John Henry Newman on the Idea of Church

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By

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With a Foreword by Jan Walgrave

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Dedicated to

KATHLEEN

BRIAN

KEVIN

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ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

Apol.	Apologia pro Vita Sua
Ari.	The Arians of the Fourth Century
Ath.	Select Treatises of St. Athanasius, 2 vols.
AW	Autobiographical Writings
Bibl.	The Theological Papers of JHN on Biblical Inspiration and Infallibility edited by J. Derek Holmes
Call.	Callista A Tale of the Third Century
CF	On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine
DA	Discussions and Arguments
Dev.	An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine
Diff.	Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching Vol. 1, Twelve Lectures Addressed to the Anglican Party of 1833 Vol. 2, Letter to Pusey and Letter to the Duke of Norfolk
Ess.	Essays Critical and Historical, 2 vols.
Faith	The Theological Papers of JHN on Faith and Certainty edited by Hugo de Acheval and J. Derek Holmes
GA	An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent
HS	Historical Sketches, 3 vols.
Idea	The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated
JHN	John Henry Newman
Letters	The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, 32 vols. edited by Charles Stephen Dessain *et al*.
OS	Sermons Preached on Various Occasions
PL	Patriologia Latina, edited by Jacques-Paul Migne
Prepos.	Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England
PS	Parochial and Plain Sermons, 8 vols.
US	Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford
VM	The Via Media of the Anglican Church Vol. 1, Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church Vol. 2, Occasional Letters and Tracts

FOREWORD

To a Victorian like John Henry Cardinal Newman, writing letters was an important part of daily life and of literary self-expression. Newman did it very carefully, as if with a consciousness that the letters might someday be published. His own saying that a person can best be known from his correspondence probably had one of its roots in his own practice and actually finds in his case an eminent exemplification.

Moreover, Newman's psychological attitude toward friends and close acquaintances was significantly different from his attitude toward the human world at large and the anonymous circle of possible hearers and readers to whom he addressed himself in his discourses and his many controversial and other writings. Whereas toward the latter he skillfully observed the claims of adaption, reserve, "economical" limitation, and rhetorical fitness, he felt with the former a greater freedom and ease to speak his mind and to express his convictions and opinions without restraint. To be sure, being perhaps the most consulted Catholic personality of his time and knowing the weight of his utterances with those who consulted him, he never failed strictly to adapt and limit his counsels and arguments to the needs and capacities of his correspondents. He could be very aloof and buttoned up with unknown or unfriendly persons who put to him indelicate or insidious questions or pressed upon him unsympathizing criticisms or irrelevant objections. Some of his letters are masterpieces of cunning circumspections and subtle irony. But with his friends, his next of kin, and familiars, his behavior and conversation were—according to this testimony—easy, tender, pleasant, and openhearted. Thus does he reveal *himself* in his private correspondence.

There were many subjects of the day that Newman could not deal with in public as outspokenly as it was his natural tendency to do. On ecclesiastical matters especially, he had to be very prudent under the watching eye of Propaganda and the English ultramontanists. His sense of obedience to church authority and of respect for his superiors often prevented him from exercising in public that freedom of thought and speech which in his view was as basic a principle in the church as that of authority itself. He boldly asserted his principles on certain occasions, such as the writing of the *Apologia* and the public letters to Edward Pusey and to the Duke of Norfolk; yet even for such general statements he had to suffer

contradiction and suspicion on the part of ultraconservative theologians and churchmen. Were it not for the general applause of the Catholic laity, for the efficiency of his explanations and argument with the British intelligentsia, and for the rapid increase of understanding and sympathy he won in England for the Roman Catholic religion, he would probably have met with more serious difficulties. In the time of Pio Nono, however, and the atmosphere created by the predominance of an intolerant ultramontane party, Newman could not take the risk openly to criticize concrete actions, decisions, counsels, and rules emanating from leading ecclesiastical powers or inspired and encouraged by them. How often he did not agree, yet kept silent and advised patience! There was in Newman a combination of historical insight and prophetical lucidity, a deep conviction that important, comprehensive changes were simply a matter of time, prudent preparations, and confident forbearance. These qualities perfectly fitted within his encompassing providential system.

To friends, however, and people he knew he could trust, Newman often confided candidly his judgment on current affairs and did not mince his words, and this particularly on ecclesiastical topics of the day. Those judgment and confidences are indispensable materials for a full and correct knowledge and appreciation of Newman's theological views on the church. To be sure, by reason of the comprehensiveness and consistency of his Christian view of things, his personal utterings were not inspired by passing moods but by his general principles and in keeping with the idea of the church. The church was perhaps the main idea that in his dealings with the problems of the Anglican Church and later of the Catholic Church—the main concern of his life and thought—had taken possession of his mind, in a process of slow and gradual development led on by ever-fresh experiences and constant reflection. Therefore we may expect that the idea of the church reflected in his writings and the idea of the church exhibited in his letters are substantially the same and that they mutually complete one the other, the former explaining Newman's general principles and views, while the latter showing his application of them in practical issues.

The idea of a reality, somewhere defined by Newman as the "sum total of its possible aspects" gradually clarified through the ages by historically conditioned reflection, may be more or less complex. In the case of the church as a visible, historical world-institution, the idea is particularly rich, multifarious, and complex. So many functions and offices, each with its own special concerns and interests, enter into its essential constitution; from their very nature they give rise in their functional togetherness to all kinds of tensions and conflicts. In his last major contribution to ecclesiology, the preface to the third edition of the *Prophetical Office*, Newman not only

attempted to describe and analyze this inner and essentially conflictual structure but also tried to make it acceptable and illuminating as necessary and fruitful for the life of such an institution as the church in such an ecological medium as the historical human world. This synthesis is his final conclusion from his experiences in the church and is meant to be a hypothesis that most adequately accounts for the facts and justifies the otherwise disquieting phenomena that could be brought up against the church.

Edward Jeremy Miller's treatment of Newman's idea of the church, although particularly based on a careful and exhaustive study of all the relevant remarks, judgments, and arguments, spread through the twenty-one volumes of Newman's recently published Roman Catholic correspondence—his knowledge on this point is really complete—gives no less attention to Newman's occasional and systematic writings. Miller particularly gives full attention to the final synthesis of the preface to the *Prophetical Office*, keeping constantly in view the ideas developed in it in order retrospectively to understand the hundreds of scattered remarks and partial treatments on this topic in the letters and earlier essays. Hence it may be said that Miller's work is, to date, the only complete study of Newman's idea of the church. This judgment holds good also for Miller's integration in the idea of the church of its more secret spiritual dimensions that are the proper object of a theology of the church: the invisible world that is the kingdom of God in which the risen Lord has been enthroned as the governing head, bestowing grace and eternal life on those who have faith in him as the God of love who became human and suffered the death on the cross "for us and our salvation." This invisible Christ is the church in which the dispensation of forgiveness and eternal life is worked by the sacramental mediation of grace through the visible actions of preaching and theology, sacramental ministry and pastoral care, government and authority, accepted in a spirit of faith and obedience.

The articulated richness of illustrations and applications, picturing in actual detail this essential image of the church, is the unique merit of Miller's book. It fills a gap in the already immense output of Newman literature.

J. H. Walgrave

PROLOGUE

Six decades have passed since the Second Vatican Council unleashed a renewal movement in the Roman Catholic Church. The early days were euphoric for many church-minded Catholics, and one heard enthusiastic predictions for an invigorated Catholic Christianity. Protestant church leaders were also excited by the surge of ideas and hopes coming from the Council halls, especially those setting the Catholic Church on a new and encouraging ecumenical path. There were at the same time, however, wary onlookers. Some Protestants were suspicious of the ecumenical overtures, thinking that Rome could not be other than its long history of triumphalism. Some Roman Catholics became so-called prophets of doom, predicting that certain interpretations of the Council would lead to the destruction of that unity and stability that they reckoned as hallmarks of the true church and claiming that Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI sided with them.

Neither the euphoric visions nor the dire predictions came to pass. The post-Vatican II Church has presented a mixed picture. It has undertaken renewal but not with the speed and thoroughness its "progressives" had envisioned; it experienced destabilization but not to the extent the "traditionalist" predicted. On one matter all parties agree: Catholicism became an "opened church." The phrase is suggested by Henri Bergson's distinction between an open and closed society. Closed societies are agents of strong group cohesion and uniformity; outsiders are held suspect or scorned. Open societies are filled with currents and movements somewhat in tension; furthermore, the group's activities reach out to persons and ideas beyond its pale.[1] Roman Catholicism was "opened up," in this latter sense, by the Second Vatican Council.

Some features of this postconciliar church suggest why a book on John Henry Newman's ecclesiology is pertinent and merits reprinting. Lest using the phrase *postconciliar church* seems awkward sixty years after Vatican II, reflect on two contemporary events. In 2021, Pope Francis began a "synod on synodality" process in worldwide Catholicism meant to implement what Vatican II wanted for the nature of the church. "The Second Vatican Council was, in fact, like a seed sown in the field of the world and the Church….The

[1] Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1935).

Synod 2021-2024 [process] continues to draw on the energy of that seed and to develop its potential. The synodal path is, in fact, implementing what the Council taught about the Church as Mystery and People of God."[2] The second event refers to the discomfort some Catholics have had with the "new Mass," that is, the replacement of the Latin Mass used prior to the Council with the revised rite promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1969. To this day, agitation for use of the so-called Latin Tridentine Mass continues and has become a source of polarization. For better or worse, postconciliar developments have not ended.

Vatican II's renewal surfaced many tensions and reminded people how large and diversified the church actually is. The laity, for example, have assumed greater prominence, especially in terms of involvement. Laity were indeed active before the Council, but their contributions usually were under strict clerical control. In new movements, however, and even in many parishes, laity have begun to exercise greater presence, or at least to demand it. This activity has caused tensions between laypersons and clerical authorities. Some laity feel that their gains have been too modest or too controlled. Some pastors and bishops, on the other hand, think that the laity are becoming too critical and aggressive, and these ecclesiastics long for the more docile attitude of yesteryear. Newman's views on a laity involved in church affairs, even though expressed so many years ago, resonate and provide support for contemporary voices, including that of Pope Francis, for the participation and voting power of laity in the 2023-24 Synod of Bishops. Francis and his supporters have met criticism for advocating it, not unlike the criticism Newman's support of the laity faced. Newman's views merit reading.

Another tension from Vatican II is felt in the relationship between the teaching role of theologians and that of the hierarchy. Immediately after the Council, theologians enjoyed "smooth sailing." They travelled the lecture circuit and explained to eager audiences, including bishops and parish pastors, the new theological orientations of the Council. Publishing houses turned out all sorts of books whose authors became well known and respected. But the flow of ideas was moving too quickly and unchecked. The Vatican, especially under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, began to exercise censoring muscle; charges of unsound doctrine, theological excesses, and disloyalty to the Catholic tradition were made. The Vatican removed from some theologians the title of teacher of Catholic doctrine and prohibited others from publishing. Tensions led to questions: What are the responsibilities of one group to the other? How are they to complement each

[2] *Synod Synthesis Report*, "A Synodal Church in Mission," given at the Vatican, 28 October 2023.

other? What are the range and limits of academic freedom for professor-theologians? Such questions had simpler answers in preconciliar days.

In the Council's aftermath, one cannot avoid mentioning the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical. This papal teaching condemning certain methods of birth control has had a very mixed response from Catholics, both priests and laity. Surveys conducted in the United States indicate that the majority of married Catholics do not agree with the teaching and do not follow it. These are not people with so-called bad will; for the most part, they are committed and earnest Catholic Christians. They simply do not "buy the teaching." A deeper issue is involved that goes by the technical theological phrase, the "reception of an authentic teaching." What is to be concluded when a teaching from the desk of the pope is, apparently, not *received* by large numbers of the faithful? Are they disobedient and in the wrong? Or are their conscientious instincts truer? In whatever event, laity and episcopacy have not been together on this issue, and the disjunction is symptomatic of a questioning mentality toward the teaching office that began with the 1968 encyclical. So strong was the reaction to it that Pope Paul VI never published another encyclical. The same conflict resulted from the Vatican declaration against the possibility of ordaining women. It, too, has met with public dissent although not as widespread as that directed against *Humanae Vitae*.[3] Papal noninfallible teachings are being examined with critical eyes, and adherence is no longer assured by the weight of authority alone.

The final tension to be noted is more fundamental than the others, yet it is somewhat confined to the professional ranks of theologians. I refer to the pluralism characterizing contemporary theology. For a very long period prior to the Second Vatican Council, Catholic theology was based on certain shared convictions found in scholastic philosophy. While there were always isolated exceptions to this "theology of the schools," such as the Tübingen theologians in the nineteenth century and J. H. Newman himself, and while there were subtleties of scholasticism under heated debate, a common *world view* was shared that at least allowed the scholastic theologians to understand what each was claiming. This situation has changed. Today's Catholic theologians base their research on different and often conflicting philosophical foundations. There is no single world view allowing shared basic assumptions on which all agree. Respected theologians, such as Karl

[3] Negative press to *Humanae Vitae* and to the priestly ordination of women proliferated. An early collection of dissent can be found in Leonard and Arlene Swidler, eds., *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist, l977). For the Vatican Declaration's use of Thomas Aquinas in support, see Edward Jeremy Miller, "Aquinas and the Ordination of Women," *New Blackfriars* 61 (l980), l85-90.

Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx before their deaths in 1984 and 2009 respectively, maintained that a single world view, integrating the claims of philosophy, the findings of natural and human sciences, and the experiences of individuals, is no longer possible. The resulting pluralism is intensified further when one takes account of current biblical exegesis. Theology uses exegesis as one of its sources for reflection, yet there are strong differences of opinion among biblical scholars on the meaning of scriptural texts. What exegetical positions is one to adopt, and on what criteria?

This fundamental pluralism, which amounts to different ways of sizing up the world and interpreting our experiences of it, was also at play in the tensions of the birth control teaching. Many married Catholics disagreed with papal teaching because of a different world view, especially how to view sexual intimacy and how to approach parenting. They responded from their experience as married persons and parents, and they concluded that the Vatican viewed certain aspects of sexual love differently from the way they did or could maintain. While the laity make no attempt to discriminate world views as theologians must do, laity are in a situation of pluralism *vis-à-vis* most hierarchy; they are following their consciences and in effect they are contributing to the social tension. Of course, some laity break the tension for themselves by simply quitting the church. In this study of Newman, we shall be meeting the themes of experience-as-teacher, the following of conscience's voice, and the place of tension within the social fabric of the church.

These few samplings from the past sixty years coalesce around a common motif: authority in the Roman Catholic Church. Some have termed the current situation a crisis of authority. Such tensions about authority are an oversimplification of the complexities, but they are surely ingredient to any transition from a more tightly controlled preconciliar church to an "opened church," and it is in this direction that Vatican II pushed the Catholic Church. So why consider Newman's ecclesiology since he is remembered as the great apologist of the authority-heavy Catholicism in the nineteenth century? Does not that earlier Catholicism represent the "closed society" which Vatican II opened? Would not his ecclesiology be written off as a Victorian period piece?

Newman worked out his views on the church during a highly authoritarian period of Roman Catholicism, and it is true that Newman defended Rome's claims for possessing authority over doctrines. But in many ways his full view was very much out of step with the prevailing mentality of his times. I have used the Bergsonian distinction between an opened and closed society. Newman struggled for an opened church. He was constantly under fire from "closed society" folk, those whose mentality

historians term *ultramontane*. Many people today are unaware of Newman's struggle with church authorities and with ultramontanism. Ironically, the title of cardinal has tamed him in twentieth and twentieth first-century eyes. John Henry Cardinal Newman was the great upholder of things Catholic, the great polemicist against the church's detractors and against a secularism eroding faith itself. These things he surely was, but there is another side to him too little known and appreciated. He was the great defender of the rights of the laity. He was a staunch advocate of freedom of thought. He was a critic of authoritarianism in the church. In these regards I like to think of him as Fr. John Newman of the Birmingham Oratory, not as Cardinal Newman. And Fr. John Newman was his title through three decades of battles he waged for a more open church. He was seventy-eight years old, with the struggles behind him, when a new pope came along and named him a cardinal in 1879. Sometimes I wonder how even this happened, because Fr. Newman of Birmingham was such a maverick to the ultramontanists in England and in the Vatican. But Leo XIII, who honored Newman, was a different cut from Pius IX and the theologians that Pio Nono gathered around himself.

Part of Newman's genius lies in what the cardinalate represented. I do not refer to the power of the position but to the post factum legitimacy it gave to the kind of ministry and influence he exercised in the years before receiving the Red Hat. Newman integrated an ability to love the church and to criticize its defects at the same time. He was both loyal and questioning. He respected authority and challenged its misuse. We are tempted to think that future cardinals are those who have avoided controversy and have never "rocked the boat." Newman was always in a controversy, and more than once he upset people in high ecclesiastical circles with his writings. In 1859, for example, one of his articles on the rights of the laity was sent to Rome for censure. Yet it was this same Fr. Newman who twenty years later received the title by which we know him today, the cardinal.

At the very least Newman's battle scars give him some claim to speak to our situation. Both his personal life and his theology—and these can never be fully separated—illustrate the tensions and polarities of these postconciliar years. Almost every day he was constantly dealing with misunderstanding and suspicion. Although he converted to Roman Catholicism because he saw it as the true church, he never believed it was a perfect church. He pushed to reform many areas, most of them relating to the misuse of authority: preemptory decisions, overcentralization, controls on theological reflection by a single and quasi-official school of thought, a clericalism that paid little heed to the experiences of the laity. When he pushed in these areas, he met suspicions and secret countermeasures from highly placed

Catholic sources. From another direction he heard allegations from Anglicans and evangelical Protestants that his conversion was insincere, that he was on the verge of returning to the Church of England after having made a bad choice. He seemed caught in the middle.

Newman's conversion was sincere, firm, and unshakable; he did not want to undermine the witness it gave to wavering Anglicans drawn toward Catholicism or to fellow Roman Catholics "on the fence" of quitting. Yet in conscience he could not remain silent about certain needed reforms in Catholicism. How was he to balance the witness of loyalty and love with the witness of reforming critic? We must remember that Newman was a very public figure; whatever position he espoused would be widely reported. The tension of being both a committed Roman Catholic and a reforming voice was intensified by his public stature in England and abroad. It is especially in his private correspondence that one senses his strategy in dealing with the tension.

Newman's theology illustrates polarities and tensions not unlike our own today. He is a strenuous champion of freedom of thought for doing theological work. But he recognizes and supports the legitimate claims of hierarchical authority over the theological task. We must see what he means by *legitimate*, however. Regarding the laity, he supports and works for a vision of lay ministry that many have seen the Vatican II documents to mandate; yet laity have limits to which they are accountable, just as theologians have limits. Furthermore, he was concerned with the *process* of church teaching—how it comes about and how it is assimilated. For the former he describes the *sensus fidelium* (the consultative process) and for the latter the *consensus fidelium* (the reception process). The latter is a decisive contribution Newman is making, namely, a church teaching comes to be properly understood in the process of being assimilated by the entire church.

I note one final polarity because polarities are a leitmotif in his writings: The church is holy; the church is sinful. Newman is convinced beyond a doubt that the church shares in the holiness of Christ, and the church is for him the community in which one meets saving grace. Yet as a keen student of history he knows more about ecclesiastical faults than most Protestants writing polemics against Catholicism. How is one to affirm Catholicism's holiness and recognize its faults? I label these dual aims Newman's "theology of abuses" since both aims ought to be part of a more embracing vision of the *idea* of the church. (See the Epilogue for Newman's notion of *idea*.) Because practicing Christians meet the church's wheat and chaff and must deal with this duality, Newman's vision should be instructive for those wishing the stability to remain committed Catholics.

I am convinced that Newman speaks poignantly to the issues that exist as polarizations in today's church. The questions will not go away because they are fundamental. Laity/clergy, freedom/authority, the teachers/the taught, grace/sin, etc., involve such subtle relationships and polarities that they can never have a settled and final answer. As in life itself, the poles ebb and flow. They move first in one direction, then another; one pole balances the other. Newman was well aware of this curious dynamism in his fundamental view of the church, that is, in his ecclesiology. One never feels that Newman offers finished answers but rather a strategy of dealing with the tensions. "Life is for action" is a favorite expression. Living, for Newman, concerns right actions more than getting the answers right.

In the ecclesiology that follows I have termed Newman's strategy as *dialectics*. The term comes from a philosophy with which Newman was unfamiliar, and although the word was not his own, the notion was. The church is a living organism. It is composed of voices: the clergy/the laity, the freedom of the inquiring mind/the words of authority, etc. These features seek aims proper to themselves, yet for the well-being of the whole organism they must interact, must at times clash, and eventually they balance the excesses of the voices. This process is a simplified description of the dialectical strategy I perceive to be a motif in Newman's vision of the church and how the church goes about being the church. The process of dialectics is the second decisive contribution that I perceive Newman is making to the *idea* of church, besides *consensus fidelium* mentioned above.

Some observations need to be directed to the structure and then to the sources of the study that follows. Newman never writes a systematically organized text on the church. He never, in fact, writes any systematic texts; they are not his style of "doing theology." He prefers essays for reasons to which I return later when discussing the role of media. As a result, his thoughts on the church are scattered throughout the nearly forty volumes of the *Uniform Edition* (the collected publications through which most readers know Newman) and the thirty-two volumes of private correspondence (materials through which he is less well known, certainly in the awareness of Catholic laity).[4]

[4] Volumes 11-31 of *The Letter/s and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (London and Oxford: Thomas Nelson & Sons, thereafter Clarendon/Oxford University Press, 1961-1977), covering his Roman Catholic period, were completed under the editorship of Charles Stephen Dessain. Volume 32 (OUP, 2008) of newly found letters was edited by Francis J. McGrath, F.M.S. The first ten volumes, covering the Anglican period, were completed after Dessain's death, edited by Ian Ker and Thomas Gornall, then by Gerard Tracey and Francis McGrath (Clarendon/OUP). My reviews of volumes 7, 8, and 9, the Tracey editions, and volumes 10 and 32, the

From this mass of material an arrangement emerges that reflects what I believe to be Newman's instincts about the church, his three basic orientations to it. He is continually concerned to relate people's more detailed thoughts to certain fundamental and deeply rooted convictions that practically define the *types* of persons they are. He calls these convictions the "first principles" of the person's way of thinking. Second, he is interested in *processes*. "Life is for action," as mentioned above.[5] Activity reveals theory, and theory should lead back to actions. Consequently, Newman's theology arises from what had in fact happened in the church, and his ideas are directed to what ought to happen. The church *in process* absorbs him. Finally, certain dimensions of the church are credible only if grace is present. If God's grace is not believed to be the primary cause and ultimate explanation of certain features, such features would be nonsense and impossible to accept.

These orientations of Newman's thinking suggest three visions of the church. I term them a foundational, a pastoral, and a theological viewpoint. As such they are similar though not identical to the threefold distinction: fundamental theology, praxis theology, and dogmatic theology. Newman's threefold orientation responds to three different kinds of basic questions: (1) Why does someone practice religion in a church? (2) How ought that church to behave? (3) Is that church expressing more than the native abilities (and faults) of its members? The questions remain current and vexing.

In this study, the three fundamental visions of the church are preceded by an initial chapter on Newman's personal style. A simple explanation governs this choice. One cannot separate what Newman thinks from the kind of person he is. He admirably fulfills his own dictum that the whole person thinks. Intellect alone does not explain thinking; memory, feelings, moral conscience, personal biography, etc., are necessary components. There is need, consequently, to examine Newman himself, to assess his style, and to tell some of his story because his theology, between the lines, is autobiographical. Newman's theology arises from the pastoral situations in which he finds himself. He never writes disembodied theology, as if he could retire to the quiet of his room and theorize over some distant matter. He reflects on his personal experiences and those of friends, on the experiences of the church at that moment, and on its past experiences as recorded in history.

I now turn to the textual sources. The *Uniform Edition* of Newman's books and essays had been in print for more than a century. (The London

McGrath editions, are in *The Thomist*, (April 1997), 325-28; (October 2003), 655-62; (January 2007), 147-53; (July 2008), 517-23; (April 2010), 311-17 respectively.

[5] *DA*, 295.

printing plates were destroyed by Germany during the Blitz.) These books have been the main source for scholarship on Newman, and there has been a great deal of it.[6] One can readily get the impression that "Newman" is an overworked subject. Curiously, however, even though the church figured so pivotally in Newman's life and thought, there were very few studies of his ecclesiology when I first wrote this book.[7] Since then, although other ecclesiology studies have appeared, none have superseded my use of Newman's vast private correspondence for his view of the church. (See the comments of Professor Walgrave in his Foreword.) Unfortunately, the original publisher, Patmos Press, has ceased to exist and so has access to my earlier text as a result. This explains the reason to republish the book, with clarifying alterations and additions made to its first appearance, both to the narrative itself and to the footnotes. The "full Newman," letters and books, deserves to be savored by a new generation of readers, laity especially.

Newman's letters and diaries contain materials likely as abundant as the *Uniform Edition* of his books and essays yet they rarely informed Newman scholarship until recently. Save for a few published sources,[8] the great bulk of Newman's letters remained relatively inaccessible to the public and to most scholars until publication commenced in 1961 by Fr. Charles Stephen Dessain of the Birmingham Oratory, beginning with the letters of Newman's Roman Catholic life in 1845. Dessain collected and pre-arranged for subsequent publications an orderly array of the vast trove. Thirty-two volumes of both the Anglican and Catholic periods of Newman's life have

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[6] See David DeLaura, ed., *Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, l973). The continuing series, *Newman Studien* (Nurnberg: Glock and Lutz), compiled by Werner Becker and Heinrich Fries et al., provides listings of recent scholarship. It is now discontinued. The *Uniform Edition* reflects Newman's final revisions from his editorial hand. The *UE* also offers a uniformly accepted pagination for locating Newman's words. The original *Uniform Edition* is now available online at www.newmanreader.org.

[7] See W. H. van de Pol, *De Kerk in het Leven en Denken van Newman* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, l936); Norbert Schiffers, *Die Einheit der Kirche nach Newman* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, l956). Stanislas Jaki, *Les Tendances Nouvelle de l'Ecclésiologie* (Rome: Herder, l957), devotes a section to Newman, as does Louis Bouyer, *L'Église de Dieu* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, l970). Jan Walgrave has a short essay, "Le sens ecclesial du Newman," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascetique et Mystique* IV/1:433-36. See also Edward Jeremy Miller, "Newman's Dialogical Vision of the Church," *Louvain Studies* 8 (1981), 318-31.

[8] See *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman during His Life in the English Church*, ed. Anne Mozley, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903); *Correspondence of John Henry Newman with John Keble and Others*, ed. at the Birmingham Oratory (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., l9l7); *Letters of John Henry Newman*, ed. Derek Stanford and Muriel Spark (London: Peter Owen, l957).

appeared, containing more than twenty thousand pieces. The sheer amount of Newman's letter writing boggles the mind! The letters reveal aspects of Newman's thought hitherto unsuspected, or if suspected from the traditional sources in his books, at least difficult to corroborate.

The correspondence is particularly instructive for Newman's ecclesiology. In his books he rarely criticizes the faults of Roman Catholicism since he is the great defender of its claims against Protestants. His letters do not gainsay this defense as if he had fabricated it all along, but the letters do show the other side of the issues, the darker side, as Newman assesses them. One finds unaccustomed candor in the letters. In writing to friends Newman could afford to express himself bluntly and unguardedly. He criticizes the misuse of authority; he deplores the treatment of individuals. His appeals for reform and renewal express themselves with a clarity and bluntness not to be found in his published books and essays. For Catholics of the post-Vatican II Church, interested in the ongoing renewal and especially in the laity's role in the renewal, the Newman of the letters and diaries will seem a supportive colleague and timely commentator.

When Newman does write lengthy studies, he opts for the essay genre in preference to systematic tomes. A pastoral objective lay behind this choice. He writes in order to help people to *decide*, to come to a concrete choice of action, especially to decide upon the identity of Christ's church and to act accordingly as he in midlife had done. Newman wants his readers to be led to "real apprehension" of an issue rather than to what he termed "notional [i.e., abstract] apprehension." (See chapter one.) One meets images, concrete examples, affective phraseology, all of which are calculated to stir the imagination to such a vivid apprehension of an issue that choice (the power of will) is invited. Newman's essays, even those of book length such as his *Grammar of Assent*, move in the direction of real apprehension in contrast to systematic textbooks that feed notional apprehension and serve technical purposes. These he left to others.

In his essays, consequently, and more clearly in his private letters, Newman operates pastorally. He wishes people to think clearly, but more than that, he wants them to come to conscientious decisions on those major questions of religious living: Is there a God? Has there been a revelation that provides an intimate knowledge of God? Is there a religious community (a church) continuing God's purposes? Where is it to be found? How ought it to behave? Because these are questions of great urgency, Newman threw himself into them with an energy reflecting the difficult choices he himself had to make, and with the tender sympathy a pastor should bring to others who struggle with choices. He has helped me face such questions, and I

hope that other readers will find in him a pastoral companion who speaks to some of the real questions they carry.

At this point, I offer a few words concerning spelling, punctuation and such matters that you will encounter in reading. Apropos spelling, the word *church* will be met over eight hundred times in the text and footnotes. Following current rules of spelling, when the word is used as a common noun, it is spelled church in lower case. When used as a proper noun, as in the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Church of England, the Established Church, etc., it is capitalized. The same applies to the word *council*. It is in lower case when used in general but capitalized as *Council* when referring to a specific council. However, when Newman is being quoted, the word is capitalized or not as he wrote it. Other spellings peculiar to Newman and to the Victorian period are retained, for example, scepticism for skepticism. His punctuations are also retained except when they would confuse a modern reader. Unusual usages or grammar have been acknowledged with [*sic*].

Let me make one final recommendation to laity as you read this republished text. Do not be concerned about deeply engaging the footnotes. They are directed, for the most part, to theologians and other Newman scholars and often involve other languages. It was judged unnecessary to update original footnotes appreciably because later studies do not address my original threefold insight—foundational, pastoral, theological—into Newman's idea of the church nor do they work from Newman's correspondence as comprehensively as I did. And should you find some of the features of Newman's style of thinking in chapter one a bit daunting, feel free to skip ahead to their more lively application to the idea of *church* in chapters two, three, and four. Thus, I am recommending that lay readers follow the text of the narrative, which is meant to introduce you to Newman and to his own engaging words as if you were one of the friends to whom Newman wrote affectionately and sometimes in confidence about the church and your lives in it. Doing so, it is likely you will find that these letters from Newman are timeless.

CHAPTER ONE

LIFE AND STYLE

To understand Newman's theology and especially his ecclesiology requires one to understand a good deal about his temperament and the pivotal experiences of his life. Unlike many other major thinkers who fall within a school of thought or under the influence of an intellectual mentor, Newman lacks clear parentage. Although he himself mentions influences in his autobiographical *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* and others have correctly identified tendencies in which he shared, as John Coulson has done with the Anglican sacramental tradition of S. T. Coleridge and F. D. Maurice,[1] nevertheless these are people with whom Newman saw things similarly rather than mentors to whom he was indebted. In large measure Newman's seminal instincts came from within himself. They were rooted in certain personal tendencies—what I am calling his *style*—and they were fed by his experiences of people and events.

Style and story are causes in everyone's thinking surely, but with Newman they are paramount. He excels in being able to plumb his experience so thoroughly and to unravel it so clearly. His powers of introspection are extremely keen. Consequently, this study of Newman's ecclesiology begins with life and style rather than with his historical antecedents. Of the two, style in the sense of temperament and character is for present purposes more necessary to describe than is the story of his life. Biographies abound, most notably the 1912 classic by Wilfrid Ward and a lengthy study by Meriol Trevor appearing in 1962. Ian Ker's more recent contribution approaches a definitive biography in the estimation of many.[2]

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[1] John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

[2] Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912); Meriol Trevor, *Newman: Light in Winter* and *Newman: The Pillar of the Cloud* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1962); Ian Ker, John Henry Newman: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, reissued 2009). Trevor's abridgment of her two volumes, *Newman's Journey* (Glasgow: Collins, 1974; reprint, Huntingdon, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1985), is a readable "short" introduction to Newman's life.

I intend only a brief sketch of Newman's life, selecting those more salient features that provide context and backdrop to issues of his ecclesiology and that offer to readers unfamiliar with Newman a broad sense of his story. The biographical sketch will make possible fuller attention to Newman's personal style.

John Henry Newman's life (21 February 1801—11 August 1890) spanned practically the entire nineteenth century. He was the oldest of six children, whose father was a London banker and whose mother had French Huguenot roots. She gave her son a religious orientation toward her own mild Calvinism and to her evangelicalism that was centered on family bible reading. When he was fifteen, Newman experienced a five-month illness he later described as a conversion period that gave him an intense and enduring sense of God's presence; it also led to his decision to remain unmarried. At this early time he was introduced to the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and he became convinced that religion needed to be grounded in definite creeds.

Newman matriculated at Trinity College, Oxford, in 1817, but the college exerted little influence on his religious or intellectual life. His 1822 fellowship to Oriel College, then at the apex of its academic fame, was to change him profoundly and set the stage for his life of writing on controversial religious matters. In the Oriel Common rooms Richard Whatley taught Newman that the church was divinely founded and hence independent from the government. Edward Hawkins convinced him of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, causing Newman to abandon the evangelical dichotomy between the “converted” and the “unconverted.” Most important, Oriel introduced Newman to Edward Pusey and Richard Hurrell Froude, the latter a disciple of John Keble, and later he came to know Hugh James Rose who was Cambridge’s only prominent contributor to the “Movement of 1833.” These Oriel colleagues brought Newman into contact with the High Church Anglican tradition and sensitized him to the common ground between Rome and Anglicanism, i.e., the continuity with early Christianity, particularly as regards the episcopacy and the sacraments. In 1825 Newman was ordained priest, the act being a sign that he would never do theological work apart from pastoral implications. It was likely at this time that he decided on a life of celibacy for himself.

While travelling alone in Sicily in 1833, Newman was beset by another serious illness, this time typhoid, and during the long recovery he became convinced that God had a special mission for him in England. His famous poem, “Lead Kindly Light,” was composed on the ship going home. Less than a week after Newman arrived in England, Keble preached the famous 1833 Assize Sermon attacking Parliament's interference in internal church

affairs. Thus began the Oxford "Movement" in Newman's view, which defended the divinely established prerogatives of the church and sought to renew the Established Church according to the pattern of the early centuries. Newman, Keble, Pusey, and others authored the *Tracts for the Times*, thereby becoming known as Tractarians. Eventually, Newman emerged as the movement's intellectual leader, a position testified to by his publications: *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church* (1837) concerning authority; *University Sermons* (eventually published 1843) concerning religious belief; and above all the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1834-42) that translated the principles of the "Movement" into a spirituality for Christian living and caused them to spread nationwide.[3]

After the publication in 1841 of his *Tract 90*, which offered a Catholic interpretation (i.e., one consonant with the nature of the earliest church) of the Church of England's Thirty-nine Articles, Newman was censured by the bishops in 1841 and forced to leave Oxford. He and several companions (including his lifelong friend and confidant, Ambrose St John) set up a quasi-monastic life-style at nearby Littlemore in 1842. For the next few years Newman sought to clarify his thoughts on the nature of the church and whether Roman Catholicism could be the legitimate evolution of the ancient and true church. Eventually coming to the conviction it was, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church on 9 October 1845. A few weeks later he published the intellectual justification for his conversion in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, showing that Roman Catholic doctrines, including recent teachings of the Council of Trent, were not novelties but rather legitimate unfoldings of the apostolic faith. Forty-five years of life remained, and Newman was at midlife in many senses.

Ordination to priesthood in Rome followed a year of study there, on 30 May 1847, and Newman returned to England to establish the Oratory of St. Philip Neri—a group of secular priests, living in community together but

[3] The eight-volume *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, the name by which we today know Newman's Tractarian sermons, were published in 1868 by William John Copeland, Newman's curate at Littlemore in the early 1840s. In the 1860s Newman was pressured to republish his Oxford sermons but it put him between sixes and sevens. If he made corrections to any Tractarian thoughts, Anglicans would not read the sermons. If he made none, Catholics would grouse and not read them. So Newman asked Copeland, as early as 1864, to take over their copyright and re-publish them under his own name, to which by 1867 Copeland accepted. (See *Letters*, 23:36 and 388; 26:293-94.) Copeland published Newman's sermons delivered at St. Mary the Virgin Church as *PS* vols. 1-6 and Copeland took Newman's volume 5 from the ten-volume *Plain Sermons by Contributors to Tracts for the Times*, edited by Isaac Williams *et al*., to distance Tractarians from Anglo-Catholic extremists. These sermons became vols. 7 and 8 in *PS*.

without religious vows—in Birmingham. Here Newman lived the rest of his life among fellow Oratorians, ministering to the parish's mostly poor and uneducated members, many of them being immigrants from Ireland's crop famine. His pastoral activities have been overshadowed by his more famous controversies involving theological disputes. Nicholas Wiseman, his Birmingham district bishop, left soon after for assignment in London, and William Bernard Ullathorne was assigned to be the Birmingham bishop under whom Newman worked the rest of his life.

During a 'no-popery' period in the early 1850s, Newman delivered his famous lectures on prejudice, published as *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics*. His attacks on the vile allegations of an Italian ex-Dominican, Giovanni Achilli, led to a long and costly libel trial brought by Achilli's sponsors, The Protestant Alliance. During the next few years Newman was involved in establishing a Catholic university in Ireland and was invited by Archbishop Cullen to be its first rector. Frustrated by hierarchical interference, he resigned the rectorship after four years, but his lectures on *The Idea of a University* became a lasting monument to the ideas of Catholic higher education.[4]

Other Oxford people followed Newman into the Roman Church, and they were to affect his later life. Frederick William Faber joined the Birmingham Oratory but soon after founded another Oratory in London; he displayed a convert's enthusiasm in importing Italianate devotions into British Catholic life and proved to be a constant thorn in Newman's side. Henry Edward Manning, who was to succeed Wiseman as Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and W. G. Ward, who was to edit the *Dublin Review*, became Newman antagonists; they represented an ultramontane Catholicism that stressed church authority, especially papal prerogatives, and opposed anything that implied Catholicism underwent development or was in need of reform.

In 1859 Newman took over editorship of the *Rambler* magazine in order to preserve an alternative Catholic voice to ultramontanism. His article that same year on the right of the laity to be consulted about doctrine was sent to Rome as suspect of heresy. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Dublin University failure because the Irish bishops never gave Newman a free hand in administration, Manning thwarted Newman's attempts, all through the 1860s, to establish a Catholic foundation at Oxford, supported by chaplains

[4] The definitive study of Newman's book and the university in Dublin remains Fergal McGrath, *Newman's University: Idea and Reality* (London: Longmans, Green, 1951). For a synopsis of the book, see Edward Jeremy Miller, "A Primer on Newman's *Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated*," https://www.newmanreview.org, under tab "education," posted March 21, 2024.

like himself, that would afford high-quality university education to the children of Catholic laity.

In 1864 Newman was unexpectedly delivered from these institutional frustrations by a public attack on his honesty from Charles Kingsley, a well-known writer. All along Newman had had to deal with rumors that he was unhappy in Catholicism and was on the verge of returning to the Church of England. Kingsley's assault led to Newman's account of the history of his religious thinking, the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, which was read far and wide and has in later years become a classic statement of personal faith alongside that of St. Augustine's *Confessions*; it also returned Newman to national status and respect among Anglicans and open-minded Catholics.

Two significant writings mark the last years of the decade. Edward Pusey, with whom a friendship was renewed when Newman needed letters for the Kingsley affair, had written about Roman abuses in Mariology; this afforded Newman the occasion to write his *Letter to Pusey* describing a Catholic devotion to Mary much more moderate than Frederick Faber and the ultramontanes liked. Years of reflection on the nature of faith and certitude led to *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Newman's most significant contribution to the philosophy of religion and also destined to become a classic in how thinking works.

The Vatican Council that convened 8 December 1869 shaped Newman's life during the next decade. He was decidedly against the ultramontane push for a definition of papal infallibility, although he himself believed in the doctrine. Defining it, Newman thought, served no purpose; most Catholics already believed it, and Protestants would be angered by a formal definition that seemed unscriptural. Papal infallibility was defined, however, and its interpretation was pushed to extremes by the ultramontanists, especially by Cardinal Manning in England. Many moderate-thinking Catholics urged Newman to come forward, but he could not provide his own interpretation without seeming to attack the cardinal. On Guy Fawkes Day, 1874, William Gladstone, the politician, launched a fierce attack, claiming that Catholics could not be loyal citizens to the Crown as long as they were under the decrees of the Vatican Council. This enabled Newman to respond indirectly to ultramontane exaggerations by ostensibly answering Gladstone. His *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* became a celebrated study of the role of conscience and of moderation in the claims being made by the Vatican Council.

In 1877 Newman republished his 1837 *Prophetical Office* and added to it a lengthy preface about abuses in the church. This preface was to be the last major writing of his career, and it is a marvelous example of the mental agility and keenness of this seventy-six-year-old warrior. No further battles

remained, although Newman did prepare a later essay on biblical inspiration and to a refutation of the accusation that he became a Catholic to overcome his inherent skepticism.

Pius IX, the pope who began as a liberal in the 1840s and who turned increasingly conservative thereafter, died in 1878 and was succeeded by Leo XIII. Leo showed his new policy by creating Newman a cardinal in Leo's first consistory, causing Newman to say that the cloud was lifted from him forever. He was allowed to remain an Oratorian priest, and he is buried at the Birmingham Oratory's vacation residence, Rednal, alongside Ambrose St John.

Consideration of Newman's personal style—his manner of thinking, of sizing up complexities, of urging his convictions—will illuminate our understanding of his ecclesiology. It has been mentioned that in Newman's methodology the one who thinks and chooses is the person whole and entire, the person of ideas, feelings, memories, social constraints, ethical temper, etc. For Newman, therefore, abstract argument, however sound and well-based, is unlikely to be convincing; neither are direct appeals to someone's will likely to be compelling. Conviction and decision are a person's deepest personal features, and they are the arenas Newman's writing seeks to penetrate. Consequently, he is concerned with those wellsprings that define a person, that color thinking, that drive the choice for one or another path. But however central those wellsprings to decision making are, they exist so far below the surface of personality that most people are only dimly aware of them, if at all. The writer in Newman intends to bring them to full light.

Newman's guide in these matters is himself. Through an introspection that revealed how he himself came to think about God and the church and how he made difficult choices as a result, Newman's own wellsprings came to self-awareness. They informed his notions of God, of moral conscience, of church and of sacraments; they influenced the way he wrote about these matters since he wrote to convince and not merely to instruct. They characterized him and thus we need to scrutinize them if we are to enter into his vision of the church.

What features constitute this interior side of Newman? First and foremost is the functioning of "first principles." These are convictions deeply embedded in each person, often of a hidden character, from which reasoning begins on any given matter. It is Newman's practice to lay bare both his own first principles and those of others, as much as they admit of disclosure. A second feature is the power that concrete experiences and the workings of imagination exercise on "assent." Newman divided assents into "notional" and "real" assents, the latter being associated with concrete experiences. Since he describes religious beliefs in terms of "real assents,"