conveniently represented. (67)

In other words, there are not really causes in nature; it is just that we think there are because some things (consequents) exist after other things (antecedents) and what we know in ourselves by willing can be applied analogically to the “phenomena”. This is pure empirical scepticism. Notice that Newman says that in applying the analogy of our own internal acts to the external appearances, where the analogy falls short is in the fact that intelligence is absent from things, whereas it is present in us.

St. Thomas, on the contrary, tells us that the human mind knows real causes and effects in nature and consequently that there is intelligence and order in nature, and that from the natural order of things which act as if they possessed intelligence we can demonstrate the existence of God who is the source of the order and causation in things. Newman’s position, which shows him to be a true son of Francis Bacon, does not only undermine the position of St. Thomas and of traditional Catholic philosophy: it lays the foundation for the possibility of disbelief in God.

The sum of Newman’s position on causation comes to this:

Starting, then, from experience, I consider a cause to be an effective will; and, by the doctrine of causation, I mean the notion, or first principle, that all things come of effective will. (68)

And again:

...but when we come to the question of cause, then, as I have said, we have no experience of any cause but Will. (72)

Interestingly enough, this is very similar to Robert Hugh Benson’s quasi-pantheistic Will of nature and man. Its consequence is to make man autonomous by placing the will above the reason and independent of it. Newman certainly realized the relation of mind and order, but this did not prevent him from leaving reason behind when talking about the will; nor does he believe that reason is a cause, for we have no experience of any cause but Will. We cannot wonder that Newman looked upon laws, moral treatises and codes, and theological prudence as cold, ineffective specimens of the dead letter.

Taking modern empirical science as the paradigm and exemplar of scientific procedure Newman proceeded to limit theology to the same ideas:

Hence in science we sometimes use a definition. of a formula, not as exact, but as being sufficient for our purpose, for working out certain conclusions, for a practical approximation, the error being small, till a certain point is reached. This is what in theological investigation I should call an economy. (47)

The same sort of thinking is almost universally believed by so-called theologians today. Theological definitions are mere formulas, sufficient for practical purposes and progressive investigation of the "content of revelation", useful approximations that enable the illative sense of the theologian to ascertain what is relevant for religion today. Dogmas and definitions in this view are no longer eternal truths, whose acceptance or rejection can lead a man either to heaven or to hell.

Newman's position looks upon the doctrine of Transubstantiation, for example, as the formula sufficiently embodying the Catholic reaction of the Counter-Reformation and sufficiently expressing Catholic doctrine on that point. Consequently, it could be interpreted that he would feel it rash, cruel, and offensive to the human person to bind his conscience under pain of mortal sin to fully assent to this doctrine as to God Himself. (To support this interpretation see page 47.) Newman's reaction to the definition of Infallibility sufficiently indicates that this was his view.

Our notions of things are never simply commensurate with the things themselves; they are aspects of them, more or less exact, and sometimes a mistake *ab initio*. (49)

Here is the crux of Newman's scepticism, which is just as unmistakably expressed in another statement:

It is true indeed that I deny the possibility of two straight lines enclosing a space, on the ground of its being inconceivable; but I do so because a straight line is a notion and nothing more, and not a thing, to which I may have attached a notion more or less unfaithful. (51)

In other words, notions and conceptions are arbitrary creations of the human mind which cannot be more or less unfaithful to the thing itself simply because they are not essentially related to the thing.

I have defined a straight line in my own way at my own pleasure; the question is not one of facts at all, but of the consistency with each other of definitions and of their logical consequences. (51)

And since our definitions and conceptions of things are the product of our mere *fiat* there is nothing to prevent them contradicting one another:

Notions are but aspects of things; the free deduction from one of these necessarily contradicts the free deductions from another. (52)

This is pure intellectual voluntarism and despair, a sceptical severance of the mind from reality.

This is the reason for his believing that we cannot recognize any intrinsic dependence of one doctrine upon another, and that even if we can, it is not important.

Our image of Him never is one, but broken into numberless partial aspects, independent of each other. (31)

And as regards the relation of devotion to dogma:

It accepts them one by one; it is careless about their intellectual consistency. (146)

Various theological definitions can never, Newman believes, be the concern of the ordinary Christian:

...the greater number of them are more or less unintelligible to the ordinary Catholic... for what have good Christians to do, in the ordinary course of things, with the subtle hallucinations of the intellect? (148)

Is this a Catholic speaking, calling theological statements and definitions 'hallucinations of the intellect'? Certainly not, and such an attitude bespeaks the sad condition of his own mind.

Theological disagreement and doctrinal pluralism are natural consequences of this position; and

if believers should happen to agree it is not because of an objective truth that enlightens them but merely the concurrence of their idiosyncrasies:

So again, as regards form; each of us abstracts the relation of line to line in his own personal way -- as one man might apprehend a curve as convex, another as concave... but still, even when we agree together, it is not perhaps that we learn from another, or fall under any law of agreement, but that our separate idiosyncrasies happen to concur. (373)

And this is exactly the position that Newman took with his ecclesiastical superiors. When disputes arose they were simply the result, he would say, of misunderstandings which inevitably spring from the differences of personalities. After all,

...in religious inquiry each of us can speak only for himself, and for himself he has a right to speak. His own experiences are enough for himself, but he cannot speak for others; he cannot lay down the law; he can only bring his own experiences to the common stock of psychological facts... (385)

Apologetics, consequently, is no longer a demonstration of the objective truth of the Catholic Faith:

...and therefore his true sobriety and modesty consists, not in claiming for his conclusions an acceptance or approval which is not to be found anywhere but in stating what are personally his own ground for his belief in Natural and Revealed Religion...

It is difficult what to know by conclusions whose approval are not found anywhere; every Catholic knows where to go for approbation of his faith. Or as he said elsewhere:

The Religion of Nature is not a deduction of reason... (404),

a view profoundly opposed to Catholic teaching. Ronald Knox expressed the same sentiment when he said

The Creed is the expression of my opinions for which I am personally responsible.

His constant appeal to the “voice of mankind” and history is but the effect of his theological scepticism, It is natural enough that these two authorities moved Newman so forcefully since he was looking for strong moral feelings rather than intellectual conviction.

How it comes about that we can be certain is not my business to determine; for me it is sufficient that certitude is felt. (Emphasis added)

Yet, we can ask, how does one know what certitude feels like if he cannot determine how certitude comes about? In the great drama of history Newman found his primary inspiration and the object for his illative sense. Momentous events, the great stage of mankind, the unsurpassing character of concrete historical facts — these were the food of Newman’s soul and the source of his august sounding prose. This perhaps also gave Newman the conviction that, as he once admitted, he was destined to do something great.

It is impossible for these ideas not to have affected Newman’s theological positions. It is necessary that we judge a man’s position in view of all the positions that he held and not just by a few select passages that seem to indicate orthodoxy. Now we can understand the motive that prompted Newman to assert that devotion must be grounded in theology, and, in general, what he means by assent to Revealed Dogma.

Lurking behind these and other orthodox passages is his personalist interpretation and illative sense. What did Newman mean, then, by the knowledge of the Supreme Judge who enlightens our consciences and makes His presence felt? Can we believe that this is the real, living God, or was it perhaps Newman’s personification of his personal feeling of his own moral authority? To whom



belonged his 'kindly light', God or Newman?

The foregoing ought to throw light on what Newman meant by the Development of Doctrine, a belief that is so widespread today that it is impossible to talk with Catholics anymore without reference to the Church developing in time. Liberals and modernists declare themselves to be sons of Newman, as Hans Küng has done, and others declare that Newman was decidedly anti-liberal and unwittingly use his pre-Catholic writings to prove it.

Meriol Trevor, in an introduction to her book *Newman's Journey*, says that Newman's spirit is what animated Vatican II:

**Since I wrote, we have had the Second Vatican Council, of which Newman has been called 'the invisible father' because so many of his views on the nature of the Church and its relation to the world then received formal and collegiate ratification.**

Much more could be said about the *Grammar of Assent* and many more notorious passages could be cited to illumine the position of Newman's mind and his liberal-beliefs. The essence of it has, I believe, been sufficiently outlined but the possible consequences of it are too numerous to examine. The practical consequence of his position is to create an artificial antagonism between the intellect and the will, between what we believe and what we do. It is a position that accepts, at least theoretically, objective truth and morality, while simultaneously establishing a legitimate basis for acting in opposition to these.

It is essentially the same antagonism that exists in the mind of the modernist who says he accepts Catholic doctrine while in the concrete his actions are contrary to it. It is specifically the heresy of praxis; it is the paradoxical position expressed in his own words: "The rule of morals is the same for all; and yet, notwithstanding, what is right in one is not necessarily right in another", a position we are all too familiar with today.

## Newman on Infallibility

Rarely was John Newman not engaged upon a tug-of-war with Rome, for almost every endeavor he embarked upon found him in opposition to one or many of the Church authorities. His Ireland and Oxford projects are cases in point, and we have seen how his doctrine of Assent and the Illative Sense supplied him with many excuses for dodging ecclesiastical censure if he deemed it necessary. How could Newman bend his neck in obedience to strict orthodox teaching when he believed that although "the fact of revelation is itself demonstrably true, but it is not therefore true irresistibly... There is a vast difference between what it is in itself, and what it is to us"? (*Grammar of Assent*, p.410)

Newman believed that "*Propaganda* was too rough and ready to understand intellectual conflict", and when he said it "likes quick results — scalps from beaten foes by the hundred" he bore witness to his own unorthodox mind and sentiments. When Pius IX issued the *Syllabus of Errors* against the multiple of modernist heresies, Newman was reluctant to accept it. After reading the *Syllabus* in the *Times* he wanted to write to the paper saying: "I beg leave to say that I do not subscribe to this proposition," but an ex-Oratorian persuaded him to wait until opposition became stronger. After an attack upon the orthodox interpretation of the *Syllabus* appeared in the press Newman decided the time was ripe to increase the opposition. "My monkey is up!" he rejoiced as the opportunity to strike orthodoxy appeared, and to his companion Ambrose he wrote sarcastically of Cardinal Manning, Msgr. Talbot and W. G. Ward: "As to clamour and slander, whoever opposes the Three Tailors of Tooley Street must incur a great deal, must suffer — but it is worth the suffering *if we effectually oppose them.*" Newman was obviously much more certain of his own positions and purposes than many Catholics who follow him and his supposed orthodoxy,.

Supposedly Newman was taking the 'moderate' view that mediates between irreconcilable opposites, but his support came from the liberals and his opposition from the orthodox. "Newman's position was the more delicate because those who opposed the Ultramontane line violently were men who had been professors in his university or had taught in his school, or were associated with the Rambler," that is, his position was delicate because of its essential agreement with heretics. In one of his writings Newman asserted that the *Syllabus, qua Syllabus*, was not binding as an object of faith, in other words, as a collection of condemnations decreed in the past it was not *per se* binding. This allowed him to dodge the Decree with tact, but we can ask why the same could not be applied to the Creed which is also a Symbol or collection of divinely revealed dogmas. This practice of Newman was consistent with his belief that the mind is careless about the intrinsic intellectual relation of dogmas and that faith is an assent effected by a grandiose historical impression of a revealed truth.

Before the revealed doctrine of Infallibility was defined Newman did what he could to delay the definition. "As usual, friends begged Newman to write at length, but he resisted. It was not the time for theological meditation, the important thing was to stop a dogmatic declaration being rushed through like a political measure in an emergency." Or, as Newman himself said,

We do not move at railroad space in theological matters... The Church moves as a whole; it is not a mere philosophy; it is a communion; it not only discovers but it teaches; it is bound to consult for charity as well as for faith.

No post-Vatican II modernist could have put it better. What Newman is saying is manifold: a) it is impossible to know revealed truth quickly, b) the Church discovers — whatever that means — the truths revealed to Her to teach, c) unless the entire Church as a whole consents She cannot define anything of great importance, d) as the modernist continually tells us, we cannot identify the Church with "a" philosophy (which means that they do not believe there is such a thing as philosophy at all, or even truth), as if the Church had never obliged Catholics by divine authority to hold to the philosophy of St. Thomas, and e) Rome is bound to consult the "communion" of Catholics in matters of faith for the sake of "charity". This last point defines the real spirit that moved him to write *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*.

The result of the definition of Infallibility was the subjection of the Papal States to the Italian masonic government, and when Newman learned that this disastrous event had taken place he wrote to his friend Mosnell: "The definition of July involved the dethronement of September", and to a Miss Bowles he wrote: "as to Rome, I cannot regret what has happened. There is one thing worse than open infidelity, and that is secret, and the state of Rome was such as to honeycomb the population of Italy with deep unbelief, under the outward profession of Christianity." Newman apparently viewed Victor Emmanuel's conquest of the Papal States as the just chastisement from God against the defects and crimes of the Church, for he is not here denouncing secret masonic societies (which he never did during his entire lifetime) but the so-called secret policies of the Ultramontanes and Jesuits (whom he often denounced).

In another letter to a Mr. Maskell, Newman again related his sentiments of the effects of the Definition:

I never expected to see such a scandal in the Church... Such scandals, I know, have been before now, and Councils — but I thought we had too many vigilant and hostile eyes upon it, to allow even the most reckless, tyrannical and heartless ecclesiastics, so wounding, so piercing religious souls, so cooperating with those who wish the Church's downfall.

Nevertheless he was sure that God would heal the offence, and "that things will in time gradually settle down and find their level... Their voice of the whole Church will in time make itself heard, and Catholic instincts and ideas will assimilate and harmonize into the credenda of

Christendom, the living tradition of the faithful, who at present many would impose upon us, and many are startled at, as a momentous addition to the Faith.." Notice that Newman is identifying the voice of the Church with the faithful instead of the Papacy which had already made its voice clearly audible in the definition. Consistent with his thinking, he believed that the real 'expression' of the voice of the Church is found in the concrete historical faith of the people who require time to assimilate new doctrine and develop it into practice. . Apparently Newman overlooked the fact that the Definition of Infallibility was not a "momentous addition" to the faith since it was taught by Christ and transmitted to the Church for all ages by the Apostles.

Following the masonic lead in Italy the news of the definition prompted Bismark, out of pure malice against the Papacy, to begin his *Kulturkampf* or persecution of Catholics in Germany. Newman wrote a letter to the *Times* about the event in reply to an article that appeared saying that if the Pope were to order another massacre of the Huguenots, Catholic opinion would now be bound to obey as it were a divine command. Consider the following words from Newman:

No Pope can make evil good, no Pope has any power over those eternal moral principles which God has imprinted on our hearts and consciences. If any Pope has with his eyes open approved of treachery and cruelty let those defend that Pope who can.

Newman was convinced that the human conscience was a mediator between defined dogmas and the individual, a position known as moderate liberalism and formally condemned by the Church. In contrast to these convictions Catholics are bound to assent without hesitation, from the most interior recesses of their souls, to all dogmas and definitions that Rome pronounces to be contained in the deposit of Revelation. Also to be found in the above statement is Newman's conviction that the Papacy has been guilty of numerous scandals of treachery and cruelty in Her history, errors he imbibed from the German historicists who reveled in such nonsense, and with whom Newman was in constant communication.

On another occasion Newman revealed his abhorrence of Papal authority in temporal affairs when he wrote a letter to Manning saying that if he (Manning) was going to use his inaugural address to the Catholic Academia to promote papal policy, he (Newman) would resign from membership. Such was the attitude toward authority of a man who would in time be esteemed as an authority in matters of philosophy and theology. As he wrote in 1860:

...while I have Him who lives in the Church, the separate members of the Church, my Superiors, though they may claim my obedience, have no claim on my admiration, and offer nothing for my inward trust.

Newman assented to authority in the exterior forum, but in the interior forum he dissented, a position in perfect harmony with his doctrine of Assent and the Illative Sense, and his moderate liberalism. Newman would certainly never fall into the pit of papalotry that his conservative followers of the twentieth century have unwittingly done.

Hence, we see that both in theory and in practice (which never are antagonistic to one another -- as a man thinks so he acts) Newman adopted a position towards infallible doctrine and pronouncements that could hardly be labeled orthodox. His beliefs as outlined in his two chief works, *The Grammar of Assent* and *The Development of Christian Doctrine* sustained him in bringing liberalism into the Church and it is important that Catholics read these works in the light of his actions, and view his actions in the light of his writings.

## **Newman and *The Rambler***

*The Rambler* was a liberal Catholic journal which was begun by John Moore Capes, who, as a

married Anglican cleric, converted to Catholicism. Capes had difficulties with the Faith during the fifties and finally left the Church, selling *The Rambler* in 1858 to Sir John Acton. Acton held two shares in the enterprise, while Fr. Capes (John's brother) and Richard Simpson, the editor, held one each. The journal was ultimately subsidized by Acton who used, it both as a political platform to ensure his entrance into Parliament in the Whig interest of his stepfather; Lord Granville, and as an opportunity to address Catholics whom he felt "needed to broaden their minds".

Richard Simpson was certainly a liberal in belief for

...like most converts, (he) was interested in theology, and would throw out speculations in the Oxford style, expecting argument; unfortunately seminary professors took them as heresies and tried to get *The Rambler* censured. (*Newman's Journey*, p.191)

The whole life of *The Rambler* consisted in one continual battle with Church authorities and men like Fr. Faber. The first clash erupted when Acton called St. Augustine the father of Jansenism, but relatively little action was taken by Cardinal Wiseman to prohibit the journal. Later Dollinger, the teacher of Acton and a good friend of Gladstone, wrote an article which attempted to demonstrate the *historical connection of ideas* which caused Fr. Faber to have recourse to Wiseman in order to delate Dollinger to Rome for heresy.

Fr. Faber, whom Dom Guéranger considered to be a saint, was not unaware of the real spirit that motivated this new suspicious teaching about the development of doctrine. Newman, as usual, was disgusted with the ultramontane intransigence. When he heard from Acton of Faber's action, Acton wrote that he "was quite miserable when I told him the news and moaned for a long time rocking himself backwards and forwards over the fire like an old woman with a toothache."

So liberal was Newman that even Acton was surprised to find him talking about "the natural inclination of men in power to tyrannize; and ignorance and presumption of would-be theologians". From then on, Newman, the directing mind of *The Rambler*, urged Acton to avoid writing on theological subjects in the magazine, and Dollinger concurred in this advice.

The journal escaped censure until another article appeared by Scott Stokes, a school inspector who advocated Catholic cooperation with government measures. Finally Cardinal Wiseman "was seriously annoyed and proposed to censure the magazine, which would effectively put it out of business". But to dodge the censure "a last minute suggestion was offered: the paper would be spared if Simpson resigned." Newman, however, was indignant and offered excuses in behalf of Simpson; but Wiseman "was merely annoyed at what he called 'Dr. Newman's stipulations' and proposed to go ahead with the censure."

The editorship of *The Rambler* passed into the hands of Newman, but he maintained the original purpose of the paper, for

...not wishing to cast any slur on Simpson and Acton, he made no public reference to any change of policy; indeed, he did not wish to change the principles of the magazine, but only its tone...

The bishops and seminary professors continued in their resentment of *The Rambler* even though they were not aware of its new editor. An article appeared in *The Tablet*, the Cardinal's paper, which sharply criticized the ideas supported by *The Rambler*, and Bishop Ullathorne paid Newman a visit to persuade him to stop causing trouble. "Our laity were a peaceable set" he said, "the Church was at peace. They had a deep faith; *they did not like to hear that anyone doubted...*"

Newman's scepticism had obviously struck the faithful with confusion, since his popularity and grandiose prose gave him the appearance of authority. His answer to Ullathorne's reasonable request reflects his basic teaching concerning conscience and authority: "I said in answer that he saw one side,

I another". This is, indeed, the true purpose and practical effect of Newman's *Grammar of Assent* which reduces a man's principles to personal characteristics. Afterwards Newman tactfully retorted to the bishop that he would resign the editorship if the journal would be returned to the original owners, Acton and Simpson, and to Newman's great surprise Ullathorne called his bluff by accepting his offer. "It had not occurred to Newman that the bishops thought Simpson less dangerous than himself", as they knew that his fame, priestly position, high sounding authority, and subtle errors would prove more harmful than mere bare-faced liberals. Newman acquiesced in the bishop's directive and managed to regain his lost respect by saying he could not act contrary to his bishop's declared wishes. He was most tactful.

Newman's famous thesis, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, however well it might read, was explicitly written to defend the rising laity in their desire to 'participate' in ecclesiastical government. The thesis appeared in the July issue of *The Rambler*, with Newman both apologizing for offending the hierarchy and arrogantly directing their minds to the fact that even the bishops were consulted when the time came to define the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Opposition came quickly. "Dr. Gillow, the leading theologian at Ushaw, not knowing that Newman was the author of this paragraph immediately wrote to attack what he regarded as an heretical and subversive idea." What, indeed, would Dr. Gillow say today?

Newman replied with his usual tact by saying he used the word 'consult' in the sense in which we consult a barometer, but in fact he wrote the thesis to defend the desire of certain laymen of participating in and determining their own Christian education. Later, at a Synod of Bishops, Newman's article was held up to reprobation by Bishop Brown of Newport and Manning was deputed to speak to Newman about the matter.

Manning told Newman to write theologically in order to avoid misconceptions, but Newman took his advice as a mere suggestion and left it at that. Bishop Brown became indignant that nothing was being done and therefore wrote to the Secretary of *Propaganda* denouncing Newman for writing what he believed was "totally subversive of the essential authority of the Church in matters of Faith." The bishop said Newman's writings were those of a Calvinist.

On December 3, 1859, Msgr. Talbot wrote to Bishop Ullathorne about Newman: "He has lost the confidence of many in consequence and *The Rambler* is beginning to be looked upon as a very dangerous periodical." Cardinal Barnabo related to Ullathorne that "*le Pape est beaucoup peine*" and *Propaganda* sent Wiseman a list of suspect passages which, curiously, never found its way to Newman. Meanwhile in 1861 *The Rambler* caused more trouble by carrying an article by Acton concerning Dollinger's view of the Pope's temporal power. Cardinal Antonelli, the Papal Secretary of State, sent a letter to Wiseman demanding that *The Rambler* be suppressed, and after Burns refused to publish the periodical Acton transferred his paper to a non-Catholic publisher.

By 1862 Acton had turned *The Rambler* into a quarterly called the *Home and Foreign Review*, whose "high quality was generally recognized and much esteemed by Newman, but the English bishops continued to criticize it in their pastorals."

## Newman on Evolution

Darwin's theory did not shock Newman; he told a correspondent he was willing "to go the whole hog with Darwin."

It is important to understand Newman's frame of mind concerning the false theories of evolution in order to understand his notions of development. Darwin's book, *Origin of Species*, appeared in 1859, a time when educated men and society in general scoffed at the idea of human evolution,

leaving such notions to the few mad scientific theorists, but Newman's empirical mind and distrust of rational philosophy disposed him to accept whole-heartedly the notions of evolution. He had been contemplating the evolution, not of man, but of religion, long before the appearance of Darwin's book; his first sermon on the development of Christianity was preached in 1843 while he was still an Anglican and within two years the *Development of Christian Doctrine* was published, with Newman entering the Church at the same time.

Newman was a pioneer of this new doctrine which shocked both Anglicans and Catholics alike. Theologians until then had never considered his ideas of development, although many before him justly contemplated the mystical and supernatural increase of the treasures of the Church. The difference between Newman and earlier theologians in this matter is that Newman considered only the material aspect of the Church's growth, not going beyond the temporal history of Her life on earth. Earlier theologians, on the other hand, had considered the formal aspect of the Church, a viewpoint which is vital to the believer who is obliged to view things with a supernatural eye.

Newman saw the Church in the light of history, whereas Catholics see history in the light of the Church. Immersed in an academia of the staunchest historicists whose scepticism imbued the thinkers of that time, Newman followed their lead and often kept up a correspondence with the worst of them, as Dollinger and Acton. Their position confined the Church to Her history, and Her history to their sceptical and critical minds. For these men the work of the Catholic mind is not to meditate upon and adore Christ in the eternal truths of the Church but to subject these truths to historical analysis. What is important for them is not the Incarnation but the development of the idea of the Incarnation. All this, of course, is nothing but that age-old pride whereby the mind of man becomes the measure of religion.

With this in mind we can understand why Newman accepted so easily the errors of Darwin, for there was nothing incompatible between the evolution of man and the evolution of religion and doctrine. On the contrary, both complement one another to form a harmonious view of the whole of creation. In fact, just as all errors begin in the highest part of the soul before they exercise their universal influence on the subordinate faculties and sciences, thus does the evolution of eternal doctrine precede the less radical errors about the evolution of man and social institutions. It is understandable, and appropriate, therefore that Newman's novel thesis should have preceded *Origin of Species* by sixteen years. As long as the mind of man is firmly rooted in the immutable and eternal truths of the Faith the occasion will never arise to fall into any kind of evolutionary errors.

Several authors bear testimony of Newman's evolutionary ideas. A certain Mark Pattison who knew Newman said he saw the whole development of human reason from Aristotle to Hegel as a closed book, and in *Studies in Modernism* Alfred Fawkes also believes that the essay on Development "is a striking anticipation of the Evolution philosophy; the application of this to theology marked a turning-point in religious thought." (p. 47)

And another author, Percy Gardner in *Modernism in the English Church*, asserts that "it shows the greatness of Newman, that before Darwin had set forth his theory of evolution, a foretaste of it appears in Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine*." (p. 118) So serious were Newman's aberrations that one of the greatest living Roman theologians at that time, Fr. Franzelin, S.J., wrote an entire treatise, *De Divinia Scriptura et Traditione*, in order to combat what he considered to be Newman's departure from the Faith.

## **The "Development of Christian Doctrine"**

The full force and implication of Newman's thinking are found in his doctrine known as **Development of Christian Doctrine**. Characteristic of his personal qualities and life, this specific

teaching of Newman contains his ambiguity and ambivalence, *in toto*, so much so that it allures the most opposed camps of thinkers. Its appeal is universal; to liberals and orthodox, to Protestants and Catholics, to believers as well as infidels. Men of every persuasion find their opinions voiced in this doctrine, for it is as pliable and flexible as Newman's supposedly transcendent and personal logic.

The essence of Newman's position consists in reconciling two contradictory propositions: first, that Christinaity is unchanging, and second, that Christianity is changing. Apparent contradictions can always be reconciled by a legitimate rational distinction, but Newman does not attempt to do this. His **Doctrine of Development** does not assert that Christianity is unchanging in one respect, and changing in another, and then delineates the consequent differences and properties from the various distinctions. On the contrary, Newman's position admits simultaneously and in the same respect that Christianity is changing and unchanging. To accomplish such a formidable task is not really very difficult, at least for a mind enamoured with concrete living experience.

To reconcile these contradictions a principle of unity must be found that is eminently concrete and contains within itself the germ of continuity that survives amidst opposition. The principle must admit and foster adaptation to prevailing circumstances without being subservient to them; it must be capable of explaining why the Church acted and thought one way in the past, another way in the present, and be pliable enough to allow for further change in the future. It must be simultaneously a principle of identity and diversity, of incorruption and corruption. In short, this principle must be a vital principle: it must be life.

"Growth is the only evidence of life" was Newman's most fundamental principle that guided every one of his endeavors, whether spiritual, intellectual or practical. If something is not growing it must be either inanimate or dead, and, in either case, it could not be the object of spiritual purpose. Newman's belief that the development of all philosophy from Aristotle to Hegel was a closed book was a deduction from the primary premise about the necessity of living things growing by development. He would not allow that any philosophical or theological proposition could be absolutely true and adequately expressed by concepts and words; and therefore every dogma and philosophical truth must be capable of continued expansion, interpretation and development. His was the 'dynamic' approach.

For Newman life is the highest expression of reality, not truth or goodness. The true and the good, by nature abstract and objective, are meaningful only in so far as they support and manifest life, which is always subjective. By taking life as the beginning point, historical development logically followed as the object of philosophy and theology.

The historical development of ideas, of institutions, the action of many minds working over long periods of time, the importance of the conditions which limited their understanding, and the way in which a central idea can change without losing its identity, how associated ideas can bring out or obscure the main reality, how a new formulation may preserve the old meaning better than outdated terms – all this was very new thinking when Newman composed his essay. (*Newman's Journey*, p.111)

Canon William Barry, the official biographer of Newman whose synopsis of his life appears in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, describes this novel idea of development: "Development, or evolution, was however necessary from the nature of the case. Not the letter of the New Testament, nor any assignable number of books, would 'comprise a delineation of all possible forms which a divine message will assume when submitted to a multitude of minds.' 'The more claims an idea has to be living, the more various will be its aspects; and the more social and political is its nature, the more complicated and subtle will be its issues, and the longer and more eventful its course.' And so the whole Bible is written on the principle of development." (*Newman*, p.92) Barry quotes Newman saying that ideas are true in so far as they are living, and the more life they possess the more multiple

will be their 'expression' in time. Is this not a formal approbation of pluralism and an affirmation that truth can change?

Newman, no doubt, would say truth does not change, on account of its living identity and continuity which can be determined by a sevenfold historical test: "Newman proposed seven tests — preservation of type, continuity of principles, power of assimilation, logical sequence, anticipation of the future, conservative action on the past, and chronic vigour." These tests are similar to what modern biologists use to determine the unity of a species, that is, a living species. Is it permissible to use such a method in matters of Divine Revelation?

Percy Gardner in *Modernism in the English Church* also describes how Newman's novel idea antedated biological theories concerning natural selection. It seems that for Newman the Church is like a living species which advances and develops in time, acquiring different characteristics and forms necessitated by its 'struggle for existence' in the midst of a hostile world. "In a remarkable passage in his **Development of Christian Doctrine** Cardinal Newman describes the process by which ideas, as he calls them, make their way into Christian belief and practice."

Gardner goes on to quote Newman:

When some great enunciation is carried forward into the public throng of men, and draws attention, then it is not merely received passively in this or that form into many minds, but it becomes an active principle within them, leading them to an ever new contemplation of itself, to an application of it in various directions, and a propagation of it on every side. At first men will not fully realize what it is that moves them, and will express and explain themselves inadequately. After a while some definite teaching emerges; and as time proceeds, one view will be modified or expanded by another, and then combined with a third, till the idea to which these various aspects belong will be to each mind separately what at first it was only to all together.

Such is the manner in which he contemplates the 'growth' of Christianity and dogma, a view that presupposes progress on the part of the Church as She becomes more and more "aware" of Herself. "It shows the greatness of Newman, that before Darwin had set forth his theory of evolution, a foretaste of it appears in the **Development of Christian Doctrine**," Gardner realizes how influential Newman's treatise was on bringing converts into the Church since they could now look upon Rome simply as possessing the more perfect form of Christianity, a form that was the logical perfection of their own belief, instead of adopting Catholicism in opposition to their former heretical tenets.

Ever since Newman became popular English converts have felt comfortable in clinging to their old ideas and sentiments, as is exemplified in Ronald Knox; few have felt the necessity of converting Protestants since they also possess the truth, although imperfect, and they also have access to the means of grace. However, although Protestants were being drawn to Rome via Newman's treatise, "the Roman hierarchy itself has never looked on Newman's views with favour, but has distrusted their thinking. And in fact they are not reconcilable with the teaching of intellectually absolute religion to which Rome is irrevocably committed. They have been carried farther by certain Romanist writers, such as Loisy and Duchesne, whose works found a place on the *Index*."

Others, as Alfred Fawkes, have discerned Newman's modernism in his idea of development, Fawkes quotes Mark Pattison, an agnostic friend of Newman, who saw clearly the thrust of Newman's ideas:

The force of his dialectic and the beauty of his theoretical exposition were such that one's eyes and ears were charmed, and one never thought of inquiring on how narrow a basis of philosophical culture his great gifts were expended. A. P. Stanley once said to me: 'How different the fortunes of the Church of England might have been, if Newman had been able to read German!' That puts the matter in a nutshell; Newman assumed and adorned the narrow basis on which Laud had stood two hundred years before. All the grand development of human reason, from Aristotle down to Hegel, was a sealed



book to him. There lay a unity, a unity of all thought, which far transcended the mere mechanical association of the unthinking members of the Catholic Church; a great spiritual unity by the side of which all sects and denominations shrink into vanity. (*Studies in Modernism*, p.31)

This kind of unity, it should be clear, is not the one established by Christ in His Church, but a quasi-pantheistic unity that transcends the happy limits of truth and goodness.

Roman theologians, including members of the *Propaganda*, were more than suspicious about Newman's sceptical **doctrine of development**. The great Fr. Perrone, S.J., discussed the matter with Newman, and although Mr. Ward, Newman's biographer, states that Perrone and Newman were reconciled on the issue of development, the case was not quite so simple. Alfred Fawkes makes an important distinction:

Perrone admitted the principle of development; and Mr. Ward argues that the difference between his view and Newman's was one *almost entirely of expression*. No; what Perrone meant was a logical unfolding: Newman, guarded as his language often is, held an organic process, For him ideas are *still unfinished*. The world is still in the making, and mankind is in the making too. (pp. 36-37) (Emphasis added)

The distinction is of the utmost importance, for "the latter admits of, and even invites, applications which the former excludes." Newman's hypothesis admits progress, not only of our understanding of dogma, but of dogma itself. Surely he must if dogmas are to be living historical experiences. That he was intent on viewing the development of dogma biologically is made clear by his own admission, because for him philosophy and theology

...necessarily arise out of an existing state of things, and for a time savours of the soil. Its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, and is employed in efforts after freedom which become more vigorous and hopeful as its years increase. Its beginnings are not the measure of its capabilities, nor its scope. At first no one knows what it is, or what it is worth. It remains perhaps for a time quiescent; it tries, as it were, its limbs, and proves the ground under it, and feels its way. From time to time it makes essays which fail, and are in consequence abandoned. It seems in suspense which way to go; it wavers, and at length strikes out in one definite direction. In time it enters upon strange territory; points of controversy alter their bearing; parties rise and fall around it; dangers and hopes appear in new relations; and old principles reappear under new forms, It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise; but below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often. (Emphasis added)

Here Newman expresses perfectly his position that truth is both changing and unchanging in the same respect, for it "changes with them in order to remain the same", a view that savours of Hegelian dialectics. His ability to discern growth and change is equal to some of the best natural historians, but unfortunately his natural and empirical method does grave injustice to the transcendent supernatural order of Revelation. The reader cannot help but agree with Fawkes when he said: "So spoke Faust to Margaret in the garden", and he adds: "Not only Roman theologians demurred. 'He places Christianity on the edge of a precipice, from whence a bold and strong hand would throw it over,' wrote Mr. Gladstone; and Manning, then an Anglican: 'I am persuaded that Bishop Butler, if he were alive, would in his quiet way tear the whole argument into shreds. Is it not a refuge for the destitute, who can find no shelter in antiquity? It seems as if he thought the *regula fidei*, and the tradition of dogmas and the whole oral confession of the faith seldom if ever crossed his mind.' They were right. Valid and inevitable as it is, the **Development** theory can only be used *by those who are prepared to follow it out to its conclusions*. Rome saw this from the first; and in our own time, though Newman's name was not mentioned, both it and his doctrine of Probability have been repudiated, in the *Syllabus* of 1907, and the Encyclical by which it was followed, the Church fell back upon the old lines.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is important for the Catholic to realize that, contrary to these ideas of development, the Church has always taught that the entire deposit of Revealed Dogma ended with the Apostles. Whatever the Church has taught in subsequent ages is

As stated earlier, Newman's theory of **Development** appealed to men of opposing beliefs. "Newman was a man so various. A primer of infidelity," said Huxley, "could be compiled from his works." But so could one of belief, of Ultramontanism and Cisalpinism; of traditionalism and science. Each of these opposites appealed to a side of his complex personality, and he threw himself into each with ardour.

This made him a *frondeur*; he was a man with whom it was difficult to deal. Mr. Ward compares his attitude to that of Fénelon under similar circumstances. The comparison is apt. But we recall Bossuet's comment on his great rival:

*'M. de Cambrai continue faire le soumis de l'air du monde le plus arrogant.'*<sup>2</sup> That his views were disapproved in Rome is not surprising.

Not only modernists like Loisy rallied behind the **Development of Christian Doctrine** but "this famous treatise had been taken up by certain Unitarian writers in Boston; and the American bishops were up in arms against it... His language on Probability suggested Hermes; on Faith, Bautain; the **Development** theory started from the side of psychology rather than of logic: '*Newman miscet et confundet omnia*'<sup>3</sup> was their view."

Newman found difficulty in reconciling the ancient, medieval and modern Church. He could not, for instance, understand how the teaching of Transubstantiation could be reconciled with the teaching of the Apostolic Church since never was a term like 'transubstantiation' ever used. Yet he willingly submitted to the Church's authority despite his ignorance:

I cannot indeed prove it; I cannot tell how it is; but I say, "why should it not be? What's to hinder it? What do I know about substance or matter? Just as much as the greatest philosophers — and that is nothing at all... The Catholic doctrine leaves phenomena alone... it deals with what no one on earth knows anything about — the material substances themselves.

Newman reveals his lack of theological training and his empirical mind in this statement. Did he not know that there has ever been in the Church a profound understanding of the nature of matter, and both natural and supernatural substance, and that this enabled Her to define with infallible certitude dogmas about the nature, substance, person and ousia of Christ, as also the dogmas concerning Transubstantiation?

How could the Church employ philosophers and theologians to articulate and defend these dogmas if the greatest of them knew only as much as Newman did on such matters, that is, "nothing at all"? And when has the Church purported to leave phenomena alone, limiting Herself to the 'mystery' of material substance which "no one on earth knows anything about"?

Newman, it seems, approached these questions like one outside the Faith, looking for a logical justification for his faith in history rather than revealed dogma. Perhaps Newman reversed the dictum of St. Augustine "*Credo ut intelligam*" to "*intelligo ut credam*". Fawkes was right when he saw the consequences of Newman's treatment of the dogma of transubstantiation: "The formula is saved by being emptied of meaning. On such reasoning anything may be anything else, and everything nothing."

Fawkes continues to describe the nature and import that Newman's theory of development had on the world. "Newman's book burst like a bombshell on the religious world. On the one hand it cut away the '*Perpeuité de la Foi*' - the keystone... of orthodoxy; on the other it opened the door to

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contained wholly in the original teaching given by Our Lord to the Apostles.

<sup>2</sup> Monsieur de Cambrai (Fénelon) continues to make submission in the most arrogant spirit of the world.

<sup>3</sup> Newman mixes and confuses everything.

uncertainty and error of every description.” “Protestants distrusted it because it was devised in ‘the interests of Catholicism; Catholics because it represented Catholicism as ‘another Gospel’, an after-growth contained only implicitly in the Gospel of Christ.” Fawkes states what he believed to be Newman’s purpose and voices the opinion that the *Syllabus* of St. Pius X had Newman in mind:

His aim was to supply a philosophy of religion which, while justifying the Papal Church, should admit a principle of progress, accounting for defects by the presence of a human element and the inevitable discrepancy between the ideal and the actual. The Church, however, showed no disposition to accept his apologetic -- at which... at least two of the condemnations of the *Syllabus* of 1907 are directed... In Newman the philosopher and the divine lie side by side unreconciled; the two lines of thought, produce them as we will, do not meet.<sup>1</sup>

It might be said that the empirical mind of Newman sought to make credible the theory that revealed religion and dogma are the result of the development of a primordial religious fact. History, we might say, becomes dogma. He admits this in the Parochial and Plain Sermons where he speaks about the role St. Paul’s Epistles played in developing and illustrating the Gospels, “raising history into doctrine, ordinances into sacraments, detached words of actions into principles, and thus everywhere dutifully preaching his person, work and will.” What does Newman mean by St. Paul’s “raising history to dogma” and “ordinances into sacraments”? Does not the Catholic position ‘assert that St. Paul simply preached the doctrines revealed to him by the Incarnate Son of God Who taught all things whatsoever that must be believed and Who instituted all of the sacraments?’

## Conclusion

Although the foregoing synopsis of Newman’s life and thought is brief and far from comprehensive, I believe sufficient evidence and argument have been mounted to expose the illusion of his orthodoxy and the invalid basis on which his fame rests. His liberal activities have not been made known to Catholics of our century, for the reason that all biographies of him have been written from the liberal standpoint and have heavily over-shadowed his heterodox sentiments. Catholics of conservative thinking turn to Newman for inspiration in defense of their anti-liberal views, for there is no other author in the English language whom they feel wrote so eloquently on divine matters; and they do this, I believe, because of the great absence of solid theologians, philosophers and apologists that has been so prevalent since the French Revolution.

The real danger of Newman’s influence, however, is now at last becoming fully apparent as numerous modernists rally behind him as the prophet of their dream, the dream of the layman’s control of his godless secular religion.

Conservatives argue that Newman was decidedly anti-liberal and cite texts from his pre-Catholic life in support of their contention. There are two main fallacies in their position. The first is that they have failed to realize that it is essential, as I have already mentioned, to judge a man, his opinions and his influence with reference to the whole of his writings rather than from a few carefully chosen passages. The second is that they have not realized that what Newman called liberalism in those days was the movement in Parliament to take privileges away from the Established Church and give them to dissenters like the Catholics. It is well known that Newman opposed Catholic Emancipation (he detested Daniel O’Connell), not for the same reasons as the orthodox Catholic bishops who distrusted the liberals leading the movement for emancipation, but on the grounds that emancipated Catholics

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<sup>1</sup> The following proposition was condemned by St. Pius X in the *Syllabus "Lamentabili Sane"*, No. 25: "The assent of the faith ultimately rests on a mass of probabilities" This condemned proposition was explicitly upheld by Newman in the *Grammar of Assent* when he says that his being suspicious of scientific demonstration urges him to "prove" the truth of Catholicism by the argument of probability: "I prefer to rely on that of an accumulation of various probabilities" (411).

sitting in Parliament would undermine the unity and supremacy of the Established Church.

The liberalism that Newman opposed was far from that condemned by Pius IX in his *Syllabus*; in fact, given that he saw liberalism as an attack on, rather than the fruit of Protestantism, his anti-liberalism was more similar to the liberalism condemned by Pius IX than contrary to it.

He indeed despised the Tri-Colour, but during his pre-Catholic life he also believed that the Papacy was an abominable thing. The best witness we have of his liberalism is, ironically, the “*consensus fidelium*” of the nineteenth century, and in particular the Roman Curia and the Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX. Cardinals Barnabo, Manning, Allen, Reisach, and even Wiseman, suspected and deplored one or another of his writing and schemes; theologians like Perrone and Franzelin opposed his ideas. And besides, how could a real Catholic find congenial company in men like Dollinger and Acton who were determined to undermine the Faith?

Against this background, even the great number of converts who came into the Church as a result of his conversion and his influence must be considered with reserve. Some indeed must have embraced the faith wholeheartedly and submissively but the more far-reaching effect must have been to flood the Church with Anglicans who did not materially alter their beliefs, thus both diluting the English Catholic Church and bringing it more into line with, and therefore into a position where it would compromise with the secular authorities and the world.

The reader, then, is called upon to consider Newman’s case more critically in order to determine his proper place in modern Catholic history. As aforementioned, he has been hailed as the “invisible father” of Vatican II, and even though the modernists of today might take Newman too far by stretching his meaning, nevertheless his elastic principles allow for such interpretation. The Catholic world has not been getting better since the death of John Newman, and we have many justifications for thinking that he was more of a cause than an obstacle to its deterioration. Cardinal Manning provided a valid and fitting conclusion to this essay when he said that Newman generated a “worldly Catholicism, and it will have the worldly on its side, and will deceive many.”