John Henry Newman: The Light of Authority and the Father of Vatican II

Introduction: John Henry Newman, Intellectual Saint

John Henry Newman, the great cardinal of the English Catholic Church of the 19th century, belongs to that rarest category of saints—intellectual saints. Some even find this category a contradiction in terms, believing that one cannot be both intellectual and holy. Msgr. John Tracy Ellis, the noted historian of the American Catholic Church, once asserted that "the American Catholic Church has been too long afflicted with saints who are not intellectuals and intellectuals who are certainly not saints." He later regretted the statement but it reflects a tension that runs through Catholic history. St. Francis of Assisi, probably the most beloved saint of all time, refused to allow his monks to read because, he said "we do not see Jesus reading in the Gospels." In that perennial classic of Christian spirituality, The Imitation of Christ, there is a strong antipathy for learning, the author proudly boasting, "I would rather feel contrition than know how to define it…Humble knowledge of self is a surer path to God than the ardent pursuit of learning." Thomas à Kempis would lead us to the conclusion that spirituality and the intellectual life are implacable enemies.

However, we have strong evidence that refutes this testimony of à Kempis and this lies in the thirty-three doctors of the Church. Only 33 over 2000 years you exclaim! Only 33 out of many billions of Catholics over that period of time! Yes, only 33 who were so distinguished in their learning and so pre-eminent in their sanctity that they received this rarest of laurels: doctor ecclesiae (Doctor of the Church). Of all the great early Fathers of the Church, Western and Eastern, only 13 have made the list. While popes confer this title upon individuals (they do not, of course, create doctors of the Church, the Holy Spirit does that!), yet the only popes who have been made doctors of the church are Leo the Great and Gregory the Great. There are three women on the list and the most recent addition is a woman who lived only 24 years and who wrote only one major book, The Story of a Soul and who was a contemporary of Newman—St. Thérèse of Lisieux. She received the title, Doctor of the Church, on the centenary of her death in 1997 from John Paul II.

The point of this prelude is to highlight the fact that it is the utmost test of the human spirit to be both humble and learned at the same time. While there are more than a handful of candidates to be named doctors of the church in the future, one of the most likely, once he acquires the necessary miracles and is canonized a saint, is the greatest theologian of the 19th century and the man whose favorite motto was "Holiness First," Blessed John Henry Newman. But to show you that this is not just my own opinion, I would like to cite the words of Bernard McGinn, a historical theologian and one of the foremost authorities on the Doctors of the Church: "In the way in which his life and thought link the first doctors of the church with the issues of the modern age, John Henry Newman witnesses to the doctoral charisma as no other figure of recent centuries. This has been recognized in recent official Roman Catholic documents in which no modern author has been quoted more than John Henry Newman." [1]

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In the rest of this talk, I wish to present first a short biography of Newman, then to examine Newman as the light of authority under four headings: the authority of the laity, the authority of scripture, the development of doctrine and the authority of infallibility, and the authority of conscience. Then I will close with a short examination of the holiness and spirituality of John Henry Newman.

A Short Biography of Newman the Failure

It is necessary to sketch out a capsule biography of Newman, if we are to understand properly both the man and some of his writings. It may come as a surprise to learn that Newman always protested that he was not a professional theologian. He was an essayist , a preacher, a poet, a novelist, but most of all, he was a controversialist of incomparable gifts, perhaps the most remarkable in English letters. He belonged to a very special category of English writers known as 'occasional' writers. As Newman wrote to one correspondent in 1864: "I can never write well without a definite call." In his life, most of his writing was done in response to a crucial event or issue of the day.

To review Newman's life as an Anglican, as a Catholic convert and as a controversialist is to establish Newman's impeccable credentials as a failure. But his ambitious failures are the measure of his greatness. It has taken 100 years for Newman's ideas to be appreciated for their originality and depth. Lawrence Cunningham in his book, The Meaning of Saints, makes a comment on Newman that I will try to validate in this talk:

> "Suspect and banned in his own time, Newman was a figure whose prophetic life was only fully appreciated in the next century, when the stored resources of his life became a model and source for Catholic renewal in our time." [2]

We will try to show that Newman's defeats in the 19th century become victories in the 20th, especially at Vatican Council II.

After his graduation from Oxford and his service there as a tutor and fellow at Oriel College, Newman in 1825 became a priest of the Church of England. In 1826, he was made the Vicar of the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin. As a result of a disagreement about the proper role of tutors, Newman was relieved of his duties as tutor in 1831. This disappointment, however, left him with time for research and writing. From 1833-1841, Newman devoted himself as the leading literary figure of the Oxford Movement to a series of controversial documents, known as The Tracts For the Times. The Tractarians, as they were known, wished to separate the Church of England from its control by Parliament—an issue Americans would refer to as the separation of church and state—and at the same time they wanted to ground Anglican theology on the church of the early centuries – as a new criterion of orthodoxy. That would position the Anglican Church as a Via Media (a middle course) between what they saw as the errors of Protestantism and the corruptions of Romanism. Newman came to see this ten-year effort as politically unfeasible when Tract 90 was greeted by a storm of opposition from Anglican Bishops and from the heads of colleges at Oxford. At the same time, he saw that the compromises of the Via Media led only to heresy. Recognizing his failure here,

Newman ceased the publication of the Tracts and retired to semi-monastic seclusion at Littlemore, near Oxford.

In 1845 Newman converted to Catholicism in the same year that he published his great Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. This essay led Newman to recognize that Tridentine Catholicism was the authentic heir of the Church of the Fathers. As a result Newman lost many of his old friends and his association with his beloved Oxford. At the same time, Newman was regarded with suspicion by both English Catholics and members of the Roman Curia. While Newman was in Rome to be trained and ordained as a Catholic priest, he found that his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine was under severe attack for seeming to concede that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was not the one held by the Church in the first three centuries. As a result, Newman feared that his book would be placed on the Index of Forbidden Books. It was not, but the damage had been done and Newman remained under a shadow in Rome, and suspect in England until the publication of his Apologia Pro Vita Sua in 1864.

But before that, Newman's trials as a Catholic were severe. He was sued for libel in 1851 by an ex-Dominican Friar, Dr. Giovanni Achilli. Newman lost and had to pay a fine of 100 lira. From 1851-1859 he accepted a role as founder and rector of a new Catholic University of Ireland. Due to a number of factors, but especially conflicts among the Irish bishops, Newman resigned in Feb. 1859. But the lasting monument from this sad experience was one of Newman's finest books, The Idea of a University.

Cardinal Wiseman and the English bishops in 1857 commissioned Newman, one of the greatest English stylists of the 19th century, to supervise a new translation of the Bible. However, when they learned that the U.S. hierarchy had commissioned Archbishop Francis Kendrick to do a new translation of the Vulgate, they let the project drag on for several years and then called it off.

In 1847, Newman had established his Oratory at Birmingham, following the rule of St. Philip Neri. By 1858, Newman wished to establish a branch house of the Oratory at Oxford, but he was opposed by Bishop Manning. In 1866-67, Newman renewed this effort but was again rebuffed by Bishop Manning and blocked by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (as it was then called) in Rome. Throughout most of his life Newman suffered from the opposition of the British bishops and of the Roman Curia.

Newman's most serious trials as a Catholic came in the period of 1859-69, the decade before Vatican Council I. The Bishop of Birmingham, William Ullathorne, asked Newman to become the editor of a Catholic journal of opinion, called The Rambler, because its views had become too liberal for the bishops. In the July issue Newman published his own article "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," in which he argued, based especially on historical precedent from the Arian controversy of the 4th century, that the laity had a role to play in the definition of doctrine. A prominent seminary professor denounced the article, and Bishop Thomas Brown of Newport reported Newman to the Holy See for heresy. Newman was never informed of the precise problems and remained for years under a cloud of suspicion.

In this decade, on issues involving the temporal power of the papacy and the Infallibility of the Pope, Newman put himself in the dangerous position of trying to mediate between the conservative hierarchy and the liberal laity, led by Lord Acton, and he incurred the enmity of both sides. In the early 1860's, it was even rumored that Newman was so disillusioned by his experiences in the Catholic Church that he would

return to the Church of England. Newman, as so often before, saw himself as the scapegoat, and once reflected as he looked back on his life that he seemed like Sisyphus, "rolling my load up the hill for ten years and never cresting it, but falling back." But happily an opportunity came for Newman to assert his allegiance to Rome , when in 1864 the Protestant novelist, Charles Kingsley, published an article charging that Newman had no regard for the truth. Newman responded with his famous defense, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (1864). This book, a spiritual autobiography that ranks with Augustine's Confessions, reestablished Newman's reputation and led, along with Newman's later publications, The Grammar of Assent (1870) and his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk (1874) to two honors that symbolize the esteem and affection that Newman had finally won. In 1878, he was named an honorary fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, the first to be so named. Then, in May 1879, Pope Leo XIII elevated Newman to the rank of Cardinal. Newman, whose career was marked by failure and opposition, was finally acknowledged for his accomplishments. But his principal legacy is his rich treasure trove of writings that will be mined by future generations.

Newman the Intellectual

In this section, we will deal with Newman as a writer, as an intellectual and as a light of authority in the Church. For Newman, the light of authority was always defined by the light of freedom. When he discussed one, he would balance his presentation with a consideration of the other. Newman was an explorer of the boundaries between freedom and authority. How far in a given area could freedom be extended before it degenerated into license? And how far can authority be extended before it degenerates into tyranny? As an intellectual explorer, Newman sought to discover where authority ends and freedom begins. This is treacherous terrain and Newman was a lonely warrior doing battle against a host of his lifelong adversaries—the English Bishops (especially Wiseman and Manning), the Roman Curia, his own London Oratorians, his old Oxford Movement colleagues, and his coarse slanderer, Charles Kingsley.

Newman's arguments reflect the same opposition of church teaching and private dissent that we have witnessed in the 20th century. So our presentation here will tend to corroborate Newman's statement in his Apologia that "Catholic christendom presents a continuous picture of authority and private judgement alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and flow of the tide."

We will aim here at defining Newman's central ideas in each of four areas showing first how they were expressed in some of his seminal works, and then, how these ideas were echoed in the documents of Vatican Council II. The echoes of Newman's thought resound through many of the documents of Vatican II to such an extent that Vatican II has been called "Newman's Council" and he has often been described as "the Father of Vatican II." In this section, we will try to justify Newman's right to those august titles.

Newman and the Authority of the Laity

The very expression "the authority of the laity" sounds strange on the lips to a Catholic. Msgr. Talbot, a persistent opponent of Newman's who had the ear of the Pope, was once asked: What is the province of the laity? He responded at once, "It is to hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all." A later American prelate described the role of the laity in similarly disparaging terms: "It is to pray, to pay and to be silent." The terrible price of this condescension has been a rebellion of the laity in doctrine and in practice. It is our purpose here to show that, if Newman's views on the laity had been more widely accepted earlier (as they were later in Vatican II), some of this rebellion might have been avoided.

Newman's views on the laity developed over a long period of time but were most dramatically outlined in his Rambler article of July 1859. Newman's views grew out of his theory of the development of doctrine and in this statement, we learn of the important role he assigns to the laity as a source for the verification of doctrine in the Church. In our day, his views have received papal and conciliar encouragement, and have shaped such works as Father Congar's Lay People In The Church, but in his own day, these views were, as one scholar describes it, "an act of political suicide from which his career within the church was never fully to recover."

This Rambler article was an argument for a more elevated place for the laity in the mind, heart and structure of the Church than Msgr. Talbot would ever have approved. Newman argued that "each constituent part of the Church has its proper functions and no portion can safely be neglected." Even though Newman stated that the laity was "but the reflection or echo of the clergy in matters of faith," yet he maintained that the laity should be free to pursue theological studies and to express themselves on any matters within their competence. The special focus of the Rambler essay, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," was to assign to the laity a consultative role in the verification of orthodox doctrine. Newman pointed out that Pope Pius IX took steps to ascertain the views of the faithful before defining the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. In the Bull of definition, the Pope referred to the "remarkable consensus" of Catholic bishops and the faithful as one ground for the definition. Newman developed a distinction between the infallibility of the whole church in believing and that of the magisterium as a part of the Church, in teaching. Thus, the testimony of the laity, while not infallible, was a reliable indicator of the faith of the whole Church which was infallible.

These views of Newman's were so controversial in his own day that a prominent theologian, Dr. Gillow, accused Newman of heresy, and he joined Bishop Brown of Newport in writing to Rome and reporting Newman for heresy. In the 19th century there was little appreciation for the fact that the barque of Peter would have looked like an unmanned ghost ship, were it not for the laity. Newman cites many precedents for his views on the laity from the 4th century, the period of the Arian crisis, when the majority

of the bishops of the church were Arian, and the true faith was maintained more by the people than by their bishops. St. Hilary declared of this time that "the ears of the people are holier than the hearts of the bishops."

Newman summarizes his views with this dramatic analogy:

> Drive a stake into a river's bed, and you will at once ascertain which way it is running, and at what speed; throw up even a straw into the air, and you will see which way the wind blows; submit your heretical and Catholic principle to the action of the multitude, and you will be able to pronounce at once whether it is imbued with Catholic truth or with heretical falsehood.

Newman was arguing early for the very personal nature of the Church. He was the progenitor of the idea of "the people of God," later taught by Vatican II. For Newman, faith lives in and is transmitted through the sensus fidelium, the common understanding of the faithful, which is shared by all the faithful—clergy and laity who together constitute the Church. He describes in his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine how this idea of the mind of the Church is formed by the people of God:

> The multitude of opinions formed concerning it…will be collected, compared, sorted, sifted, selected, rejected, gradually attached to it, separated from it, in the minds of individuals and of the community. It will, in proportion to its native vigour and subtlety, introduce itself into the framework and details of social life, changing public opinion, and strengthening or undermining the foundations of established order.

In another context, Newman describes this as a conspiratio or breathing together of clergy and faithful:

> Through practice of faith and through baptism, there is a mutual inspiration by the Holy Spirit of teachers and learners in the Church, a conspiratio pastorum et fidelium. Teachers become learners and learners teachers.

No idea is more appealing today in the dawn of a world church not tied to European culture. The ancient saying takes on a new meaning—"Securus judicat orbis terrarum (the whole world is a safe judge). It is Newman's enriching idea that there is a collective consciousness of the faith, a collective power to judge truth and heresy deep in the depths of the mystical body of Christ.

After Newman had been reported to the Curia for these ideas, he wrote to Cardinal Wiseman then in Rome with this famous complaint: "I suppose that it is a law of the world that those who toil much and say little, are little thought of." When Wiseman discussed Newman's discontent with Msgr. Barnabo, the Secretary of Propaganda who had a low opinion of Newman and who found all English converts quarrelsome, Barnabo suggested to Wiseman that Newman was a saint and saints must expect to be persecuted.

It took 100 years for Newman's views to be accepted, but they were appropriated in the documents of Vatican II. The Council speaks in Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic

Constitution on the Church of "the whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one and who cannot err in matters of belief." [3] In the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, we hear Newman's high estimate of the laity, in words that would have shocked Msgr. Talbot; "To the apostles and their sucessors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in His name and by His power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetical and kingly office of Christ; they have, therefore, in the Church and in the world their own assignment in the mission of the whole people of God." In Gaudium et Spes, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," the faithful are urged to reconcile Christian morality and thought with modern science and technology and to make the preaching of the Gospel more intelligible to men's minds. What is this but an echo of the challenge Newman gave to Catholic intellectuals, when he wrote:

> "I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity. I am not denying you are such already; but I mean to be severe and, as some would say exorbitant in my demands. I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other, and what are the bases and principles of Catholicism."

It was from Newman especially that Vatican II drew its conception that the church is defined not through hierarchy and clergy but through all its members regardless of ecclesiastical status or office. The notion of the church as the 'people of God' was one of those defeats of Newman's in the 19th century that became a victory in the 20th. Newman had to give a painful reminder to the bishops that after the Council of Nicea, "the Catholic people in the length and breadth of Christendom were the obstinate champions of Catholic truth and the bishops were not." Bishop Ullathorne who did not agree with Newman that the consensus of the faithful throughout Christendom was the voice of the infallible church, referred to the laity as only a 'reflection' of the teaching of the church. Newman with his keen sense of irony commented, "Reflection: that is the people are a mirror in which the Bishops see themselves. Well, I suppose a person may consult his glass and in that way may know things about himself that he can learn in no other way."

We, the laity, should thank Newman that we have gone from the hunters, shooters, and entertainers of Msgr. Talbot's phrasing to the 'people of God' in Vatican II. We can now say with St. Paul: "Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it."

Newman and the Authority of Scripture

Newman's views on scripture are but little noted in the vast corpus of Newman literature. Yet his views were quite distinctive and original and in this area also, his thought had an impact on Vatican II. Newman's Tract 85, later republished as 'Holy Scripture in Relation to the Catholic Creed', argues that the Bible cannot prove the whole of Christianity by itself. Nowhere does scripture expressly teach the divinity of the Holy Spirit, or infant baptism, or Sunday observance or the Apostolic succession. Newman saw tradition and scripture as complimentary and tradition as an equal source of doctrine. Thus, he rejected the Protestant doctrine of 'sola scriptura' or scripture alone. Newman noted that the Arians were devoted to the private study of scripture , and this led him to conclude that the notion that 'the Bible alone can teach the word of God,' has been from the beginning, the very seedbed of heresy. Those who form their creed solely from scripture fall away into sects or parties, he argued, because there are many truths not directly stated in scripture. Scripture does not contain the whole of Revelation, but it does contain all that is necessary for salvation. As a matter of antecedent probability, a favorite mode of argumentation for Newman, he contends that the history of the composition of scripture and its internal structure are opposed to the notion that scripture is a complete depository of the Divine Will. "We find revealed doctrines, he says, scattered about high and low in scripture, in places expected and unexpected." "If scripture contains any religious system at all, it must contain it covertly and teach it obscurely." The point I wish to emphasize here is that Newman put great stress on tradition and its relation to scripture. He often invoked the rule of Vincent of Lerins that Christians are bound to believe what has been professed by Christians "everywhere always and by all" (though this rule, he maintained, could not be applied mechanically by a mathematical survey of all the Fathers).

The core of Christian tradition came down from the apostles and was passed on by the bishops. This he referred to as "episcopal" tradition. But surrounding this core was a vast collection of ideas and customs, a kind of unofficial tradition that Newman referred to as "prophetical". In his words, it consisted of:

> partly written, partly unwritten, partly the interpretation, partly the supplement of Scripture, partly preserved in intellectual expressions, partly latent in the spirit and prayer of Christians; poured to and fro in closets and upon the housetops, in liturgies, in controversial works, in obscure fragments, in services, in popular prejudices, in local customs.

This prophetical tradition was generally consonant with episcopal tradition but could be corrupted in its details. The Catholic churches (whether Roman, Graeco-Russian or Anglican), Newman argued, were united in their acceptance of Episcopal tradition but differed in their prophetical traditions.

As Newman's thought on tradition evolved, he saw scripture and tradition as intimately connected, and he, in effect, rejected the post-Tridentine "two sources theory" that saw scripture and tradition as two independent sources of revelation. Newman's views were later confirmed in Vatican II's Dei Verbum, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation which taught that "Sacred Tradition and sacred scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God."

In the United States of the 21st century, we know that knowledge of the Bible is thin. This ignorance is symbolized for me by the results of a poll conducted by the Barna Research Group. They found that 10% of those polled believed that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife! And such ignorance was exceeded only by those who thought that the epistles were the wives of the apostles! In Newman's day, however, the Bible was much more of a central cultural document. Newman, like many others of his time, had committed to memory large passages of the sacred text. Many of the most compelling cultural issues of the day focused on the nature of scripture. Does scripture offer proof of the Christian creed? What do we mean when we say that scripture is the inspired word of God? What principles should underlie the interpretation of scripture? Is there any link between the Old Testament and the New Testament? Do religious doctrines as derived from the Bible evolve or would that be contrary to the notion that the deposit of faith was complete with the death of the last Apostle? These questions were at the heart of the writings Newman has left us on scripture.

Newman's study of primitive Christianity led him to the conclusion that the early Church did not use the Scriptures to teach the revelation of Christ. Rather, the church taught what was to be believed and then appealed to scripture as proof of its teaching. But for the Fathers the unanimous witness of the whole Church was "as much the voice of God" as was scripture. Since for Newman, the Bible did not "carry with it its own interpretation," it could not be the only standard of appeal in matters of doctrine. To attempt to deduce the true and whole system of religion from so unsystematic a collection as the Bible, Newman likened to trying "to make out the history of Rome from the extant letters of some of its greatest politicians, and from the fragments of ancient annals, histories, law, inscriptions, and medals." For Newman the Anglican, the evidence of Scripture was indirect and incomplete. For Newman the Catholic, tradition and scripture were the twin sources of doctrine that complete one another.

In the course of his reflections on scripture Newman makes a number of astonishingly accurate predictions of the future course of biblical criticism, one of which has come true but recently, in our own time. Newman remarks that "the leaven which at present makes the mind oppose Church doctrine does set it or will set it soon against Scripture. I wish to declare what I think will be found really to be the case, that a battle for the Canon of Scripture is but the next step after a battle for the Creed." In our own time, we have witnessed a campaign to reopen the canon and to insert Gnostic scriptures, such as the Gospel of Thomas. Newman was a perceptive and accurate prophet who also forecast the rejection of the monastic life, and the abandonment of both the Bible and the institutional Church for a shallow religion of feeling. He also predicted the growth of that rationalism, so prevalent in his own day, which spoke of Revelation as the Word of God, but treated it as the word of man. (Tract 73)

Newman read the Bible constantly and almost all his sermons derived their substance and motivation from Scripture. From his extensive reading and study of the Bible, he developed an antipathy for the view that the Bible was easy to understand:

> The Eternal Wisdom of God did not utter His voice that we might at once catch up His words in an irreverent manner, think we understand them at a glance, and pass them over. But his word endureth forever; it has a depth of meaning suited to all times and places, and hardly and painfully to be understood in any. They, who think they enter into it easily, may be quite sure they do not enter into it at all.

Newman's skepticism about attaining secure linguistic meaning derives from his historical sense for the complexity of the text. It is the difference, as one Catholic theologian, Jean-Luc Marion, expresses it, between an idol which claims to represent the whole truth and an icon which points beyond itself to what is not fully understood. For Newman, it was always essential to preserve a sense for the mysteries of God's Word.

It was Newman's sense for the huge gap between man and God that led him to conclude that the words of Scripture were imperfect and defective, not because inspiration was defective in itself but because of the frail medium of human language, the use of human concepts to express divine realities and because of the people addressed, human beings. These convictions led Newman to explore the nature of inspiration in his work <u>On the Inspiration of Scripture</u>, written five years after he had been made a cardinal, in 1884. The most significant feature of Newman's ideas on inspiration was his recognition of the human element in the formation and writing of the sacred books. He rejected the theory of inspiration as divine dictation. While he saw that "what is historically human may be doctrinally divine," he wanted to emphasize the difficulties, the limitations and the human element in inspiration:

> In what way inspiration is compatible with that personal agency on the part of its instruments, which the composition of the Bible evidences, we know not; but if anything is certain, it is this,--that, though the Bible is inspired, and therefore, in one sense, written by God, yet very large portions of it, if not far the greater part of it, are written in as free and unconstrained a manner, and (apparently) with as little apparent consciousness of a supernatural dictation or restraint, on the part of His earthly instruments, as if He had had no share in the work. As God rules the will, yet the will is free,--as He rules the course of the world, yet men conduct it,--so He has inspired the Bible, yet men have written it.

Newman knew that many passages of scripture would appear at first sight strange and incredible, like the cure of the demoniac or the finding of a coin in a fish's mouth, or the accounts of Noah and the Ark or of Jonah and the whale. Startling facts were narrated simply and even essential truths were not made clear. In short, the Bible had all the characteristics of an uninspired book. It was impossible for Newman to believe in the

infallibility of the Bible without believing in the infallibility of the Church. Revelation must be plain to all and it was made so only in the tradition of the Church and the explanation of the Fathers.

While accepting scripture as divine, Newman questioned whether it could maintain the truth in an anarchical world. He believed experience proved that it could not answer this purpose for which it was never intended. "A book could not make a stand against the wild living intellect of man." Revelation would not be preserved by a book but required an infallible authority.

With regard to the extent of inspiration, Newman knew that the Council of Trent held that "the entire books with all their parts are to be held sacred and canonical." Newman interpreted this to mean that every part of scripture is inspired but that not every part of scripture need be considered an actual means of revelation. Newman interpreted matters of faith and morals as the scope of inspired teaching but any restriction on inspiration runs counter to the decrees of Trent, and an Irish theologian Fr. Healey, reprimanded Newman and some interpreted Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Providentissimus Deus to be critical of Newman on this issue. But Newman was eager to reduce the scope of inerrancy, to argue that the Bible was neither history nor science but religion—a viewpoint that could avoid a second trial of Galileo and that addresses issues of historical criticism today as well as the issue of creationism in Genesis. In his day, Newman gave comfort to Catholics engaged in scientific research, who were puzzled by the complete disregard and even contempt of scientific discoveries by defenders of scripture. In his era, Newman had the only psychologically credible view of inspiration.

As in other areas, Newman's views were vindicated in Vatican II. The Constitution on Divine Revelation gave the first conciliar account of how inspiration worked and it would have delighted Newman, even though it drew more on Aquinas than on Newman. With regard to the scope of inerrancy, the Council confirmed Newman's views when they defined this scope as "that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation." It would also have pleased Newman that both the Constitutions on Liturgy and on Revelation kept a comparison that came down in tradition from St. Augustine to The Imitation of Christ to Newman, namely, the comparison of the Holy Scripture to the Eucharist, "the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ." The Second Vatican Council explained its intention of not adding to dogmatic definitions and of leaving open controverted questions in order to concentrate on pastoral concerns. In this, the Council exemplified the spirit of openness for which Newman fought and suffered.

In his sermons, Newman was always acting the part of an exegete, so it is not surprising that in his various works he gives us his principles of exegesis, or biblical interpretation. Two principles dominate his theory of exegesis. First, scripture is essentially a work of religion, not of science or history. Newman was not aware of the highly developed school of historical biblical criticism that was developing in Germany in his own time, but he warned against its excesses, forecasting a time when "no reliance can safely be placed on single texts, and so men would proceed giving us first one thing, then another, till it would become a question what they gained of any kind…from Christianity as a definite revelation or a direct benefit. They would come to consider its publication mainly as an historical event…rather than as independent, substantive and one specially divine in its origin and directly acting upon us." Newman's principle of

'Holiness First' made it a first principle for him that we realize the majesty of God when we read His Word. The Bible occupies a special place no human document could occupy. It cannot be studied or commented upon as if it were a purely secular work. Had Newman had the opportunity to read the comment of Dr. Dominic Crossan, a professor at the Catholic University of Loyola in Chicago, to the effect that Christ's body was probably eaten by dogs while on the cross, as were so many other poor victims of crucifixion, he would have made his comment: "O Lord, Thy word endureth forever in heaven but the expositions of men are written on the sea-shore and are blotted out before the evening."

Newman's dismissal of the Bible as science would have been the antidote we needed to the literal, fundamentalist readings of Genesis. Newman's sacramental view of scripture is unscientific, for it views the first two chapters of Genesis as revealed truth and not as the result of the empirical sciences of ancient biology and physics.

Second, Newman believed that man's mind cannot fathom the mysteries of God, yet the inspired text is the proper matter for faith to work on. "God asks of us first faith," Newman remarks, "then he vouchsafes to give us sight."

Newman taught the unity of the two testaments and the progressive fulfillment of the Old Testament through added revelation finally completed in the New and resulting in a unity founded on Christ.

Prophecy was for Newman the link between the Old and New Testaments—the continuity of tradition. The church, Newman held, is not always conscious of all the elements in the deposit of faith so that these implications, though present at the beginning are only formulated over time. Truth is the daughter of time and an idea shows what it is by what it becomes. In the history of the Church, the need was for a gradual and ever more sophisticated formulation of the belief of Christians. Heresy helped to shape apostolic tradition, and scripture presumes the existence of a tradition outside itself. Newman would have agreed with Cardinal Bellarmine that "there is a body of doctrine not contained in scripture yet not opposed to it, but independent and separate from it." Both the Church and tradition are considered by Newman to be interpreters of Scripture. The argument from the convergence of evidence was most compelling for Newman, and in this as in so much else, he anticipated Vatican II's statement:

> "But since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind, no less attention must be devoted to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the Tradition of the entire Church and the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts. It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form a firmer judgment."

One critic acquainted with Newman's views on the laity and on scripture concluded: "Perhaps no theologian since the age of the Fathers has illumined our understanding of God's work in history as much as Newman."

The Development of Doctrine and the Authority of Infallibility

The hierarchical magisterium was for Newman an essential factor in the transmission of truth, but it never operated alone. The Church included Popes and Bishops but also theologians and lay persons with active roles to play in the complex interplay of dogma, faith, and theology. From the age of fifteen, Newman's faith was bound up with dogmatic propositions. Newman described his lifelong battle against liberalism as a battle against "the antidogmatic principle and its developments." His Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine was in one sense a defense of his decision to become a Catholic and was first published in the year of his conversion. He describes his enemy, liberalism, in this book with great precision:

> That truth and falsehood in religion are but matter of opinion; that one doctrine is as good as another; that the Governor of the world does not intend that we should gain the truth; that we are not more acceptable to God by believing this than by believing that; that no one is answerable for his opinions; that they are a matter of necessity or accident; that it is enough if we sincerely hold what we profess; that our merit lies in seeking, not in possessing; that it is a duty to follow what seems to us true, without fear lest it should not be true; that it may be a gain to succeed, and can be no harm to fail; that we may take up and lay down opinions at pleasure, that belief belongs to the mere intellect, not to the heart also; that we may safely trust to ourselves in matters of Faith, and need no other guide, --this is the principle of philosophies and heresies, which is very weakness.

Newman fought all his life against the view that what you believe is not of crucial importance. In defending his conversion, Newman's problem was to discern the truth amid competing systems of doctrine. His own confidence in the Anglican Via Media had been undermined by the Anglican rejection of Tract 90. The Anglican communion could not lay claim to the mark of catholicity or universality. It was a regional church. But the question for Newman, after he had long railed against additions or corruptions of dogma introduced by the Roman church, was: did the Roman church possess the mark of apostolicity? Were its doctrines rooted in apostolic times, or was Catholic Christianity, like Protestant Christianity, ever in flux and accommodating itself to the times?

Newman's Essay is an attempt to establish seven notes or tests that would allow us to distinguish authentic developments from corruptions. Chillingworth, an Anglican theologian, contemporary with Newman, disparaged the history of Catholicism as being "Popes against Popes, councils against councils." The great question was whether or not the church had ever contradicted one of her dogmas. If she did, then the notion of sound development is shattered and the position of the church as an infallible oracle is destroyed. It was for this reason that Newman had to explain how new formulations of

doctrine could change and develop yet remain in accord with the ancient faith. It must remain, like Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. I do not have time to explain these notes in detail but I would like to give you a sense for them by casting them into the form of questions:

1) Preservation of Type / Does Catholicism of the 19th century conform so closely to the earliest form of Christianity that if St. Athanasius or St. Ambrose were to come to life again, they would choose the Catholic communion as their own?

2) Continuity of Principles / Has Catholicism maintained a continuity of its foundational principles which Newman defined as these nine dogmas: the sacramental principle, the priority of faith over reason, theology or the propriety of intellectual inquiry into the meaning of revelation, the mystical sense of scripture, grace, asceticism, the malignity of sin, and the potential for sanctification? It is here that Newman even adds a tenth note—the principle of true development that gives a character to the whole course of Christian thought.

3) Power of assimilation / Has the Church been able to assimilate truths from the cultures it meets, and yet transform these interactions with other civilizations, like Greece or Rome, into an appropriation that enlarges the range and refines the sense of her own teaching?

4) Logical Sequence / Does the development of Catholic doctrine exhibit a logical sequence so that one doctrine leads to and is completed by another, as the remission of sin in baptism leads to and is completed by a sacrament of forgiveness for post-baptismal sin?

5) Anticipation of Its Own Future / Were doctrines that did not receive formal recognition until relatively late foreshadowed by the beliefs and practices of early Christianity, as the early veneration of the relics of martyrs were a prelude to the later practice of the invocation of saints?

6) Conservative Action on its Past / Does the new statement of doctrine confirm adherence to the ancient faith or is it a corruption of the original idea that tends to deform and destroy it?

7) Chronic Vigor / Does the Church retain its youthful vigor despite its antiquity and does it by its very nature avoid the corruption that leads to stagnation and decay? [4]

As well as arguing the idea of doctrinal development, the Essay argues for the 'antecedent probability' of infallibility. Revelation itself, Newman argues, comes to us with a profession of infallibility. If God speaks, His word cannot be false. Revelation could not survive in its purity and fullness without an authority that was protected against error. "If Christianity is both social and dogmatic, and intended for all ages, it must

humanly speaking, have an infallible expounder." Consistent with his notions of the development of doctrine, Newman applies his doctrine of development to the papacy itself.

It s hard to comprehend today how startling these ideas appeared to many of Newman's contemporaries. Orestes Brownson, himself a recent American convert, attacked Newman's book in July, 1846 in very strong language. Brownson denied the very existence of historical variations in doctrine and censured Newman's work as "essentially anti-Catholic and Protestant." Some on the continent felt that Newman was on the slippery slope toward a heresy that Pope Pius X called modernism. The common belief at that time was that the deposit of faith was fixed and unchangeable from the death of the last Apostle. In contrast to such views held by some scholastic theologians, Newman tried to state his theory of development as an hypothesis—an alternative to the immutability of the scholastics on one side, and the corruptions and additions alleged by Anglicans and Protestants on the other. The notion of evolution, so popular in the 19th century, was regarded by many, particularly in Rome, as destructive of Christianity, and as a concession to rationalism. Newman was attacked by Roman ecclesiastics and defended by modernists like Alfred Loisy who compared Newman to Origen, who in the 3rd century worked out his own theory of development to establish the continuity of the Old and New Testaments in the face of attacks by Marcion and other heretics. Newman, Loisy argued, was the first theologian since Origen to work out a serious theology of doctrinal development, a theory that he felt was a necessity for the times.

Newman's Essay was a work of the highest importance. It was, one scholar argues, the first work by an Englishman since the days of William of Ockham to shake the theological schools of Europe. It was a vision of Catholicism as a system continuous with the past, yet with a fertility reaching forward into the future. This single work, more than any other in Christian history established the theory of doctrinal development as a principle of Catholic theology.

Newman's principle of the development of doctrine was restrained and defensive and apologetic. Yet we find Vatican II adopting Newman's notion in both the Declaration on Religious Freedom and in the Constitution on Revelation in order to justify new advances and apparent shifts in doctrine, such as its new teachings on religious freedom. In the Constitution on Divine Revelation, the Council argues in words made possible largely by Newman's Essay that

> "The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth. Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her."

This conciliar statement would not have been possible without the acceptance of that theory of doctrinal development which some found heretical a century earlier.

Newman, the archenemy of liberalism, was also the champion of liberty. Though he was insistent about the prerogatives of authority, yet he was ever on guard against its abuses. This balanced view shows especially in his views about papal infallibility both before and after its definition in Vatican Council I (1870). Newman was dismayed by the growing authoritarianism within the Church in the late 19th century. The so-called Ultramontanes, a group of conservative European Catholics, mostly French and German, wished to support Pope Pius IX, who was under attack for his Syllabus of Errors. Remember also that at this time about 1860 the papacy was, as it had been from ancient days a secular ruler of considerable territory, in essence, the king of Rome. These Ultramontanes wished to make the temporal power of the Pope a de fide doctrine and they wished to claim that no pope could ever make a mistake in anything he said or did. To support these views, they wished to have their notion of the pope's infallibility officially declared at the First Vatican Council (1870). Newman knew that their claims were disproved by the facts of papal history and he offered examples as proof:

> "Was St. Peter infallible on that occasion at Antioch when St. Paul withstood him? Was St. Victor infallible when he separated from his communion the Asiatic Churches? Or Liberius when in like manner he excommunicated Athanasius? And, to come to later times, was Gregory XIII, when he had a medal struck in honour of the Bartholomew massacre? Or Paul IV in his conduct towards Elizabeth? Or Sextus V. when he blessed the Armada? Or Urban VIII. when he persecuted Galileo? No Catholic ever pretends that these Popes were infallible in these acts."

Before the Council, Newman opposed the definition of infallibility, not because he did not believe in a restricted definition of papal infallibility, but because he was opposed to the timing, because he felt it was catering to the arrogance of the Ultramontanes and because he felt that dogmatic definitions were always emergency measures in the history of the Church. He expressed his conviction that such a definition was unnecessary and inopportune in a letter to his bishop. "When has definition of doctrine de fide been a luxury of devotion, and not a stern painful necessity? Why should an aggressive insolent faction be allowed "to make the heart of the just to mourn, whom the Lord hath not made sorrowful." The Council, however, proceeded with the definition, but in very restricted terms that Newman accepted and that disappointed the Ultramontanes. As usual, after a council, authority issues split the church in half.

In 1874, the Liberal Prime Minister of England, William Gladstone, wrote a pamphlet arguing that the Pope had exalted himself "above everything, superseding all authority, and dispensing with all obligation." This gave Newman the opportunity to clarify for all the meaning of the decree in his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk (1875). Newman explained that the Council taught only a very limited doctrine of infallibility, limiting it to statements of faith and morals that the Pope issued from the chair of Peter with the intention of binding every member of the Church to accept his judgment. The role of the Pope still needed to be seen in relation to other elements in the Church.

Newman pointed out that doctrine normally develops by a dialectical process, and one Council often balances another. Vatican II fulfilled this prophecy with its emphasis on the authority of bishops in the Decree of the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church. Newman's Letter did much to heal the polarization in the Church, to demolish Gladstone's argument that a Catholic's conscience was politically in subjugation to the Pope and to assert that it should be "the voice of the school of theologians" that would "assimilate and harmonize the definition into the wider context of Catholic belief."

Newman and The Authority of Conscience

Newman's Letter to the Duke of Norfolk is also celebrated as the major treatment in his works on the sovereignty of conscience. Newman sought a balance here between the two extremes of unbridled conscience and unrestricted authority. Newman had always given a role of primacy to conscience. The idea that people who follow their consciences are in a real sense following Christ was one which Newman promoted and which was adopted in the Second Vatican Council's acknowledgment of the truth in non-Christian religions.

As early as The Arians of the Fourth Century (1833) Newman had endorsed the notion that all genuine revelation comes from God. The idea which Newman proposed, following some of his predecessors in the Alexandrian Church, was the startling idea of revelation apart from Christianity. This came at a time when the ancient doctrine that there can be no salvation apart from Christ was interpreted in a narrow and exclusive way. The most fundamental part of revelation is available, Newman argued, to every one because it is to be found in each individual who listens to the voice of his or her conscience. For Newman, conscience is the voice of God, as apprehended by each individual. In his novel, Callista, the heroine recognizes in the dictate of her conscience "not a mere law of my nature, but the echo of a voice speaking to me…an echo implies a voice; a voice a speaker. That person I love and fear." In his later Grammar of Assent (1870) Newman develops an argument for the existence of God from "the intimations of conscience." By discovering God in our conscience, he maintains, we discover who God is: "the phenomena of conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive."

Newman used his concept of conscience to refute Gladstone's notion that any single papal directive was binding on Catholics—a notion that any Catholic textbook on moral theology would refute. But Newman wanted to deal with the extreme cases where conscience comes into collision with the word of the Pope in order to establish that conscience is to be followed in spite of that word. Newman wanted to clarify that conscience was our private, inner pope. He proclaimed this idea in the Letter in these eloquent words:

> Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas, and, even though the eternal priesthood throughout the Church could cease to be, in it the

sacerdotal principle would remain and would have a sway.

Newman intended his definition of conscience to stand out in contrast to that 'liberty of conscience' which was condemned by Pope Gregory XVI and Pius IX, and which supposed the right of any man to think and act for himself without reference to the God within. Newman not only emphasized the obligation of obeying the voice of conscience, he also recognized that many who advocated the rights of conscience were really arguing for the right to act without any thought of God, or attention to the inner voice. Many who proclaim Newman's views on conscience avoid the other side of his views, namely the duties of conscience, as reflected in these words of his:

> They do not even pretend to go by any moral rule, but they demand, what they think is an Englishman's prerogative, for each to be his own master in all things, and to profess what he pleases, asking no one's leave, and accounting priest or preacher, speaker or writer, unutterably impertinent, who dares to say a word against his going to perdition, if he like it, in his own way. Conscience has rights because it has duties; but in this age, with a large portion of the public, it is the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a Lawgiver and a Judge, to be independent of unseen obligations. It becomes a license to take up any or no religion, to take up this or that and let it go again, to go to church, to go to chapel, to boast of being above all religions and to be an impartial critic of each of them. Conscience is a stern monitor, but in this century it has been superseded by a counterfeit, which the eighteen centuries prior to it never heard of, and could not have mistaken for it, if they had. It is the right of self-will.

It is a mistake to think of Newman's views on conscience as purely his own. He is reiterating with great eloquence an ancient view of the Church, a view that he enshrined in his famous toast: "Certainly if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, (which indeed does not seem quite the thing), I shall drink to the Pope, if you please, still to conscience first and to the Pope afterwards." This toast shows why it is not easy to separate Newman's views on conscience from his views on infallibility. Seeking always to preserve the prerogatives of conscience, Newman also sought to minimize the scope of the infallibility decree. Newman argued that the Pope spoke infallibly only when he spoke ex cathedra, under four conditions: first as the Universal Teacher, secondly in the name and with the authority of the Apostles, third, on a point of faith or morals, and fourth, with the purpose of binding the whole Church. Newman liked to quote an 18th century Dominican Theologian Fr. Billuart, to support his views: "Neither in conversation nor in discussion, nor in interpreting Scripture or the Fathers, nor in consulting, nor in giving his reasons for the point which he defined, nor in answering letters, nor in private deliberations, supposing he is setting forth his own opinion, is the Pope infallible, and to this single reason, because, on these various occasions of speaking his mind, he is not in the chair of the universal doctor."

This minimalizing of infallible papal utterances was paradoxically designed as a safeguard, as a way of keeping open the interpretation of infallible decrees to be made by Newman's beloved 'school of theologians'. Newman's understanding of conscience and of the Vatican I decrees on infallibility have been tacitly accepted by the Church in the documents of Vatican II (see Declaration on Religious Liberty Chap.1, par. 3 on conscience, and Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Chap.1, par. 25 on infallibility). And it is now widely accepted, as a result of Newman's arguments that papal infallibility has been unambiguously exercised only twice in the modern period—the declaration of two Marian doctrines—first the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and, second, the Assumption in 1950.

Another of Newman's favorite mottos was: Cor ad cor loquitur. Heart speaks to heart. This saying reflects Newman's preference for personal rather than abstract arguments as a means of persuasion. Obedience to conscience is the way to penetrate the truth for it is God who speaks first in our consciences and then in His holy word. "The Gospel is but the completion and perfection of that religion which natural conscience teaches." Newman wishes us to avoid what he calls "that miserable counterfeit of conscience, the right of self-will." At the same time he wishes us to enjoy the freedom to grow into truth. I have often remarked in this talk that Newman strove for a balance between freedom and authority. Nowhere is this more evident than in his painful battle to sustain both freedom of conscience and infallible truth at the same time. Sheridan Gilley sums up Newman's passionate plea for both conscience and revelation in this apt comparison:

> The whole of Newman's thought lies between the poles of two God-given popes, the private peremptory if fallible pope of conscience, the witness to the God within, creating that hunger for God which is satisfied and fulfilled by the public pope of the external revelation of God in Scripture and Tradition, as upheld in the witness of the infallible Church. Newman never doubted the infallibility of the Church, which sustained him in the battle over papal infallibility. His own anxieties had that other consolation, the certitude that growth into truth is a personal growth through present suffering. When Gerard Manley Hopkins joined the Society of Jesus, Newman solaced him in his doubts. 'Don't call "the Jesuit discipline hard"', he wrote: 'it will bring you to heaven.' [5]

A Summary Note on Newman and Vatican II

Pope Paul VI said that Vatican II could be called in a special way "Newman's hour". But, as in his life, so in his after life, Newman has always suffered strong opposition. Nicholas Lash, a historian, contends that "Newman had little direct influence on what took place at Vatican II and he dismisses what he disparages as the "myth of Newman's Council." I have taken great pains to show you the areas in which Newman impacted the Council. If, however, we view the Council as having two principal goals, summed up first in the French word, ressourcement, or return to the sources of Scripture and the Fathers, and second, in the Italian word, aggiornamento, or updating the Church and bringing it into the modern world, Newman would have applauded the first and resisted the second. [6] The modern world, Newman felt, was rapidly headed into simple unbelief, and the Church needed to combat the spirit of modernity, and the wild, living, capricious and untrustworthy intellect of man.

Newman was prophetic and influential in anticipating Vatican II's positions on revelation, on biblical inerrancy, on the indispensability of tradition, on the active role of the laity, on freedom of conscience and on the place of Mary in salvation history. But Newman had little influence on the Council's views on liturgy, on sacramental ecclesiology, on episcopal collegiality. He would have wished the Council had said more on his favorite concepts of the relationship of faith and reason, the role of theologians in the Church and the development of doctrine. In sum, however, it would be hard to name another theologian of the last 400 years who had a greater impact on the Council than John Henry Newman.

Before I leave this subject of Newman's influence on the 20th century Catholic Church, I wish to point out one other remarkable anticipation by Newman of a grave need of the Church that was only addressed in the late 20th century and that is in the internationalization of the Curia. Newman fought with the Curia all his life so bitterly that he could barely disguise his distaste for the Italian monopoly of the Holy See. Newman always insisted on the universal character of the Church and we see it in these words:

> The multitude of nations which are within the fold of the Church will be found to have acted for its protection, against any narrowness, on the supposition of narrowness, in the various authorities at Rome, with whom lies the practical decision of controverted questions…Then, again, such national influences have a providential effect in moderating the bias which the local influences of Italy may exert on the See of St. Peter. It stands to reason that…Rome must have in it an element of Italy; and it is no prejudice to the zeal and devotion with which we submit ourselves to the Holy See to admit this

> plainly…Catholicity is not only one of the notes of the Church, but…one of its securities…I trust that all European races will ever have a place in the Church, and assuredly I think that the loss of the English, not to say the German element, in its composition has been a most serious misfortune. And certainly, if there is one consideration more than another which should make us English grateful to Pius IX, it is that, by giving us a Church of our own, he has prepared the way for our own habits of mind, our own manner of reasoning, our own tastes, and our own virtues, finding a place and thereby a sanctification, in the Catholic Church.

With the election of the first non-Italian Pope in 400 years, with his internationalization of the Curia, and with the enormous growth of the Church in Asia, Africa and Latin America and with the increasing emphasis on the local church, Newman's hopes for a more universal church are being realized today.

The Holiness and Spirituality of John Henry Newman

In Newman's devotions, he could never divorce theology from spirituality. Like the great Christian humanists, Augustine, Erasmus, More and even Anglicans like Hooker and Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, Newman made a fresh combination of Scripture and the great Fathers of the Church, especially the Greek Fathers. Just as Newman found a new way of doing theology, he also invented a new way of doing spirituality. It was a new way of practicing the ancient art of lectio divina, of praying the Scriptures. The aim of his meditative prayer was summed up by Bengel's famous maxim, still found on the first page of Greek New Testaments:

> Apply yourself totally to the text;
> Apply the text totally to yourself.

Newman was always trying to create in us the proper response to God's Word.

Newman had a special devotion to St. Philip Neri and he set up his Oratory in Birmingham to serve the poor of that manufacturing center. Newman was attracted to Philip's affinity with the primitive Church and yet his openness to the needs of his contemporaries. Near Newman's house was a surgeon's office, and the doctor proudly kept on his walls, framed and hung with care, letters from Father Newman asking after poor patients and enclosing money to pay their bills. This little vignette shows us that Newman practiced what he preached.

But it is in his sermons, and particularly in that neglected spiritual masterpiece, Parochial and Plain Sermons (1839-41) that Newman lays out his blueprint for holiness—a pattern he followed himself. In his sermon "Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness," he exhorts us: "Be you content with nothing short of perfection" and to help us attain this goal Newman outlines for us "A Short Road to Perfection":

> It is the saying of holy men that, if we wish to be perfect, we have nothing more to do than to perform the ordinary duties of the day well. A short road to perfection—short, not because easy, but because pertinent and intelligible. There are no short ways to perfection, but there are sure ones. He, then, is perfect who does the work of the day perfectly, and we need not go beyond this to seek for perfection. You need not go out of the *round* of the day. I insist on this because I think it will simplify our views, and fix our exertions on a definite aim. If you ask me what you are to do in order to be perfect, I say, first—Do not lie in bed beyond the due time of rising; give your first thoughts to God; make a good visit to the Blessed Sacrament; say the Angelus devoutly; eat and drink to God's glory; say the Rosary well; be recollected; keep out bad thoughts; make your evening meditation well; examine yourself daily; go to bed in good time, and you are already perfect.

Newman's call to holiness is a plea for the cultivation of discipline and of regular habits. I would like to give you an extended sampler of Newman's spirituality[7] with material culled from Parochial and Plain Sermons, eight volumes of sermons, preached to Oxford undergraduates when Newman was vicar at St. Mary the Virgin between 1839 and 1841, when he was still an Anglican. "Is not holiness the result of many patient, repeated efforts after obedience, gradually working on us and first modifying, then changing our hearts?" The trouble with most people, he tells us, is not that they do not "act up to their standard, but it is their standard that is low." He exhorts us then not to strive for holiness but for the desire for holiness." The problem, as Newman sees it, is that too many of us do not want to be holy because it is too difficult.

Ordinariness and unpretentiousness are the marks of Newman's spirituality—constant acts of self-denial because "a great deal hangs on small acts of apparently little consequence…I have ever made consistency the mark of a Saint." Newman's route to sanctity is forged out of habit and regular discipline.

Conversion for Newman is a long and steady process of inward growth; it is not a single emotional moment. Even Paul's "sudden conversion" was a redirection of his energies to Christ, perfected over years in the deserts of Arabia.

Even repentance does not remove the "present consequences" of past offenses, since sin leaves a burden upon the soul that must be gotten rid of. Repentance requires that we persevere in prayer for pardon throughout our lives.

Newman keeps a balance between the cross and the resurrection, between sorrow and joy. "The Gospel must be a burden before it comforts and brings us peace. To speak only of God's love and never of His wrath is spiritually debilitating. Faith is always sorrowing with Christ in His death, while it rejoices in His resurrection. The duty of fearing does but perfect our joy."

With regard to self-denial, Newman exhorts us, "Try yourself daily in little deeds, to prove that your faith is more than a deceit. We must become what we are not; we must learn to love what we do not love and practice ourselves in what is difficult. Such

creatures are we that there is the most close and remarkable connection between small observances and the permanence of our chief habits and practices.

It is a rule of God's providence that those who act up to their light, shall be rewarded with clearer light. Faith and obedience develop together. Let not your words run on: force every one of them into action…If we allow our feelings to be excited without acting upon them, we do mischief to the moral system within us."

Spiritual progress depends upon self-knowledge and self-knowledge depends upon self-examination, the use of the examen. Thus, we understand the deceitfulness of the human heart. Thus, we come face-to-face with our own faults and sins that have been hidden from us.

Is it surprising that "we have no love when we neglect altogether that great ordinance whereby love is nurtured, abstinence and fasting?

We succeed not in spite of but through our failures: "We advance to the truth by experience of error, we succeed through failures. We know not how to do right except by having done wrong…Such is the process by which we succeed. We walk to heaven backwards.

Not to pray is not to claim one's citizenship in heaven."

Newman's sermons, as you can tell from this brief sampler, shine a gentle light on the inner depths of our hearts and he tells us things about ourselves we had not known till then.

Once when Newman read the dispatches of the Duke of Wellington, he said of them, "They make one burn to be a soldier." Similarly, when we read Newman's Parochial and Plain Sermons, they make us burn to be a saint.

We have come full circle in dealing with Newman, the intellectual saint. One more question we might ask—Does Newman believe, as Socrates did, that knowledge makes us virtuous? Hardly, he was scornful of any such notion. In 1841, Sir Robert Peel opened the Tamworth Reading Room so that people who came there could get knowledge and be virtuous, but only virtuous women were to be admitted. Of this Newman remarked, "One would have expected the unvirtuous women to be the most glorious triumph of this theory of morality through knowledge." Newman knew that human nature was too rebellious to be chained by knowledge. He challenged this notion in these words: "Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and pride of man." Newman knew that the mind cannot be separated from the soul. And the soul needs God to be free. Education alone is not enough.

Conclusion

Newman died on Aug. 11, 1890 in his ninetieth year. After his death, his enemies were not gracious enough to observe the old Latin maxim: Nil nisi bonum de mortuis—say nothing but good about the dead. Instead, his opponents wished to get in their last licks. Archbishop Manning, Newman's old nemesis, now the Catholic primate of England, said: "Newman's conversion is the greatest calamity which has befallen the Catholic Church in our day…He was the most attractive and most colossal egotist who ever lived." Another prominent friend and colleague of Newman's at least until the infallibility decree of Vatican I, Lord Acton, said on Newman's death: "He was a rhetorician, a sophist, the manipulator and not the servant of truth," a charge that has stuck to Newman for some ever since.

Yet there is no figure in the Catholic Church of the last 1500 years who has left us the rich intellectual and spiritual legacy that Newman has. He was the stout defender of an active and respected role for the laity. He was the most eloquent defender of the rights of conscience the Church has ever known. He pioneered the belief in a separation of church and state, and the belief in a limited concept of papal infallibility as defined by Vatican I. He developed a theory of the development of doctrine that has shaped modern theology. He was an early teacher of tradition and scripture as twin sources of revelation. He anticipated the late 20th century view of scripture as theological proclamation rather than as history or science. He taught a practical spirituality that has set many on the road to perfection. His defeats in the 19th century have become victories in the 20th, justifying his right to the title, Father of Vatican II. We shall not see his like again.

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Endnotes

1) Bernard McGinn, The Doctors of the Church: Thirty-three Men and Women Who Shaped Christianity (NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999), 182

2) Lawrence Cunningham, The Meaning of Saints (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 170

3) Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, Rev. Ed., (Collegeville, Indiana: Liturgical Press, 1992), 363
All subsequent quotations of Vatican II documents are from this edition.

4) This material is condensed from Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., Newman, (N.Y.: Continuum, 2002), 74-75

5) Sheridan Gilley, Newman and His Age, (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1990), 362

6) See Dulles, Newman, 151

7) Much of the material for this sampler was culled from Ian Ker, Newman on Being a Christian, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 119-144