

The Teenage Dissent of Newman and Unamuno: Conscience as a Safeguard Against Coercive Manipulation

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Abstract

Teenagers seem easy targets for despotic groups, such as cults. Moral conscience, however, may be a dike against a sea of despotism. John Henry Newman and Miguel de Unamuno were giant defenders of conscience in their respective cultures. Their philosophies and phenomenologies of conscience depict conscience as supreme in the mind of the ordinary person, though subject to pressures, even death. This notion becomes alive in the deep religious crisis and conversion of their adolescence, marked by a sense of personal divine experience, confidence in final predestination or holy trust, and an ethical commitment. Both men, however, dissent from their religious authorities and doctrines within an environment of academic freedom, individual study, and limited coercion. Hence, the interplay of friends and environments along with personal dedication are essential to our understanding of the role of conscience as a safeguard against coercive manipulation, above all in the lives of youth. This article illuminates these themes by examining the teenage years of these two great philosophical and literary figures.

A key concern for all who are apprehensive about authoritarian mind manipulation and totalitarian group control is the penchant for manipulative organizations to focus on young people to achieve their purposes. Given their innocence and idealism, teenagers are attractive prey to wolves dressed as pastors, gurus, political leaders, psychotherapists, or even charismatic salesmen. I contend that against this sea of despotism, conscience can serve as an ethical dike, safeguarding individuality and personal responsibility. Moreover, reflecting upon the role of conscience in the young may help us better understand how to help our cherished children defend themselves against the lure of cultic groups.

This essay focuses on a philosophical theory and a phenomenological analysis that proposes the supremacy of conscience over religious authority in young people, as understood and lived by the famed Catholic convert, John H. Cardinal Newman (1801-1890) and the prominent Spanish dissenter from Catholicism, Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936). Whereas Newman is considered a champion of intellectual Catholicism in the English-speaking world, Unamuno is oft the supporter of academic dissent in the Hispanic diaspora. Newman followed conscience to embrace Catholicism, while Unamuno, as a "lone heretic" (Rudd), sincerely abandoned the Catholic Church of his childhood. However, both shared the conviction of courageously following conscience above authority, paying a high price with their careers and confreres.

John Henry Newman sees conscience as both natural and open to change. Conscience is defined as a moral sense of right and wrong, independent of any authority, which may, in life, become distorted and even seem to die due to abusive environments. If conscience is independent of any source of authority, does that mean that the content of conscience, of the sense of right and wrong, is initially independent of authority? I think Newman's answer to this question is "yes." Conscience, then, rests on an impulse to adhere to the perceived truth that there is right and wrong. Adhering to this truth results in an enduring recognition of the existence of "right" and "wrong," although the content of right and wrong will change and the capacity to choose to follow right or wrong remains. The "moral sense of right and

wrong," then, relies on the passionate adherence to truth. The lesson for the cultist is to "follow truth," to shun lies, especially those made in order to please or placate those in all kinds of authority, but especially that which is purportedly divine?

Let us address Newman's theory of conscience in his main philosophical work, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Then, see how this theory played out in Newman's teenage years. Finally, let us contrast Newman with Unamuno's parallel experience of teenage dissent from religious authority.

To prove his point that there is "an instinct of the mind recognizing an external Master in the dictate of conscience," Newman sketches in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* a phenomenology of conscience in the mind of a child, or rather, an ordinary child, as he says. There is an "impulse of nature," which recognizes a Moral Governor in our consciousness of right and wrong. Without using the word "innate," Newman does see a "spontaneous reception" of the link between the sense of wrong and its religious component as an offense against God. A child who has offended his parents will "alone and without effort" place himself in the presence of God and beg of Him to set him right with them. The importance of this phenomenology of religion in a child is to prove the "connatural" character of conscience in every person from infancy. Such a phenomenon is present in every human being prior both in time and authority to all future authority (103-07).

Newman also applies this to other religious authorities. All divine authorities such as revealed religion and churches based thereupon have their authority in God speaking to conscience. This is because conscience relates directly to God as the source of the authority of revelation and religious authority. Hence, revelation, written and verbal, is accepted by the individual precisely as a message and mandate from God, only and in so far as it has, and is recognized in conscience to have, authority from God in that specific mandate. In fact, at the end of his phenomenology of natural conscience, Newman states how "this vivid apprehension of religious objects . . . is independent of the written records of any divine Revelation; it does not require any knowledge of Scripture, nor of the history or teaching of any Church" (107).

Religious belief is a great "addition" of fullness and exactness to our mental image of the divine personality and attributes (107). Conscience is therefore prior to and independent of authority, like that of a child's consciousness of God, which is prior to, and independent of their parents' authority and teaching. Later on, for the believer, conscience will follow God prior to and independent of any religious authority. Religious authority for the believer, therefore, only has force in so far as it is recognized in conscience to have divine authority. Hence, conscience is both chronologically and naturally prior to authority, since, according to Newman, God is first known directly by conscience.

Here we have the force and weight of conscience, as Newman will later defend it. It is neither the rule of pride against authority, nor blind acceptance of human authority, but rather obedience to a "kindly Light," where there is "one step enough for me" (*Verses* 156). This natural link between God and duty, as brought out in the *Grammar of Assent*, in each one's conscience from childhood sets the stage for a reading of Newman's adolescence, considering Newman as "an ordinary child" (103-07). However, Newman also sees the possibility of conscience dying out:

Whether its elements, latent in the mind, would ever be elicited without extrinsic help is very doubtful; but whatever be the actual history of the first formation of the divine image within us, so far at least is certain, that, by information external to ourselves, as time goes on, it admits of being strengthened and improved. It is certain too, that, whether it grows brighter and stronger, or, on the other hand, is dimmed, distorted, or obliterated, depends on each of us individually, and on his circumstances. It is more that, in the event, from

neglect, from the temptations of life, from bad companions, or from the urgency of secular occupations, the light of the soul will fade away and die out. (105)

How does this conscience develop and grow? Newman speaks of the divine image being strengthened and developed by "information external to ourselves." In John Henry's mind, this world of "nature and of man" is a mirror that enables the child to attain these first truths of conscience. In his own case, certain "information external" to himself will shed light on his future decisions in conscience as they evolved. Hence, the individual circumstances surrounding the life of Newman and every child become part of either a brightening and strengthening, or a distortion and death. Nonetheless, God and our duty are both intertwined in a manner "singularly congenial to the mind," due to the fact that the growing infant initially goes beyond the mere shapes and aspects of goodness. The child knows things, persons and actions, but naturally has a conscience with a sense of the divine (103-05).

As he looked back at this life and noticed surprise after surprise, these truths had held firm. So, for Newman, no event in a life is indifferent or purposeless. Indeed, unforeseen and unusual circumstances can force untold influence on the development of each life and conscience. His autobiography, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, would never have been born without Kingsley's attack on his sincerity; the "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk" without Gladstone's critique of Catholic freedom; *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* without his exile from the Anglican Church. The world of "nature and man" is the scaffolding on which each person walks his path. These ideas are clearly expressed in the whole thrust of the *Apologia*. Newman's *secretum meum mihi*—"my personal secret"—made him "rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator" (*Apologia Pro Vita Sua* 16). The meaning he gave to his life came from the central truth of his teaching on conscience as knowing God as a self-evident Being from childhood.

To illustrate this philosophy of conscience, natural, personal and dependent on influences external to itself, let us now contrast the teenagers Newman and Unamuno as they understood and lived supremacy of conscience over religious authorities.

Adolescence brought Newman and Unamuno to the experience of a religious crisis. What will be interesting in our analysis of this phenomenon will be to see how their concepts of conscience reacted to a personal experience of religion in a revered adult. The key task will be to see how Newman's and Unamuno's changes in thought were not purely subjective as an emotional phenomenon, empty of all objective reality, but rather a reference to a definite thought system, a questioning of authority, and a personal responsibility towards one's future.

This question should set the stage to answer a deeper concern about conscience vis-à-vis authority. If the authority of conscience is supreme as present from the beginning of human conscience, as stated in Newman's philosophy of conscience, and lived in both his and Unamuno's lives, can we consider this ethical philosophy as a foundation stone to avoid the trap of mind manipulation and cult control for youth?

Immediately, we notice their first religious crisis as teenagers to be those of typical adolescents with limited maturity and boundless idealism. Both youths combined religious fervor and intellectual independence. Nevertheless, Newman himself attributed life-long importance to this moment of religious conversion. After he became a Cardinal, he confided to Anne Mozley, his sister-in-law and editor of his correspondence: "Of course I cannot myself be the judge of myself; but . . . I should say that it is difficult to realize or imagine the identity of the boy before and after August 1816 . . . I can look back at the end of seventy years as if on another person" (*Letters and Correspondence* 1: 19)

Unamuno, likewise, carefully considers his first spiritual crisis at age 14:

En la época de este cuarto curso, a mis catorce años, cumpliéndose en mí, en lecturas de vela y por la obra de la Congregación de San Luis Gonzaga, la labor de la crisis primera de espíritu, de la entrada del alma en su pubertad. Y voy a ver si consigo hallar palabras apropiadas y sencillas para contaros aquella brisa de la maña de mi espíritu. ¡Feliz quien logra resucitar en su memoria la candorosa expresión de sus años de romanticismo!
(*Recuerdos* 103)

During fourth year, when I was 14, reading late at night and involved with the Congregation of St. Luis Gonzaga, the work of my first spiritual crisis, my soul's entry into puberty, took place. And I'll see if I find appropriate and simple words to tell of that breeze of the spirit's craft. Happy whoever can bring alive in memory the warm expression of romantic years!
([1])

Unamuno later certainly was not the practicing Catholic, nor was Newman the Evangelical of their early youth. Both teenagers, before their changes, clung to the upright religion and morality previously learnt at home. However, some touches of what they later considered to be superstitions were also present. At the beginning of the *Apologia* Newman stated how "even though I had formed no religious conviction . . . I used constantly to cross myself on going into the dark" (14).

In Unamuno's case, he remembers his experience of childhood Catholic fervor and piety, practicing all Holy Mother Church teaches, including praying for indulgences:

Verdad es que recuerdo también cómo habiendo leído en un devocionario una jaculatoria que proporcionaba cincuenta días de indulgencia a cualquier fiel por cada vez que devotamente la recitare, nos estuvimos una tarde una prima mía y yo, sentados sobre la mesa de la cocina, recitándola una y otra vez durante largo espacio de tiempo y llevando en un papel con raya de un lápiz la cuenta, no ya de los meses, sino de los años de indulgencia que nos habíamos ganado. (*Recuerdos* 22)

It's true that I remember as well that having read in a devotional of a prayer that offered fifty days of indulgence to the faithful every time they devotedly prayed it, my cousin and I spent an evening seated on the kitchen table, praying over and over again for a long time and taking note with a pen and paper, no longer the months, but the years of indulgences which we had won.

At this stage of their lives, Newman and Unamuno evinced an inkling of interest towards a combination of intellectual philosophy and emotional Christianity. Their teenage study became a first exposure to the liberal and conservative philosophies characteristic of the 18th and 19th centuries. In the same token, both thinkers began to steer away from dogmatism towards a personal Christian faith.

The change or conversion took place for Newman when he was 15. John Henry was sent away to the College at Ealing, where he had to remain after the close of the school term in June because of the collapse of the bank that Mr. Newman directed. At Ealing, he found a discreet and dedicated scholar in the Rev. Walter Mayers, a naturally serious man of character. This shy person was above all dedicated to God, preoccupied with the Gospel message. Mayers nonetheless always had a yearning for an even more apostolic mission and pastoral ministry. He hid the simplicity and depth of his faith under the austere appearance of a rigid professor, indifferent to both sympathy and success. Nevertheless, his example and the straightforwardness of his words earned him the esteem of Newman, who knew how to look beyond the man's timidity (*Apologia* 16).

In religion, Rev. Mayers was a convinced supporter of Evangelicalism. The essence of the Evangelical stream then within the Anglican Communion was to bring souls to the purity and rigorous simplicity of faith. This movement was conceived more as an experience of assured salvation than as an adhesion to dogmas. From this came the importance attributed to

conversion and new birth, giving to each one the certainty of his own salvation experienced through the grace of Jesus Christ. Accompanying this conversion was an austere morality that added a rigid code of conduct to the piety of Evangelicals (17-18).

Instead of being sent to a college like Newman, Unamuno at age 14 found his tutors in reading the only books available to him in the library of his father: the philosophers Balmes and Donoso. Nonetheless, this limited collection opened his mind to a whole new world of philosophy.

Por Balmes me enteré de que había un Kant, un Descartes, un Hegel. Apenas entendí yo palabra de su Filosofía fundamental – esa obra tan endeble entre las endebles otras balmesianas --, y, sin embargo, con un ahínco grande, el ahínco mismo que aplicado después a la gimnasia regeneró mi cuerpo, me empeñé en leerla entera y la leí. (Recuerdos 105)

Through Balmes I learnt there was a Kant, a Descartes, a Hegel. I barely understood a word of their fundamental Philosophy – that feeble work among other feeble works of Balmes --, and, nonetheless, with great effort, the same effort later applied to my body at the gymnasium, I pledged to read it all, and I did.

Those days for Unamuno were a combination of emotional mysticism and philosophical searching. Deeply emotional and intellectually curious, the stage was set for a philosophy of life linking heart and head, will and imagination. Sometimes, he cried without an explanation; on others, he would fall sleep with a book in his hands (104).

The results were different for both teenagers, but with amazing similarities. In Newman's case, the new birth of conversion portrayed a conviction of a singular predestination from God, acquired by a strong effort of the will and imagination. John Henry experienced the certainty of God's pardon in a stirring intuition, thought necessary to reach the certitude that Christ had redeemed him from sin. This proof was as absolute and infallible as the fact of one's "own hands and feet" (*Apologia* 16). So, yielding to a flood of emotions, his heart let itself go in a touching avowal of gratitude and love for his God who had filled it from his most bountiful mercy. The barrenness of moral formalism and the skepticism of rationalism seem to have been answered by a personal call by God towards emotional piety. How objective was Newman's conversion to this ardent devotion? Was this God neither that of the philosophers nor that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but rather the God of Newman's own emotional needs?

In the *Apologia*, Newman stated the circumstances of his conversion and his debt to Rev. Mayers. As to the objective content of his conversion, we notice that it was not a mere subjective certainty of conversion. The latter would involve the vicious circle of subjectivity, with certitude based on certitude. Rather Newman noticed a great change of thought, rather than emotion:

When I was fifteen, a great change of thought took place in me. I fell under the influence of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma . . . I neither recollect the title nor the contents, except one doctrine, which I do not include among those which I believe to have come from a divine source, viz., the doctrine of final perseverance. (16)

In Unamuno's life, the search for the eternal led to changes in his ideas, perhaps a seed of his future assertion of his right to contradict himself.

Enamorábame de lo último que leía, estimando hoy verdadero lo que ayer absurdo; consumíame un ansia devoradora de esclarecer los eternos problemas; sentíame peloteado de unas ideas en otras, y este continuo vaivén, en vez de engendrar en mí un escepticismo desolador, me daba cada vez más fe en la inteligencia humana y más esperanza alcanzar alguna vez un rayo de la Verdad. (Recuerdos 104-05)

I fell in love with the latest I read, thinking today true what was absurd yesterday; a devouring anxiety consumed me to clarify the eternal problems; I felt hit by some ideas in others, and this continual to and fro, instead of creating in me a desolating skepticism, gave me more faith in human intelligence and more hope to reach some time a ray of Truth.

This respect for individual intelligence and, hence, conscience was to continue the rest of his life.

The first noticeable element in these teenage conversions is the combination of the emotional and philosophical. These texts and their lives show that both Unamuno and Newman feel certain of this combination in their change or growth: With Newman, it is a loving relationship with Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior, and also a conversion to God who manifests Himself in a definite creed or objective revelation. Moreover, the very doctrine of final perseverance is understood as such, that is, a doctrine, an objective teaching to be believed in. In fact, Newman referred explicitly to a "divine source" being necessary for the validity of a doctrine. Hence, the certitude of belief is not based on the certitude itself, but rather on the "definite creed" which itself supposes a divine source. Therefore, the reason behind his conversion was not the strength of emotional certitude but rather the fact of divine revelation as understood by John Henry. Just as with Unamuno, it was not the personal emotion of tears or the will to learn, but rather the conviction of the valor of each person's mind.

Applying this distinction to conscience, we may deduce that conscience for Newman and Unamuno in these changes is not derogatory about their previous superstitious and religious convictions. Rather conscience finds an objective reason for conversion, and hence changes. It was the same search for truth and meaning that spurred in both men a personal love for truth and later an understanding of religion in both as part of this affection. So we see that, for Newman and Unamuno, the same conscience that found truth was prepared to receive further insight. Nature who gives us a conscience as part of our being also gives us the possibility of knowing truth constantly better. In this sense, Newman later would write that conscience is a messenger from God both "in nature and in grace" (*Difficulties* 248) and "to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often" (*Development* 40).

A second characteristic of this conversion was Newman's understanding of final perseverance and Unamuno's thoughts on "holy trust."

On the one hand, Newman asserts the consciousness of his inward conversion and certainty that it would last until the next life with his election by God to eternal glory (*Apologia* 16). In Unamuno's case, one of his first writings "¡Pistis y no gnosis!" likewise argues in favor of an idealistic final Christian hope linked to a moral commitment. Drawing on the historical phenomenon of the early Christians, Unamuno draws the conclusion that their hope in the second coming of Christ was a hope in the future, where the person and life of Jesus was the guide for their lives:

Jóvenes las comunidades cristianas, esperaban la próxima venida del reino del Hijo de Dios; la persona y la vida del Divino Maestro eran el norte de sus anhelos y sentires. Sentíanse henchidas de verdadera fe, de la que con la esperanza se confunde, de lo que se llamó *pistis*, fe o confianza, fe religiosa y no teológica, fe pura y libre todavía de dogmas. (*Obras completas*: 4: 1020)

When the Christian communities were young, they hoped for the next coming of the kingdom of the Son of God; the person and life of the Divine Master was the aim of their longings and feelings. Full of true faith, that which is confused with hope, called *pistis*, faith or trust, a religious not theological faith, a pure faith free from dogmas.

Hence, their sense of Christian truth and hope were both directed towards a Person. Their religious faith is neither towards an idea nor an authority nor a virtuous life in themselves,

but rather towards the Person of Jesus. This God revealed in a truth, an example, and a way of life. This Person, therefore, for a Christian, is above any dogma, authority, and morality. So, the need to follow conscience towards a philosophy, creed, and lifestyle was ultimately the need to follow the person of Jesus.

Finally, for both seekers their changes did not exclude moral commitment. Newman has no consciousness that "this belief would lead me to be careless about pleasing God" (*Apologia* 16). Unamuno finishes his article insisting on the moral needs of this faith, and the necessity of this kind of faith to live accordingly ("¡Pistis y no gnosis!" 1024).

Newman and Unamuno's conversions, therefore, were similar to that of the Evangelicals. There was the same isolation of conscience from beings and things, a sense of being free, alone, and dependent on God, with the same assurance of being saved. We find the same openness of the young Newman and Unamuno to the call of living life to the full, the wish to surpass self in pursuit of the truth, the enjoyment of a lifelong purpose and the need of an ideal. In these texts of the *Apologia* and the *Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad* we note the admiration of young disciples who find philosophical and religious masters, not only through discussion and reasoning, but also through reasons known only to the heart. Future years will change some of their ideas and convictions, including the rejection of their teenage mentors, but a durable foundation will subsist. Profound values of personalized religion, definite hope, and ethical consistency will bear abundant fruit in Newman's and Unamuno's future endeavor to follow conscience.

But both Newman and Unamuno also soon saw their masters' limits. Beyond the enthusiastic certainty, Newman sought the reason for his conversion and certainty of perseverance. The strength of his emotions did not block out the processes of his mind. Though accepting Mayers as his teacher, Newman did not cease seeking after truth. As will be his characteristic in the future, Newman's conscience was above any teacher, because his conscience was his personal relationship of duty and friendship with truth. While preserving the essence of his conversion experience as a personal relationship with God who loves and saves him, Newman shows his independence of mind not to identify either God or truth with those who claimed to be either his representatives or teachers. Hence, his later toast, as a famed Catholic convert, to Conscience, and then to the Pope. "I add one remark. 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" (*Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* 261).

Upon moving to Oxford, Mayers gave the teenage Newman a work to read of the evangelical Bishop Beveridge. Mayers' letter at the end of the month revealed the Master's innermost fears:

On perusing it you will see that the opinions which we have discussed, though at present singular, are not novel, nor are they without authority, for they are deduced from the only authentic source. To that source let me direct your attention. Be more disposed to form your sentiments upon religion from that, than to adopt and interpret it to your opinions. (*Correspondence* 115)

This quotation not only reveals the fears of a master losing his disciple but also touches the nerve of liberty of conscience. The master based the force of his argument on the fact that the matters discussed are neither novel nor without authority, but based on an authority, the book of Beveridge. "Not novel" is an appeal to tradition, which begs the question, what authority has that tradition got? Whereas, the second appeal to authority as the "only authentic source" is equally empty, if not dangerous. The implication is that Bishop Beveridge is authoritative in religious matters, and, hence, is the voice of God. Mayers' command to be "more disposed" to Beveridge begs the final question of Mayers' own authority to command, and the limits thereof. His rejection of Newman's opinions in favor of

Beveridge's without giving reasons why smacks of religious despotism. This reflects a reference to cult-tactics described in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine:

If Faustus were so sure of his postulates, why was he so afraid of questions . . . This implies that either Faustus did not have all the answers or the very fact of his not having all the answers did not fit in with the cult's credo. His rejection of "the give and take of argument" would imply no argument, except the authority of Faustus to allow no argument. (*A Toast to Conscience* 24)

Unamuno, in his *Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad*, never tires in the hunt for ideas initially escaping his grasp. Reading Kant, Fichte and Hegel, causes him vertigo, but the critical skills, seen later in his life, are also present in the young Unamuno's reading of Balmes and Donoso. The difficulty of understanding philosophy motivates Unamuno to seek deeper insight (Recuerdos 105-06):

As with Newman vis-à-vis Mayers, Unamuno begins to think critically about his masters. Their readings bring him to knowledge of greater philosophers, but also to a critical analysis of his initial masters. Soon they who opened his eyes to philosophy also enable him to see their limits, especially in the philosophers they presented. In fact, their very reading of Kant, Fichte and Hegel seems inadequate to the searching mind of Unamuno. Oversimplification leads to infidelity to the authors:

La desilusión de Balmes fué lo que empezó a abrirme los ojos. El espíritu del publicista catalán, una especie de escocés de quinta mano, tenía no poco de infantil; simplicificaba todo lo que criticaba, ganando la discusión en claridad cuanto perdía en exactitud la exposición de las doctrinas criticadas. (106)

My disillusionment with Balmes was what opened my eyes. The Catalan publicist's spirit, a kind of fifth-hand Scottish species, had not little childishness; he simplified all he criticized, winning the argument in clarity while losing out on exactness of the exposition of the criticized doctrines.

Even worse was the fact that Balmes himself did not seem to have direct knowledge of the texts of the philosophers he criticized. Reflecting on this medieval experience of second-hand readings, Unamuno learnt then the importance of faithful translations and direct contact with the texts themselves. Possibly his love for languages and his yearning for reading writers in the original came from this experience with Balmes (106).

Nonetheless, Unamuno did discover a reality by studying Balmes' interpretation of Hegel. Though Balmes was superficial, merely skimming the surface of Hegel, out of these readings came pulp, "de ellas brotó pulpa" (106).

So at the time of their religious crisis, both writers reject a blind, irrational faith in religious authority. Newman would write in a work intimately involved in his later "great change" to Catholicism: "An argument is needed, unless Christianity is to abandon the province of argument" (*Development* 31). From Mayers' letter above, we note the pupil did not comply without reservation to the principles instilled in him with such great insistence and concern. The "absolute obedience" rejected later in the "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk" is unacceptable from Newman's first conversion, however emotional and salutary (*Difficulties* 243).

However, Newman, though not "absolute," renders obedience, unto Mayers, as Unamuno critically appraised Catholicism, though their ideas were constantly attuned. Newman read the recommended devotional books: Beveridge, Doddridge, Law, and Romaine, "all of the school of Calvin." He listened to the sermons that led him towards predestination and efficacious grace. He even scribbled some writings, one of them drawn clearly from the Calvinistic inspiration: "These will be punished with eternal punishment." (*Letters and*

Correspondence 1:21). More and more, the problem of predestination took possession of his spirit and an obsession with eternal salvation accompanied it. Newman questioned whether his teenage conversion really was the “second birth” described by the books and an all too impressive master. Later when his inner life grew strong, the realities of pastoral ministry showed him the inconsistency of this “detestable doctrine” of predestination (*Apologia* 17).

Throughout his life Unamuno had a problem with a simplistic faith, a “coal-worker’s faith” as he often described it. Indeed, he wished to live and die in his Christian faith, but in the historical Christ and his message, as each one understands it, not in Church dogmas and authorities. Likewise, rejecting both the intellectualism of the irrational and the simplistic faith of the coal-worker, Unamuno insists on trust, not belief, as the essence of faith. Unamuno further explains the simplistic faith as a “vicious” illogical circle, in which Church doctrine and popular faith explain away each another:

¡Terrible fe la del carbonero! Porque ¿a qué viene a reducirse la fe del carbonero?

-- ¿Qué crees?

-- Lo que cree y enseña nuestra Santa Madre la Iglesia.

-- ¿Y qué cree y enseña nuestra Santa Madre la Iglesia?

-- Lo que yo creo.

Y el círculo vicioso continúa. (*La fe* 1:266)

The terrible faith of the charcoal-maker! Why, what is the reduction of the faith of the charcoal-maker?

-- What do you believe?

-- Whatever Holy Mother Church believes and teaches.

-- And what does Holy Mother Church believe and teach?

-- What I believe.

And the vicious circle goes on! (*Faith* 155)

Unamuno also obviously had difficulties with family authorities due to his new religious convictions. In *Paz en la guerra*—Peace in War—Pachico, a character in the novel clearly modeled on Unamuno himself, gives up his religious practice in Madrid. For a time, he attended Church services regularly, then only on feast-days, and finally gave up altogether, seeing he no longer found any meaning in the act:

El primer curso iba a misa todos los días y comulgaba mensualmente, [. . .] Así es al salir de misa en la mañana de un domingo— [. . .]--se preguntó qué significase ya en él tal acto y lo abandonó desde entonces, sin desgarramiento alguno sensible por el pronto, como la cosa más natural del mundo” (1:53).

During the first year of school he went to Mass every day and to Communion once a month. [. . .] Thus it is that leaving Mass one Sunday morning [. . .] – he asked himself what such a ritual could mean for him, and he stopped going from that day on. He suffered no soul-wrenching for the moment, for it seemed the most natural thing in the world. (*Peace in War* 69)

However, on one trip home, his uncle noticed the change. Drawing on the youth’s memory of his mother, he leaves Pachico emotionally drained and in tears. In fact, on his mother’s death anniversary, his uncle manipulated Pachico to confess and return to the religion of his childhood. Pachico fought through a crisis of retrogression with an old faith and struggled for rebirth. The irony of the priest’s advice against reading the *Soliloquies* of Augustine, as

being too strong, still had a further negative impact on Pachico and, as we may surmise, on Unamuno. Pachico, upon leaving the confessional, disillusioned with the effort, said to himself: "The poor man probably thinks I haven't read the *Soliloquies*, or I'm still suckling at the breast...." And Unamuno continues: "Pachico, once the crisis passed, returned to pursue the course of his own ideas, avoiding all conversation with his uncle" (70).

Unamuno moved from wanting to be a saint ("soñaba ser santo"—"dreaming of being a saint" [*Recuerdos* 111]) to the identification of faith with sincerity, tolerance, and mercy (*La fe* 273). Leaving high-school in love with knowledge, his philosophical readings led him to believe more in human intelligence and see the shame that we do not understand each other, "y es lástima grande que no logremos entendernos"—'it's a great pity that we can't understand each other' (*Recuerdos* 105).

So we see that the first and most tangible outcome of religious change in Newman and Unamuno was a retirement into themselves and their personal conscience. The search for truth, well in keeping with their temperaments, was constantly stimulated. There is no doubt that Evangelical spirituality had a lasting influence on Newman as did Catholic spirituality on Unamuno, not only due to the questioning of former doctrinal convictions, but also due to the rigors of their moral demands to seek truth. Intellectual curiosity, personal study, and an ethical preoccupation within an environment of academic freedom and non-coercive authority were critical for both Newman and Unamuno's judgments in conscience on their teenage conversions, masters, and ideas.

Thus, what concerns us in our understanding of conscience and coercion in teenagers is to notice how, first, their teachers were worried about Newman and Unamuno following their own opinions rather than received authority. Second, in their adolescent decisions, we see Newman and Unamuno making a break with those authorities and their books. The impact of their changes of conviction was not only an emotional assurance of truth, but also an adherence to a different doctrine due to their free search for truth, and a way of life in accord with their convictions.

Their changes were such in so far as their consciences decided what truth and ethics wanted of them, there and then (*La fe* 266). But when that previous God of truth, who gave them those ideas, now was calling them personally to both moral and intellectual dissent, not mentioned by their religious authorities, Newman and Unamuno are ready to walk alone that extra mile. Their lives were for God speaking in their conscience first, and then in books, teachers, and doctrines second.

Conscience is based on "two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator" (*Apologia* 16). "Dios en nuestros espíritus es Espíritu y no Idea, amor y no dogma, vida y no lógica" (*La fe* 266), "God in our spirits is Spirit and not Idea, love and not dogma, life and not logic" (*Faith* 154). Belief in conscience as divine and supreme is the end of tyranny of mind and life. Even for teenagers.

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([1]) All translations are by the author.