A TOAST TO CONSCIENCE:

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE IN JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

by

KEVIN BRENDAN FAGAN

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>AN ORDINARY CHILD</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>MYSELF AND MY CREATOR</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>OXFORD MADE US CATHOLICS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>TWO ANSWERS TO LIBERALISM</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>BLESSINGS OF FRIENDS</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>A STRANGE LOVE OF SICILY</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>DEAD TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>CONSCIENCE AND REASON</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>GOING TO THOSE I DO NOT KNOW</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI.</td>
<td>CONSCIENCE AS A MORAL SENSE</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.</td>
<td>THE VOICE OF GOD?</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII.</td>
<td>CHURCH, STATE, AND CONSCIENCE</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV.</td>
<td>INFALLIBILITY AND CONSCIENCE</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV.</td>
<td>DUTIES AND RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI.</td>
<td>WAS NEWMAN TOO LIBERAL?</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII.</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Anyhow the true judgment about me lies,
not with clubs or with coteries, but in my own acts.

*Letters and Diaries*

“What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?”¹

Mr. Kingsley’s pamphlet comes to mind as we seek today the meaning of Newman’s oft quoted after-dinner toast to conscience.

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.²

The *Apologia* itself offers us the key Newman himself wished to give to what he “means.” Rather than go by books, we ought go by persons.³ In our search for Newman’s thought on conscience vis-à-vis the religious authorities of his beliefs, we pursue that “living intelligence by which I [Newman] write, argue, and act.”⁴

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¹ *Apo.* Preface, 11.
³ *LD* xxii. 158.
⁴ *Apo.* Ibid.
In fact, Newman considered the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, wherein the toast is contained, his "last publication." We may rightly apply his own historical and theoretical method in the *Apologia* and *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* to Newman's thought on conscience as he lived it throughout his life, and to which he gave long meditation as related in the *Letter*.

Our method shall be interdisciplinary, based on the philosophy of religion in the *Grammar of Assent*, but open to the historical method of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the personal, concrete, touch of the *Apologia*, and the theological horizon of the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*. In fact, in the *Grammar*, Newman sought to investigate "natural truths," rather than revealed ones. Here, likewise, we wish to deal with the natural truth of conscience vis-à-vis authority as applicable to all humans independent, but not exclusive, of their religious beliefs.

With Newman, we believe that this philosophical basis is the best.

An evil time is upon us.
Principles are being adopted as starting points, which contradict what we know to be axioms.
It follows that the only controversy which is likely to do good, is philosophical.7

As to our hermeneutic principle, it shall be that established in the *Essay*:

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5 *LD* xxv. 29
6 GA 93
7 *LD* xxiv. 74.
ideas are in the writer and reader of the revelation, not the inspired text itself; and the question is whether those ideas which the letter conveys from writer to reader, reach the reader at once in their completeness and accuracy on his first perception of them, or whether they open out in his intellect and grow to perfection in the course of time.  

Hence, here, we wish to read Newman not only in the text of the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk from where the toast to conscience comes, but rather in a more global view of how Newman himself, the writer of the toast, perfected his ideas of conscience and religious authority over the course of his life. So, to a certain degree, we are paralleling his treatment of doctrine in the Church in An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine by not only reading a teaching in a text, but also seeing the whole development of an idea over time. In the Apologia, his aim was merely to “state the facts” rather than expound Catholic doctrine.  

Likewise, in this essay, we do not wish to isolate the concrete, living, Newman, from his global horizon of truth, revelation, conscience and authority.

Besides, following the distinction of the Grammar of Assent we are concerned with that “personal assent” of conscience to religious authority, that is, the act of faith rather than the content of that faith. So, the argument of religious authority is considered from the point of view of personal conscience. That is, we are concerned with how Newman viewed different aspects of religious authority during his life.

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6 Dev. 56.
8 GA 94
So, as this essay advances, we seek to find in Newman a process of reasoning starting off from his own natural conscience as a child, moving on in his life to the acceptance or rejection of certain religious authorities with their teaching and commands. This latter principle, we will argue, implies a liberty of conscience vis-à-vis religious authority. Hence, we hope to show that Newman followed consistently a path such as to secure us against hopeless mistakes and emancipate us from the capricious ipse dixit of authority.\textsuperscript{11}

Therefore, the thrust of this dissertation shall be to parallel the method of the Apologia Pro Vita Sua with an Apologia Pro Dictu Suo (an apology for his saying). We seek to analyze key periods of Newman's life in chronological order, combining writings and decisions, focusing our attention on his teaching and life which bear on conscience, and thus clarifying a meaning to his toast to conscience in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. 211.
CHAPTER II

An Ordinary Child

To a mind thus carefully formed upon the basis of its natural conscience, the world, both of nature and of man, does but give back a reflection of those truths about the One Living God, which have been familiar to it from childhood.

An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent

To prove his point that there is "an instinct of the mind recognizing an external Master in the dictate of conscience,"¹ Newman sketches in the Grammar of Assent a phenomenology of conscience in the mind of a child, or rather, "an ordinary child." There is like an "impulse of nature," which recognizes a Moral Governor in the 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 truth 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.²

¹ GA 102.
² Ibid. 103.
The importance of Newman's 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. Newman gives the example of a child offending his parents and placing himself in the presence of God.

The application to other religious authorities is also drawn by Newman. All other 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 oral, 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 Revelation; it does not require any knowledge of Scripture, nor of the history or teaching of the Catholic Church.⁴

Revelation is a great “addition” of fullness and exactness to our mental image of the Divine Personality and Attributes.⁴ 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, his parents’ authority and teaching. Later on, for the believer, conscience

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³ Ibid. 107.
⁴ Ibid.
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 God is first known directly by conscience, according to Newman.

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 an obedience to a "kindly Light." where there is "one step enough for me." This natural link between God and duty, as brought out in the Grammar of Assem., in each one's conscience from childhood sets the stage for our own reading of Newman's childhood, considering Newman as "an ordinary child."

How does this conscience develop and grow? In these same pages, Newman speaks of the divine image being strengthened and developed by "informations external to ourselves." Applying our method of reading Newman through Newman's life, let us examine key details of his own conscience as a child vis-à-vis authority, paralleled to his teaching on conscience in a child.

In John Henry's mind, the world of "nature and of man" are somewhat a mirror where the child attains these first truths on conscience. In his own case, certain

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5 From the poem, "Lead, Kindly Light," in VV 156. The verse reads: "Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see The distant shore - one step enough for me."

6 GA 103-107.

7 Ibid. 103.

8 Ibid. 105.
informations 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 divine providence helping that infant discover the meaning of conscience. God and our duty are thus both intertwined in a manner “singularly congenial to the mind.” due to the fact that the growing human person goes beyond the mere shapes and aspects of goodness. The child knows good things, persons and actions, and immediately goes beyond to a sense of God.⁹

As Newman looked back at this life and faced surprise after surprise, these truths held. So, no event in a life is indifferent or purposeless. Indeed, unforeseen and unusual circumstances can force untold influence on the development of each one’s conscience. The Apologia would never have been born without Kingsley, the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk without Gladstone, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine without his death to the Anglican Church.¹⁰ The world of “nature and man” is the horizon on which Newman walked his path. These ideas are clearly expressed in the whole thrust of the Apologia. Newman’s “Secretum meum mihi” (my secret is mine) made him “rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator.”¹¹ 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 infancy.

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⁹ Ibid. 103 - 104.

¹⁰ Newman’s “death to the Anglican Church” will be addressed in Chap. VIII.

¹¹ Apo. 16.
The "world of nature and of man" which reflected a sense of God in Newman's conscience as a child were his home and family. These memories of places and people are linked in Newman to his concept of God and, hence, to his teaching on the presence of God in conscience. Reminiscing these events meant for Newman remembering the same God he knew in conscience as a child, echoing his teaching on conscience as being an innate personal relationship with a living God.

One vivid memory of his childhood was the image of a huge house in the countryside near London, isolated in a field of greenery, illuminated in the evening with the fleeting glimmer of candles burning in honor of Admiral Nelson, the victor at Trafalgar. This was Grey's Court at Ham near Richmond, some miles from the hustle and bustle of London. The thought of this immense and quiet home made such an impression on Newman that much later in life he affirmed he was able to recall the slightest detail although he had seen the house only once or twice since his youth. Newman, sensitive to his own history as the dwelling-place of God in his conscience, will later search history for the dwelling-place of God in the Church.

The first authority figure in Newman's "world of man" was, of course, his father, a banker who wished to give his family the peace of the countryside. Nevertheless, hard hit by the financial troubles after Waterloo, Mr. Newman acquired the craft of the

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12 GA 106.
13 LD xx. 46.
14 In the introduction to An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine Newman wished to use in controversy "the testimony of our most natural informant concerning the doctrine and worship of Christianity, viz., the history of eighteen hundred years," 29.
brewer. This change of fortune brought an end to stability and security at home. No doubt a lesson to the child John Henry on the fragility of what is human. Towards the end of his life, he found again the “poor book” of violin music used in his infancy. This “voice from the grave” had to be auctioned after his father went bankrupt. “What a world of history,” he sighed, “has any single family in it, which perishes like the leaves in Autumn.”

Another constant trait in Newman’s sense of conscience related to his father was his pride in being a gentleman and an English gentleman at that. Kingsley had accused Newman of untruthfulness, but John Henry felt confident of his acquittal by his fellow Englishmen. He considered them “the most suspicious and touchy of mankind,” but he would rather be an Englishmen than belong to any other race. In his writings Newman reveals some of his father’s traits which attracted both esteem and admiration. As an English gentleman, his culture was that of a liberal member of the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century. An avid lover of books and music, Newman’s childhood religiosity was without doubt more conformist than profound, but, nonetheless, more interested in sincere convictions than outward manifestations. Later on, we see the adult Newman lament the extravagances in some external exaggerations of Marian devotions, from which the “national good sense” has protected English Catholics.

John Henry inherited from his mother the “Bible Religion” of which he was so proud. Aided by his grandmother and Aunt Elizabeth, Newman was introduced to the

13 LD xxv. 352.
16 Apo. 8.
17 Diff. ii. 99-100.
sacred texts, and the Bible remained the manual, par excellence, for all of his religious life. The text spoke as much to his eyes as to his mind, and the impressions which he received from it day after day were both aesthetic as well as religious. Bible history revealed some strong and beautiful images to him. His memory then collected them as precious symbols, burying them in the deepest recesses of his mind, in order that they might never be lost. Much later, they will spring forth from him spontaneously. Every sermon in St. Mary’s at Oxford and at Birmingham, every letter to diverse friends, every work of apologetics, are already present in germ because of this first biblical initiation. Linked to the text is the revelation of a personal God, living at the very heart of history, so rich in personages and heroes, that filled the child’s subconscious with a richness of images of the divine. The notion “God and myself” is in the heart of Scripture, at the heart of the Apologia and at the heart of his concept of conscience.

It [the Bible] is the best book of meditations which can be, because it is divine. This is why we see such multitudes in France and Italy giving up religion altogether. They have not impressed upon their hearts the life of our Lord and Saviour as given in the Evangelists. They believe merely with the intellect, not with the heart. Argument may oversee a mere assent of the reason, but not a faith founded in a personal love for the Object of Faith. They quarrel with their priests, and then they give up the Church. We can quarrel with men, we cannot quarrel with a book.¹⁹

John Henry, therefore, inherited a contented and tolerant Anglican religion, the Via Media, always moderate in its enthusiasm and formal in its rites. His sincere efforts in conscience to add depth to its doctrine will later prove its undoing. However, his

¹⁸ Apo. 16.
¹⁹ LD xxvi. 87.
childhood religion enjoyed the King James Bible as an ancient patrimony, guarded more with fidelity to tradition than with personal passion. Later on, here too, Newman would see the weakness of such a “Bible Religion.”

The Religion of England is “the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible” - the consequence is that to strike a blow at its inspiration, veracity or canonicity, is directly to aim at whatever there is of Christianity in the country. 20

The other horizon in Newman’s conscience as a child were his brothers and sisters. John Henry was the oldest, followed by brothers Charles and Francis. While John Henry was serious and studious, Charles was capricious and irresolute. Lured by fancy and luck, he lived the life of a wanderer, always dissatisfied, always searching. Francis, some four years younger than John Henry, changed from docility to jealousy in manhood, assuming religious positions contrary to those of his famous brother. John felt obliged to refuse to meet Frank “in a familiar way or to sit at table” with him, since he considered him “a teacher and organizer of a new sect.” 21 This encounter with envy and heresy, as he saw it, was to continue through most of Newman’s life. How he was to handle each difficulty would ultimately define his understanding of conscience as a personal relationship with God, independent of human and even authoritative approval of his life and teaching.

“The world of women” of his three sisters also presented contrasts for this “ordinary child.” Harriett and Jemima both married clergymen, but it was Jemima to

20 Ibid. xix. 482–483.
21 LD v. 315.
whom John Henry revealed his innermost thoughts. Before his change to Catholicism he warned her of the forthcoming step towards "those whom I do not know," because "everything that one does honestly, sincerely, with prayer, with advice, must turn to good." This latter statement will be echoed in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk when Newman will speak of the supremacy of conscience over accepted authority in exceptional cases.

The death of his youngest sister Mary brought home to Newman "the world, both of nature and of man." Though only able to talk about her "in the third person," the beauty of nature made him feel more intensely than ever

the transitory nature of this world. Dear Mary seems embodied in every tree and hid behind every hill. What a veil and curtain this world of sense is! beautiful, but still a veil.

Sixty years later, he would write to Pusey that "I do not exaggerate when I say that I have not even now got over my Sister's death."

So, we see that Newman's text quoted at the beginning of this chapter on natural conscience knowing those truths about the living God through a reflection of the world of a child can be aptly applied to Newman himself. The force of his argument in favor of supremacy of conscience is that God is present in one's conscience since childhood and

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22 To Mrs. J. Mozley, 15 Mar. 1845.
23 Ibid. 31 Aug. 1843.
24 Diff ii. 257-258.
25 LD ii. 61.
26 Ibid. 69.
27 LD xxviii. 406.
that the events of the world around a child are part of that development of conscience as the person grows. Besides, the supremacy of God is perceived by conscience in its very concept of right and wrong from infancy. Newman’s childhood was his own example to himself of such a natural conscience. His long journey towards “a distant shore” had begun.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28} From the poem “Lead, Kindly Light.” VV 156.
CHAPTER III

MYSELF AND MY CREATOR

When I was fifteen, . . . a great change of thought took place in me.

I fell under the influences of a definite Creed.

Apologia Pro Vita Sua

If Newman's childhood is itself a vivid example of his teaching on human conscience being natural and consisting necessarily in a relationship with a personal God, the next stage in Newman's life brought him to the experience of a religious conversion. What will be interesting in our analysis of this phenomenon will be to see how his concept of conscience reacted to a personal experience of God. The key task will be to see how Newman's conversion was not purely subjective as an emotional phenomenon, empty of all objective reality, but rather there was a reference to a revealed creed, a religious authority, and a responsibility to God as a way of life.¹

This question should set the stage to answer a deeper concern about conscience vis-à-vis authority. If God is the authority over natural conscience as explained in

¹ Apo. 16.
Chapter II, how can we avoid the trap of subjectivism? Can Newman's theory of natural conscience lead to a reduction of Religion to a "religious a priori", due to man's "sense and taste of the infinite" in the manner of Schleiermacher? Was Newman not answering rationalistic criticism of his Bible religion by adopting an introspective Kantian a priori approach to God where the roots of religion lie in the structure of the human mind? Would Newman's doctrine of a supremacy of conscience over authority owing to the relationship of conscience to God not be the death-knell to revelation and church authority? Later, and logically, by putting conscience above the Pope, is Newman not playing into the ancient temptation of "being like God"?

Admittedly, his first conversion at age fifteen was that of an adolescent with all that his limited maturity implied. Nevertheless, Newman himself attributed life-long importance to this moment of religious conversion. After he became a Cardinal, he confided to Anne Mozley, the 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.

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4 Gen. 3:5.

5 Moz. i. 19.
The boy before the conversion clung to the upright morality learnt at home. However, some touch of superstition was still remaining. At the beginning of the *Apologia* he stated how

> even though I had formed no religious conviction . . . I used constantly to cross myself on going into the dark.\(^6\)

Before his conversion, he had taken the road towards deism, based on the humanistic and liberal model characteristic of the beginning of the 19th. century. Newman had ventured into the literary frontiers of the philosophies of the preceding century where the seeds of doubt flourished. At age fourteen, having studied *The Age of Reason* by Paine, he did not appear to have been frightened by the rationalism of Hume any more than by that of Voltaire.\(^7\) We notice no anti-clerical bias, no fear of so many people between him and God, but rather a moralistic approach to religion as simply doing one's duty. As Newman approached his first religious conversion, his early religious upbringing seemed to recede and his critical powers were advancing towards rationalism.

The conversion took place during the summer of 1816. 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 which Mr. Newman directed. At Ealing, he found a discreet and dedicated scholar in the Rev. Walter Mayers who was naturally serious and strong of character. This shy man was above all a man of God, preoccupied with the Gospel message. Mayers always had a yearning for a more apostolic mission and pastoral

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\(^6\) *Apo.* 14.

\(^7\) Ibid. 15-16.
ministry. He hid the simplicity and depth of his faith under the austere appearance of the rigid professor, indifferent to sympathy or 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.

In religion, Rev. Mayers was a convinced supporter of Evangelicalism. The essence of the Evangelical stream 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 adherence 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 moralism which gave color to the piety and conduct of Evangelicals.

Newman's new birth of conversion betrayed 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." So, yielding to a flood of emotions, his heart let itself go in a touching avowal of gratitude and love for its 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

* Ibid. 16.
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 *Apologetia*, 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 based on this certainty itself. The latter would involve the vicious circle of subjectivity, certitude based on this same certitude. Rather Newman noticed a great change of thought, and continued:

> 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.

What is important in this text is that Newman felt certain of both aspects of his conversion. It was 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

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9 Ibid.
strength of emotional certitude but rather the fact of divine revelation as understood by John Henry.

Applying this distinction to conscience, we deduce that conscience for Newman in this conversion was not supreme over his previous superstitious and deist convictions because it was certain about itself. Rather conscience had found an objective reason for conversion. It was the same God who spurred both personal love and revelation about Himself as part of this friendship. So we see that, for Newman, the same conscience that found God was prepared to receive divine revelation. God who gave man a conscience as part of his being also gave him as part of that conscience the possibility of knowing God further in conscience through some revelation. In this sense, Newman later would write that conscience is a messenger from Him both "in nature and in grace."\(^\text{10}\)

A second characteristic of this conversion according to the *Apologia* was his understanding of final perseverance. On the one hand, Newman asserted the consciousness of his inward conversion and certainty that it would last until the next life with his election to eternal glory. On the other, he had no consciousness that "this belief would lead me to be careless about pleasing God."\(^\text{11}\) Hence, besides the inner consciousness and certainty which could easily be argued as a subjective emotion, and maybe even a passing one at that, there was a clear link between that certainty and a desire to live accordingly. So, Newman did not fall into the quicksand of a subjective

\(^{10}\) *Diff. ii.* 248

\(^{11}\) *Apo.* 16
conscience based on his feelings, independent and apart from any personal commitment in his lifestyle, but rather saw a clear link between faith and works.

However, his sense of truth and his sense of obligation were both directed towards a Person. His religious faith was neither towards a creed nor an authority nor a virtuous life in themselves, but rather towards his Creator. This God revealed Himself in a truth, an authority, and a way of life. In this Person, therefore, for Newman, was the force of dogma, authority and morality. So, the need to follow conscience towards a creed and conversion was ultimately the need to follow God.

Newman's conversion, therefore, was like that of Evangelicals. There was the same isolation of conscience free from beings and things, a sense of being alone and dependent on God, with the same assurance of being saved. We find the same evangelical openness of the young Newman to the call of living life to the full, the same wish to conquer self in pursuit of the absolute, the same enjoyment of a lifelong purpose and the same need of an ideal. In this text of the Apologia we note the admiration of the young disciple who has found his human and divine master, not through discussion and reasoning, but through reasons that only the heart knows. Future years will rub off some of the externals, including the departure of his mentor, but a durable foundation will subsist. Profound values of personal salvation, definite creed, and service to God will bear abundant fruit in Newman's future endeavor to follow conscience.

Parallel to the Apologia, many confidences in the Journal, written at the time of his conversion, are indeed helpful for understanding Newman's state of mind. A first annotation:
I recollect, in 1815 I believe, thinking that I should like to be virtuous but not religious. There was something in the latter idea I did not like. Nor did I see the meaning of loving God.\footnote{Moz. i. 19.}

So, our view is confirmed that Newman before this conversion was seeking a moral perfection, rather than a religious fidelity. A call to love God made less sense than the demands of a conscience characterized by sincerity and uprightness. His former readings drew him into the ways of a deism perfectly reconcilable with a certain moral rectitude. However, it is clear that the young Newman realized that virtue should be lived in order to be true. His conversion was to change an emotionless moralistic theory into a personal encounter with God.

As to Mayers, we note both his influence and its limits. Mayers had influenced the lonely Newman in the course of those months of vacation in the empty school. The shy teacher was able to express his better self in their conversations. Gaining the confidence of Newman he revealed to him the true meaning of life, the seriousness of the call that God addresses to every soul, and the inestimable reward of conversion. The grave warnings of Mayers detached Newman from an incipient deism towards the call of the austere life in God. Newman seemed captivated, as we see from his letter as a Cardinal and the \textit{Apologia}, quoted above.\footnote{Notes 5 and 9 above.} Exulted at the encounter of God’s presence, Newman had no doubt of his spiritual experience of a second birth.
But Newman also soon saw Mayers’ limits. Beyond the enthusiastic certainty, Newman sought the reason why of his conversion and certainty of perseverance. The strength of his emotions did not block out the procedure of his mind. Though accepting Mayers as his teacher, Newman did not rest 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 God. While preserving the essence of his conversion experience as a personal relationship with God who loves and saves him, Newman showed his independence of mind not to identify God with those who claimed to be his representatives.

In December 1816, in fact, Newman had gone to Oxford. Mayers gave him a work to read, the *Private Thoughts* 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.\(^{14}\)

The above not only reveals the fears of a master losing his disciple but 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

\(^{14}\) K 115.
as the “only authentic source” is as 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. As we wrote in a previous publication on cult-tactics 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. 15

Newman on the contrary would write in a work intimately involved in his later conversion to Catholicism: “An argument is needed, unless Christianity is to abandon the province of argument.” 16 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. 17

Obedience, however, though not “absolute”, is rendered unto Mayers. Newman read the recommended devotional books: Beveridge, Doddridge, Law, and Romaine, “all of the school of Calvin.” He listened to the sermons which led him towards

15 This writer, Cult Tactics in the Confessions in “Briaff Briefly,” (April 95): 4.
16 Dev. 31.
17 Diff. ii. 243.
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." More and more, the thought of predestination took possession of his spirit and an obsession with eternal salvation accompanied it. Newman was seeking to persuade himself that the conversion of 1816 really was the "second birth" which the books described and which an all too impressive master announced to him. He kept this illusion until much later when his inner life grew strong and when the realities of the pastoral ministry showed him the inconsistency of this "detestable doctrine" of predestination.

Besides, his conversion was not exactly according to the book, as is evident from future testimonies in 1821 and 1826:

I speak of conversion with great diffidence, being obliged to adopt the language of books. For my own feelings, as far as I remember, were so different from any account I have ever read that I dare not go by what may be an individual case. In the matter in question, that is conversion, my own feelings were not violent but a returning to, a renewing of principles, under the power of the Holy Spirit, which I already felt, and in a measure acted on when young.

So, we see a conversion that is *iuxta modum* both in its intellectual acceptance of its Master and the books he recommended.

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18 Moz. i. 21.
19 Ibid.
20 *Apo.* 17.
21 Moz. i. 109.
As to his life style, his "not being careless about pleasing God,"

sought to copy the models proposed by his masters and books. Applying himself to

restricting his life within the limits of the straight and narrow way, he made resolutions

and cultivated virtue, however imperfect. The spectacle he offered his family was one of

a solitary soul, and one not really understood. Newman reflected:

Although it is far from pleasant to give my reasons, inasmuch as I shall

appear to set myself up, and to be censuring recreations, and those who

indulge in them; presenting my scruples with humility and a due

obedience to my parents; open to conviction, and ready to obey in a matter

so dubious as this is, and to act against my judgment if they command,

thus satisfying at once my own conscience and them. 23

So we see that the first and most tangible outcome of the conversion was the

shutting up of the young man within himself. The desire for perfection, which was well

in keeping with his temperament, was stimulated. There is no doubt that the Evangelical

spirituality had a lasting influence on Newman, not only because of the certainty of its

doctrinal convictions which fell away quickly enough, but also due to the rigors of the

moral demands to which he subjected himself. Judgment on the sinful world, the denying

of himself, and the strict preoccupation with spiritual progress were to be retained later in

the depths of Newman's religious sensibility.

Nevertheless, a new element over and beyond the call to conversion in

Evangelicalism became present in Newman. That same autumn, the noble and

22 Apo. 16.

23 Moz. i. 19.
independent spirit he will later admire in Bishop Dupanloup, brought forth in Newman the desire to live a celibate life. He had no mistake about the fact that it would be "the will of God that I should lead a single life." Newman saw celibacy as part of his calling to missionary work among the heathen and his feeling of separation from the world.

What concerns us in our understanding of conscience and its liberty in Newman is to notice how, first, his tutor was worried about Newman following his own opinions rather than received authority. Second, in the decision for celibacy we see Newman made a break with that authority and with what its books had taught him. The impact of his conversion was not only an emotional assurance of salvation, an adherence to a definite creed due to its divine source, and a way of life pleasing to God. His conversion was only such in so far as his conscience decided that such and such was what God wanted of him there and then. But when that same God who gave him those assurances, creeds and life-style, was now calling him to a personal choice such as celibacy not mentioned either by creed, master, or book, Newman was ready to walk the extra mile. His life was for God speaking in his conscience first, and then for Mr. Mayers. Conscience is based on

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24 Newman praised the "noble and independent" Bishop Dupanloup for "daring to do what we think right" (LD xxiii. 396).

25 Apo. 19.
"two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my
Creator."26

26 Ibid. 16.
CHAPTER IV

OXFORD MADE US CATHOLICS

Catholics did not make us Catholics; Oxford did.

Letters and Diaries

When, in December 1877, Newman received out of the blue an invitation from W.S. Wayte, the President of Trinity College, Oxford, to become the college's first honorary fellow, John Henry wrote to Bishop Ullathorne, 'to see once more ... the place where I began the battle of life ... is a prospect almost too much for me to bear.'

Newman's 'battle of life' did indeed begin in Oxford, but the Apologia notes his discovery of the fundamental tenet of religion as he initiated his struggle, i.e., to follow truth wherever it led him. The link between 'the salvation of my soul', truth, religion, and liberty of conscience are evident even as he took the road to Oxford.

At Oxford, the undergraduate Newman credited one key author as close to being the savior of his soul. The writer was Thomas Scott and the book, his autobiography, The

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1 LD xxviii. 283-4.
2 Apo. 17.
Force of Truth (1779). Why did John Henry attribute a kind of immortality to Scott’s book? Therein Newman found the “fundamental truth of religion: that vigorous independence of mind which follows truth wherever it led him.” The basic tenet of religion was indeed the salvation of one’s soul, as Newman lived in his first conversion. Now, at Oxford, such a salvation was seen as achieved only in the personal search for truth. Besides, Newman realized that the search for truth demands liberty to follow truth wherever one finds it.

So the authority of a religious figure, for Newman, became a value only in so far as truth is personally encountered in that authority. Therefore, a lack of liberty of thought in seeking the truth invalidates the whole religious process. If there is no liberty of inquiry, how can truth be personally attained? And if truth is not personally attained, how sincere is that religious conviction, and how near to hypocrisy may be external rituals and acquiescence?

Liberty of conscience, as Newman learnt from Scott as being “the vigorous independence of mind to follow truth wherever it led him,” is indeed the “fundamental truth of religion.” And it is precisely so, because it is the natural right of the human person to seek truth. Hence Newman thought that no religious authority can deny the

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3 Ibid.


5 Apo. 17.
right to a human being to seek truth. Using the terminology of natural law, religious authority cannot impose religious duties contrary to human nature, since grace presupposes and perfects nature. Aquinas applies this principle to the right of Jewish parents to educate their children according to their faith.

On the contrary, the opposite to Newman's learning of the value of liberty of conscience is illustrated in the opposite need to control people by controlling their knowledge. Information control is considered part and parcel of any totalitarian organization.

The other virtue Newman noted in Scott was his opposition to Antinomianism. This doctrine, recurrent at different times in Christian history, taught that Christians are by grace set free from the need of observing any moral law. Applying this doctrine to liberty of conscience, religious authorities would identify themselves with the divine, denying to their subjects the moral right to question either their teaching or commands.

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8 We may imagine Newman, Aquinas, or Augustine seeking truth in an organization where “people are not allowed to talk to each other about anything critical of the leader, doctrine, or organization. Members must spy on each other and report improper activities or comments to leaders. New converts are not permitted to talk to each other without an older member present to chaperone them. Most importantly, people are told to avoid contact with ex-members or critics. Those who could provide the most information are the ones to be especially shunned. Some groups even go so far as to screen members’ letters and phone calls.” In Steven Hassan, *Combating Cuij Mind Control* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1988), 65.

9 Cult deprogrammer Rick Ross, in his foreword to *See No Evil*, states: “A prospective member of a religious group should . . . think twice if members are not allowed to question: if isolation and spiritual elitism are promoted by an ethnocentric theology; if independent thinking is discouraged or described as rebellion against God; if the only truth is the leader’s truth; or if the leader is above “man’s law” and accountable only to ‘God’.” Tim Madigan, *See No Evil: Blind Devotion and Bloodshed in David Koresh’s Holy War* (Fort Worth: Summit Group, 1993), xi.
If Scott considered the fundamental truth of religion a vigorous independence of mind to follow truth wherever it be found, a distinct authoritarian approach would consider that “error has no rights.”

Therefore, in this latter perspective, the seeker after truth has no right to either seek or propagate error which is known to him as truth. Hence, religious authority should control what their subjects may seek and know. There would be no room for freedom of inquiry and of conscience. Newman, following Scott, rejected that approach.

The Oxford Newman found at age sixteen was suitable for the task of seeking truth in freedom of conscience. The intimacy and quiet of their sheltering walls, which maintained the traditions of the University, intrigued him. The country in particular enchanted Newman; those charming rolling meadows, divided by groves, enclosed the city in isolation and rustic beauty like an incomparable jewel. From the very first day, Newman felt himself to be fully in accord with this city and the Oxonian tradition. So much so that on taking leave of Oxford in 1846 - ‘for good’ according to the Apologia - he considered for years the snap-dragon growing on the walls opposite his freshman’s rooms as the emblem of his own perpetual residence ‘even unto death in my University.’

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11 Apo. 17.

12 Apo. 183.
Though convinced by Scott of liberty of conscience, Newman remained the religious follower of the predestination doctrine of Mayers, together with a certain apathy and aloofness towards others. Seeking truth involved the certitude that he was in truth. Others were not only in error, but maybe even unable to seek truth. For the doctrine of predestination meant that one may think one is saved while presuming ‘others’ are damned. The road from self-righteousness, confidence of one’s salvation, conviction of the damnation of others, may finally lead to the certitude in conscience that others are worth little, if anything at all. The final step, which Newman did not take, would be to deny them liberty of conscience. We note Newman’s elitist’s attitude, condemnation of others, and isolation, in an early letter from Oxford to his father:

Besides, . . . I felt solitary . . . I am glad, not because I wish to be apart from them and ill-natured, but because I really do not think I should gain the least advantage from their company.

Influenced by Mayers, this predestined youth feared being false to that grace if he even deviated one inch from the lines stipulated by his master. From the first day, we see Newman shut himself off, refusing the company and excesses of student life. The common pleasures and tradition of lax morals in a cloister-like milieu, typical of university campuses like Oxford, seemed to him a plague and work of Satan. Newman was particularly disgusted by the “Gaudy,” the traditional day of enjoyment when students indulged themselves in noisy drinking parties. His condemnation of these

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13 Hence the ambiguity attributed to Christianity of demanding liberty of conscience when weak, and denying the same to others when in power. Martina, 286.

14 Moz. i. 26-27.
excesses gave him a pretext for isolation. Happy to "live like a hermit," Newman overdosed himself in inflexibility, narrow-mindedness and scrupulosity.\(^\text{15}\)

In the \textit{Apologia} Newman remembers he was very much alone:

I used to take my daily walk by myself. I recollected once meeting Dr. Copleston, then Provost, with one of the fellows. He turned around, and with the kind courteousness which sat so well on him, made a bow and said, "\textit{Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus}."\(^\text{16}\)

According to his then evangelical belief system, there are only the good and the bad, them and us, God and Satan, the perfect and the imperfect, the predestined and the damned. And Newman considered himself, by the grace of God, among the predestined. This simplistic ideology is another atom in the molecule of the denial of liberty of conscience to others, characteristic of an elitist religious mentality.\(^\text{17}\) And Newman's reaction was likewise typical of religious groups convinced of their salvation, to the exclusion of others. If control is not possible, isolation is necessary.\(^\text{18}\)

Linked to, and maybe because of, his moral rigidity, Newman realized he had an excess of timidity and "a trembling within himself." Hence, his failure to get honors at Trinity in 1820 did not surprise him too much. His mother was quick to reflect: "Your fault is a want of self-confidence and a dissatisfaction with yourself."\(^\text{19}\) Newman himself

\(^{15}\) \textit{Apo.} 16.

\(^{16}\) \textit{Apo.} 25. Copleston is quoting Cicero, \textit{De Officiis}, \textit{III}, 1, "Never less lonely than when alone."

\(^{17}\) Hassan, 80.

\(^{18}\) Madigan, 86.

\(^{19}\) \textit{Mo} i.. 51.
prayed that he not get honors if they were to be “the least cause of sin.” A puritanical view of human greatness as radically opposed to divine goodness, and hence a source of possible sin, is apparent. 20

A second lesson came with his winning the Oriel fellowship in 1822. Once again, he shut himself up more than ever in his interior solitude by a sort of auto-defense mechanism. Nevertheless, he would soon note, with great clarity of vision, that his moral austerity bordered on intransigence. It contained the germ of scorn and of arrogance:

We are apt to get censorious with respect to others as soon as we ourselves have adopted any new strictness. At least, that is the case with me. . . . Humility is the root of charity. 21

Nevertheless, all these struggles of conscience were not in vain. They contributed to assuring fidelity to the ideal of a religious life based on divine authority, even if, in this case, they were tinged by a Calvinistic, puritan spirit. Newman, now a fellow of Oriel, would gradually discover the gloomy vanity of a system which, under the cover of holiness and perfection, forced a man always to look at himself, at the risk of isolating self from others. Oriel, however, held a sort of peaceful humanism, often bordering on intellectual dilettantism, which accorded more weight to original ideas than to truth.

Leaving the authoritarianism of his former master, Mayers, Newman would be tempted by the authoritarianism of his own mind. Moving from a master giving himself divine authority, John Henry would live the opposite temptation of the individual playing

20 Apo. 38.
21 Moz. i. 70.
God with the graces of his own intellect. Out of liberty of thought and conscience towards truth and salvation, as Scott had taught him, Newman now saw the possibility of absolute liberty, absolute pride, absolute individualism, which a priori rejects all authority, except oneself. This Newman will call “Liberalism.” Having had an absolute master as Mayers pretended to be, Newman now was tempted to think of himself as a totally independent pupil. In this latter perspective, conscience is absolute freedom from all authority. One would then toast only to one’s conscience, never to another authority.22

The group of intellectuals, synonymous with this Liberalism, was given the bizarre name of “Noetics.” It was said of Whately, the most sagacious and most paradoxical among them, that he used the minds of his disciples as an anvil on which to forge ideas. John Henry was willing to applaud Whately for his “most exact mind” while he was “kind enough” to severely snub Newman’s first writings.23 Newman gave Whately the highest praise as being the first who taught him “to weigh my words and to be cautious in my statements.”24 John Henry thanked him for teaching him how to think and use his reason. More importantly, says the Apologia, he taught Newman not only how to think, but to think for himself:

He had done his work towards me or nearly so, when he had taught me to see with my own eyes and to walk with my own feet.25

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]


23 Ibid. 20.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. 22.
The strength of the Noetics, and of Liberalism, was to insist on personal assent and free inquiry, which Newman no doubt accepted. The temptation for John Henry was to give himself over to the mood in Oriel which also included a secret scorn "for Christian Antiquity." Liberty was no longer only a *conditio sine qua non* for religious belief, but religious revelation and authority were left out of the picture.26

As an epilogue on Whately, what is amazing for such a liberal spirit, are some later events on which Newman commented.27 Whately is offered the highest praise for his efforts to teach John Henry how to think and for his critique of Newman's works. Nevertheless, Newman later observes how "he made himself dead to me," and "inserted sharp things in his later works about me." 28

In these poignant passages, Newman outlined his reaction. John Henry preferred not to speak out on what would pain him so much. The differences of opinion brought out in mutual correspondence and in a friendly spirit on Newman's part finally brought him to follow "his [Newman's] reason" and conclude they could not get on together any longer. What seems important was Newman's final conclusion in the drama of their lost friendship. Whately's influence was wanting in a "higher respect" than intellectual advance. The Noetics had preferred intellectual to moral excellence. The ties of

26 Ibid. 24.
friendship had been broken. Desire for truth was linked to the desire for life, or salvation, as Newman said earlier about Scott.29

The Apologia also speaks of “very different influences” during these first years of Newman at Oxford. Newman mentions friends and books which helped him change his views. The underlying assumption is that John Henry was open to the wisdom of those who did not profess his religious views, be they evangelical, puritan, deistic, or liberal. Newman learnt to see with his own eyes and walk with his own feet in the presence of friends who made him question his former beliefs. The love they professed for the young Newman is linked to their love of reason.

The same link between immortality, wisdom, liberty and religion is found in another great searcher for truth ex umbris et imaginibus (out of shadows and pictures into truth).30 In Book III of the Confessions, St. Augustine was impressed by Cicero’s Hortensius. Feeling a longing for the immortality of wisdom, he desired “not to study one particular sect, but to love and seek and pursue and hold fast and strongly embrace wisdom itself, wherever found.”31 Augustine, however, did soon join a Manichee sect and had a long path towards a beauty, so new and yet so old.32 Augustine was able to free himself from the Manichees through sincere friends, personal questioning and free

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29 Ibid., 22-24.
30 Newman’s memorial tablet. Can be seen today at the Oratory in Birmingham.
32 Ibid. X, xcvii, 38.
inquiry. The final personal assent to the immortal wisdom of Christianity came by way of a liberty of thought to seek wisdom, wherever found, independent of whoever preached it. The parallel with Newman shows the value of liberty of conscience as a basis for finding truth in free inquiry and personal assent.\(^33\)

Like Augustine following an old friend, Helvius Vindicianus,\(^34\) Newman could seek truth because of the emotional influence of friends. There again, like with Mayers, Newman was never a devotee of blind obedience to his intellectual teachers. He learnt from them to think for himself, and ultimately thinking for himself meant he was not always thinking just like his leaders.

Going to, and starting at Oxford, John Henry Newman had already learnt the fundamental tenet of religion,

see with my own eyes; walk with my own feet.\(^35\)

\(^33\) This writer, "Cult Tactics in the Confessions," Braniff Briefly, (April, 1995), 4-6.

\(^34\) Ibid. IV, iv, 5

\(^35\) Apo. 21
An important tenet in Newman's thought on conscience and its liberty was his rejection of Liberalism as he found it historically in Oxford upon his arrival. The perspective under which we wish to view Newman in this dissertation is to understand his thought in the light of his life. A classic example of teaching based on his life was his resistance to Liberalism. Newman knew Liberalism in those early years and rejected it from then on. However, Newman insisted over and over on his use of the term "Liberalism" "as a Protestant . . . and . . . in connection with the circumstances under which that system of opinion came before me at Oxford."\(^1\)

On receiving the Cardinal's hat in 1879, Newman would proudly state:

\(^1\) *Apo*. Note A, "Liberalism."
To one great mischief [the spirit of Liberalism in religion]
I have from the first opposed myself.²

The epigraph to this chapter follows the stated purpose of the Apologia to “simply state the facts.” These words fit into Newman’s whole emphasis of going by persons, not by books.³ On arrival at Oriel in 1822, Newman had felt the power of the Noetics with their, by Newman’s definition, Liberalism. Their ideology had excluded faith by relying solely on reason. Devotion was likewise made superfluous by their knowledge.⁴

In fact, we may even note that Liberalism, as criticized by Newman, was an immanent philosophy which set up the individual as the ultimate judge of reality. But, according to Newman, the very fact of setting the individual human as the judge of revealed doctrines becomes contradictory. The nature of revelation is precisely to be beyond, and independent of, individual judgment. The strength of religious doctrines lies in their being divinely revealed. Liberalism then went in circles since it claimed that the individual must even understand something that need not be understood. For a Liberal, all truth must pass through the sieve of his own mind. And all religious authority is rejected a priori. Religious revelation and authority must be made to the measure of the individual’s mind. Hence, Newman concluded that Liberalism was ignorant of the very “constitution of the human mind.”⁵

² Biglietto Speech, Rome, May 11, 1879. To be discussed in Chapter XVI.
³ LD xxii, 158.
⁵ Ibid.
Newman's rejection of this Liberalism will help us understand the real liberty of conscience in Newman's thought and life. What John Henry did not discard was another kind of Liberalism. The Liberalism rejected by Newman was pointedly called a "false liberty of thought." He contrasts his use of the term to that of Montalembert and Lacordaire in France. Newman admitted his high admiration of these men, with whose ideology he enthusiastically concurred. The "liberty of conscience" invoked publicly by Montalembert in 1863, the year before the Apologia was published, is a freedom from coercion and respect for the individual conscience. Hence, we can logically conclude that Newman, by praising Montalembert, accepted this "liberty of thought."

Why did Newman reject this Protestant Oxonian Liberalism? Newman's change of mind did not come by study. Books - "intelligible processes of thought" - did play a role in Newman's "history of his opinions", but so also did "honest external means." In his critique of Liberalism, in fact, books seem to have no part. Rather his own weak body and his dear youngest sister's death stopped his moving towards Liberalism. "Two great blows rudely awakened him." Let us examine both events with their consequences against his "drift towards Liberalism."

The illness was a depression due to intellectual overwork which he brought on himself by assuming the burden of tutor in 1826. The temptation to take on too many

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6 Apo. 218. Note A. "Liberalism."

7 Discourses to the Catholic Congress at Malines. See Martina, 534 - 535.

8 Apo. 36.

9 Ibid. 24.
responsibilities remained with him for most of his life. Already in 1820, when he competed for honors at Trinity, he experienced a distressing lassitude, symptomatic of a state of extreme cerebral fatigue.\(^\text{10}\) The remedy was simple: go out, take some exercise, and walk in the open air. These prescribed walks had the added advantage of taking him away from the excitement of the common room and giving him more time for personal reflection.

To sister Jemima, he wrote: “It is so great a gain to throw off Oxford for a few hours.”\(^\text{11}\) With Harriet, there was an acknowledgment of another reason for peace and quiet: a desire to avoid the vanity of success:

> My ride of a morning is generally solitary; but I almost prefer being alone. When the spirits are good, everything is delightful in the view of the still nature which the country gives. . . . How desirable for me to get out of the stir and bustle of the world, and not to have the responsibility and weariness of success! Now, if I choose to wish a scheme, and in my solitary rides, I sometimes do, I should say, “Oh, for some small curacy of a few hundred a year, and no preferments, as the world calls it!”\(^\text{12}\)

These thoughts reveal a desire for perfection and silence; no doubt easier to achieve in obscurity than in the excitement of the intellectual discussions of the Noetics. Beyond that, Newman distrusted the seductions of the academic world. Liberalism had little to offer beyond intellectual advance. John Henry had realized the magical spell of the intellect was unable to satisfy the flight of the soul towards virtuous living.

\(^{10}\) Moz. i. 151-152.
\(^{11}\) Ibid. 172.
\(^{12}\) Ibid.
Linked to his rejection of mere academic success, John Henry remarked that ambition also must go, which also included a desire for influence. Being Tutor at Oriel, Newman was cautious even about a promising career with considerable influence over students. His illness of 1827 cooled the ambitions of his tutorship begun the year before. The preference for intellectual over moral excellence was defeated. His illness provoked solitary walks; then, solitary walks a detachment from the vanity of this world. Liberalism was found lacking.

Mary's death, on the other hand, on January 4th, 1828, came as a shock to Newman. Her memory absorbed him more and more. Besides the vanity of intellectual excellence mentioned above, her disappearance opened Newman to the thought of a world beyond the senses, the reality of a spiritual communion beyond the grave, the mysterious yet powerful presence of God in our life, and, finally, the reality of Death as the ultimate arbiter of all human life. Liberalism, with its immanent, individualistic, and human limitations had no answer to such a mystery.

To appreciate the impact and consequences of Mary's death on her brother, we may envisage the deep and ineffable friendship between the two. Its special nature was born in an intimacy of kindred spirits, quite unknown even to the family. The few extant letters of Mary Newman to her brother John or to her older sister, Harriet, reveal a deeply sensitive soul who knew how to hide her impulsive heart. One may guess the immediate harmonious agreement of John Henry with such a delicate and intuitive spirit.

\[\text{Apo. 22.}\]
At first, he had guided his young sister in her early studies. In spite of all his professorial seriousness, the influence of the older brother did not stop at the academic level. In Mary’s open and upright soul, John Henry’s deep interior life engendered a sort of fascination. Long before her brother’s future friends recognized his talents, Mary discerned something of the genius hidden behind his above-mentioned solitude.

A close communion of souls in the sharing of a common religious ideal remained in Newman after her death. Her memory drew him to the threshold of the invisible world, making him even more attentive to the realities inhabiting it. Thus did bereavement purify the Oriel tutor’s soul, deepening his sense of the world beyond and renewing his spiritual life. Their common partaking of the same profound reality of God produced a bond that death itself was unable to dissolve but rather strengthened in a renewed fidelity. Once again, Liberalism with its a priori rejection of the rationally unacceptable seemed inadequate to Newman’s life.

Their communion of souls was kept secret by Mary during her life. There are, however, some letters of admiration for her brother, referring to the influence exerted on her:

Well, I really think I have found out the secret of my difficulty in writing to you. It is because I never told you the difficulty. At least, I find I write much easier since my confession. 14

A few weeks before her death, she wrote with the same abandon:

How I long to see you! I can fancy your face - there, it is looking at me. 15

14 Moz i, 117. Mary refers to the “confession” of admiration for her brother.

15 Ibid. 150.
John Henry’s first reaction to so brutal and unexpected a tragedy was one of shock. Without guilt, anxiety, or meaningless questions, her death resolved for him the problem of his own destiny. Quickly, Newman understood that Mary’s death was not an end but a beginning, the inauguration of a new order of relations between them. An even closer communion began to establish itself. Thanks to the mysterious presence of his sister, the surviving brother discovered the presence and action of a living God and a long list of invisible realities in another world from our concrete world of appearances.

The utter suddenness of Mary’s death revealed the living God in his terrible majesty. “Sister death,” to use St. Francis’ image, had been so rapid and unexpected that she allowed no room for speculation. The visitor came alone “unheralded,” coming and going with amazing ease. This off-handedness captured Newman’s attention. In it, he saw the hand of God, seizing for Himself such a young life which really belonged to Him. Thus, Mary’s departure was a silent witness to the power and mystery of the Lord of life and death.

This theophany showed God as the only Actor, the human being as helpless. The revelation of the divine was all the more apparent in its rapidity faced with the inability of human medicine to either delay or prolong it. Newman’s poetry shortly after her death shows how her demise was totally divine, and hence consecrated to the Lord as a pure and spontaneous offering:

_16 Ibid. 157._
Death was full urgent with thee, Sister dear,
   And startling in his speed;-
   Brief pain, then languor till thy end came near -
   Such was the path decreed,
   The hurried road.
   To lead thy soul from earth to thine own God's abode.

Death wrought with thee, sweet maid impatiently:­
   Yet merciful the haste
   That baffles sickness; - dearest, thou didst die,
   Thou wast not made to taste
   Death's bitterness
   Decline's slow - wasting - charm, fever's fierce distress.17

So, this “blow” to Liberalism brought home to Newman the living presence of
God in his life in a manner similar to the day of his earlier conversion. The absolute
certainty of another world beyond death reinforced what his illness had also taught him:
the vanity of this world, and, with it, the vanity of intellectual achievement without
virtue, of reason without faith, of knowledge without devotion, of man without God.18

From then on, Newman's conviction about the invisible world was so real that it
came close to constituting one of the most basic foundations of his spirituality. Mary’s
death was without doubt the event which contributed the most to the clarity of vision of
him who wished to “never sin against light.”19 Liberalism’s insistence on intellectual
greatness rejected the notion of the moral greatness of virtue over sin, while its refusal to
accept revelation in religion bore no answer to the mystery of death.

17 Ibid. 159.
19 Ibid. 40.
Besides the incompleteness of the Liberal ideology, Newman saw the insufficiency of its claim to life and success only in this world, what he calls “the pride of reason.”\textsuperscript{20} In his letters of 1828, Newman’s memories of Mary provoked in him a conscious disenchantment with the world caused by his seeing it as so vulnerable.

In May, he wrote to sister Jemima:

Thursday, I rode over to Cuddlesdon... The country too, is beautiful; the fresh leaves, the scents, the varied landscape. Yet I never felt so intensely the transitory nature of this world as when most delighted with these country scenes. And in riding out today, I have been impressed more powerfully than before... with the two lines:

... Chanting with a solemn voice
Minds us of our better choice...

I wish it were possible for words to put down those indefinite, vague, and withal subtle feelings which pierce the soul and make it sick.

Dear Mary seems embodied in every tree and hid behind every hill.

What a veil and curtain this world of sense is! beautiful, but a veil.\textsuperscript{21}

The transparent quality of Newman’s sentiments are far removed from any false affectation and hopeless despair. We see his ability to grasp the profound depth of living behind the mask of appearances. Liberalism’s mistake of judging all human knowledge in rationalistic terms blocked out the light of Revelation.\textsuperscript{22} Hence, Newman’s deep rejection of such an ideology till his very end.

Evoking the memory of Mary, his own destiny of life beyond the grave evoked in John Henry more than just a lingering sorrowful emotion of his deceased sister. Newman saw that a person’s past is never totally abolished. A person’s history projects itself into

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. 217.

\textsuperscript{21} Moz. i. 161.

\textsuperscript{22} Apo. Note A, “Liberalism,” proposition 6, 223.
the present, and the future. This spiritual reality beyond senses, science, time, praise, and death is real and meaningful. The past becomes the messenger of the invisible world, the life of living persons, close to us always. In June, 1828, five months after his sister’s death, Newman wrote to his sister Harriet: “Not one half-hour passes but dear Mary’s face is before my eyes.”

Newman began to see a happy, serene, life beyond the grave:

Dearest, gentlest, purest, fairest!...
Paradised in the inmost shrine.
There thou liest, and in thy slumber
Times and changes thou dost number.

From Mary’s happiness in eternity, he began to envisage his own destiny on earth as a share in God’s eternal bliss:

A sea before
The Throne is spread; its pure still glass
Pictures all earth-scenes as they pass.
We on its shore
Share, in the bosom of our rest,
God’s knowledge, and our blest!

The above poem shows the impact of his sister’s death. Newman now considered the real world that of God, however invisible and spiritual. In this universe of divine knowledge and human happiness, each person has a destiny. John Henry’s search for truth encompassed another world unknown to science and the senses, known only through faith. The duty of conscience to an “external Master” is to a living God, all-

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23 Moz. i. 163.
24 I V, 29.
25 Ibid. 108-110.
powerful and omniscient. Death, therefore, is the ultimate witness to the truth of all things. All else is secondary.

Newman ended his note on Liberalism in the *Apologia* with a sense of total liberty from all threats of authority in his search for truth. Quoting Horace, one’s property may be taken; cruelty may be his lot; and the great treasure of friends either “dead” or “rude.” God himself, to whom one wished to be faithful in conscience, would ultimately set him free. When? At death. There is the final and just end to the story of his earthly endeavor. *Mors ultima linea rerum est* (Death is the line that marks the end of all).26

So, Mary’s death and the thought of divine judgment at the hour of his own death helped Newman achieve the liberty of conscience and life to “launch himself in an ocean with currents innumerable.”27 This conviction gave Newman strength when the liberal Whately, who taught him how to think for himself, later made himself “dead to me,”28 and even when Newman “felt himself dead as regards my relation with the Anglican Church.”29 Even if Whately became dead to him, and he became dead to the Anglican Church, the real death for Newman would come later. And what would count then was neither the judgment of Whately or the Anglican Church, but the viewpoint of God.

Ending this note on Liberalism, Newman stated his “his frame of mind” and strength towards those who persecuted his quest for truth in freedom. Trusting in God

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27 Ibid. 33.

28 Ibid. 22.

who “the moment I choose, will set me free,”\textsuperscript{30} Newman was faithful to his conscience, but ultimately is faithful to God. That same God, all-seeing and all-powerful, set him free from all earthly powers and possessions. Newman's love of truth beyond the veil of appearances and authorities found its ultimate vindication at the moment of death, moment of truth and freedom.

Newman says “he chooses,” because his choice was for truth in all its reality, both here and beyond, both in science and in religion, both in reason and in faith, both in freedom and in authority, both in life and in death. The ultimate reason for Newman's fearlessness of academic and religious authorities is his own death. People and Churches may become dead to him, but the living Lord lives forever. And those who die in the Lord are no longer dead, but alive.

Like Mary.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. 222.
While Whately became "dead" for Newman as a friend, there were other friends who not only taught John Henry how to think for himself, as Whately did, but also "influenced his theological view." What is more, as we shall see in this Chapter, they even helped Newman write his first theory of what we are calling "liberty of conscience."

Whately, we noted in Chapter V, only gave Newman "intellectual advance." Now two friends enter the picture, who had an influence beyond mere intellectual advancement. As with Whately, Newman did not necessarily agree with them on all topics, but their influence would be deeper. Paraphrasing his critique of Liberalism in

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1 Apo. 32.
2 Ibid. 22.
being mere intellectual achievement without a moral thrust, Newman saw the same weakness with individual Liberals. They, like their arguments, did still have an intellectual influence on Newman. John Henry still cherished the influence of Whately in helping him think for himself, and of Hawkins in helping him weigh his words. Lacking in them, and in Liberalism, was a moral and religious dimension to life, truth and friendship.

Froude and Keble were friends of a different breed. Not only did they give Newman tools to think for himself, but also helped him to achieve in conscience new theological convictions. Newman still preserved in his new friendships with Froude and Keble the intellectual freedom he had gained from dealing with the evangelicalism of Mayers and the Liberalism of the Noetics. What the three, Froude, Keble and Newman, achieved was a respect and communion of spirits in the mutual search for truth in liberty of conscience. Once again Newman would follow them part of the way, but break open his own new track whenever he deemed necessary. The novelty of Newman’s friendship with Froude and Keble in contrast to his friendship with Whately and Hawkins was that in this new friendship Newman maintained this friendship even though he would differ intellectually from both Keble and Froude.

Who were these influential friends of Newman and how did they influence him and each other? Son of an archdeacon, Richard H. Froude had been brought up in the purest Tory and High Church tradition of his paternal home and county. In a word, he

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3 Ibid. 26 - 32.
4 Ibid. 32.
was an English gentleman imbued with tradition. Prematurely deprived of his mother, he received a strict education from his father, which possibly exacerbated an already difficult temperament. His naturally fiery character carried him into the most diverse enthusiasms: the excitement of a boat race at sea, or the contagious fever of an intellectual debate where he could use his passion for logic to his heart’s content.

Possessing intellectual, and religious insights, a temperament such as his could have easily gone to extremes if it were not for the influence of John Keble, who brought him the peace of mind he needed. Before joining Newman at Oxford, Froude had been Keble’s pupil for years. When Keble retired to a country parish, Froude followed him as a private pupil, and the pastor’s moral authority soon produced positive results. Keble radiated the serenity and innocence of the just. Earthly honors and university titles were not his ambition. A man of silence and prayer, everything around him exuded peace and serenity. His example succeeded in overcoming other powers in the conscience of his pupil. Keble showed Froude how to fight against the “pride of life,” along the path of true renunciation. In Keble’s care, Froude was able to exercise his exceptional gifts, both refining and spiritualizing them.5

Friendship between Newman and Froude grew as they both became involved in the reform of a tutor’s role on the conscience of their pupils. Froude tended to follow the ideas of Newman in undertaking a reform of the system. John Henry wrote:

\[5\text{ Ibid. 31-33.}\]
There is much in the system which I think wrong; I think the tutors see too little of the men, and there is not enough direct religious instruction. It is my wish to consider myself as the minister of Christ. Unless I find that opportunities occur of doing spiritual good to those over whom I am placed, it will become a grave question whether I ought to continue in tuition.  

This desire to achieve religious impact and reform showed the earnestness of both in their religious convictions and their understanding of the role of Oxford in the religious education, as it was then, of Anglicanism.

An episode illustrating Newman's understanding of conscience, friendship and Oxford, came with the election of a new provost for Oriel in 1827. Newman's esteem for Keble did not blind him to the distinction between his "angelic qualities" and the practical duties of administration in a college. Keble did not seem capable for the administrative position. Keble seemed to Newman extremely conservative in the exercise of authority. This truth, and the duty to vote for Hawkins, John Henry thought, was greater than his personal friendship with Keble. Hawkins as a future administrator seemed more realistic. Newman voted for Hawkins accordingly as the best choice for Provost.

Time, however, brought out Newman's error. The final result of the Liberal thought of Hawkins was the termination of Newman and Froude as tutors, in 1830. The question may be raised here as to how liberal the Liberalism experienced by Newman in Oxford was. The influence of ideas on authoritative decisions in the running of an

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6 Moz. i. 133.

institution as seen by Newman in Hawkins firing them was to have lasting effect on Newman’s thought and life. In fact, the cessation of Newman and Froude as tutors was to spark the Oxford movement. “Humanly speaking, that movement never would have been, had he not been deprived of his tutorship.”

Richard Hurrell Froude and John Henry Newman later became friends with mutual influence on each other. The road to Rome was first shown by Froude who taught Newman to look with admiration towards the Church of Rome, and in the same degree to dislike the Reformation. He fixed deep in me the idea of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and he led me gradually to believe in the Real Presence.

What interests us here in this essay, however, is not so much what Newman began to believe, but how he came to believe. Through Froude’s friendship there was obviously freedom from the constraint of coercion, and, on the contrary, there was persuasion based on argument and affection. “Cor ad cor loquitur.”

We see Froude’s influence also on Newman’s spiritual life. Froude showed him the sanctity of a sincere and simple conscience. Constantly Froude sought to bridge the gap between his life and ideals. The burning fire of his enthusiasm often met with the cold ice of reality. His many ideas expressed in the Remains convinced Newman of the dangers of intellectualism. Soon after his friend’s death, John Henry wrote:

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8 Moz. i. 140.
9 Apo. 32.
10 Newman’s motto on his cardinal’s coat of arms.
11 Froude’s papers published posthumously by Newman and Keble.
Dearest: he longs to speak, as I to know,  
And yet we both refrain. 12

"Faith without works is dead" may have been his reflection. Not only was the
dilettante intellectualism of Liberalism incomplete as to moral excellence, but other ideas
may also become sterile if not brought to action. Newman learnt from Froude that
personal convictions need to be spoken of in public. Later, Newman would say: I wish to
keep quiet; but if Bishops speak, I will speak too. 13 Before we saw how Newman
rejected the vanity of ambition, preferring to pass unnoticed. Now he refused to be silent
about his understanding of truth in accord to the demands of conscience.

A deeper lesson Newman learnt from Froude was how to deal with conflict.
Newman and Froude saw that ideas may be only words in a discussion, but also may
become linked to deeds, and sometimes to deeds by those in power. The very fact of their
dismissal as tutors by Hawkins showed Newman the power of authority. Not only can
there be an intellectual disagreement with someone, but also that discord may lead to the
dissenter being shown the door. Their rejection as tutors was only the beginning of many
sword-crossings with other ideas, people and powers that be.

Froude’s fearless firmness of convictions with others equaled his firmness with
himself. If he was convinced of some claims of the Church of Rome, he was indifferent
to his friend Newman’s belief that the Roman Church was the anti-Christ. 14 Froude’s

12 VV 195-196.
13 Apo. 115.
14 Ibid. 32.
obvious sincerity, his open and direct manner toward one and all, and his freedom of thought both frightened and stimulated Newman. Impressed by his friend’s contagious vitality and ardor, Newman learned how to overcome his own reserve and timidity. John Henry learned to argue in public the battle that became the Oxford Movement.

Upon Froude’s death in 1836, Keble and Newman edited the papers left by their friend. The intimate notes of his *Journal* testify to the marvelous combination of an intense loyalty to the traditions of the Anglican Church together with caution towards the self-righteousness of the majority in power. This conservative combination meant a critical attitude towards the political and religious leaders of the day, such as Peel and Hawkins, whose sole worry was power in alliance with Liberalism. The influence on Newman of this fidelity to tradition plus fierce independence from those in power will be seen later as John Henry advanced in his search for truth.

Newman’s second influential friend, John Keble, had decisive influence on John Henry’s first theory of liberty of conscience. The link between the two came about due to Froude. In the *Remains* Froude wrote:

*Do you know the story of the assassin who had done only one good deed in his life? Well, if I was asked what good action I have done, I would say that I brought Newman and Keble to understand each other.*

Their first encounter was rather one of admiration. After all, Keble then enjoyed incomparable prestige at Oxford, having obtained at a young age all the honors of the University. In the *Apologia* Newman recalls the shock he experienced when he came face

\[15\] Ibid. 27.
to face with Keble on meeting him in the street and then in the common room at Oriel during Newman's presentation ceremony. In a letter to his friend, Bowden, John Henry wrote:

I had to go in great haste to the Tower in order to receive the congratulations of all the fellows. I had suffered it just until Keble shook my hand, then I felt myself so confused and so unworthy of the honor which had been conferred on me that I would have wished for the earth to swallow me up.\footnote{16}

However, the relationship between the two scholars lay dormant from that day in 1822 until after Keble's retirement to a country parsonage in 1836. In fact, the wise master considered Newman still too imbued with the schools of evangelicalism and Liberalism. Keble considered both those ideologies arch-enemies of the Church of England, and Newman seemed to have a stake in both antagonistic camps.\footnote{17}

Events in 1827 brought together their paths of life into a deep friendship. First, Newman favored Hawkins over Keble in the election for Provost. When that door of tutorship was later closed to him, he would turn for guidance to Keble. Newman's open spirit appreciated the beauty in Keble's *Christian Year* published that same 1827. This book of poetry is a defense of Anglican traditions in the line of the *Book of Common Prayer*. On reading Keble's poems, Newman was deeply moved. A first visit to Keble's home followed in 1828.

\footnote{16} Ibid. 26-27.  
\footnote{17} Ibid. 27.
The Peel affair in 1829 brought another twist to Newman's disillusion with Whately and Liberalism. Newman called it the "formal break." Once again, the door to his friends Froude and Keble grew wider, while the door to Liberals Whately and Hawkins was closed. Peel's vote for Catholic Emancipation might seem an unlikely cause célèbre for Newman, our supposed defender of liberty of conscience. The point which the Apologia makes, however, is that it was not a matter of politics and religion, but rather consistency and Oxford's independence. John Henry could not take a gross inconsistency all of a sudden from Peel who before was against Catholic Emancipation and now was in favor "as dictated by Liberalism." Liberalism, which Newman attacks later in Note A of the Apologia as being against the "constitution of the human mind," is shown in this episode as being also against the constitution of a State in so far a liberal politician, Peel, showed no consistency of belief.

Going back to Keble's Christian Year (1827), an important development took place in Newman's thought relevant to our issue of liberty of conscience. Newman dwelt on the topic at this stage of the Apologia even though, as he admits, his philosophy of religious assent will later be dealt with extensively in An Essay on the Development of

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18 Ibid. 24.

19 The Act of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 meant religious liberty for Catholics and an end to most discrimination in the British Empire. For historical background to Newman's participation in the controversy with Peel, see Ker, 32 - 39.

20 Apo. 24 -25.
Christian Doctrine and the Grammar of Assent. At this point, we follow Newman's ideological development as related in the Apologia. 21

References to Newman's two works on Miracles were a first step on the path towards defining liberty of conscience. Newman first saw a development in his ideas on miracles between these works, one written in 1826, the other, in 1842. In the first essay, before Keble's Christian Year, John Henry divided miracles into those received and those rejected. In the second version, the difference lies in the degree of probability perceived to create certitude, or only opinion. 22 The development in Newman's thought can be attributed to Keble, but, as seen before with Mayers and Whately, evangelicalism and liberalism, Newman saw in Keble a master, but never a divine one.

So, on the one hand, Newman did call Keble "his new master," 23 and took from him via Butler the concept of "probability" being the rule of life. Nevertheless, Keble attributed the "full internal assent" in religion not to probability, but to the force of faith and love in the subject. Quoting a Mr. Miller, Keble attributed to Scripture that power by which the human subject knows and is certain of his faith. 24

Newman, however, was "dissatisfied" with this explanation. He found it "beautiful and religious," but "lacking in logic." Once again, going beyond his master, Newman tried to "complete it with considerations of his own." The lack of logic was

21 Ibid. 29.
22 Ibid. 30.
23 Ibid. 28.
24 Ibid. 29.
bringing in religion to justify religion. This, of course, would be the fallacy of a "petitio
principii." Besides, the door lies open to subjective appraisals of religion by any
individual who feels God has spoken personally to him. The reason for such a certitude in
reduced to the person's conviction that he has the necessary faith and love in order for
God to speak to him. This "ipse dixit" argument might seem to open the door to all
forms of religious subjectivism, fanaticism and tyranny, and was therefore rejected by
Newman.25

Newman saw another line of solution. Accepting both Butler's and Keble's theory
of the idea of probability, Newman noted the difference between certainty and certitude.
Certainty pertains to the quality of propositions; while certitude pertains to a human habit
of mind. Therefore, in accord with the greater or lesser probabilities of the case in point,
there should be greater certitude. So, Newman considered that certitude is stronger or
weaker in accord with neither the faith and love of the believer nor the power of
Scripture, but rather on the strength of the probabilities themselves.26

Going a step further, how did Newman justify this jump from probabilities to
certitude and full internal consent? John Henry draws on "the very constitution of the
human mind and will of its Maker."27 Newman considered that part and parcel of reality
is that the human mind is so made by God that it makes this leap to assent. This topic will
occupy a great part of his Grammar of Assent when he deals with the "illative Sense."

25 Ibid. 29, 31.
26 Ibid. 30-31.
27 Ibid. 29.
The mind can amass a certain amount of evidence but needs to go beyond the individual, concrete, experience to affirm certain realities due to the lesser or greater degree of cumulation of probabilities.28

In the case of miracles, about which Newman developed his thought at this stage of his life, the point in question was the distinction between miracles per se and the accounts thereof. John Henry affirmed that miracles, such as the Resurrection, are to be believed, or to be rejected, etc., in accord with the circumstances with which they are presented to us. The Apologia refers to the classical distinction between religious truths true in themselves, “certain” quoad se, and truths as they are known to be certain to us, quoad nos. Therefore, though propositions about God or religion may be totally “certain” quoad se, they are not quoad nos.

Applying this distinction to “private judgment in religion,” Newman made it clear that the objective content of religious truth is not clearly known to all humans, but demands subjective effort. So, the Resurrection may, of course, be true, but its knowledge and acceptance by the individual is a matter of certitude based on the probability of the fact brought home to us.29 The parallel to Aquinas’ distinction between Deus per se notus and notus quoad nos is remarkable.30

28 GA 270-299.
29 Apo. 30.
What also interests us are several adjacent considerations to this theory of religious assent. Newman speaks of probabilities “attached to a professed fact” as it is “brought home to us.” The implication here of the phrase “brought home to us” is that not only are there variations in the probabilities themselves, but also in the individual’s assessment of them. Therefore, religious truths, or even an ideology like Liberalism, may or may not be assented to by the individual person. This assent is not only because of the arguments per se, but also in so far as those arguments or probabilities are brought home to this specific person. Newman’s life itself comes to mind as he struggled along the path of evangelicalism, Liberalism and now Keble’s Anglicanism.

The logical follow-up to the above theory of probabilities and certitude becomes the realm of duty and conscience. The subjective appraisal of diverse probabilities “attached to a professed fact” with all its pluralism in no way takes away the element of “objective fact” in our assents. If Newman here was willing to accept the heterogeneity of probabilities and the variety of individual assents, he likewise insisted in the same breath on linking probability, certitude, objectivity, conscience and duty. There is a duty to have certitude in accord with the objective probabilities which are “brought home to us.”

Hence, we may conclude with Newman that there is both an inherent subjective and objective element in all religious assent. The subjective element is the individual person assessing probabilities as they are brought home to him. Hence, Newman

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31 Apo. 30.
understood pluralistic views in religion, precisely because each subject accepts probabilities in so far as they are convincing. Also, the very law of probabilities implies an objective content. That objective content in religion has a force of its own on the individual. That force is the force of truth, however imperfectly known. And, thus, the knowing subject has an obligation to follow that truth as it is known. To conclude, there is both a logical and moral subjective duty to assent to the force of objective facts in so far as they are brought home to us by greater or lesser probabilities.\textsuperscript{32}

Summarizing this concept, we may say that Newman argues for a primacy of conscience understood as the individual’s duty to assent to truth as it is known. And this very primacy demands a rejection of the notion “autonomy of conscience” understood in the aforesaid understanding of Liberalism, where conscience is a law unto itself, and even rejects a priori certain truths.\textsuperscript{33}

These objective probabilities in no way can be identified with subjective whims, fancies, fallacies, or fanaticism of what divine thought may be. Hence, Newman’s argument for the possibility of diversity and error in following conscience did not reside in the subjective factors of the individual. Diversity in conscientiously reached decisions are based, in his view, on the nature of the facts as brought home to us, not on our whims or fancies. So, for Newman, an explanation of contradictory conclusions in conscience among individuals cannot be reduced to subjective desires, passions, or ignorance. The

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. Note A, “Liberalism.”
very nature of the human mind, including the divine will for it, causes the law of probability in life, which, in turn, causes distinct religious assents in diverse people.

If we were, in opposition to Newman, to accept a reduction of pluralistic convictions in conscience to merely subjective factors, there is only a step to consider the individual always culpable of his ignorance, and, if culpable of ignorance, his decision in conscience may be considered tainted and unworthy of respect. Hence, no tolerance should be offered for dissenters, since they are culpably ignorant of the truth.

And, if also we were to consider that divine revelation, and maybe even the need to be a member of a specific Church, is readily known to all, without probabilities and subjective searching, then error would have no excuse but personal passions. In this perspective, error ends up with no rights.34

The rest of Newman's life will show how he "wrote, argued and acted," in accord with this key principle of justifying pluralism in religious assent.35 In the following chapters we wish to show the distinction between subjective culpable error and error based on the law of life that is probability.

For now we may conclude this section on certitude and probability, quoting:

34 See note 10 in chap. IV.

35 Apo. Preface.
This was the region of judgment in religion; that is, of a Private Judgment, not formed arbitrarily and according to one's fancy or liking, but conscientiously, and under a sense of duty.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. 30.
CHAPTER VII

A STRANGE LOVE OF SICILY

Time was, . . .

I would not brave the sacred fight
Because the foe was strong.

Verses

The key distinction between a plurality of private judgments in religion, due to whim and due to conscience, as brought out in the last chapter, becomes a drama in one particular episode of Newman's life; his trip alone to Sicily. Following our theory of understanding Newman's teaching on liberty of conscience by seeing how he lived, we can analyze this key vital event to bring out even more the difference between judgments in conscience and those in fancy. Later, in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk Newman will deny the rights of conscience considered as "the right of self-will" and call it a "counterfeit." ¹ Such a concept of conscience as self-will became prevalent, according to the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, in the eighteenth century. What Newman understood as

¹ Diff. ii. 250.
this counterfeit of conscience, and what he meant by self-will, are clearly illustrated during his trip to Sicily. His reflections thereupon taught him to purify his view of conscience and duty.

Having set off from England with the Froudes in December 1832, Newman decided to go back to Sicily all alone. His desire was to know more about the enchanting places which he had only started to discover in the course of this Mediterranean voyage. Dr. Copleston’s words came to mind: *Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus* (Never less lonely than when alone).²

Reaching Naples, the sole voyager wrote to sister Jemima:

I have lost my companions, and I was going among strangers into a wild country to live a wild life, to travel in solitude, and to sleep in dens of the earth - and all for what? for the gratification of an imagination, for the idea of a warm fancy which might be a deceit, drawn by a strange love of Sicily.³

The irony of these lines is that they reflect the struggle of conscience which was to follow. On the one hand, Newman felt that he was just following his own personal desire to enjoy the pleasures of the voyage. On the other, scruples of conscience were to magnify in his mind, as if he were committing some kind of a deceit, a falsehood, a doing something which was not his duty and maybe not even the will of God. John Henry was living the struggle of those who wish to follow their conscience but doubt their selfishness.

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² *Apo.* 25.

³ *Moz.* i. 337.
The idea of conscience, duty and the will of God, were intimately connected in his scruples. In a letter to Froude, Newman explains his anxiety:

When I went down to Sicily by myself, I had a strong idea that He was going to effect some purpose by me. And from Rome I wrote to some one, I think Christie, saying I thought I was to be made something of in His Hands, "though if not, the happier for me."
And when I was in Sicily by myself, it seemed as if someone were battling against me, and the idea has long been in my mind, though I cannot say when it came on, that my enemy was then attempting to destroy me. A number of sins were committed in the very act of my going down by myself - to say nothing else, I was willful, and neglected warnings - from that time everything went wrong.⁴

Deep down we see that, on the one hand, Newman wished to assure himself that he remained in the hands of God. On the other, he associated the deadly illness he would suffer with a divine punishment for having been too capricious and self-willed. In another letter, he wrote: "I felt it was a punishment for my willfulness in going to Sicily by myself."³

As to the trip itself, on arrival in Sicily, Newman was ecstatic at the spectacle of Taormini. However, assailed by illness, he decided to go inland towards the city of Catania. Accompanied by Gennaro, his faithful servant and guide, John Henry in pain reached the town of Leonforte, a hundred miles from Palermo. After a sleepless night, he was overwhelmed by fever without finding a suitable remedy to fight it. Two or three days later, realizing that his state was getting progressively worse without hope of rapid improvement, he decided to take to the road again in the hope of reaching, at any cost, a

⁴ K 315.
³ Moz. i. 363.
place where he would be in a better position to receive care. A few miles later, he was forced to stop anew. A doctor, met by chance, took him to the village of Castro-Giovanni, where he was to remain for nearly three weeks in a precarious state between life and death.  

By throwing Newman into a state bordering on agony, this illness was a terrible encounter with his deeper self. It became a dramatic confrontation between the forces of self-will and the mission he felt he had to do in England. John Henry himself, a year earlier, had consoled his bed-ridden friend Thomas Mozley:

\[ \text{It is one especial use of times of illness to reflect about ourselves... had it pleased God to have visited you with an illness... it would seem a rebuke for past waste of time. I believe that God cuts off those He loves and who really are His, not interfering with their ultimate safety, but as passing them by as if unworthy of being made instruments of His purpose.} \]

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These austere reflections on human weakness made earlier to Mozley were probably now present in the mind of the depressed voyager, languishing in a poor Sicilian inn. His physical weakness stirred up a sorrowful examination of conscience, while the mounting fever made former scruples reappear. The plunging into the hidden recesses of truth bore the mark of a personal chastisement. God appeared to abandon his servant to the worst of temptations, the one of the desert, revealing to Newman the image of his own self-will, with the threat of spiritual failure beyond repair.

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6 *Apo. 40.*

7 *Moz. i. 228.*
This sense of rebellious self-will, later to be called a "counterfeit of conscience" in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, and empty intellectualism as seen with the Liberalism of the Noetics, reached a peak at Leonforte during the most critical phase of the fever. Newman alluded to it in a memoir written some eighteen months after the event:

Next day the self-reproaching feeling increased. I seemed to see more and more my utter hollowness. I began to think of all my professed principles, and felt they were mere intellectual deductions from one or two admitted truths. I compared myself with Keble, and felt that I was merely developing his, not my, convictions. I knew that I had very clear thoughts about this then, and I believe in the main true ones. Indeed, this is how I look on myself; very much (as the illustration goes) as a pane of glass, which transmits heat being cold itself.

I have a vivid perception of the consequences of certain admitted principles, have considerable intellectual capacity of drawing them out, have the refinement to admire them, and a rhetorical or histrionic power to represent them; and having no great (i.e. no vivid) love of this world, whether riches, honors, or anything else, and some firmness and natural dignity of character, take the profession of them upon me, as I might sing a tune which I like – loving the Truth, but not possessing it, for I believe myself at heart to be nearly hollow, i.e., with little love, little self-denial. I believe I have some faith, that is all.

The above letter merits a detailed analysis to see Newman's critique of academic success empty of virtue and his understanding of self-will as a counterfeit of conscience.

First, we notice the rejection of an empty Liberalism which has nothing to say beyond words at Newman's hour of agony. John Henry realized that he had thoughts

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8 Diff. ii 250.
9 See above chap. V.
10 Moz. i. 366.
about this or that, that he drew logical deductions, and even had the capacity to deduce their consequences and admire their beauty. All of which gave little strength to a dying man alone in a strange land.

Second, we perceive the reference to Keble. Again, Newman felt he lacked the inner peace and sincerity of conscience, which was the charm and source of his friend’s influence. Newman saw that he was unable to realize, with regard to himself, this marvelous accord, this sort of natural symbiosis between truth and sentiment, grace and life, of his friend, pastor and scholar.

Thirdly, we note that Newman felt that the Lord was battling against him, but not because of earthly pleasures. These, he admitted, never attracted him: “I do not love the world, its riches, nor its honors.” The problem was his self-will, his desire to rule his own life, taking him away from a destiny where God wanted him. This self-will was made up of an independence of judgment and an impatience of heart which sometimes became unbridled pride.

The spiritual trial of his deadly illness tore Newman’s conscience apart in two different directions. On the one hand, Newman was attracted by moral beauty such as that represented by Keble and, on the other, he felt he was not living up to the requirements of what he knew to be his duty. Newman felt that “he had not sinned against the light,” but also that “God was fighting against me, . . . - at last I knew why -

11 Moz., I.c.
12 Apo. 40.
it was for self-will.” In Catholic terminology, Newman saw he had done no evil, but, likewise, had committed the sin of omission by not following the will of God, but rather his own.

In this Sicilian drama, the anxieties and scruples of past years came to his conscience. A kind of spiritual fire threw light on his most intimate sentiments, as he lay on his death-bed. A new light was shed on his conscience to know even better the imperfections of his acts and thoughts. The resulting remorse made him condemn any remaining trace of self-will.

With illness, a deep questioning spirit threw a true light on his “private judgment in religion, not formed arbitrarily and according to one’s fancy or liking, but conscientiously, and under a sense of duty.” In spite of conversions and self-denials, in spite of the security of a divine presence which gave him light, his journey in conscience in Sicily was more the work of his will than that of God. It was less a revelation of God than a performance by Newman. Up to now, John Henry had chosen his path in life, not that of the Lord. The poem “Sensitiveness,” written during this Mediterranean trip, states:

Time was, I shrank from what was right
From fear of what was wrong.
I would not brave the sacred fight
Because the foe was strong . . . .
Such dread of sin was indolence.
Such aim at heaven was pride.

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13 Moz. i. 365.
14 Apo. 30.
15 W. L., 113, January 13, 1833.
Having discovered how he had lived arbitrarily and not really in conscience as a sense of duty towards a loving Person, Newman entered the next step. A sense of desert and hollowness made him feel how much his soul was empty. To cut short such painful reflections, he counted the number of stars and flowers “in the pattern on the walls” to keep himself busy in his sick room.¹⁶ Such a trial accomplished the necessary purification of his will towards a more complete abandonment to whatever mission the Lord destined for him in England. Newman had indeed chosen his own way, but his search for the light was sincere. The Lord would eventually make his will known.

Though erroneous, his conscience had led him on the road to truth:

I had a strange feeling on my mind that God meets those who go on in His way, who remember Him in His way, in the paths of the Lord; that I must put myself in His path, His way, that I must do my part, and that He met those who rejoice and worked righteousness, and remembered Him in His way.¹⁷

Newman notes in the *Apologia* that “especially when I was left alone . . . I began to think that I had a mission.” And going to Sicily, he noted that “the presentiment grew stronger.” At several stages during this drama, such a conviction surfaces. First, there was the spontaneous farewell to Msgr. Wiseman at the English College in Rome before his trip to Sicily, when Newman said he had a work to do in England. Then, in Leonforte, when the fever struck, he assured Gennaro he would not die for “he had not sinned

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¹⁶ AW 123-125.
¹⁷ Moz. i. 368.
against light.” Finally, on becoming well again, he could only explain his violent sobbing by exclaiming: “I have a work to do in England.”18

Hence, Newman’s understanding of divine, and not self, will involved freeing his judgment from whim and fancy in order to discover truth in doing God’s will as one understood it. Newman would consider self-will as not being real liberty of conscience. And such a liberty involves a decision to follow truth and God wherever they might lead.

On his return to Oxford, Newman would now brave the sacred fight, even if the foes were strong.19 If, up to now, Newman had chosen his own way, he would now have to banish all vanity and attachment to his own self-will. The desire for total sincerity in conscience to what he thought God’s mission for life became the “kindly light” to lead him on. Though later he might lose friends, churches, Oxford, and even Rome, he endeavored never “to sin against light.”20

Newman’s ultimate answer was to repeat the words dear to him from youth, “Exoriare aliquis” (Let someone rise up).21 Together with the sense of divine mission in the verse from Virgil, Newman applied to himself Southey’s poem of Thalaba, a young Arab, whose appointed task was to destroy a race of sorcerers. Thalaba succeeded, despite great difficulties, due to his faith in the Lord.22 With his conscience at peace

18 Apo. 40.
19 VV, LX, 113.
20 Ibid. and Apo. 40.
21 Aeneid IV. 625.
22 Apo. 40.
again, Newman renewed his resolution to be a faithful instrument in the hands of the Lord. Once his self-will was fully submitted in conscience, the latter understood as a moral sense and sense of duty to a living and loving Creator, his mission was able to assert itself. God was presenting to him a mission in the Church in England. Newman would now undertake it, not as a task chosen by himself, but as a mandate received from God.

The certitude that he was obeying Truth, and not his own whim or fancy, was to fortify his conscience in all his trials. On his return to Oxford, Newman would surprise himself with his own courage and audacity. Froude had taught him previously how to dominate his personal repugnance and timidity towards controversies and possible enemies. Now in Sicily, the Lord himself showed Newman the meaning of his illness and the strength of Achilles returning to battle.23

All this episode had a key message in Newman's understanding of liberty of conscience. We have seen that Newman's "private judgment in religion" was not based on a "fancy or liking." He undertook the trip to Sicily as an act of self-will. Here, we see Newman reject an understanding of liberty of conscience as self-will, as what I want to do, without any consideration of truth beyond my liking.

Of course, the opposite implication is also true. A decision in conscience is likewise not doing whatever the other's "will to power" might be. Newman felt strong now to "brave the sacred fight... even if the foe were strong."24 Liberty of conscience

23 Ibid. See Iliad XVIII.125.
24 Note 15, above.
involves freedom from slavery to one's self-will in the same breath as it is freedom from the will of other human beings, however divine they consider themselves. In other words, autonomy or servility of conscience is not the same as primacy of conscience. In the first case, autonomy or servility means making oneself or another the divine law, following self or another's will. In the second case, primacy of conscience means doing what one considers one's duty in conscience. Likewise, primacy of conscience means seeking the will of God, above self-will or any supposedly divine institution, such as the Anglican Church, which may become dead for us.

We have also seen how Newman, on the one hand, says he "never sinned against the light," while, on the other, he was a slave of "self-will." How can these views be reconciled? It remains obvious that Newman was erroneously following what he thought right, though indeed it was more personal fancy than conscientious duty. Ultimately his desire to always follow the light, led him out of the darkness of self-will to the fuller light of divine truth. The lesson here may be that even if a private judgment in religion be guided by self-will, if the ultimate desire is to seek truth, there is a possibility of repentance and, even, ulterior strength. As happened to Newman in Sicily.

The light of conscience may grow dim amid the darkest night. The traveler may choose to follow in pride his own path, but while he searches with the light of a sincere

25 In the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, Newman writes of religious authorities making conscience their creature and their slave, "doing, as if on a divine sanction, his [authority's] will," Diff. ii. 255. Conscience should be "free in fact... independent." Cf. cult tactics, above, 30.

26 Ibid. and Apo. 30

conscience the road to truth becomes clear. Therein is reflected a serene humility, a
peaceful confidence, and trust in God, who gives spiritual strength and a hopeful end.

Newman's strange love for Sicily ended on the sea-voyage home with this poem:

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home -
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene, - one step enough for me.
I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now,
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will, remember not past years!
So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on.
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone.
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.²⁸

John Henry arrived back at his mother's house in England on July 9, 1833. The
following Sunday, John Keble preached the sermon "National Apostasy" from the
Oxford University Pulpit. For Newman, that date was always considered the start of the
Tractarian Movement.²⁹

²⁸ VV 156; June 16, 1833. Apo. 40.
²⁹ Apo. 41.
CHAPTER VIII

DEAD TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

My change of opinion arose,

not from foreign influences,

but from the working of my own mind,

and the accidents around me.

Grammar of Assent

The events surrounding Newman’s life from 1833 to 1841 can globally be considered the time of the Tracts. Our interest here is to see how Newman understood liberty of conscience as he developed his own religious convictions.

What is indeed remarkable in this time-frame are the apparent ironies in Newman’s decisions. First, he set out with the Tracts to defend the Anglican Church against Liberalism, while eventually he ended up being considered “dead . . . to the Anglican Church.” Then, he started writing the Via Media, as the way of the Anglican Church, in order to prove he was not becoming a Roman Catholic. Again, this effort

1 Apo. Note A. “Liberalism.” 222.
eventually drew him close to Rome.\textsuperscript{2} Finally, he sought in the 39 Articles the theological basis for his anti-Roman bias.\textsuperscript{3} Their analysis in Tract 90 brought him nothing but trouble in Oxford and lead him "into the hands of the Philistines" [the Heads of Colleges at Oxford].\textsuperscript{4}

The purpose of our reflection is not a theological analysis of the arguments used by Newman to justify his ideological position. Rather, we wish to analyze how he lived an understanding of liberty of conscience as free inquiry and personal assent. Above all, we wish to see in action in Newman's life his own theory on the "region of private judgment in religion; that is, of a private judgment, not formed arbitrarily and according to one's fancy or liking, but conscientiously, and under a sense of duty."\textsuperscript{5}

In this stage of Newman's life and writings, a paradox is seen in his contrasting opinions, as time evolved. How could he reconcile such contradictions? How did he envisage the clash of individual conscience and the ecclesiastical authority he was living under and only wishing to defend? As he wrote of the Tractarian Movement:

And so it proceeded, getting stronger and stronger every year, till it came into collision with the Nation, and that Church of the Nation, which it began by professing especially to serve.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid. 61.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid. 71.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid. 78
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid. 30.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid. 70.
First, let us briefly view the theological horizon of the events of the Tractarian Movement of 1833-1841. Newman attributed its beginning to Keble's Sermon on National Apostasy in 1833, and its end to Tract 90 in July, 1841. Its purpose was to defend the Anglican Church against the dangers of Liberalism and Evangelicalism. Liberalism showed itself in the political sphere by intrusions by the State into religious affairs such as the appointment of an Anglican bishop in Jerusalem for foreign policy reasons. Newman considered this appointment inspired by religious indifferentism as the third blow which "finally shattered" his faith in the Anglican Church. Liberal religious indifferentism also promoted the de-establishment of the Anglican Church. Case in point was the suppression of the ten Anglican bishoprics in Ireland, and the removal of religious tests in Oxford and Cambridge, especially subscription to the 39 Articles. Evangelicalism, on the other hand, insisted on personal conversion and religious experience. Indirectly, it promoted Liberalism in Religion by making religion only "a subjective idea of our minds."

Newman denounced both evils and wished to engage the battle on its true terrain, which was not political but religious. John Henry wanted to bring the Anglican Church back to a sense of her own dignity by helping her rediscover the sense of her mission from Apostolic times. Healing against Liberalism and Evangelicalism would come only

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7 See Ker, 54-100.
8 Apo. 116 - 119.
9 Ibid. 37, 68.
from within by the renewal of faith and faithful obedience to the Church of the Fathers which the Anglican Church had forgotten.

So, for Newman, the problem went beyond the question of privileges for religion in the State or Universities. The question was for the Anglican Church to get back to the faith of the Church of the Fathers. Indeed, Newman still held the then-common assertion of state-support for religion. He rejected the separation of Church and State, Church and University, fostered by the religious indifferentism of Protestant Oxonian Liberalism. The latter was in contrast to Roman Catholic Liberalism in France, where Montalembert and Lamennais advocated liberty of conscience in the context of Gallican control of Catholicism. Montalembert rejected State enforcement of religion. Religious assent should be personal and non-coercive. Newman’s ideological evolution followed a different approach, as we shall see. Ultimately, however, it was his very life which bore out his understanding of liberty of conscience during these Tractarian years.

The means Newman chose to bring the Anglican Church back to the Fathers was the wide diffusion of tracts destined to arouse or stir up from indifference all those, cleric or lay people, interested in the affairs of the Church. Pamphlets written in a striking style, incisive and dealing with unexpected subjects, were the weapons selected, rather than ideological petitions. Newman edited numerous tracts and wrote letter upon letter, traveling throughout the countryside in order to bring tracts just off the presses to the vicarages.

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10 See Chap. V above.
His opposition to Liberalism continued unabated. A painful example revealed the depth of his belief in the Anglican Church in 1834. In disagreement with the current opinion of that time, Newman, Vicar of St. Mary's since 1826, refused to perform the wedding of an unbaptized woman who belonged to a dissident sect. The sacramental discipline in the Anglican Church was then very relaxed, brought under the influence of lax theologians and liberal pastors. Newman’s refusal to marry the couple was part of his effort to return to the practice of the Primitive Church. This was the principle defended by the Tractarian Movement, to appeal to the Church of the Fathers.

John Henry encountered hostility among his own family; even his mother did not spare him her disapproval. In painful isolation, he only received letters of support from Keble and Pusey. Newman felt an obligation in conscience to obey his local Bishop. However, it would be an obedience under a certain compulsion. If he were to disobey, he knew disobedience ultimately meant disowning the authority of the Bishop and, finally, would involve resigning from his pastorate in the diocese.11

In this incident, we see in a nutshell the inherent contradiction or, rather, power of development of Newman’s thought both about the Anglican Church and liberty of conscience. He sought to defend the Anglican Church by appealing to the Church of the Fathers. Hence, he exercise his freedom of thought in a search for truth in his religious beliefs. However, the truth about the Primitive Church - in this case, about marriage - would come back to judge the Anglican Church. His wish was to defend orthodoxy, but

11 LD iv. 299-301.
orthodoxy as he discovered it. Newman felt obliged to accept the bishop’s authority, but also clearly saw the limits on such authority. Put another way, and as has already been seen with Newman’s many previous teachers, those in authority may be God’s representatives, but they are so only in so far as God decides. So, ultimately, Newman’s understanding of the “region of private judgment in religion; that is, of a private judgment, not formed arbitrarily and according to one’s fancy or liking, but conscientiously, and under a sense of duty,” also subjects all religious authority to such a test of truth. Are they really representing God? and within what limits?

Newman’s answer to Liberalism was to reach the vast public with signs of doctrinal, liturgical, and ascetic renewal, based on a return to the Church of the Fathers. The latter, however, caused Newman to be criticized as looking towards Rome. To answer that interpretation, between 1833 and 1836, Newman wrote *The Prophetic Office of the Church Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism*. Newman thought he had given the Anglican Church an original status, that of *Via Media*, between the Roman Catholic and Protestant interpretations of the Primitive Church. Thus, the Church of England claimed her right to apostolic succession in a special way, which distinguished her from the innovations of Protestantism, born of the Reformation, and, at the same time, from the corruption which had weakened Roman Catholicism. Newman did not consider the *Via Media* as being the political compromise of Elizabeth I, a sort of watered-down version of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Rather, he

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12 *Apo.* 30.
saw in the English theologians of the seventeenth century the true face of Christianity as it had been defined by the Church of the Fathers. Newman’s unique effort tended to show that the *Via Media* was the rich source towards which his Church of England ought to return in order to express in her acts, as in her life, a fidelity to her basic constitution. 13

In 1841, Newman published the celebrated *Tract 90*, his last. In it, he first differentiated between the concepts of “Popery” and “Roman doctrine.” Then he went on to ascertain what a man who subscribed to the 39 *Articles* might hold rather than that what he must hold. Again, the method was “a first approximation to the required solution,” with the acknowledgment that “in minor things, whether in question of fact or of judgment, there was room for difference or error of opinion”; and Newman was willing to own a mistake, if it were proved against him. 14

Before analyzing Newman’s response to the Church of England’s reaction, let us examine some aspects of Newman’s sense of duty in conscience on writing the Tracts. First, since Sicily, Newman was no longer afraid to “brave the sacred fight, because the foe was strong.” 15 In fact, the “position of his mind” was that it would have been “intellectual cowardice” not to seek a “basis in reason” for his faith. Secondly, it would be “moral cowardice” not to put it in writing. Newman felt that if their opponents, the

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13 Ibid. 61-63.
14 Ibid. 72-73.
15 *VV*, LX, 113.
Liberals, did so, the Tractarians should do likewise. This, says Newman in the *Apologia*, was the main reason for Tract 90.\(^\text{16}\)

As to the issue of authority versus private judgment, we note Newman's reaction to the public censure of Tract 90 by the Heads of Houses at Oxford. Newman found himself not at all troubled. The latter was not some kind of Stoical resistance to pain. Rather, it was because his opinion remained unchanged as to the truth and honesty of the principles of Tract 90, and of the necessity of making it public.\(^\text{17}\)

As to the reaction of ecclesiastical authority, the first step was his bishop's - Bagot of Oxford - request for silence and an end to discussion. One is reminded of other instances in religious and moral drama where the command to "keep silence" is the answer to awkward questions.\(^\text{18}\) Newman found that artificial, akin to cowardice. Then, the bishop, at the urging of the Bishop of London, requested that Tract 90 not be reprinted. Again, Newman tended first to obey, but had second thoughts.

Here, John Henry described several nuances in this power struggle between his respect for religious authority and his private judgment. To begin with, he saw the bishops becoming more authoritarian as he became more obedient. The more he submitted, the more they demanded:

\(^{16}\) *Apologia*, 63.
\(^{17}\) *Via Media* ii. 368-387.
They pressed on me whenever I gave way; they fell back when they saw me obstinate.\textsuperscript{19}

The mistreatment became worse, as Newman suddenly saw himself being used against himself. He was to write a letter suppressing the Tract at the Bishop's request. Again, he perceived that, if he obeyed, he would leave himself defenseless against those who attacked his ideas. Finally, he felt so strongly that, if pushed by the Bishop to resign his living, he "could not in conscience act otherwise."\textsuperscript{20}

This episode of the controversy finally ended with a compromise. Newman did not defend the Tract, ceased to publish new Tracts, and wrote a letter of compliance, not recantation, recording the Bishop's view. John Henry keenly saw the meaning and limitation of the Bishop's disapproval. Tract 90 had been found "objectionable," but no reason had been given and no doctrine condemned by Authority. His one aim was to save the Tract.\textsuperscript{21}

The damage, however, was done. Not only was Newman even more doubtful of the claims of the Anglican Church as it was de facto, but his religious submission to its authorities was severely shaken. The clear distinction between the divine message and the messenger was firmly established. Newman's naive obedience had come to an end. He understood the bishops' refusal to condemn Tract 90. Their interest was not

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Apo.} 79.

\textsuperscript{20} Letter to E.B. Pusey, March 24, 1841.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Apo.} 79. See Ker, 220-224.
adherence to the value of the 39 Articles to serve the Anglican Church’s cause, but rather to keep peace and avoid disturbance.22

Again, Newman reaffirmed the principle of submission to his bishop, but there was a clear limit. Compromise was the solution, but he added: “I have no intention whatever of yielding any one point which I hold on conviction.”23 Authorities at Oxford and in the Anglican Church had lost confidence in him, he was on their black list.

I saw indeed clearly that my place in the Movement was lost; public confidence was at an end; my occupation was gone. It was simply an impossibility that I could say any thing henceforth to good effect, when I had been posted up by the marshal on the buttery-hatch of every College of my University, after the manner of discommoded pastry-cooks, and when in every part of the country and every class of society, through every organ and opportunity of opinion, in newspapers, in periodicals, at meetings, in pulpits, at dinner-tables, in coffee-rooms, in railway carriages, I was denounced as a traitor.24

However, John Henry never lost confidence in himself. His aim was to defend the Church of England and the “Catholic” - understood as ‘Church of the Fathers’ - interpretation of the 39 Articles. Henceforth he found himself “dead to the Anglican Church.”25

Newman’s immediate conclusion to all this controversy over Tract 90 was to stay with the important question of authority, or, rather, divine authority. Ultimately, who decides the interpretation of Scripture, the Church of the Fathers, and orthodoxy?

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22 To J. Keble, 10 Apr. 1841.
23 Letter to A.L. Philipps, 8 Apr. 1841.
24 Apo. 78-79.
Newman had begun Tract 90 with distinctions of the meanings of “Rome”; next, he faced the question of who was to decide the interpretation of the 39 Articles; and now he found himself confronted with the key issue of religious authority in all religious belief. Ultimately, it was be his personal “conviction” which decided the issue.

Beyond that, Newman wished to let the whole issue rest. As usual, he felt that truth would work itself out, adding: “I felt that by this event a kind Providence had saved me from an impossible position in the future.” Tract 90 marked the end of Newman’s belief in the cause of the Church of England. All his sincere efforts to bring to the Anglican Church the dogmatic structures justifying its claim to be the Church of the Fathers in the 19th century ended in a command to silence. Even though the Tracts had come to an end, the workings of his own mind and the accidents around him were bringing about a change in his opinions.

In July, 1841, the British Critic carried an article by Newman on “Private Judgment.” Seemingly resisting his own changes of opinion, Newman listed a series of conditions for change of judgment in religion. First, change seems the characteristic of error, and men who change must show the sincerity of their willingness to change by their willingness to suffer.

We repeat it, if any men have strong feelings, they should pay for them; if they think it a duty to unsettle things established, they should show their earnestness by being willing to suffer.
Newman remembered his own experience at “the hands of the Philistines,”\textsuperscript{29} when the Heads [of colleges at Oxford] did him a “violent act.”\textsuperscript{30}

Second, since truth in religion is a revelation from God himself, change of religion would be a sin, were it not one’s duty. Religion and a change thereof is a most serious matter, since it deals with God himself.

Considering the emphatic words of the Apostle, laid down by him as a general principle, and illustrated in detail, “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called:” considering, in a word, that change is really the characteristic of error, and unalterableness the attribute of truth, of holiness, of Almighty God Himself, we consider that when Private Judgment moves in the direction of innovation, it may well be regarded at first with suspicion.\textsuperscript{31}

However, such may be one’s duty in conscience. Newman's former definition of private judgment in religion based on the law of probability in life comes to mind.\textsuperscript{32}

Third, and satirically, Newman distinguishes between “the right of private judgment” and “the private right of judgment.” John Henry notes that the former, the right of all to have their personal judgment in religious matters respected, is totally distinct from the latter, where some think only they have the right to judge. Hence, he concluded that

the doctrine of private judgment, all private judgment, and nothing but private judgment - is held by very few people indeed.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{29} Apo. 78.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. 113.

\textsuperscript{31} Ess. ii. 138.

\textsuperscript{32} See chap. VI above. Also, Apo. 30.

\textsuperscript{33} Ess. ii. 141.
Taking the case of an anti-Catholic Protestant whose daughter enters a Roman Catholic convent, Newman remarked on the father's small delight in such an event. Hence, the real sense of the "right of private judgment," as understood by Newman, means respect for the individual conscience, whereas the "private right of judgment" reflects the tendency of some to demand freedom of religion for themselves, but not others. Therefore, they demand freedom of religion when their religion is not respected, while coercing religious conformity when in power.

Newman's final justification for a right of private judgment in religion is Scripture. In this way, the error of Liberalism is avoided, in so far as the human mind is not erected as the judge of divine revelation. On the contrary, the Scriptures do teach us to inquire about the teacher of doctrine.

And this obvious fact does, as far as it goes, make it probable that, if we are providentially obliged to exercise our private judgment, the point towards which we have to direct it, is the teacher rather than the doctrine.

When, therefore, an appeal is made to private judgment - what we are calling a judgment in conscience - this is done in order to settle who the teacher is and what is his authority, rather than to substantiate this or that religious opinion or practice. Newman added that even in the early Church, very grave outward differences seemed to exist even between Christian teachers, such as Paul, Cephas, and Apollos at Corinth, with partisan

34 Apo. 30
35 See Martina, 285-286.
36 Ess. ii. 152.
groups forming around them. John Henry concluded that we must distinguish between
“party feelings and interests” and “the holy Church Catholic.”

Hence, there is obviously a freedom for the individual - a Scriptural privilege - to
seek the truth about religion, to judge the validity of the claims of teachers to preach the
divine message.

Let it be observed how exactly this view of the province of private
Judgment, where it is allowable, as being the discovery not of doctrine,
but of the teacher of doctrine, harmonizes both with the nature of Religion
and the state of human society as we find it.

Such a search aims, in free inquiry and through persuasion, towards truth by
private judgment. Scripture sanctions an inquiry, not about the content of divine teaching,
but rather about the teacher: whether or not he be true or false.

Another category mentioned by Newman in this essay on private judgment are
those who “despise the notion of a teacher altogether.” These assert that there is no such
teaching authority anywhere. Consequently, Newman wished them to avoid the example
of the dog in the fable - “who would neither use the manger himself, nor relinquish it to
others.” Such are those who neither seek the teacher of truth nor allow others to do
so.

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37 Ibid. 158.
38 Ibid. 159.
39 Ibid. 152.
40 Ibid. 155.
As for his own conscience, whether he should continue in the Church of England or take the road to Rome, he advocated leaving the issue to time. "Truth can fight its own battle." Rather than attempting "to trace by anticipation the course of divine providence," Newman insisted on doing "simply what we think right day by day."\footnote{To R. Belaney, 25 Jan. 1841.}  

\footnote{To R. W. Church, 25 Dec. 1841.}
CHAPTER IX

CONSCIENCE AND REASON

I had no right, I had no leave,
to act against my conscience.

That was a higher rule than any argument
about the notes of the Church.

_Apologia Pro Vita Sua_

In 1841, after the tragedy of Tract 90, Newman had the highest regard for
conscience. He still could not in conscience join the Church of Rome.¹ On the other
hand, he “said boldly”:

The Church in which I found myself had no claim on me, except on
condition of its being a portion of the One Catholic Communion, and that
that condition must ever be borne in mind as a practical matter, and had to
be distinctly proved."²

Parallel to the Tracts for the Times, Newman had preached the University
Sermons to the University of Oxford between 1826 and 1843. His conviction on the

¹ _Apo._ 121.
² Ibid. 123.
primacy of conscience vis-à-vis the proofs for the claims of both Churches had found early expression in those Sermons. A key element to understand his argument in conscience for either Church was the primacy he gave to moral, rather than intellectual, proofs for the validity of their claims.³

A passage in one of his early sermons ‘The Usurpations of Reason’ (1831) coincided with Newman’s critical view ten years later of both Churches:

> So alert is the instinctive power of an educated conscience, that by some secret faculty, and without any intelligible reasoning process, it seems to detect moral truth wherever it lies hid, and feels a conviction of its own accuracy which bystanders cannot account for, and this especially in the case of Revealed Religion, which is one comprehensive moral fact.⁴

In later sermons Newman did a great deal to make intelligible the process by which conscience is able to detect hidden moral and religious truth. Above all, the question he had to resolve in 1841 was how, on the one hand, he was asking proofs from the Churches for his adhesion in conscience to their claims, while, on the other, he seemed, in the Sermon above, to exclude an “intelligible reasoning process.” If the later were true, would Newman not be reducing conscience to non-rational subjective feeling?⁵

A key distinction was his use of the terms “implicit” and “explicit” acts of reasoning in the third edition of the University Sermons, published in 1871, only a year

³ Ibid. 110.
⁴ US 66.
⁵ Cf. David Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, bk. 3, pt. 1, section 2. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). Hume considered that the “distinguishing impressions, by which moral good or evil is known, are nothing but particular pains or pleasures,” 471.
after the key doctrine on conscience in the Grammar of Assent. Newman gave instances which incline one to acknowledge that there is genuine reasoning, reasoning of which the reasoner may be unaware, and in which the grounds of inference may only be vaguely seen. So, for example, from a person’s religious views, we can often deduce where they may stand on apparently indifferent issues, defending those issues better than they defend them themselves.6 Newman contrasted “implicit reasoning” with “argument.” “People may argue badly, but reason well”; that is, their professed grounds are no sufficient measures of their real ones. People reach conviction not normally as a result of some proof seen as decisive, but as a result of many minute considerations coming together, which the mind cannot “count up and methodize in argumentative form.”7

Examples of the above in Newman’s life were his consideration of St. Augustine’s principle of securus iudicat orbis terrarum (the whole world judges with assurance).8 The Apologia remarks how a friend repeated these words to Newman “again and again,” and, when he was gone, they kept ringing in Newman’s ears. Then, the mere sentence struck him “with a power which I never had felt from any words before.”9 Obviously, the lesson is that something, however so true and powerful, needs time and reflection in

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6 US 211.

7 Ibid. 274.

8 The full sentence, in Augustine’s Contra epistolam Parmeniani (III. iv. 24) can be translated: “The whole world judges with assurance that they are not good men who, in whatever part of the world, separate themselves from the rest of the world.”

9 Apo. 98.
order to penetrate the mind and conscience. And, what may have been unknown before, becomes a source of truth and duty.

Another example from the *Apologia* is Newman's attitude towards converts. Newman reflects how Catholics have accused him of backwardness in making converts, while Protestants have argued from his reluctance to seek converts that he really had little eagerness to do so. Newman answers:

> It would be against my nature to act otherwise that I do; but besides, it would be to forget the lessons which I gained in the experience of my own history in the past.\(^\text{10}\)

Newman found himself unable to give reasons for his behavior, except the weight of his own experience. There was an "implicit reasoning" in his conduct, whereas he was hard put to find "arguments" acceptable to others, be they Catholics or Protestants, to justify his convictions. The whole point of the *Apologia* was to give some intelligible meaning to his conversion, but not necessarily with an intelligibility acceptable to all. What Newman achieved was a subjective conviction on what his conscience asked of him. Sometimes it was in the different expressions of revelation. Other times, he sought rationalization of truth as a Liberal. But, the narrative of the *Apologia* was to state the objective "apology" Newman had for his journey with truth. Arguments took time to be convincing in conscience.

In summary, the Third Edition of the *University Sermons*, explains the essential relationship between implicit and explicit reasoning. Reasoning can be implicit, as in the

\(^{10}\) Ibid. 105.
above examples in Newman's life, or explicit, when it seeks articulated argument for what is implicit. 'Explicit reasoning,' therefore, is articulated argument from an 'analysis' of what goes on in implicit reasoning.\textsuperscript{11}

Another setting for Newman's theory on conscience and reasoning is when he contrasted conscience and faith, on the one hand, and reason, on the other. By 'reason' Newman meant 'reasoning.' The parallel between faith and conscience in their relationship towards reason is seen in Sermon 10:

No one will say that Conscience is against Reason, or that its dictates cannot be thrown into an argumentative form; yet who will, therefore, maintain that it is not an original principle, but must depend before it acts, upon some previous processes of Reason? Reason analyzes the grounds and motives of action: a reason is an analysis, but is not the motive itself. As, then, Conscience is a simple element in our nature, yet its operations admit of being surveyed and scrutinized by Reason; so my Faith be cognizable, and its acts be justified, by Reason, without therefore being, in matter of fact, dependent upon it.\textsuperscript{12}

The notion may be taken from the above text that conscience does not need reason. In this line of thought, conscience is totally independent of all that is objective reasoning. Hence, it becomes subjective, more of a feeling in the Humean sense, and therefore, a master unto itself. In such a perspective on moral convictions, the impression may then be taken from this text of Newman that he is favoring a concept of conscience wherein the subject himself, in conscience, is determining right and wrong.

\textsuperscript{11} US 66, footnote 4.
\textsuperscript{12} US 183.
However, a careful reading of the text shows that he is talking about conscience having an independence of action prior to any process of reasoning. In other words, conscience has a motive, prior to formal reasoning, for acting. Therefore, conscience is prior to, not independent of, objective reasons for moral convictions. Nor, is there a double motive for action; first, what conscience uses as a motive, and, later, what reason sees to be a motive. Conscience acts sometimes for motives which are implicit, and may be put into argumentative form in explicit reasoning. Therefore, the implicit reasons of conscience become rationally argumentative by the process of reasoning.

The parallel with faith shows that conscience, like faith, can be justified by reasoning. Hence, faith, like conscience, has implicit reasons for one’s faith or moral convictions. However, in matter of fact, in life’s daily duties and beliefs, faith, like conscience, is independent of reasoning in its manner of acting. Only later can one deduce from what is implicit the explicit reasons for either faith or conscience. In Sermon X, Newman gave the example of the judge who does not justify the innocence or guilt of suspects. He merely discovers their truth. Likewise, reason only discovers what is in faith or conscience.\(^\text{13}\)

Another context used by Newman in the *University Sermons* to explain conscience is to contrast the senses with the reasoning used in perception. The typical example is the sailor who looks at the clouds and feels the wind, and decides a storm is blowing. Therefore, according to Newman, the senses give us “direct and immediate...”

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
acquaintance" with their objects, whereas perception by reasoning is obtained "indirectly upon grounds." So, following Newman's terminology above, sense perception would be implicit perception, whereas the reasoning of the grounds behind that perception would be explicit perception. Thus, the sailor, from previous experiences of certain clouds and winds, has learnt that a storm is coming, even though he cannot articulate there and then the reasons for and against.

Likewise with Newman's own conscience, his religious conversions were hard to reason explicitly. There were implicit reasons that needed analysis. Therefore, Newman was understandably slow towards proselytism. Both Catholics and Protestants had difficulty with his experience in this regard.

Concluding our comparison of faith and conscience, we quote Newman's example of the sagacious general in Sermon XI:

Consider the preternatural sagacity with which a great general knows what his friends and enemies are about and what will be the final result, and where, of their combined movements, - and then say whether, if he were required to argue the matter out in word or on paper, all his most brilliant conjectures might not be refuted, and all his producible reasons exposed as illogical.

And, in an analogous way, Faith is a process of the Reason, in which so much of the grounds of inference cannot be exhibited, so much lies in the character of the mind itself, in its general view of things . . . that it will ever seem to the world irrational.

14 US 205-207.
15 Apo. 105.
So faith is like conscience. The action of both involves their operating rationally, but not by way of articulated reasoning.

The importance of these comparisons and the distinction between implicit and explicit reasoning in conscience is that Newman clearly included moral intelligibility as an activity of conscience. Hence, when Newman speaks of the subjective power of conscience to ascertain a conviction on right or wrong, the action involves the implicit reasoning to detect hidden objective moral truth. Newman uses the qualification “educated” for such a conscience.\(^{17}\)

We may conclude, then, that the doctrine of conscience in the *University Sermons* implies that conscience engages in moral reasoning of an implicit kind. The term in the *Grammar of Assent* will be “natural inference.”\(^{18}\) Conscience decides the rightness or wrongness of an action by implicit reasoning, as if the action simply presented itself, and its rightness or wrongness simply felt or seen. We may call the latter psychological immediacy in so far as the subject is immediately aware of his convictions without a formal, conscious, process. Explicit analysis by reason of the grounds and motives of actions dictated by conscience comes later.\(^{19}\)

As a final note to these reflections, we consider the best guide to Newman's texts to be Newman himself. His whole youth from evangelicalism to liberalism to

\(^{17}\) Ibid. 66. Earlier in the *University Sermons* Newman speaks of a mind “habitually and honestly conforming itself to its own full sense of duty.” 20. Cf. Grammar of Assent, 106, where he speaks of “careful” formation of the individual's natural conscience.

\(^{18}\) GA 260.

\(^{19}\) US 183.
anglicanism to Tract 90 bears testimony to his search for reasons for his belief. At the same time, he always wished to "see with my own eyes and walk with my own feet." 20

This combination of personal conviction and objective reasons are summarized in a passage when he was "on his death-bed" as regards the Anglican Church in 1839. 21

The one question was, what was I to do? I had to make up my mind for myself, and others could not help me. I determined to be guided, not by my imagination, but by my reason. And this I said over and over again in the years which followed, both in conversation and in private letters. 22

The question of what he had to do was, of course, the question of conscience. Conscience consisted in an ultimately personal decision, unresolved by others. Quite obviously if others could not help him, neither could they coerce him. Newman knew he had to seek for himself explicit reasons for his decisions in conscience. And once again, John Henry insisted in that dark hour, that such was his consistent belief in conscience and reason throughout his life.

20 Apo. 22.
21 Ibid. 121.
22 Ibid. 100.
CHAPTER X

GOING TO THOSE I DO NOT KNOW

When I was fully confident that the Church of Rome was the only true Church,
I joined her.

*Apologia Pro Vita Sua*

Newman's conversion to the Roman Catholic Church is intimately linked with his writing of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. This book was written before the author became a Catholic.¹ In fact, the outcome of the book was to remove the last obstacle on his road towards Rome.² Once again, we note the amazing link between Newman's life and books. In fact, he had learnt the lesson from his illness in Sicily and

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² Letter to his sister Jemima, 15 Mar. 1845. The context reads: "I have a bad name with more - I am fulfilling all their worst wishes and giving them their most coveted triumph - I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided - I am going to those whom I do not know and of whom I expect very little - I am making myself an outcast, and that at my age. Oh, what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this?"
friendship with Froude that certitude in religious questions demands action. In considering the question of joining the RC Church in 1843, Newman's own simple answer to his great difficulty had been

Do what your present state of opinion requires in the light of duty, and let that doing tell: speak by acts.⁴

According to the method of this dissertation, we wish to analyze Newman's concept of conscience as he wrote this book and acted accordingly. We shall endeavor to note the following characteristics of conscience as brought out in this episode of Newman's life. First, its individual, personal, character as each person finding alone their own path towards duty in truth. Secondly, we shall emphasize the historical dimension of decisions in conscience as written and lived by Newman at the time of his conversion to the RC Church. Finally, we wish to note the divine element in any decision in conscience as understood by Newman. Our hope is that this elucidation of conscience as lived by Newman in his decision of 9 Oct. 1845 will prepare the road towards our later conclusions on his understanding of liberty of conscience.

On March 20, 1841, Newman had written: No one can enter into my situation but myself.⁵ Newman's purpose in writing the An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine was not to write an apology for his conversion to Catholicism. Less still was he writing an apology for Roman Catholicism itself.⁶ His purpose was totally personal; how

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⁴ Apo. 168.
⁵ Ibid. 137.
⁶ Preface to the edition of 1878, Dev. vii.
to answer his own difficulty in becoming a Catholic at a precise time in his life. His need was not for logical reasons to join the Church of Rome. He felt a great dislike for "paper logic."

All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I did; as well might you say that I have arrived at the end of my journey, because I see the village church before me, as venture to assert that the miles, over which my soul had to pass before it got to Rome, could be annihilated, even though I had been in possession of some far clearer view than I then had, that Rome was my ultimate destination.

Newman insisted here on the personal, historical dimension of decisions in conscience. Comparing logical arguments to seeing the village church at a distance, he distinguished between seeing intellectual reasons for going to Roman Catholicism and actually going over to Rome. At the root of this distinction is his philosophical dislike for "unfeeling logical inferences." As developed later in the Grammar of Assent, Newman considered certitude as being in the concrete by an acting person, whereas logical inference only reaches conclusions in the abstract. Here, with An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, Newman distinguished between seeing and walking. One thing is to see intellectual arguments for Roman Catholicism. Quite another to actually go over to that Church. The human mind may foresee intellectual consequences in Logic from certain premises. But, it is the "whole man who moves." Newman's

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7 Dev. ix-x.
8 Apo. 136.
9 Ibid.
10 Below chapters XI and XII.
11 Apo. 136.
philosophical anthropology involves the whole person with his life situation, a clear rejection of an intellectual abstraction.

Therefore, in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman's method of certitude for his own conscience is the law of probability. On the question of development of doctrine, there is the high antecedent probability that Providence would watch over His own work, directing and ratifying those developments of doctrine which were inevitable. ¹² On the other hand, the existing developments of doctrine are the probable fulfillment of that expectation. ¹³ This system of writing and arguing by Newman in this work follows the distinction quoted above from the *Apologia* between the certainty in logic due to rigid demonstration, and certitude in religious inquiry, where we arrive at certitude by accumulated probabilities. ¹⁴ For that reason, it is the whole man that reasons and moves; whereas "paper logic is but the record of it." ¹⁵ Therefore, for Newman objective reasons or apologetics have a clear limit; the individual person needs certitude from an accumulation of probabilities brought home to him alone.

The personal and historical character of conscience is also seen in his *Advertisement to the First Edition of An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. The work is intended to "avow his present belief" with his desire to "suggest

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¹² Dev. 100.
¹³ Ibid. 92.
¹⁴ Apo. 157.
¹⁵ Ibid. 136.
thoughts” and “carry forward” other inquirers.\textsuperscript{16} So, if, on the one hand, Newman found his own certitude in Roman Catholicism on writing this book, on the other hand, he clearly knew that his reasons for belief are mere suggestions for other seekers. Not only did he see his own decision in conscience to be entirely individual, but also considered that the same held for other people. Just because he saw reasons for conversion to Roman Catholicism with the decision to walk that road did not mean he felt others should in conscience follow his path. On the contrary, precisely because his own certitude was entirely personal and historic, likewise the conscience of others had to see and walk for themselves.\textsuperscript{17}

Besides, this characteristic of conscience can be seen in both \textit{An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine} and the \textit{Apologia}. He began the \textit{Essay} as an non-Catholic as he says in the \textit{Advertisement}, and decided to become a Catholic when “he had got some way in the printing.” But, this, his own personal certitude, did not entice him on a crusade of proselytizing for Roman Catholicism. On the contrary, in the \textit{Apologia} he remarked that he was eager for converts while he was “fighting in Oxford for the Anglican Church.” Nevertheless, as soon as he turned towards Rome, he kept to the principle of “finding disciples, rather than seeking them,” because his concern became entirely his own duty in conscience.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Dev. x}.

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. chapter IV above. Hawkins taught Newman “to see with my own eyes and to walk with my own feet.”
This went on till 1843; but, at that date, as soon as I turned my face Romeward, I gave up, as far as ever was possible, the thought of in any respect and in any shape acting upon others. Then I myself was simply my own concern.  

The divine character of decisions in conscience is brought out in An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. Newman's conversion is concomitant with the discovery of the historical character of divine revelation and providence in the development of doctrine. Newman's argument was history against which there were no arguments. His problem was likewise history in so far as certain apparent inconsistencies appeared in historical Christianity. And his solution was history in so far as probability demanded a divine providence over developments of doctrine in history. Chapter IV of Part I precisely reviews instances to illustrate his point. All of Part II is a historical view of doctrinal developments vis-à-vis doctrinal corruptions. In the final analysis, this historical Christianity turns out to be Roman Catholicism. So, he could conclude his introduction to the Essay:

The following Essay is directed towards a solution of the difficulty which has been stated, - the difficulty, as far as it exists, which lies in the way of our using in controversy the testimony of our most natural informant concerning the doctrine and worship of Christianity, viz., the history of eighteen hundred years.

The historical and divine character of Christianity determinant in Newman's certitude in embracing Roman Catholicism is also paralleled in the historical and dutiful character of his decision towards conversion in conscience. There is a precise "here and

18 Apo. 169.
19 Dev. 29.
now” when Newman decided to embrace the Church of Rome as coming from God. His theory of the development of doctrine was not only a hypothesis to account for a difficulty,²⁰ but also the historical moment for his certitude on what God wanted him to do. There was a precise here and now in his decision to write the Essay,²¹ but also a precise historical “circumstance” which allowed him to act on his certitude, and be received into Roman Catholicism as the Church of Christ.²²

Therefore, the argument of history which determined his conviction on the divine nature of Roman Catholicism in An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine is also the argument to determine his own historical conversion, understood as his certitude in conscience at that time and place. Hence, his theory of conscience was historical, changing and seeking divine certitude. His certitude in conscience was not the same at the beginning of the Essay as at the end. So, later he would apply to others what he himself had lived. His theory of conscience, then, could likewise be considered a hypothesis to account for the difficulty of his change in certitude, and, consequently, other people’s changes in certitude.

The second edition of the Apologia is precisely titled History of my Religious Opinions since he says it is “historically relating my state of mind.”²³ The Essay is in itself a testimony of history on how Newman gradually changed from a non-certitude in

²⁰ Ibid. 30.
²¹ Apo. 177.
²² Dev. xi.
²³ Apo. 157.
the Church of Rome to intellectual conviction. Hence, he could conclude a theory of conscience where each person, day by day, must seek their certitudes:

Is not this a time of strange providences? is it not our safest course, without looking to consequences, to do simply what we think right day by day? shall we not be sure to go wrong, if we attempt to trace by anticipation the course of divine Providence?

This gradual change of certitudes in religious matters finally raises the question of the divine presence in conscience which seems concomitant with error. How can the same God be present in contradictory conscientious certitudes? Consequently, is it enough for a personal, historical conscience, such as Newman's, to seek truth, though he find error? How can real objective truth be allied with subjective change? What respect merits a conscience we know to be in error?

Again, Newman's life is Newman's answer. Beginning the Essay we cannot doubt his sincerity as a non-Catholic, while, at the end, we cannot fail to admire his courage to "go on the open sea." God, who lives as a Personal, All-seeing, All-judging Being in his conscience, is the same Lord who provides the antecedent probability of divine protection and the subsequent probability of his action in the development of doctrine.

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid. 130.
26 Dev. xi.
27 Apo. 182.
28 Ibid. 156
Newman applied this theory to the individual conscience when he faced the question of his change of certitude possibly leading people to be skeptical as to all objective truth. If Newman was mistaken as an Anglican, might he not be mistaken again as a Catholic? Quite the contrary: John Henry argued in the *Apologia*. The very fact of objective truth demands that a person recognize that he has been deceived, as Newman was by the Anglican divines. Truth demands change in accord with the knowledge the individual achieves in his historical life. The contrary - to remain in a known error - indeed would be militating against objective truth. So, Newman's decision to enter the Church of Rome as soon as he saw the emptiness of his doubt was not an apology for relativism, but rather for objective truth.

The next step in Newman's theory of conscience was to ask whether a person should always follow an erring conscience. The whole focus of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* is that Newman was in error in regard to his doubts about Roman Catholicism. Hence, his change. Nevertheless, at no point did Newman consider his subjective error to be an objective culpable fault. On the contrary, he stated that he has "always contended" that

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30 *Dev.* 10.
obedience even to an erring conscience was the way to gain light, and that it mattered not where a man began, so that he began on what came to hand, and in faith; and that any thing might become a divine method of Truth; that to the pure all things are pure, and have a self-correcting virtue and a power of germinating. ...And though I have no right at all to assume that this mercy is granted to me, yet the fact, that a person in my situation may have it granted to him, seems to me to remove the perplexity which my change of opinion may occasion.31

Hence, obedience to an erring conscience not only is not considered "evil," but rather is considered the road to truth. Besides, Newman added the historical reference to those conscientious Jews being precisely those who converted to Christianity, whereas the lukewarm did not.32 This reference implies that obedience to an erring conscience is precisely that; obedience to conscience as to a Living Person dwelling within, and not to some fancy or liking.33 In Newman's case, it was his desire to defend the Church of England against Liberalism which eventually brought him to the truth of the Church of Rome.34

A final question then arises as to Newman's view of the "authority" of conscience vis-à-vis Church authority as brought out in the Essay. We note that in the postscript he states: "His first step on his conversion was to offer his Work for revision to the proper authorities." This obedience to the authorities of Roman Catholicism was a consequence of his recognizing the presence of God in that Church.35

31 *Apo.* 162.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid. 30.
34 Chapter VII.
35 *Dev.* postscript, x-xi.
Again, the whole point of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* was a final farewell to the Church of England and her authorities. Newman did finish the work obeying the authority of the Church of Rome, but the book itself is a clear dissent in conscience from the Anglican Church. The final authority for conscience is the Lord Himself. In the case of Church authorities, Newman discovered writing the *Essay* that that same Lord dwelt in the Church of Rome, rather than in the Church of England. The primacy of conscience is the primacy of God himself over both the individual either in error or truth and the religious authorities which teach error or truth in his name.

So, we see in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, besides the reason for Newman's conversion, a moderate approach to dissent. Obedience is granted to the religious authorities accepted in conscience by Newman. In no way would John Henry agree with a systematic rejection of religious authorities known to be of divine origin. Nor would he enhance himself as an authentic teaching authority of the Church. If he considered that the Lord endowed the Church with a living authority throughout the ages, he consequently included in the postscript the offer of his work to the proper authorities.37

Thus, primacy of conscience as seen by Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism is the primacy of God over the individual and religious authorities. This primacy implies the liberty of conscience to seek God in truth, follow him when known,

36 Ibid. chap. II, section 2.
37 Ibid. postscript, xi.
consequent conversion implies that Newman believed in freedom of inquiry in so far as he sought out truth; freedom of expression in so far as he thought it fit to print what he wrote; and freedom of religion, in so far as he felt free to change his religious beliefs and practice.
CHAPTER XI

CONSCIENCE AS A MORAL SENSE

For twenty years I have begun and left off an inquiry again and again,
which yesterday I finished.

Letters and Diaries

Newman's most extensive philosophical treatment of the nature of conscience comes in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, published during the year of the I Vatican Council, 1870. To help us understand Newman's understanding of conscience vis-à-vis authority during these years, a careful analysis of this text may be invaluable. Nevertheless, we soon realize that Newman entered on the subject incidentally, when he showed how the proposition that there is a God is possible and that conscience is where he looks for proof of God's existence.¹

Our first introductory observation on conscience in the *Grammar of Assent* is that Newman considered conscience an act, rather than a faculty.² Although conscience is an

¹ GA 97.

² GA 98. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.79, a.13: “Respondeo dicendum quod conscientia, proprie loquendo, non est potentia, sed actus (I answer saying that conscience, properly speaking, is not a potency, but an act).”
original endowment of nature as much as memory and reason are, Newman implied that conscience does not have the same manner of being as they do. Newman considered memory and reasoning as “faculties” whose existence is inferred from the corresponding acts. They are genuine instruments, like the apparatus of breathing:

We know indeed that we have a faculty by which we remember, as we know we have a faculty by which we breathe: but we gain this knowledge by abstraction or inference from its particular acts, not by direct experience.  

When conscience is later associated in the text with memory and reason, it is not as a faculty. It is placed among “our mental acts,” along with the “action” of memory and reasoning.  

This placing by Newman of conscience in the category of mental acts does not affect his doctrine that conscience is part of our nature, underivable from anything else. Newman showed that conscience is not a product of our upbringing in the story of the child who offends his parents. The child, “alone and without effort, as it were the most natural of acts,” places himself in the presence of God. Just like the infant has a knowledge of his mother or nurse, “without previous experience or analogical reasoning,” so he is able to perceive the voice of God in the dictate of conscience. This brings Newman to affirm that “we have by nature a conscience.” So, even though

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3 GA 66.
4 Ibid. 98.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid. 102-103.
7 Ibid. 98.
conscience for Newman is not a faculty, but a mental act, it is still in us by nature, just as much as memory and reasoning.

The next distinction made by Newman on the nature of conscience is to ascribe to it a double aspect:

The feeling of conscience... is twofold: - it is a moral sense, and a sense of duty, a judgment of the reason and a magisterial dictate. Of course its act is indivisible; still it has these two aspects, distinct from each other, and admitting of a separate consideration. 

In this paragraph Newman explains the distinction between moral sense and a sense of duty, although both are part and parcel of conscience. One may lose his moral sense in one area of conduct, but not his sense of obligation to follow what he considers right. On the contrary, in other case, one may no longer feel an obligation to do a known good or avoid a certain "dishonesty", but still has a sense of good and evil. Newman considered the act of conscience "indivisible," but admitting "a separate consideration" for each one of its aspects: moral sense and sense of duty. Our first step, in this chapter, will be analyze the concept of moral sense. In the next chapter, we shall see Newman's understanding of conscience as a sense of duty.

"Moral sense" has a precise philosophical history in British moral theory, the analysis of which will help us see Newman's use of the term. The predominant use of the term, as described by Hume, is "a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind" induced by the contemplation of "an action, or sentiment, or character." The particular kind of

\* Ibid.

\* Ibid.

118
pleasure or pain which constitutes the moral sense is partly specified by the contemplated 
object. Nevertheless, the moral sense is ultimately specified by the pleasure or pain felt 
by the subject. Hume presupposes our recognizing what he is referring to, when he calls 
this pleasurable or painful feeling a "moral sense."¹⁰

Comparing this to Newman, we notice that Hume's moral sense is not a cognitive 
sense: there is nothing it ascertains. According to Hume's subjectivist view, something is 
morally good or evil in accord with a particular kind of feeling:

An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious: why? 
because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind.¹¹

Hence, for Hume, the feeling induced in the subject and the features of the action 
ascertained by ordinary perception are all that are relevant to the rightness and wrongness 
of an action. Later, we shall see how Newman differs from this view of moral sense.

A second historical use of the term "moral sense" in the British philosophical 
moral tradition insists on the objective standard of morality. According to this use of 
"moral sense," the rightness or wrongness of an action, the goodness or badness of a 
person's character, exist independently of any feelings induced in us by the 
contemplation of an action or character. In ascertaining the goodness or badness of an 
action, moral sense here has a cognitive operation. Moral sense may be considered 
analogous to sight; as a seeing of self-evident moral truth.

¹⁰ Hume, 470.

¹¹ Ibid. 471.
Shaftesbury was the most important proponent of this second type of moral-sense theory. For Shaftesbury, there is an “immutable independent nature” of right and wrong. Hence, Shaftesbury would distinguish between our feelings and our knowledge. The latter constitutes moral sense according to Shaftesbury, whereas the former are subjective affections. However, Shaftesbury does give a certain role to the subject’s moral character. For Shaftesbury, for a person to lack a certain moral sense, implies having a certain defect of character. This moral defect of character is also linked to the social behavior and feelings one has in society. In contrast, Newman linked a person’s whole moral perception with his whole moral being, both in personal character and in society.

Common to both the subjectivist and to the objective types of moral-sense theory is the idea that moral sense operates without ratiocination, with the immediacy of feeling. Reasoning may often be necessary to establish relevant matters of fact. Once these matters of fact are established, inference or the adducing of reasons is over. Some sort of feeling or perceiving takes over, presenting the action as right or wrong. Differing from that, we have seen in Chapter IX how Newman used the concept of “implicit reasoning” to save the role of reason in moral sense.

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12 Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964), 255.

13 GA 106.

14 We remember the definition of “reason” in the preface to the third edition of the University Sermons. “By Reason is properly understood any process or act of the mind, by which, from knowing one thing, it advances on to know another,” preface, xi.
An aspect of both moral-sense theories taken up by Newman is the “sense of beauty” analogy.\(^\text{15}\) This inward sense of beauty produces an account of the moral sense appropriate to both a subjectivist and objective viewpoint. It is subjectivist in so far as it lends itself readily to a disposition of the subject on contemplating an object. And it may be objective in so far as a thing of beauty is a joy forever in so far as it is a “thing.” A sense of beauty implies a feeling on the part of the subject - in the case mentioned, a feeling of joy - but, also, implies some thing which causes joy.

Coming back to our original quotation from the Grammar of Assent on conscience as a “moral sense,”\(^\text{16}\) we notice first a subjectivist understanding of conscience in Newman. Conscience is subjectivist as a feeling being, I repeat, a certain keen sensibility, pleasant or painful, - self-approval and hope, or compunction and fear, - attendant on certain of our actions, which in consequence we call right or wrong.\(^\text{17}\)

In this subjectivist view, according to Newman, we feel self-approval or its opposite. In consequence - retrospectively - we call things right or wrong; right, since doing them resulted in self-approval; wrong, since doing them resulted in self-condemnation. So, the contemplation of certain things induces in us a feeling of approbation or disapprobation, in consequence of which we call these things right or wrong. Newman added that the doing of these things evokes in us further correspondent pleasurable or painful feeling.

\(^{15}\) Ibid. 100.

\(^{16}\) Ibid. 98-99.

\(^{17}\) Ibid. 98.
This feeling of conscience lends itself to the affirmation that Newman in fact is saying that personal conscience determines right and wrong. Is this not a view of conscience as purely subjectivist and autonomous? Are we not back to Hume?

However, the paragraph before in the text explains well the key difference from Hume. Those feelings have a cause in the objects themselves. There Newman wrote how right and wrong are brought to our knowledge by conscience as a moral sense:

As there are objects which, when presented to the mind, cause it to feel grief, regret, joy, or desire, so there are things which excite in us approbation or blame, and which we in consequence call right and wrong; and which, experienced in ourselves, kindle in us that specific sense of pleasure and pain, which goes by the name of a good or bad conscience. 18

So, the comparison, for Newman, is double. Just like the senses convey things which cause feelings of grief, etc., so “things” excite in us approbation or blame. The knowledge in both cases is immediate, and the cause is something objective known by the subject. Secondly, pleasure and pain, for Newman, is obviously not physical, but “specific” as a pleasure or pain associated with approbation or blame, and, consequently, with a good or bad conscience. All of which is a far cry from Hume, for whom the very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration.

We go no further: nor do we inquire into the cause of the satisfaction. 19

A further argument for both a subjectivist and objective view of conscience as a moral sense in Newman is his use of the parallel between moral sense and the sense of beauty.

18 Ibid.
19 Hume, 471.
As we form our notion of whiteness from the actual sight of snow, milk, a lily, or a cloud, so, after experiencing the sentiment of approbation which arises in us on the sight of certain acts one by one, we go on to assign to that sentiment a cause, and to those acts a quality, and we give to this notional cause or quality the name of virtue, which is an abstraction, not a thing. And in like manner, when we have been affected by a certain specific admiring pleasure at the sight of this or that concrete object, we proceed by an arbitrary act of the mind to give a name to the hypothetical cause or quality in the abstract, which excites it. We speak of it as beautifulness, and henceforth, when we call a thing beautiful, we mean by the word nothing else than a certain quality of things, which creates in us this special sensation. 20

Here we see Newman’s understanding of virtue as caused by a quality of the acts themselves parallel to the subjective feeling caused by contemplating the quality of a thing of beauty. Following this parallel, we can ask what is the “quality of things” found in both the moral sense and the sense of beauty? In Hume’s case, it is a “structure of parts” 21 in natural and moral beauty that is more properly “felt than judg’d of.” Hence, moral good is not something present in the object. Whereas in Newman’s case, as quoted above, the quality is indeed found in the “acts” themselves as known by the moral sense, just as being beautiful means a “certain quality” in things themselves.

The next question arising from Newman’s comparison of moral sense and sense of beauty is whether this quality of acts “named as virtuous” is something “metaphysical” or something merely reducible to sense-knowledge. In the moral sense, Newman uses ambiguous terms like “experiencing” approbation, “assigning” a cause, and “giving” a

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20 GA 69.
21 Hume, 299.
22 Ibid. 470.
name. In the sense of beauty, we are "affected" by the sight of a concrete object. Nevertheless a reduction of Newman's concept of the "quality of things" to merely individualistic sense-knowledge would fail to pass the test of its being an objective cause of feelings, as is clearly shown in the passage above. What, however, remains open to discussion from the above text is the role of reason in this moral-sense theory according to Newman. The answer to this question will help us ascertain the way in which conscience decides virtue from vice, and right from wrong.

Our first impression of Newman's understanding of the role of reason in conscience is found in the paragraph following his account of conscience as a moral sense. Newman wrote:

Here I have to speak of conscience . . . as supplying us, by means of its various acts, with the elements of morals, such as may be developed by the intellect into an ethical code. 23

Conscience, so, as a moral sense, discerns the "elements of morals." From these elements as data, the moral principles of an ethical code would be derived by certain processes of reasoning. Finally, these principles would be premises for inference to the rightness or wrongness of actions. Newman's morally-sensed "elements of morals" are not moral principles, but rather the cause of the formulation of such principles. So, Newman's moral sense starts from the rightness or wrongness of individual actions in fully determinate circumstances, from which moral principles will be rationally derived.

He added:

23 GA 98.
By first principles I mean the propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject matter. These so-called first principles are conclusions or abstractions from particular experience; ... they are not elementary truths prior to reasoning.

The moral principle chosen by Newman as an illustration of this view is the first principle in moral philosophy: that there is a right and a wrong. Newman could have said more about the derivation of other moral principles, but the point at hand is the nature of assent given to first principles. For his purposes, it is sufficient merely to mention the procedure by which moral principles are obtained: we "abstract and generalize" from "particular experiences." Hence, Newman's insistence on a "sentiment of approbation" as being foundational to the knowledge of an objective moral law in no way involves him "denying the objective existence of the moral law." The point in the text is the concrete particularity of the experience from which the moral law in its general principles has to be reasoned to. The continuation of his remark emphasizes even more the objective character of the "sentiment of approbation." There is an "instinctive recognition of the immutable difference in the moral quality of acts ... elicited in us by one instance of them." So, we conclude that the role of reason in conscience as a moral sense is proceeded by abstraction and generalization. This action is not ultimately due to

24 GA 66.
25 Ibid. 69.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid. 66.
any feeling or sentiment of ours, but rather specifically to what is right or wrong in a concrete act.

The next question we may ask about Newman's theory on conscience as a moral sense is how we are to ascertain what is right and wrong in a particular case. In a late section of the Grammar of Assent, Newman explains the "illative sense" as "right judgment in ratiocination," a "power of judging and concluding," and the "controlling principle in inferences." The faculty with which the illative sense is compared is Aristotle's "phronesis" - "judgment" in Newman's terminology.\(^{28}\)

In his account of phronesis, the manner in which we ascertain right from wrong in a particular case is a question no ethical system can answer. We have to go to the "living intellect, our own, or another's." An ethical system may supply "laws, general rules ... examples ... landmarks, limitations ... distinctions," but all these have to be applied to concrete situations: it can tell us that virtue lies between extremes, but cannot determine for an individual where the mean lies for him. Phronesis, arising out of native endowment, "formed and matured by practice and experience," regulates judgment in these matters.\(^{29}\) So, phronesis is a capacity sufficient for the occasion, deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances. It decides nothing hypothetical, it does not determine what a man should do ten years hence, or what another should do at this time. It may indeed happen to decide ten years hence as it does now, and to decide a second case now as it now decides a first; still its present act is for the present, not for the distant or the future.

\(^{28}\) Ibid. 276-281.

\(^{29}\) Ibid. 278.
and such is phronesis, from which the science of morals forms its rules, and receives its complement. 30

There is a parallel in the analysis of conscience as moral sense in Newman and his treatment of the illative sense relative to phronesis in Aristotle. Reason in both cases starts out from individual, concrete, experiences, and, from there, forms the “ethical code” in the case of conscience, and the “science of morals” in the case of phronesis.

Wherein lies the difference between conscience and phronesis according to Newman? Conscience, earlier on in the Grammar of Assent, is stated as having to do with “self alone and one’s own actions.” 31 Phronesis, on the other hand, is a resort either to oneself or another in matters of a personal, social, or political character. 32 Phronesis coincides with conscience when deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances. Phronesis goes beyond the realm of conscience because it has resort to another’s actions or even to another person in deciding what is right or wrong in the concrete here and now.

Both conscience as a moral sense and phronesis, according to Newman, seem to follow the same three steps in moral knowledge. First, particular moral acts are the starting-point for the formation of moral rules. This principle of Newman implies logically immediate moral perception by the individual, that is, without explicit reasoning. Second, both conscience and phronesis form by reason “an ethical code” or

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid. 99.
32 Ibid. 278-279.
"science of morals." Finally, moral particular judgments in concrete cases are formed based on that code or science of morals.

The main difficulty with the above conclusion is that it shows Newman's concept of both conscience and *phronesis* in Aristotle as having logically immediate perception in that first stage. *Phronesis*, however, in Aristotle would seem to be more in the category of practical judgment, or prudence, understood as the practical application of principles to concrete actions, that is, in the third stage. This is shown by Newman's insistence that *phronesis* is "matured by practice and experience." Can we combine an understanding of conscience as a moral sense including immediate moral perception with growth in moral sense by practice and experience? Newman seems to understand the moral sense as having as its starting-point moral judgments not produced by reason and not subject to growth.

However, Newman's understanding of the moral sense in conscience is associated, in a later essay, not only with *phronesis*, but rather with another Aristotelian faculty, *nous*. The context of Newman's description of this other faculty is his objection to the use of the word "reason" to designate mental proceedings which do not involve reasoning. Newman then wrote of a "faculty in the mind which acts as a complement to reasoning", upon which reasoning is "dependent", which has "truth for its direct object."

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33 GA 278.
Viewed “in its relation to religion,” this faculty is the “moral sense.” In its wider scope as “being the apprehension of first principles,” it is the faculty called by Aristotle nous. 34

The point that Newman is making here is that the moral sense has moral truth as its direct object. Hence, moral sense perception is to be contrasted with reasoning of any kind, be it implicit or explicit. So, moral reasoning is dependent upon moral-sense perception due to the latter’s intuitive apprehension of first moral principles.

So, how does conscience determine right and wrong based on Newman’s understanding of conscience’s role as a moral sense? John Henry may answer that conscience sometimes perceives that an action is right or wrong, and sometimes infers this. Conscience, then, as a moral-sense has both an intuitive and a ratiocinative operation.

Evidences of Newman’s insistence on both roles of conscience as moral sense are read in his correspondence with Charles Meynell. Newman had Meynell go through the Grammar of Assent at proof stage due to Newman’s anxiety to keep within the bounds of “doctrinal propriety.” Newman wrote:

You will find I there consider that the dictate of conscience is particular... and that from the multiplication of particulars I infer the general. Next that this dictate of conscience... is a moral instinct and its own evidence - as the belief in an external world is an instinct on the apprehension of sensible phenomena. 35


This "instinct" is more than psychological immediacy. As seen by the words "its own evidence" and by comparison with "instinctive" belief in an external world, it is an operation also characterized by "logical immediacy," that is, with no reasoning process involved.

This consideration of the dual function of conscience both as intuitive and ratiocinative leads us to the consideration of the reliability of conscience as Newman understood it. In Newman's teaching we have seen that conscience is to be our guide in all the various circumstances of our lives. Therefore, its role is to be a "rule" and "sanction of right conduct." In some circumstances, conscience operating in an intuitive fashion may suffice. However, in difficult complex cases, such an instinct would be inadequate. So, if, as Newman sees it, conscience has a role of always determining what is right and wrong for the individual here and now, it should be adequately equipped for its role. Hence, Newman clearly envisaged both an intuitive role for conscience as well as a reasoning one.

So, conscience in its determination of right and wrong has a moral-sense type operation but is open to diverse ways of operation. In other words, if reasoning is called for, conscience can reason. But this reasoning may be implicit in the operation of conscience as we have seen in Chapter IX. And, as studied in this chapter, the conclusions of conscience remain in accord with initial intuitional moral sense perception.

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36 GA 99.
Our final consideration in this chapter, linking us to the following, is whether conscience may be reduced to a merely cognitive role. Newman insisted that conscience was indivisible with two aspects: a moral sense and a sense of duty. Being distinct from one another, they admit of a separate consideration.\textsuperscript{37} The cognitive role may be, as we have seen here, either as an immediate moral instinct or as a reasoning process. The two expressions, “moral sense” and “a judgment of reason,” are coupled together. However, we have seen in this chapter that they are not synonymous. Explicit reasoning is not identical to the “moral sense” perception and implicit reasoning of conscience. “A judgment of reason” would be in accord with our analysis in the *University Sermons.* Explicit reasoning sums up or concludes the process of implicit reasoning performed by conscience. That is why Newman speaks of conscience as “supplying us, with its various acts, with the elements of morals.” Later, the explicit reason may develop these elements into “an ethical code.”\textsuperscript{38}

As to the indivisibility of conscience, no deciding on right and wrong - moral sense - takes place before an imperative of conscience - sense of duty - is felt, because normally none is needed. As soon as Newman felt it was his duty to be an Evangelical, Liberal, Anglican or Catholic, to assist at Vatican I or not, etc., implicitly he thought that such was the right thing to do.\textsuperscript{39} A moral sense and a sense of duty go together. The very

\textsuperscript{37} GA 98.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Apo. 179. Newman is in doubt whether he is impelled by what “seems clear” or by a “sense of duty.”
fact of knowing something to be good or bad for me here and now implies in itself that I may have a duty to do or avoid such and such an act. Nevertheless, Newman insisted on these two elements of conscience as being distinct from each other. One problem is to know what is good, quite another to fulfill that duty. In Newman's life, we have seen how he struggled to fulfill his obligations in conscience.\textsuperscript{40}

Conversely, when he felt something to be his duty in conscience, there was always something known by Newman. Corresponding to a sense of duty, there was a sense of truth known to this acting person. When conscience makes itself felt as a duty to Newman, there had to be something corresponding to what Newman saw as the cognitive side of its act. There had to be some knowing in order to have an obligation in conscience. A duty in conscience implies a truth known in conscience. Newman's conversion came after \textit{An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine}. Ultimately, duty depends on truth. An obligation can only be felt if it is known as such. Hence, the link between moral sense knowing right and wrong and a sense of duty obliging us to follow the truth known also implied for Newman a clear distinction. The duty to follow truth is always present. However, as we have seen in his life, that same truth, which remains unchangeable, takes time and effort to be known. Hence, duties change in accord with the truth known. In Newman's words:

\textsuperscript{40} See. Chapter X.
The law of truth differs from the law of duty, that duties change, but truths never; but, though truth is ever one and the same, and the assent of certitude is immutable, still the reasonings which carry us on to truth and certitude are many and distinct, and vary with the inquirer.\footnote{GA 278}
CHAPTER XII

THE VOICE OF GOD?

Were it not for this voice,
speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart,
I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist
when I looked into the world.

Letter to the Duke of Norfolk

Having analyzed Newman's treatment of conscience as a moral sense, and seen the link between truth and duty, we now proceed in the Grammar of Assent to investigate conscience as a sense of duty, and, from there, as the voice of God. Newman considered the sense of duty as the "primary and most authoritative aspect of conscience," the "ordinary sense of the word," and that "every one knows what is meant by a good or bad conscience."¹ So the first aspect of conscience as a sense of duty is its ordering this to be done, that to be avoided. "Good and bad" in this context are subordinated to the primary fact of conscience as being something that commands or sanctions, independent of

¹ GA 99.
whatever it commands or sanctions, of whenever it functions, before or after the action.

Conscience in this chapter will be considered as a “sanction of right conduct,” rather than a “rule of right conduct.”

The “imperative” nature of conscience is what gives conscience its “sense of duty” and “sanction of right conduct.” Obviously, nuances exist between each term. It is the person himself who commands his own actions, giving them a quality as being right or wrong for him here and now. Then comes the consequent sense of duty of performing the action, with the final sanction of a good or bad conscience in accord with how the action evolved.

In the text we next notice how Newman attributed to conscience a universality in its magisterial office, contrasting with its singularity in every action of different people:

So far it is one and the same in the mind of every one, whatever be its particular errors in particular minds as to the acts which it orders to be done or to be avoided.

What is universal is the fact of there being an imperative for all in the dictate of conscience. How each person sees his or her imperative, and then effects it, is another matter. However, the nature of conscience in each individual is the same, in so far as it is a mandate to do or avoid this or that. And, in the same breath, Newman immediately sees the fallible side of conscience. It is indeed the “voice of God” in so far it is commanding

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}} \text{ Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{3}} \text{ Ibid. 99.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}} \text{ Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}} \text{ Ibid. 102.}\]
something to be done, but remains human and erring in its weakness. So, the primacy of
mandating conscience is linked to its possibility in the individual to err and the duty of
the individual to seek what is morally right. The duty upon all to follow conscience is
linked to the obligation for all to seek truth. This text destroys the notion that Newman
was promoting autonomy of conscience. The individual’s duty to follow his or her
conscience is always subordinate to the first principle of seeking what is right and wrong,
that is, the first principle of conscience as a magisterial dictate. 6

In this context, we can evaluate Newman’s description of conscience as a voice in
order to illustrate his view of conscience as a magisterial dictate:

Conscience vaguely reaches forward to something beyond self, and dimly
discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions, as is evidenced in
that keen sense of obligation and sense of responsibility which informs
them. And hence we are accustomed to speak of conscience as a voice . . .
and moreover a voice, or the echo of a voice, imperative and constraining,
like no other dictate in the whole of our experience. 7

The very concept of a “voice” implies a reference to another beyond oneself,
excluding an autonomy of the self deciding what is right and wrong. “Voice” also implies
a person, not an impersonal categorical moral imperative to do one’s duty. In Newman’s

6 Cf. Summa Theologicae, I-II, q.94, a.2 - 4. In article 2, Aquinas shows how the first precept of
law is that “bonum est faciendum et malum viiendum (good is to be done and evil avoided).” Whereas in
article 4, he notes how “ratio practica negotiatur circa contingentia in quibus sunt operationes humanae:
et esti in communibus sit aliqua necessitas, quanto magis ad propria descenditur, tanto magis inventitur
defectus (practical reason has to do with changing affairs in which are human acts; and even if in general
there are some necessary elements, the more you go into details, the more you find defects.)” Although
using different terminology, both authors seem compatible in their analysis of conscience as having a first
principle by nature in so far as it mandates to do good and avoid evil. Later, both agree, that in the real,
concrete world, the individual is prone to error, but must follow conscience based on its first precept, good
to be done, evil avoided.

7 GA 99.
case, the voice of conscience clearly refers to God since his place for looking for the proof of the existence of God "as a reality" is via conscience. 8

Again another comparison for conscience as duty and voice in Newman are the similarities and dissimilarities between conscience and aesthetic taste. Just as we have "a sense of duty and obligation," however different the actions mandated by it, so we have "a sense of the beautiful and graceful," for all its diversity in different persons. 9 Their difference is that aesthetic taste has no essential connection with emotion. Beauty is contemplated with tranquil admiration except when it is personal beauty; then emotion enters into the experience - affection or passion. Conscience, however,

is something more than an aesthetic sense; it is always, what the sense of the beautiful is only in certain cases; it is always emotional. No wonder then that it always implies what that sense only sometimes implies; that it always involves the recognition of a living object, towards which it is directed. Inanimate things cannot stir our affection; these are correlative with persons. 10

Newman's point here is to avoid reducing conscience to a moral sense without obligation, as Shaftesbury taught, whereby conscience is merely cognitive, reflecting virtue as beauty, and vice as deformity. 11 In the same breadth, Newman wished to avoid reducing the sense of duty in conscience to a mere subjective emotion of either degradation and shame, or fear and foreboding. Conscience in Newman fulfills a sense of

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8 Ibid. 97.
9 Ibid. 99.
10 Ibid. 100.
11 See above, p. 117.
obligation and prohibition as part of our moral experience. We feel, by nature, such a
sense of duty, going beyond a mere intellectual knowledge of what is right and good.

To understand better Newman’s treatment of conscience as not merely cognitive,
but also imperative, we return to the difficult text in the Grammar of Assent where he
distinguishes both aspects of conscience in a hypothetical duel.

Though I lost my sense of the obligation which I lie under to abstain from
acts of dishonesty, I should not in consequence lose my sense that such
actions were an outrage offered to my moral nature. Again: though I lost
my sense of their moral deformity, I should not therefore lose my sense
that they were forbidden to me. 12

How can we understand this text in the moral philosophy of Newman?

Conscience has two indivisible aspects: cognitive and magisterial. How can we know
something as morally right and not feel an obligation to act accordingly? Likewise, how
can we know something as evil and not feel a duty to avoid it? Do these last two
examples refer to the magisterial dictate coming from the cognitive act of conscience?
The opposite is also posed by Newman: the possibility of a sense of duty towards
something not necessarily know as good or evil. In the latter case, something is mandated
by conscience which is not known as good.

Newman does consider the act of conscience as “indivisible,” but both aspects are
“distinct.” 13 Hence, either the moral sense or the sense of duty may err, as in the
hypothetical case he gave of the child. The child may either “strengthen and improve” his

\[12 \text{Ibid. 98.}\]
\[13 \text{Ibid.}\]
"initial religious instincts," or may be subject to elements "destructive of his religious
instincts." In the latter case, "the light of the soul will fade away and die out."14
Therefore, if the moral sense errs, the notion of obligation remains. The erring
conscience enforces the person to do what he incorrectly thinks right or wrong. So, we
have the case of an erring, but still obliging, conscience.

Likewise, the human fallibility of the sense of duty implies that one may see
something as either right or wrong, but, as yet, feel no obligation to follow through on
one's convictions. Newman had learnt the lesson on the need to be faithful to one's
convictions in conscience. As soon as he saw what was right, he allowed that "Light" to
lead him on.15 On writing An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, as soon
as he discovered the path led to Rome, there he went.16

Therefore, moral sense without an obligation would be akin to the moral sense
described by Shaftesbury as being merely aesthetic - its object being the "venustum .. the
decorum of things"17 - with no notion of obligation. For Newman the moral sense is not
only analogous to a sense of beauty and ugliness, but as he indicated in the course of his
comparison between conscience and aesthetic taste, it also can be a sense of moral
beauty and ugliness.18

14 Ibid. 105.
15 See poem on p. 76-77.
16 See Chap. IX.
17 Shaftesbury, pt. 4, sec., 2, 92.
18 GA 99.
This distinction of a sense of obligation from a moral sense in Newman is also seen when he calls the moral sense the "principle of ethics" and the sense of obligation the "creative principle of religion." As discussed in the previous chapter, the meaning of conscience as a moral sense being the "principle of ethics" is that such an activity of conscience supplies us "by means of its various acts, with the elements of morals." Therefore, according to Newman, the foundation of ethics in the individual is a moral-sense or intuitive apprehension of the rightness or wrongness of actions in their full personal particularity.

Linking the moral sense role of conscience to religion as a duty, we mentioned above the moral sense knowledge of first moral principles. Later in the Grammar of Assent, another reference by Newman speaks of the right attitude brought to reasoning in matters of religion.

We may expect, that when there is an honest purpose and fair talents, we shall somehow make our way forward, the error falling off from the mind, and the truth developing and occupying it. Thus it is that the Catholic religion is reached, as we see, by inquirers from all points of the compass, as if it mattered not where a man began, so that he had an eye and a heart for the truth.

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19 GA 101.
20 Ibid. 98.
21 Apo. 100.
22 Chapter XI.
23 GA 294-295.
Here it is not only a matter of knowledge *per se* by conscience, but rather the attitude one has towards religion. In other words, conscience implies that one knows what is right and wrong in different steps, but also that one has a duty, as part of conscience, to seek truth. Conscience is bound to honestly search for truth. In that understanding, Newman could be said to favor the *dictum* that conscience should be both always followed and always educated.

As used by Newman here, the role of conscience in religion is the right attitude, springing from a sense of duty, so that truth and right be obtained. Conscience, as a moral sense, had given us a source of premises in the search for moral truth. There are no intuitively ascertained premises in Newman’s theology which enable reasoning to get under way in a Thomistic five ways to God. Rather, Newman sees the evidence of God in conscience as a sense of duty and an *a priori* in the human mind. Conscience is considered as a sense of duty, for there we find God.

So, speaking of an infant, Newman wrote:

> In the dictate of conscience, without previous experiences or analogical reasoning, he [the infant] is able gradually to perceive the voice, or the echoes of the voice, of a Master, living, personal, and sovereign.\(^{24}\)

Here we touch the essence of Newman’s phenomenology of religion by stating conscience as the place where he seeks the existence of God.\(^{25}\) Also we see how conscience is considered by Newman as an *a priori* religious experience. And, just as

\(^{24}\) Ibid. 102.

\(^{25}\) Ibid. 97.
Conscience as moral sense is alike to *nous* in Aristotle’s Ethics, it is also the place where God may be discovered. This discovery of God in conscience links us to the image of the “voice” used by Newman. If conscience reflects a voice, and that voice is that of God, with all that the concept of God implies, this thought lends itself to a vision of conscience as a magisterial divine dictate. Therefore, conscience is the “creative principle of religion,” precisely because its phenomena “avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive.”

Newman used several analogous phenomena to explain the transition of the mind from the working of conscience to an awareness of God in conscience. One analogy used by Newman is with the way children, and even animals, discern “amid the maze of colours and shapes which meet their sight,” “unseen” beings, known as “certain units, individuals, substances, whatever they are to be called, which are outside and out of the reach of sense.” This is Newman’s epistemology whereby we know in phenomena something beyond phenomena. In this view, moral and intellectual objects are known through the senses, since we do not know “mere impressions,” but a real being.

Another example he gave is of two Christian writers.

We take up a passage of Chrysostom or a passage of Jerome; there is no possibility of confusing the one with other; in each case we see the man in his language.

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26 See p. 125 above.

27 GA 101.

28 Ibid. 96.
In these cases, this kind of knowledge is neither the work of sense nor of reason. It is not sense-knowledge because it goes beyond the senses. It is not the work of reason, in Newman's use of the term, since it is based on *prima facie* impressions. Newman called it an "instinctive certitude" by which we know beyond sense phenomena. In a parallel fashion, Newman claims, the "mental phenomena . . . found in the sense of moral obligation" lead us to the notion of a Supreme Ruler and Judge. Likewise, if an "instinct of the mind" discerns individuals, it also recognizes "an external Master in the dictate of conscience, . . . without previous experiences or analogical reasoning."

A second comparison used by Newman in the *Grammar of Assent* is our knowledge of an external world. By an external world, he meant a physical or material world existing independently of all of our sensory experiences. In the former analogy the mind goes from sensory knowledge of individuals to their knowledge as individuals. Here the jump is towards knowing a real objective world, rather than knowing sensations. The link with conscience is that just as we know such an external world beyond sensations, so too we go beyond the activity of conscience as an external "voice," and move on to the notion of the personality of that Judge. Newman wrote that as from a multitude of instinctive perceptions . . . of something beyond the senses, we generalize the notion of an external world . . . so from the perceptive power which identifies the intimations of conscience with the reverberations . . . of an external admonition, we proceed to the notion of a supreme Ruler and Judge.

29 Ibid. 96.
30 Ibid. 97.
31 Ibid. 102.
32 Ibid. 97.
So, just as the phenomena of sensations demand something causing them, so too the phenomena of conscience demands a cause external to itself. Again, just as an “instinctive perception” explains the jump from phenomena to the external world, an “instinct of the mind” explains the leap from the phenomena of conscience to the concept of God.

There is, of course, a difference. The step from sensations to the external world seems logical and instinctive since it refers to the same objects, whereas knowledge of God in conscience implies a jump from mental phenomena to a distinct Being. Newman explains that the phenomena of conscience imply a knowledge of God, since they “require for their exciting cause an intelligent being.”

And the second causal connection is that if the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the Object of his perception must be Supernatural and Divine.

This double causal connection - conscience to intelligent being; intelligent being outside this world to God - seems to imply a “reasoning” from the phenomena of conscience as a moral obligation to a view of conscience as the “voice of God.” However, the use of terms such as “intimidation,” “discernment,” “perception,” “testimony,” and “recognition,” in the course of his remarks on this voice of God in conscience implies no real “reasoning” as Newman understood reasoning. Rather
Newman put into words what he considered conscience _per se_ evokes. That is why he insisted that he was not proposing a "proof of the Being of a God." Newman followed here his personalistic epistemology of wishing to "see with my own eyes and walk with my own feet." If we cannot be brought to a recognition within ourselves of the voice of God in conscience, no reasoning can induce its occurrence.

This understanding of conscience as the voice of God within us by nature, as we have tried to prove up to now, also answers another objection to conscience as described by Newman. If conscience is an original endowment of our nature, and, therefore, of all peoples in all times, there will be no possible force for a reductionalist account of the phenomena of conscience. Newman considered the notion of conscience as something natural in humans as a "first principle ... that I assume."

Lord Acton praised Newman's _Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine_ since it "did more than any other book ... to make his countrymen think historically, and watch the process as well as the result." Natural history of the sense of moral obligation threatened the concept of conscience as the voice of God. Others wished, Newman said, to reduce conscience to the expedient or the beautiful - a clear reference to utilitarianism and aesthetic philosophies - or to education or association. Newman did

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36 Ibid. 97.
37 Apo. 22.
38 GA 98.
40 GA 110.
not answer such criticisms. His answer was not a capricious *ipse dixit* based on his own authority, but rather based on the fact that

this solemn dogma [that conscience is the voice of God] is recognized as such by the great mass both of the young and of the uneducated, by the religious few and the irreligious many.

Besides the great mass of his own time, this recognition is also true throughout the ages by the widest variety of minds. Even, says Newman, by philosophers, "who have been antagonists on other points."

Does this mean that conscience is infallible? If conscience is the voice of God, therefore the voice of conscience is without error, a faultless guide of conduct, and a sort of God without us. How can its oracle be divine, without being infallible? Conscience, in this perspective, would be totally autonomous and needless of being perfected.

No affirmation of conscience being infallible is found in the *Grammar of Assent*. Several statements, in fact, would render conscience most fallible. A false solution would be to take up the distinction between truth and duty quoted above, and used in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*. In this argument, infallibility touches the problem whether a statement is true or false, whereas a command or prohibition is an utterance of

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41 Ibid. 211.

42 GA 110.

43 Ibid. Here one remembers the lapidary principle of *securus iudicat orbis terrarum* (the whole world has a sure judgment) in theology, so influential in Newman's conversion. Cf. Apo 98.

44 Above, 129-130.

45 *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, chap. 4: "Divided allegiance." Here Newman distinguished between papal infallibility in dogmas and fallible authority in matters of conduct. To be considered later in this essay.
what ought to be done or not. So, in this line of thought, it is one thing for something to be true or false, quite another for it to be right or wrong. Infallibility responds to what we know. Conscience on how we ought to act. Applied to Church authority, one element of our life is to believe what the Church teaches as true or false. A totally different realm of our existence is to obey or not what the Church commands.

Nevertheless, this distinction does not answer our question on understanding Newman. If conscience is the voice of God, how can conscience err in its commands? How could conscience command us to do evil, or avoid evil, on behalf of God? *Agere sequitur esse.* Our actions follow our knowledge. *Ens est verum et bonum* (being is true and good). Our conscience commands in accord with our knowledge of reality. If that knowledge is false, our conscience makes a mistake.

An immediate answer to the difficulty of Newman’s having conscience as the voice of God and its erring possibility,46 is to understand Newman as saying that conscience is the voice of God only in so far as moral obligation is ultimately “identified” as the voice of God. So, when God is said to command through conscience, what Newman is saying is that what we perceive as a moral obligation, we also perceive as the voice of God. Not the other way around.

In the latter case, God would speak directly to us and therefore tell us infallibly what to do. An example of this latter case would be if someone felt in conscience he should follow the will of God as found in his religion. One would then feel that such and

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46 GA 190. Image of conscience as the bell. Cf. “Certainly, I have always contended that obedience even to an erring conscience was the way to gain light.” *Apo.* 162.
such a command should be followed because his religion commanded him. But the question remains: what is the basis of the person being convinced in conscience felt in that he had a moral obligation to follow that known religion as the voice of God?

The error in conscience is in what we may consider its material object, that what it is considering. Where conscience does not err, said Newman, is attributing to God Himself the force of moral obligation itself, whatever its content may be. That is why in the passage where he quotes the universal philosophical consensus on conscience as the voice of God, he makes the qualification that such an image - “voice of God” - refers to the “authority and religious meaning of conscience,” not to the content of conscience itself. Later in the Grammar of Assent he will conclude that “it is no disproof of the authority of conscience that false consciences abound.”

Further considerations complete the paradox between the divine and erring elements in conscience.

We note that Newman, in fact, does not use the term “voice of God” himself. Rather he modified the metaphor of conscience as the voice of God, because by our perceptive power which identifies the intimations of conscience with an echo ... reverberation ... of an external admonition, we proceed on to the notion of a Supreme Ruler and Judge, and then again we image Him.

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47 Ibid. 97.
48 Ibid. 110.
49 Ibid. 190.
50 Ibid. 110.
All the above images - echo, reverberation, notion - are, of course, coherent with Newman's description of conscience as something natural in humans. Being a mental act we all have by nature, it is obviously human and the "place where we apprehend Him as a reality." So, Newman's phenomenology of conscience explains how conscience may be called the "voice of God," without the ascription of infallibility to any of its operations, or the assumption that it is God talking directly to us.

Concluding our consideration of conscience as the "voice of God," we may quote from Newman's concept of conscience in its role as "the great internal teacher of religion." Above, Newman showed conscience as making available to us a realization of the existence of God and of our individual relation to God as ruler and judge. Now conscience, in the section on natural religion, is

a personal guide . . . and I must use it because I must use myself; I am as little able to think by any mind but my own as to breathe with another's lungs.

Therefore, conscience has no divine or super-ego being which transcends our own human nature. Our experiences of conscience are part of our everyday life. The theistic implications of conscience are not "notional assents," but have their source in every

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51 Ibid. 98.
52 Ibid. 97.
53 Ibid. 304.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid. 95.

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man's experience. Newman is interested in conscience in the "ordinary sense of the word," to ground his phenomenology of religion in the *Grammar of Assent*.

In our last two chapters, we have been considering the nature of conscience, what it knows, as a moral sense, and how it commands, as a magisterial dictate. In Newman's thought, conscience determines the rightness or wrongness of actions in the concrete situations in which we find ourselves, and in doing this is able to engage in reasoning, if necessary. The magisterial nature of conscience means for Newman the presence of a voice beyond oneself, and, being beyond this world, that of a Supreme Being and Judge.

Towards the end of the *Grammar of Assent* Newman remarked that he did not wish to enter into the question of "how far external assistances are in all cases necessary to the action of the mind." So, following our philosophical analysis of conscience in the *Grammar of Assent*, our next step will be to see how Newman brought conscience into relationship with the authority of the Church in which he believed. Conscience will preserve its natural character, as discussed above, both as a moral sense and a sense of duty. Obviously, due to the contrast within conscience itself with both its erring and divine character, conflicts are possible. Newman will attempt to resolve deadlocked situations by his appeal to a separation of domains: one in which the word of Church authority is final; the other in which the word of conscience is supreme.

In all religious conflicts, however, conscience preserves its nature, with the particularity of its dictates and capacity to reason. The Church authority with which

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56 Ibid. 304.
Newman deals in our next chapter is primarily papal in the Church of Rome. However, these crises of conscience will also bring out the authority of conscience in a man's life vis-à-vis any religious authority. The latter will our argument in Chapter XV. What authority does conscience, for all people, in all beliefs, ultimately have?

The meaning of Newman's toast to conscience should gradually become clearer. Our hope is to show that, in all matters, our author will continue faithful to the general principle which I have all along implied: that no religion is from God which contradicts our sense of right and wrong. 57

57 GA 325.
CHAPTER XIII

CHURCH, STATE, AND CONSCIENCE

I give an absolute obedience
to neither the Pope nor the Queen.

Letter to the Duke of Norfolk

Newman's *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* in 1875 was a reply to Gladstone's critique of the First Vatican's Council definition of papal infallibility as an article of faith in 1870. Gladstone's basic argument is directed towards two elements in papal authority. First, that Catholics owe the Pope absolute obedience in their religious submission. Second, that the Pope had jurisdiction in all aspects of a Catholic's life. Seeing that no aspect of life escapes papal jurisdiction, and a Catholic has no right to disobey the Pope ever, Gladstone draws the conclusion that the Vatican decrees had put the conscience of every Catholic at the disposal of the Pope. "Therefore Catholics are moral and mental slaves."¹

Newman will address both issues raised by Gladstone, coming, we foresee, to an opposite conclusion. In passing, he will develop a philosophy on the supremacy of conscience to justify his claims. So, we shall see that once Newman allows the possibility of conscience overruling either the State or the Church in one instance, that is, in the political realm, the need is felt to philosophically justify his position.

In this chapter, we shall endeavor to first address the issue as raised by Gladstone. Then describe Newman's answer, followed by his philosophy of the supremacy of conscience. In this, we shall follow the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, with references to the Grammar of Assent.

Some important distinctions made by Newman in the Letter may be helpful before we begin. In the exercise of papal authority Newman distinguishes between papal teaching on doctrine and papal discipline in matters of conduct.  

Then, within papal teaching there are

1. Papal teachings which is infallible.
2. Papal teachings on religious matters which are not infallible.
3. Papal teachings on non-religious matters which are not infallible.

Whereas, in matters of conduct, there are papal mandates that are

4. On religious matters.
5. On non-religious matters.

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2 Ibid. 224.
The matter at hand in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* enters within category number 5 above, the realm of political action.

Another key to the reading of Newman on the question of conscience and the Papacy is the method of interpretation he follows. In the dedication itself, Newman addresses the issue, excluding all interpretations of papal documents except that of the *Schola Theologorum* and of time.³

This hermeneutics is carried out throughout. In the final chapter on the Vatican Definition, Newman again insists that

but hardly has she [the Church] spoken out magisterially some great general principle, when she sets her theologians to work to explain her meaning in the concrete, by strict interpretation of its wording, by the illustration of its circumstances, and by the recognition of exceptions, in order to make it as tolerable as possible, and the least of a temptation, to self-willed, independent, or wrongly educated minds.⁴

Newman, no doubt, considered himself one of the *Schola Theologorum* of the Church, for his reading of church documents in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* are carried out in that vein. The importance of this hermeneutics is that Newman is excluding Church authority itself as its own exclusive interpreter. This is especially brought out when Newman gave the example of the Catholic dilemma with two conflicting Popes.

How else could private Catholics save their souls when there was a Pope and anti-popes, each severally claiming their allegiance.⁵

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³ Ibid. 176.
⁴ Ibid. 321.
⁵ Ibid. 245. See also Newman's reading of the Syllabus of 1864 in Sections 6 and 7 of the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*. 154
Coming back to the original question posed by Gladstone, Newman tackles both issues; whether obedience is absolute and whether obedience is due by a Catholic in all aspects of his life. The quotation from the Council, used by both Newman and Gladstone, is that clergy and laity are

bound by the duty of hierarchical subjection and of sincere obedience; and this not only in matters that pertain to faith and morals, but also in matters that pertain to the discipline and government of the Church.\(^6\)

First, Newman analyses "hierarchical subjection and sincere obedience." Later, we shall investigate Newman's hermeneutics of the "matters" involved. In the context of Gladstone's question on how Catholics may obey both Queen and Pope, Newman rejects "absolute obedience" to either. Newman treats the expression "absolute obedience" with irony: "Gladstone speaks of 'absolute obedience' so often, that any reader . . . would think that the word 'absolute' was the Pope's word, not his."\(^7\) However, what is important is how Newman himself understands the word. It is obedience which is unlimited in extent, obedience to whatever might be commanded. No person on earth, neither Pope nor Queen, has such authority over a person's conscience.


\(^7\) Diff. ii. 233.
When . . . Mr. Gladstone asks Catholics how they can obey the Queen and yet obey the Pope, since it may happen that the commands of the two authorities may clash, I answer, that it is my rule, both to obey the one and to obey the other, but that there is no rule in this world without exceptions, and if either the Pope or the Queen demanded of me an ‘Absolute Obedience,’ he or she would be transgressing the laws of human nature and human society. I give an absolute obedience to neither. Further, if ever this double allegiance pulled me in contrary ways, which in this age of the world I think it never will, then I should decide according to the particular case, which is beyond all rule, and must be decided on its own merits.  

In this answer Newman develops a personalist ethical theory based on a philosophy in which the real is the concrete. Universal concepts belong, of themselves, to the realm of the abstract. Ultimately, the individual must decide in each case, because such is the nature of the world. And the laws of human nature and human society, according to Newman’s philosophy, are universal. There is no rule without exceptions. So, seeing that there is no law without exceptions, such universal, that is, in all cases, obedience to either the Pope or the Queen always has its limits.

We remember, of course, from Chapters XI and XII, Newman’s understanding of conscience as a moral sense and sense of duty. In the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk

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* Ibid. 243.

9 Note the gap between universal and individual concepts. “To him [the Logician] dog or horse is not a thing which he sees, but a mere name suggesting ideas, and by dog or horse universal he means, not the aggregate of all individual dogs or horses brought together, but a common aspect, meagre but precise, of all existing or possible dogs or horses, which all the while does not really correspond to any one single dog or horse out of the whole aggregate,” GA 215. Hence, a universal obedience to either Pope or Queen is a universal concept and does not correspond to every individual situation.
Newman again rejects a definition of conscience as either the “right of self-will” or a definition of conscience that would empty it of its content.  

A further reflection shows that Newman writes that, in fact, such a conflict between Queen and Pope could never happen. However, he goes on to consider possible examples of how that might occur. There are possible cases where a Catholic should obey the Pope over the command of the Queen:

There are cases in which we should obey the Pope and disobey the State. Suppose, for instance, an Act was passed in Parliament, bidding Catholics to attend Protestant service every week, and the Pope distinctly told us not to do so, for it was to violate our duty to our faith: I should obey the Pope and not the Law.  

Likewise, situations arise when a Catholic should obey the Queen over a command of the Pope:

Again, were I actually a soldier or sailor in her Majesty’s service, and sent to take part in a war which I could not in my conscience see to be unjust, and should the Pope suddenly bid all Catholic soldiers and sailors to retire from the service, here again, taking the advice of others, as best I could, I should not obey him.  

In another part of the Letter, Newman clearly implies that one Pope did, in fact, consider others as having overstepped their authority.

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10 Diff. ii. 249 - 250. It is interesting to note that the concept of conscience as “the right to self-will” in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk is not only applied to the “popular mind” but only to “educated minds.”

11 Ibid. 240.

12 Ibid. 241-242.

13 Ibid. 217. Pope Urban VII, in 1641, clearly questions the excommunication of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I by Pope Pius V.
What is important for our study is the fact that Newman does teach that a Catholic may disobey the Pope, in certain "supposable cases," under certain conditions.\textsuperscript{14}

Its [conscience's] dictate, in order to prevail against the voice of the Pope, must follow upon serious thought, prayer, and all available means of arriving at a right judgment of the matter in question.\textsuperscript{15} Newman concludes in principle that a Catholic's obedience to the Pope, "though not 'absolute' even in religious matters,...he [the Pope] has a supreme call on our obedience."\textsuperscript{16} This distinction between us not having an absolute obedience to the Pope and his having a supreme call on our obedience will be dealt with by Newman later on in the \textit{Letter to the Duke of Norfolk}.\textsuperscript{17} Newman will maintain there that obedience to the injunctions of a Pope may be withheld at the dictate of conscience. However, the main thesis holds: conscience may be supreme over the Pope in the political realm.

The second aspect of Gladstone's critique centered on the Pope's power over all aspects of a Catholic's life. "Absolute" means unlimited in its authority in any aspect of a Catholic's life. "Matters of faith and morals," as defined by Vatican I, would seem to cover all one's life.\textsuperscript{18} Newman begins his comments by stating that Mr. Gladstone says that "the Pontiff declares to belong to him the supreme direction of Catholics in respect to all duty." Supreme direction; true, but "supreme" is not "minute," nor does "direction" mean "supervision" or "management."\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 242.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. 257-8.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. 240.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. 256-257.
\textsuperscript{18} See note 6 above.
\textsuperscript{19} Diff. ii. 227.
To make his point, Newman draws two parallels; that of human law, and that of medical supervision. Human law directs our conduct and must be obeyed, but has not total direction of every aspect of our lives. Likewise, Church law and authority has power over us: “yet no one would say that the Law, after all, with all its power in the abstract and its executive vigour in fact, interferes with our comfort or our conscience.” Again, the bottom line seems that law, _per se_, whether State or Church, is in the realm of the abstract. Therefore, conscience is needed to apply that law to the individual situation.

Again, in the example of the businessman with a medical adviser, Newman tries to answer Gladstone's objection to the seemingly limitless authority, and, hence, possible tyranny of the Pope over the whole domain of a Catholic’s conduct. Newman's thesis is that the Pope may have authority over any act of a Catholic, but not over every act of a Catholic. A medical adviser may indirectly control the business life of his patient, as to his meals, schedule, trips or, in fact, any act. This control is not slavery understood as total authority over all areas of human conduct, but rather indirect authority in all life’s matters. Hence, the distinction is between authority in every act of the patient and authority in any act of the patient. An example would be that the doctor may tell the patient not to travel in order to write his will, but would not be competent to tell the patient not to make a will.

Likewise a Catholic is not a slave of the Pope, who would have general authority over any act of his life. Again, however, Newman insists that papal power may cover all

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20 Ibid.
one's life, and must be applied by the individual conscience to concrete situations. An example would be that the Pope, or the Church, may determine the laws of marriage according to the Church, but, obviously, would not tell the Catholic whom or when to marry.

So, coming from the question of disobeying the Pope in favor of the State, Newman has advanced to the consideration of who ultimately decides when to obey one or the other. Having accepted the individual's conscience as the supreme guide in these hypothetical conflicts of Church and State authority, Newman is brought to the conclusion that the individual Catholic conscience may rule against the Pope in other supposable cases.

Having, therefore, accepted the principle of a supremacy of conscience over the Pope in certain circumstances, Newman feels obliged to give reasons for his thesis. Newman substantiates his claim that the dictate of conscience may overrule saying:

I must begin with the Creator and His creature, when I would draw out the prerogatives and the supreme authority of Conscience.

Newman based his claim on three principles:

1. Conscience has the antecedence of natural religion to revealed religion.
2. Conscience is foundational to the mission of the Church.
3. Conscience is coeval with creation.

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21 Ibid. 231-232.
22 Ibid. 246.
This threefold priority of conscience over the Pope touches the very essence of Newman's toast to conscience first, and then to the Pope. The after dinner hypothetical toast is the conclusion of the section of the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk where Newman begins by linking conscience to creation. Just before the toast, there is a citation of theological opinion to the effect that conscience is always to be obeyed. The toast, therefore, reflects the title of conscience to obedience in all circumstances, based on its link to creation, and supported by Catholic theological opinion.23

A first reason given for the authority of conscience is its being the principle of natural religion. Newman's argument may be described as follows: Revelation, including, of course, the authority of the Pope, depends on Natural Religion; and Natural Religion depends on conscience as a sense of right and wrong.


23 Ibid. Section 5, Conscience, 246-261.
24 Ibid. 254.
25 GA 321.
considers the rule of conscience as being prior to the rule of revelation, the former having
a subjective authority, the latter an objective one.\(^{26}\)

Secondly, conscience, as a sense of right and wrong, is "the first element in
religion."\(^{27}\) In the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman writes of conscience as "our great
internal teacher of religion," giving us "a rule of right and wrong, as being His rule, and a
code of moral duties,"\(^{28}\) and concluding "that no religion is from God which contradicts
our sense of right and wrong."\(^{29}\) Based on this philosophy of religion and conscience,
Newman rejects a notion of the Papacy using "revealed prerogatives" to neglect "his
mission of preaching truth, justice, mercy, and peace, much more if he trampled on the
consciences of his subjects."\(^{30}\) Here at work is a clear rejection of Antinomianism as if
papal authority were over and above the natural law and human conscience.\(^{31}\)

Two objections may immediately be made to this supremacy of conscience based
on its role in natural religion and natural religion’s role in revelation. First, that in the
text, Newman insists on conscience as "the least luminous of teachers." Second, that
natural religion "needs" to be "sustained and completed by Revelation."\(^{32}\)

\(^{26}\) *Dev*. 86.

\(^{27}\) *Diff*. ii. 253.

\(^{28}\) *GA* 304.

\(^{29}\) Ibid. 325.

\(^{30}\) *Diff*. ii. 254.

\(^{31}\) Cf. Dante’s love for the Church as *la bella donna* (the beautiful lady) and his critique of the
Papacy making *Dio d’oro e d’argento* (God of gold and silver). *Inferno*, XIX. Cf. *Paradiso*, XVIII:
*Purgatorio*, VI, and *Inferno* XXVII.

\(^{32}\) *Diff*. ii. 254.
However, we note that in the same sentence that Newman considers conscience the “least luminous” of teachers, he also considered it “the highest of all teachers.” This philosophy is difficult but must be accepted integrally if we wish to accept Newman’s teaching on conscience. In the same vein that Newman sees the enormous limitations of conscience, he also states its supremacy as teacher. A mystery, indeed, but one that must be dealt with courageously. Hence, though mistaken, and very easily so, nevertheless conscience should be followed. But, precisely because so weak and erroneous, as part of its sense of right and wrong, conscience is precisely bound to seek right and wrong beyond its own defective perspective. But one affirmation cannot eliminate the other in Newman.

As to the second objection on the need for revelation, the above weakness of conscience explains why revelation is at all necessary. Being human and individual, conscience tends to err and, therefore, needs help to find right and wrong. Hence, it calls for revelation, the Church, and the Pope, in the Catholic perspective. But such a need in no way eliminates the primordial essence of the seeker. To state the need for conscience to know right and wrong presupposes that conscience in fact does seek right and wrong. Hence, conscience demands respect at all stages of its search. Revelation, as something required by conscience, would lose its raison d’être were it to suffocate conscience. The doctor is only needed where the sick exists.

The second basis for Newman’s claim for supremacy of conscience is its role as being foundational to the mission of the Church. Newman writes:
On the law of conscience and its sacredness are founded both his [the Pope's] authority in theory and his power in fact.\textsuperscript{33}

Newman explains this foundational role of conscience vis-à-vis the Papacy in that it is the Pope's "very mission to proclaim the moral law." In this moral theology, the moral law, knowable by "the light of nature," that is, by conscience, is definitively made known by revelation, from which also the Pope derives his teaching office. Hence, part and parcel of the Papacy is to proclaim the natural moral law of which conscience is an essential part. In that sense, conscience is foundational to the Pope's mission. Hence, Newman concluded that

the championship of the Moral Law and of conscience is his [Pope's] \textit{raison d'être}.\textsuperscript{34}

However, Newman immediately clarified the concept of papal proclamation of moral law by not limiting the role of the Papacy, and of Revelation, to "a mere republication of the Natural Law."\textsuperscript{35} Revelation is "distinct" and "beyond" the teaching of nature. So, even though the Pope should preach respect for conscience, such a teaching in no way takes away from the originality of Revelation. Again, we have the paradox in Newman. On the one hand, conscience must be preached by the Pope. On the other hand, conscience needs the Papacy.

Newman is at the same time affirming the need for the Pope to respect conscience and, at the same time, proclaiming all parts of the moral law are part of the Pope's

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. 252.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. 253.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. 254.
mission. Therefore, a wrong conclusion would be to make Newman teach that conscience is something opposed to or on a different track to the Papacy. On the contrary, precisely because the Pope teaches respect for conscience as part of his mission, in the same manner other elements of the moral law are within his teaching authority. Whether conscience accepts his teaching authority is another matter. But Newman is writing the Letter in the context of Catholic coherence in his teaching on conscience and the Papacy. So, seeing that the Papacy teaches the moral law, and conscience is essential to that law, it follows that if

he [the Pope] neglected his mission of preaching truth, justice, mercy, and peace, much more if he trampled on the consciences of his subjects, . . . then he could not have lasted all these many centuries till now. 36

But Newman also applies the teaching of the Pope vis-à-vis conscience to the authority of the Pope vis-à-vis conscience. If the Pope “could not speak against conscience,” it follows that the Church itself is “built” on “the right and duty of following that Divine Authority, the voice of conscience.” 37 The Church is built on conscience, according to Newman, because what inspires papal authority is a sense of right and wrong. Likewise, what inspires a person in conscience to follow the Pope is precisely the same sense of right and wrong.

Going back to Newman’s experience in his “great change” to Roman Catholicism, 38 we saw how he became a Catholic because he thought it was the right

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid. 252.
38 Ibid. 349
thing to do. His conversion had no value if it were not a conversion in conscience. Therefore, his conscience was what brought him to Rome. On the other hand, he became a Catholic precisely because he saw that the Church of Rome was right, and that its doctrines and teaching authority were from God, the same creator of his conscience seeking truth.

In a curious twist to the historical arguments found in An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, in the Letter the very historical fact of the survival of the Papacy throughout the ages is proof of his claim to defend conscience and the moral law. Not only does Newman argue that if the Pope had trampled on the consciences of his subjects, he would not have survived.\(^3^9\) Also, he affirms the very fact of conscience as being the only foundation for the survival of the Papacy.

It is by the universal sense of right and wrong, . . . deeply lodged in the hearts of me, it thus and only thus, that he [the Pope] has gained his footing in the world and achieved his success. It is his claim to come from the Divine Lawgiver, in order to elicit, protect, and enforce those truths which the Lawgiver has sown in our very nature, it is this and this only, that is the explanation of his [the Papacy’s] length of life.\(^4^0\)

So, according to Newman, if the Pope rules by divine authority, conscience, with the sense of right and wrong, will require that he be obeyed as part of that same sense of right and wrong.

A third reason for conscience’s supremacy is that it is coeval with creation. Newman began his chapter on conscience in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk:

\(^3^9\) Ibid. 254.

\(^4^0\) Ibid. 253.
I must begin with the Creator and His creature, when I would draw out the prerogatives and the supreme authority of Conscience.\textsuperscript{41}

Here we find the same contrast noted above between natural and revealed religion, between moral law and papal respect for conscience, also present between divine creation and the divine authority of conscience. Conscience has its force because it is the eternal law of God as apprehended in the minds of individual men. Again, it may “suffer refraction,”\textsuperscript{42} but still remains the Divine Law. The conclusion is that even though it be mistaken it still is divine and ought to be obeyed. Newman, therefore, goes beyond the mere paradox of conscience being the highest and the least luminous of teachers. Its force comes because it is always “divine.”

Consequently, seeing that conscience is always considered divine, whereas the voice of the Pope may sometimes be seen as not divine, it follows that the voice of conscience prevails. The basic argument of the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk is that divine law is supreme as coming from God. But there is an inherent subjectivity in the individual’s knowledge of that law. Nonetheless, the subject is bound to follow God as he knows Him and His law over and above any human, including papal, authority.

So, Newman espouses not some moralistic code of conduct according to conscience, but rather sees God always present in the very definition of conscience. Consequently, conscience is always to be obeyed since God is always to be obeyed. Whereas the Pope, by his very human nature, is never God and, hence, is not always to be obeyed.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid. 246.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. 247.
obeyed. Thus, the precedence of conscience over the Pope is not only a matter of what comes first in time. Rather it is the precedence of what is created over what is perfected. All of the above, in this third reason, in no way takes away from the erring character of conscience and a need for Revelation and the Pope.

The next step is to determine the consequences of Newman's teaching on the supremacy of conscience, especially in the case of a believing Catholic. If conscience is always to be obeyed, when is the Church to be obeyed by a believing Catholic? In a parallel fashion we may ask the same question for someone who accepts the divine authority of some other religion. Is obedience either blind and supreme, or never at all?

Newman now applies to his original political question in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk a personal philosophy of conscience.

In fact, we see the same pattern of conscience questioning religious authority throughout Newman's life as described in this essay. Newman was born into a religion and, following his conscience, decided later to follow different religious authorities. Inherent in his philosophy is the optimism that conscience sincerely followed _per se_ leads to truth.

It [conscience] is so constituted that, if obeyed, it becomes clearer in its injunctions, and wider in their range, and corrects and completes the accidental feebleness of its initial teachings. 43

Linked to that is his conviction, present in all his life, that truth and, in his case, Catholicism only needs a love for truth.

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43 GA 304.
Thus it is that the Catholic religion is reached, as we, by inquirers from all points of the compass, as if it mattered not where a man began, so that he had an eye and a heart for the truth.\footnote{Ibid. 295.}

Therefore, we note that Newman was not in favor of “cafeteria religiosity,” according to which supremacy of conscience means a believer may select at random what teachings of Church authority convince him.

We are not left at liberty to pick and choose out of its contents according to our judgment, but must receive it all, as we find it, if we accept it at all.\footnote{Ibid. 302.}

Returning to the text and context of the \textit{Letter}, we remember that Newman is answering a specific question as to the freedom of a Catholic in the political realm. His concern was not the relation between conscience and the teaching office of the Church. However, he answered Gladstone by stating that if conscience and the Pope, operating in the same domain as they do when the Pope legislates, or gives particular orders, and the like, were to clash, conscience would have the final say.\footnote{Diff. ii. 256-257.}
CHAPTER XIV

INFALLIBILITY AND CONSCIENCE

Then since infallibility alone could block the exercise of conscience,
and the Pope is not infallible in that subject-matter
in which conscience is of supreme authority,
no dead-lock ... can take place between conscience and the Pope.

Letter to the Duke of Norfolk

Now, a new question arises. How do we combine supremacy of conscience in the search for truth with acceptance of the authority of the Catholic or any religion? As we saw in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, being a Catholic for Newman does not mean being a blind subservient one, *tamquam cadaver* (like a corpse). One's mind works within acceptance of Church authority. Our quest in this chapter will be to define the consequent domains of conscience vis-à-vis religious teaching; then, the meaning of supremacy of conscience and that of the Pope in his teaching, jurisdiction, and infallibility. We shall conclude with a search for harmony between conscience and the Papacy.
Newman's concern was with the objection to the possibility of any genuine political freedom of conscience in the Catholic system. Our conclusion in the last chapter was that if conscience and the Pope were to clash in the political realm, conscience would have the final say. Now a possible reading of Newman would be that conscience may, in fact, have the final say over any papal order or even teaching. Hence, any human authority, religious or political, may be always subject to the judgment of individual conscience. Conscience, in this opinion, would yield absolute autonomy from all authority. However, Newman rejected such a reading. Just as the Pope and Queen never demand absolute obedience, neither, as we shall see, does conscience. Newman's teaching on the supremacy of conscience must be read with his equal rejection of an absolute autonomy for conscience. He wrote:

For what would become of the Pope's "absolute authority," as Mr. Gladstone calls it, if the private conscience had an absolute authority also?¹

Newman's argument denying the absolute authority of conscience followed four steps:

1. Conscience must be understood as the voice of God in the nature and heart of man, as distinct from the voice of religion's representatives. Newman further distinguished conscience from self-will and rejected reductions of conscience to imagination.²

¹ Diff. ii. 255.
² Ibid. 247-250.
2. Conscience is a practical judgment on what is to be done or not done, here and now, by the individual person. It is not a judgment on any speculative truth. Hence conscience cannot come into direct collision with the Church's or Pope's infallibility; which is engaged on general propositions, and in the condemnation of particular and given errors. 

3. Therefore, according to Newman, seeing that conscience is a practical dictate by the individual in matters of conduct, "collision is possible between conscience and the Pope only when the Pope legislates, or gives particular orders, and the like." Here conscience is supreme, since the Pope is not infallible in his laws, commands, acts of state, or administration. This supremacy does not contradict number 2 above.

4. In order for conscience to "have the right of opposing the supreme ... authority of the Pope," its dictate must "follow upon prayer, and all available means of arriving at a right judgment on the matter in question."

5. Hence, Newman can conclude that no "deadlock ... can take place between conscience and the Pope."

In summary, Newman has answered Gladstone's objection to papal infallibility destroying a Catholic's conscience in political matters. Newman placed infallibility and

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Ibid. 256. See also Grammar of Assent where Newman contrasts real and notional assent: "Acts of Notional Assent and of Inference do not affect our conduct," whereas "the fact of a proposition being accepted with a real assent is accidentally an earnest of that proposition being carried out in conduct. ... Real assent is proper to the individual." 87, 82.

Ibid. 256.

Ibid. 257-258.

Ibid. 257.
conscience on two distinct levels of human life. Their subject matter are totally different; hence, a conflict is impossible. Infallibility does not touch directly on matters of individual conduct, which is the area of conscience. Besides, conscience is not concerned with speculative truths. In the area of speculative truth, infallibility and the Pope prevail. In matters of conduct, conscience.

The Pope has two domains of authority according to Newman: theory and practice. Within the former, he is endowed with infallibility. In the first domain, the Pope teaches; in the second, he mandates. He can teach infallibly; he cannot command infallibly.

The Pope's infallibility ... lies in matters speculative, and his prerogative of authority is no infallibility in laws, commands, or measures. His infallibility bears upon the domain of thought, not directly of action. 7

Conscience has a singular domain of authority and possible supremacy: that of conduct by the individual in the actual circumstances in which one finds oneself. Mandating our conduct in these situations, all its commands on right and wrong are concrete. This real particularity is what insulates conscience from infallibility.

Several questions arise from this consideration. Do theory and practice never intertwine? Let's suppose a speculative truth by the Pope that all abortions are evil. Let us further suppose that the Pope or Council make an infallible statement on morals. 8 Even supposing Newman's view that universal concepts do not really correspond to any one

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7 Ibid. 341.
8 GA 200.
individual, how could a Catholic's conscience be supreme in matters of conduct and justify any abortion? Newman's theory seems a curtailment of Church teaching authority.

Conscience limits authoritative teaching.

To answer these objections, step 2 above is critical. Newman states the premise that conscience determines only what here and now, in these actual circumstances, is to be done as being right or to be avoided as wrong. As seen in chapters XI and XII, conscience for Newman is both a moral sense and a sense of duty. Conscience both mandates and determines right and wrong in the concrete. Newman's premise, however, is that action is exclusively in the realm of the particular here and now by "self alone and one's own actions."  

Why does conscience, for Newman, not make universal judgments on right and wrong, like all abortions are evil? We may only answer with the Grammar of Assent that Newman wishes to "investigate what the mind does," with "instinctive certitude." Newman starts from the premise of only wishing to describe the functioning of conscience as he sees it. This phenomenology of conscience excludes the possibility of another interpretation of conscience as formulating universal judgments, because, in Newman's view, conscience never goes beyond the individual circumstance, here and now.

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9 Ibid. 215.
10 GA 99.
11 Ibid. 92.
12 Ibid. 96.
The next step in Newman’s argument is that individual judgments can never conflict with general judgments; the latter being the subject of infallibility. To justify this statement, Newman later on states that “exceptions there must be in all concrete matters.” To explain his statement, Newman gives three examples of ulterior exceptions to Church utterances; that outside of the Church there is no salvation; absolute predestination; and usury.

In the first example, Newman accepts the dogma from early Christianity that “Out of the Church, and out of the faith, is no salvation.” However, Newman notes that the then Pope accepted the principle of invincible ignorance, according to which one may belong to the soul of the Church, without belonging to the body. According to Newman, this is an “exception” to the general principle of the dogma. In the second case, “absolute predestination” in the Latin Church since St. Augustine has been subject to a “great explanation and modification” by the Jesuit School. The latter distinguished between “predestination to grace” and “predestination to glory.” According to the latter distinction, our works do not avail us for grace here on earth, but do avail us for eternal life. In the third example, Newman contrasts the statement of Pope Clement V that

13 Diff. ii. 261.
14 Ibid. 334 - 337.
15 Ibid. 334
16 Ibid. 335.
17 Ibid. 336.
18 Ibid.
usury was a sin with the 1831 decision of the Holy See to “suspend its decision on the point.” Again, because a double aspect was seen in the word usury.  

As a finale to “this process of partial and gradually developed teaching,” Newman gives the “apparent contradiction of Bellarmine, who says in one place that the Pope is to be obeyed by all, and, in another, he is not be obeyed.” In the one instance, Bellarmine is stating a general principle of respect towards papal authority. In the second, he is giving specific exceptions to the rule such as

if he assaulted a man’s person, so it is lawful to resist him, if he assaulted souls, or troubled the state (terranti rempublicam), and much more if he strove to destroy the Church. It is lawful, I say, to resist him, by not doing what he commands, and hindering the execution of his will.  

Newman’s principle of hermeneutics is that these exceptions in their actual application are

determined either by other authoritative utterances, or by the scrutinizing vigilance, acuteness, and subtlety of the Schola Theologorum.  

In all of the above cases, it is a later decision by the same authority which developed the doctrine. It was the contemporary Pope to Newman who accepted the theory of invincible ignorance. On justification, the theories of St. Augustine were distinguished by later theologians. Whereas, in the case of usury, the same authority, the Holy See, later changed its teaching due to different meanings of the word usury. In Bellarmine’s case, it is the same theologian who seemingly contradicts himself, but, if

19 Ibid. 337.
20 Ibid. 243.
21 Ibid. 334.
read carefully, is merely clarifying the scope of papal authority which still has to be obeyed in its proper role.

Applying this theory to our example of abortion, a medical knowledge as to the precise moment of conception of a new life may further the moral principle as to the destruction of a fertilized ovum. At the root of Newman's theory there is the need for the individual to apply general principles to oneself as the acting person. From the universal teaching that all human life is sacred and merits respect, the knowledge of the first moment of existence of this individual human being here and now allows conscience to apply the moral teaching to a specific action to be done or avoid. Therefore, conscience's role is not to empty the universal teaching, but rather develop and mandate it in a concrete situation.

Another reading of Newman would be that infallibility does not necessarily apply to this person's concrete situation. Specific personal situations are not implied in the definition. In other words, the Pope cannot know infallibly if this action I am going to do is evil, since he does not know if this specific action is within the universal scope of his doctrine. Conscience must apply the doctrine.

This, of course, is a far cry from a reading of Newman whereby the individual conscience makes universal statements of moral rights and wrongs. In this sense, conscience would supposedly state that all abortions are not evil and hence some abortions may be permissible. In this case, conscience is going beyond Newman's theory and getting into universal propositions, which turn out, in this case, contradictory with Church teaching.
Another imperfect reading of Newman would be to suppose that conscience makes an exception in the concrete, contradictory to Church universal teaching. The exceptions Newman spoke of are further and future developments, clarifications, and applications of a previous theory. Hence, an application clearly contradictory to the “legitimate sense of the words,” either in a minimalist or maximalist fashion, would be “imposing on the consciences of others.” “Caution is to be observed.”

Conversely, how can infallibility limit conscience? Newman himself gives the case of a Catholic who refused to accept the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and left the Church. In this example the Catholic in conscience cannot accept a new dogma of the Church. Therefore, his judgment in conscience tells him not to continue in the Church. In Newman's case, his conscience rejected the Anglican Church. In both cases, the individual conscience rejected the teaching authority of the Church. Hence, infallibility \textit{per se} in neither case limited the role of conscience. Again, Newman, in his commentary on Vatican I, opens the door to a false interpretation of its acts and the need for “another Leo” to set it right. Here, Newman's thought led to go beyond the apparent fixed nature of Vatican I to an ulterior interpretation of the same which we know today as Vatican II. Historically, Newman saw how Vatican I was in fact stopped violently and needed to be complemented later.

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22 Ibid. 337-338.
23 GA 200.
24 Cf. Chapter VIII.
25 \textit{Diff.} ii. 307.
As to the question of the person who leaves the Church because of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Newman answered that that person never accepted the indispensable and elementary faith of a Catholic. A real convert to Catholicism believes in “whatever the Church then or at any future time should teach.” This person only believed those particular doctrines “which at that time [of his conversion] the Church in matter of fact formally taught.” Hence, we can suppose that the person in good faith left the Church, because, in conscience, he had never accepted her living authority.26

What is interesting here for our study is that Newman stated lack of belief in infallibility as the reason why this person left the Church. If the person had have believed in her infallibility, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception would have been no problem. Hence, belief in the living infallibility of the Church is a necessary limit for conscience, not only from a perspective of this or that dogma which the person may later accept or not. Rather, if a person accepts in conscience the on-going role of infallibility in the Church, then that person’s conscience follows on to whatever the Church infallibly teaches. If a person’s conscience does not accept this infallibility, that person’s conscience may lead in another direction which is not truly Catholic.

However, supposing that one’s conscience does consider that the Church has infallibly taught some moral doctrine that he “in conscience,” that is, before God, considers mistaken in his personal situation. To get out of the contradiction, either one has to accept the teaching or reject the teacher. In the first case, he realizes that his

26 GA 200.
conscience has erred since he believes in the non-erring quality of the Church's *Magisterium* in this case. With Newman, he sees how easily conscience is "obscured," how "impressible" it is by current opinion, how "unsteady in its course."\(^{27}\)

In the second case, the person may act like the person quoted above by Newman. Having rejecting the Church’s infallible teaching in one subject, logically the claim of the Church to infallibility in other areas is rejected, and, so, the very dogma of the infallibility of the Church, and the Church herself, are likewise repudiated.

An alternative reading of Newman would be for the person to reject the infallible character of the doctrine out of an erring conscience. He didn’t know it was infallible. Hence, he remains in the Church with a certain inconsistency. Seeing that he was not in conscience convinced of the infallible character of the doctrine, he rejects it as non-infallible and, hence, not ultimately, binding in conscience.

In both readings, however, the authority of both the infallibility of the Church and supremacy of conscience remain intact for a believing Catholic. Newman taught a harmony of conscience and infallibility. In the area of thought, infallibility reigns supreme. In that of conduct, conscience.

As to *per se* non-infallible propositions, again conscience is not directly engaged. According to Newman, it is not conscience’s concern to examine Church teaching and its fallible or infallible character. Rather conscience is the moral sense of duty to act.

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\(^{27}\) *Diff. ii.* 253.
A classic example in Newman's life was his writing of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. His search for the truth may have ended in just that: an intellectual grasp of the true Church. However, as explained in Chapter VI, Newman had learnt from Keble to move from conviction to action. Once he realized that the Catholic Church was the true Church, he decided it was his duty in conscience to avail of the first opportunity to request admission.\(^{28}\)

The truth or non-truth of an non-infallible Church teaching is a question for a "wise and cautious theology."\(^{29}\) As to the Catholic who does accept the Church's infallibility, can one's conscience reject certain Church teaching? The supremacy of conscience taught by Newman deals with a person's acts, not his beliefs in universal, even if they be non-infallible, propositions. Therefore, conscience is not concerned with the area of the teaching of the Church. Quoting Aquinas, Newman wrote:

> Conscience is not a judgment upon any speculative truth, any abstract doctrine, but bears immediately on conduct, on something to be done or not done.\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) *Apo.* "When I was fully confident that the Church of Rome was the only true Church, I joined her," 127.

\(^{29}\) Ibid. 332.

\(^{30}\) Ibid. 256.
CHAPTER XV

DUTIES AND RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE

The reproach levelled against us [is]

that the Catholic Church has now become . . . a despotic aggressive Papacy,

in which freedom of thought and action is utterly extinguished.

Letter to the Duke of Norfolk

As a conclusion to our previous chapters, the next question facing us is Newman's view on the trilogy of human freedoms of speech,¹ thought and action.² The latter are generally called the "rights of conscience." Newman clearly speaks of the rights of conscience in the context of his theory of conscience as obedience to the voice of God "as apprehended in the minds of individual men."³ Since one has a duty to obey God, we likewise have a right to do so. Again, Newman rejects conscience as "self-will," "without any thought of God at all."⁴ So, the question in this chapter is how conscience has rights

¹ Diff. ii. 197.
² Ibid. 342.
³ Ibid. 247.
⁴ Ibid.
linked to its duties, and how far these rights may affect others and society in general.

How much can one say that Newman anticipated certain rights now commonly held in
universal declarations of human rights and Vatican II’s teaching on religious liberty?

Logically we cannot read into Newman a situation non-existent in his time.

However, his dealing with the problem of liberties posed by Gladstone enlighten us as to
his views. Again, his very life is the ultimate isthmus test on his thought. Still and all,
some guide-lines are found in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*.

In the paragraph where Newman speaks of rights of conscience, the argument is
to distinguish between rights of conscience based on a concept of conscience as “self-
will” and the rights of conscience understood as obedience to God speaking in our
conscience. That is our first distinction. Newman talks of conscience always as an
obedience to God as “the rule of ethical truth, the standard of right and wrong.”

Conscience is never a thinking, speaking, and acting, according to one’s own judgment
and humor, “without any thought of God at all.” Hence, conscience for Newman is a
moral imperative, not a subjective whim, and much less the subjective whim of doing
away with conscience properly understood. Nevertheless, the objective search for God
and truth necessarily involves the individual’s subjective understanding of the same.
Therefore, Newman obviously understands the possible pluralist nature of religious
assent and dissent.

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3 Ibid. 246.
6 Ibid. 250.
Seeing that conscience is not a license, but rather a duty, it has rights. Hence, for Newman not only the person with an objectively true conscience has rights, but even one in error. At the conclusion of Chapter 5 of the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* he quotes Catholic theologians to the effect that

if a man is culpable in being in error, . . . still he must act according to that error, while he is in it, because he in full sincerity thinks the error to be truth.\(^8\)

Therefore, to the question whether error has rights, Newman would answer that error *per se* does not have rights, but rather the person exercising his conscience does. The rights of conscience are derived from the duty of following conscience. The inference is from a duty to a right. The man in error "must" act accordingly. Later we shall see the duties Newman puts to this right in the social arena.

In fact, Newman goes on to even consider the Church having as a moral foundation the "most serious doctrine, the right and the duty of following that Divine Authority, the voice of conscience."\(^9\) This is what Newman understood by that "liberty of conscience," at which no Pope had ever scoffed. The Church is founded on both the duty and the rights of conscience. So, conscience, rightly understood, and liberty of conscience, correctly read, have never been condemned by the Church. Quite the opposite. In this understanding, they are accepted by Newman.

In an earlier passage, Newman spoke of the war against the rights of conscience.

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\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^8\) Ibid. 259.

\(^9\) Ibid. 254.
All through my day there has been a resolute warfare, ... against the rights of conscience, as I have described it. ... Public writers, day after day, have indoctrinated the minds of innumerable readers with theories subversive of its claims. As in Roman times and in the middle age, its supremacy was assailed by the arm of physical force, so now the intellect is put in operation to sap the foundations of a power which the sword could not destroy. We are told that ... its dictate is an imagination; that the very notion of guiltiness, which that dictate enforces, is simply irrational.  

The rights of conscience subject to the attack described by Newman are the rights to do what conscience dictates, which others are to respect. Just as before in history, coercion by force was used against conscience, in his day, says Newman, intellectuals tried to dissolve its true content. Hence, Newman wished to defend conscience against two kinds of attack: that of force upon one's conscience to do or not to do what one thinks is right or wrong; and, second, that of intellectual sophisms against the very notion of each person having their own conscience with its duties and rights. In contemporary terminology of cult tactics, Newman was possibly describing the use of techniques of effective conscience control:

So that in the abstract indeed and in idea it [conscience] is free, but never free in fact, never able to take a flight of its own, ... any more than birds whose wings are clipped.  

In the context of the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk Newman could then affirm that conscience has "the right of opposing the supreme, though not infallible, Authority of the Pope."  

Newman had spoken a few lines earlier of the supreme authority of conscience

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10 Ibid. 249.


12 Diff. ii. 257.
in its own domain. The right of conscience to oppose the Pope avoids the collision between two bearers of “supreme authority.” When the domain of conscience and the jurisdictional authority of the Pope intersect, conscience ultimately reigns, and, in that sense, has a right over the Pope.

To explain this, Newman gives some examples of the supreme, though not infallible, authority of the Pope:

What have excommunication and interdict to do with Infallibility? Was St. Peter infallible on that occasion at Antioch when St. Paul withstood him? was St. Victory infallible when he separated from his communion the Asiatic churches? or Liberius when in like manner he excommunicated Athanasius? And, to come to later times, was Gregory XIII, when he had a medal struck in honour of the Bartholomew massacre? or Paul IV, in his conduct towards Elizabeth: or Sextus V, when he blessed the Armada? or Urban VIII, when he persecuted Galileo?13

Next, he gives cases when disobedience in conscience is called for. In both examples, the domain of conscience and the jurisdictional authority of the Pope clash.

Thus, if the Pope told the English Bishops to order their priests to stir themselves energetically in favour of teetotalism, and a particular priest was fully persuaded that abstinence from wine, etc., was practically a Gnostic error, and therefore felt he could not so exert himself without sin: or suppose there was a Papal order to hold lotteries in each mission for some religious object, and a priest could say in God’s sight that he believed lotteries to be morally wrong, that priest in either of these cases would commit a sin hic et nunc if he obeyed the Pope, whether he was right or wrong in his opinion, and, if wrong, although he had not taken proper pains to get at the truth of the matter.14

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid. 260.
In these cases, conscience is "fully persuaded," "in God's sight," to disobey the Pope in a non-infallible jurisdictional area.\textsuperscript{15}

Newman's next question in the \textit{Letter to the Duke of Norfolk} regards the social character of these rights of conscience. Did Newman understand rights as having a purely individual character such as erasing the possible guilt involved in following an erroneous conscience? Was his concept of liberty of conscience a mere absence of coercion or sophisms? Or are they rights to act according to conscience in the social realm? Did Newman defend or attack the triple liberty of thought, speech, and action?

Newman addresses these issues in Section 6 of the \textit{Letter to the Duke of Norfolk} in which he defended the Syllabus of 1864 against Gladstone's attack. Liberty of conscience implied for both Newman and Gladstone liberty of speech, thought, action, worship, and conscience. To simplify the issues, we may consider freedom of conscience in these three situations:

1. Situation I:

There is no freedom of speech, press, assembly, worship, or of conscience. In this hypothetical situation, there is only one religion, censorship of the press, no right to dissent, and authority controls all conduct to the exclusion of individual conscience.

2. Situation II:

There are freedoms, but with certain limits.

3. Situation III:

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

187
Unlimited freedoms to say, think and do, what one thinks fit.

Newman's thesis is that Gladstone accused the Pope of adhering to Situation I. Newman maintained that "the Pope has done no such thing." Rather, Situation II can be applied to contemporary British courts of law, and that is not condemned by the Pope. What the Pope does condemn is Situation III, which is also condemned by the "present state of British law." The question Newman does not answer was whether the Pope explicitly adhered to Situation II.

To prove his point, - that the Pope is not adhering to Situation I - Newman first compared contemporary Papal teaching to former British Toryism. The idea of a "Christian Polity," where "Christianity was the law of the land," and "the State had a conscience" was "Popery today and Toryism yesterday." The conviction of one true religion led to the established Church of England having the support of the civil power in diverse ways of discrimination against dissenters.

Newman admits to being an admirer of this system of State Religion, but considers it to be impossible to maintain. In his view, there are three steps to an "inevitable" pluralism of ideas and religions, in accord with Situation II.

First, there was the cultivation of the intellect that leads "into a thousand various shapes." And, in matters of religion, this is even truer, "by reason of the extreme subtlety

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16 Ibid. 269.
17 Ibid. 270.
18 Ibid. 271.
19 Ibid. 262, 264.
and abstruseness of the mental action by which they are determined." So, Newman observes that in the "past seventy years, first one class of the community, then another, had awakened up to thought and opinion."  

Second, the differences of religion means that the State no longer has one conscience, the Anglican, but rather "half-a-dozen, or a score, or a hundred, in religious matters, each different from each." Hence, a deadlock comes about when some could not work with others with unanimity as required by a State Religion. As a necessary consequence, Newman concludes, the whole theory of Toryism collapses. Here, it is clear that Newman does not approve the enforcement of a State Religion over the consciences of others, but rather that a plurality of consciences fostered by education means that a State Religion can not hold.

Thirdly, Newman, like others, sees that a return is impossible. Only a miracle hinders this evolution of ideological pluralism. Even if a return were possible, Newman notes, such a restoration may interfere with human responsibility.  

The implication here that a return to religious unanimity by the people makes a State Religion acceptable to all. However, this religious unanimity always involves the possibility of some in the National Religion wishing in conscience to change religion. As, in fact, happened in the life of Newman. The Church of England was the State Religion which Newman in conscience left. Situation II is the moral answer for both Church and State.

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20 Ibid. 267.
21 Ibid. 268.
From the above analysis, we may draw several conclusions on Newman's teaching on liberty of conscience. Obviously, Newman prefers a situation where Christianity is the law of the land, of the monarchy, and of the university. However, he sees how increased culture brought pluralism of opinion and religion. His ideal is to combine Christianity with culture, as he himself did all his life. We remember, for example, his intellectual defense of the Anglican Church, his intellectual search for the truth of Catholicism, and now, his intellectual defense of freedom of conscience in the Catholic Church. His reaction to the growth of other religions is not to reject such liberties by the use of coercion, censorship, and cult-tactics. In fact, he called such religious pluralism "men ... with consciences." The underlying conviction, therefore, is that Christianity should be the law of the land, but in conscience.

Next, we may easily parallel Newman's treatment of Toryism with a hypothetical treatment of Popery. If the Pope wants a State Religion, such a thesis is impossible, because of the free flow of ideas. Likewise, a State Religion is undemocratic since it demands a despotism exclusive of dissenters. Finally, it would be an imposition of Catholicism "interfering" with personal responsibility.

Newman's final solution was hazy. His hope was, in centuries to come, there may be found out some way of uniting what is free in the new structure of society with what is authoritative in the old.  

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22 Ibid. 267.

23 Ibid. 268.
Finally, let us ask what duties does Newman, in fact, put on the exercise of liberties of conscience in society? This addresses hypothetical Situation III.

Later in the same Section 6 of the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, Newman explains that the Pope does not condemn all liberty of press, conscience and of worship. Again, comparing Papal decrees to British law, Newman shows that both place responsibilities on human freedoms. What is interesting for our study are the social obligations Newman puts on freedoms in his interpretation of British law and Papal teaching.24 Hence, Situation III, as unlimited freedoms, is rejected.

First, there is the duty of “political society” and “common security.” Newman considers that the very notion of “human society” involves the limits of certain, even innocent, liberties for public order. He then goes on to list several limits on Catholics in British society for the good of “social compensation,” such as the prohibition of public religious processions. Likewise, he notes the parallel curtailment of religious freedoms in the Papal States. To further his point, he observes the limits on freedom of speech, press and religion in Britain. Freedom of speech is not freedom to insult. Freedom of the press is not freedom to libel. Freedom of religion is not total equality for Catholics in England. The conclusion is that both British law and the Pope do not allow for unrestricted use of all human freedoms. The latter would be a return to “a liberty of self-will,”25 Situation III.

24 Ibid. 269-275.
25 Ibid. 274.
Secondly, Newman concludes this section with his evaluation of the Papal rejection of Situation III, paralleled to that of British law. Again, there are rights and duties of conscience. In this case, it is not just the need for common peace, but the case for social justice against “atrocities.” Freedom of conscience is obviously not a freedom to do all one wills. Whereas abuses of freedom endangers others and leads to “atrocities,” the correct use of freedom implies the duty to help others. With individual rights, come social duties. Respect for other’s rights are a duty in conscience. Not only is there a need for a common security, but also a duty to promote social justice and public morality.

“Conscience has rights because it has duties.”

26 Diff. ii. 274.


28 Diff. ii. 250.
CHAPTER XVI

WAS NEWMAN TOO LIBERAL?

And, I rejoice to say, to one great mischief

[the spirit of Liberalism in religion]

I have from the first opposed myself.

Biglietto Speech

A year before his death in 1890, John Henry Newman made a short, formal speech in Rome when he received the ticket summoning him to be invested as a cardinal of the Catholic Church. hence called the Biglietto speech. “This great occasion” gave the future Cardinal Newman the opportunity to weigh his every word before a world audience. The main point of his speech, however, was his joy on having from the beginning “opposed the spirit of Liberalism in religion.”

How do these concluding thoughts on Liberalism stand in relation to the remainder of Newman’s life as a champion of conscience? How do we define this

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1 My Campaign in Ireland, 393-400.
philosopher of religion whom people also considered, according to Pope Leo XIII, "too liberal"?  

A lot depends, of course, on what we understand by "liberal," and what Newman understood by "liberal." Is there a continuity or a break between this Biglietto speech and Newman's understanding of liberty of conscience in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk? So, let us first examine what Newman did say in that last Biglietto speech and then try to read it in the context of his other writings in defense of the supremacy of conscience. If so, then we may possibly understand Newman's "Liberalism."

The Liberalism condemned by Newman in the Biglietto speech was defined as "the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion." Therefore, Newman thought that there was a certain religious tolerance solely based on the ideology that religion is a merely subjective feeling, and, hence, a solely personal affair with no social consequences.

This "liberal" view and its consequences led to Newman's lament that Christianity was no longer the law of the land. Before, the civil power had been Christian with religion the bond of society. No longer. In like fashion, education, once under the authority and teaching of the Church, has now become totally secular, understanding secularism as the ideology of excluding religion.

Calling this event an "apostasia," Newman found three reasons behind it.

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2 LD xxix. 426.

3 See Chapter V above.

4 All unreferenced quotes are from the Biglietto speech.
First, Newman distinguished between the infidelity which may be the result of Liberalism and the infidelity which is its root. "Infidelity" was understood by Newman as disbelief or atheism. In Newman's mind, the root of Liberalism in England was not the disbelief of other countries, but rather the desire of English religious "sects" over three centuries to separate Church and State. Newman called this "unChristianising of the monarchy" not a blessing, as sects had it, but a "catastrophe."

Second, Newman saw the advent of so many sects as pushing society to act in disregard of religious principles. If society is to be democratic and representative, it is impossible to act in recognition of any specific religious denomination. To achieve harmony, religion must be excluded, noted Newman.

Every dozen men taken at random whom you meet in the streets have a share in political power, —when you inquire into their forms of belief, perhaps they represent one or other of as many as seven religions: how can they possibly act together in municipal or in national matters, if each insists on the recognition of his own religious denomination?

Finally, Newman recognized that Liberalism is attractive to people of diverse age and background, precisely because there is a lot of good in it. The array of human virtues, such as liberty, equality, and justice, proclaimed therein, is justly acclaimed by all. However, Newman considered this attraction of true virtues "a device of the Enemy... so carefully framed."

All of the above would seem a clear indication that Newman was in favor of the confessional State in his last famous speech. Liberalism, for Newman, was the "ruin of many souls." However, our reading of his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk in the previous chapter, his very life as found in the Apologia, and the philosophy of religion developed
in the *Grammar of Assent*, point to a clear supremacy of conscience over State Religion. Is there a contradiction?

Another way of understanding Liberalism would be respect for individual freedoms as its essence. Newman's speech and his earlier life and writings seem at odds. How can we possibly combine them? Is the *Biglietto* speech a step backwards in his defense of conscience? Or, in the line of his historical analysis of Christianity in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, may we affirm an organic development in Newman's thought on liberty of conscience?

However, first let us clearly see what Newman understood by Liberalism vis-à-vis the union of Church and State. Liberalism, in the *Biglietto* speech, was reducing religion to the individual’s personal life as if it were just an opinion and fancy with neither objective content nor social consequences. In this basic principle, Newman saw the evil of Liberalism. On the contrary, if religion does have an objective truth independent of one’s personal opinion, even individual religious conviction should have a social impact. In accord with this logic, Christianity can be the law of the land, the fabric of society, the religion of the monarchy. So, if one is convinced as a Christian to love one’s neighbor, then one lives in society in accord with this value, wrote Newman.

This understanding of Christianity being the law of the land does not necessarily mean an imposition of Christianity on unbelievers. Rather, the Christian needs to live socially according to his faith: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the
stranger, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, and visit the prisoner. So, logically, even the laws enacted will reflect these Christian principles. For example, if a people are Christian, their laws and society would be in accord with Christian principles on help for the hungry, suffering, immigrants, poor, sick, and, of course, infants and children. The latter is a far cry from coercion in religion on dissenters.

Accordingly, secular education, criticized by Newman for excluding God, is likewise not considered an evil in itself because of the virtues it extols, but, rather, precisely because it anathematized religion. Newman’s problem with secularism is that it is a “Liberalism” which excludes God and religion from education. However, in its totality secularism does have human virtues, such as justice, veracity and benevolence. In the Biglietto speech, Newman said:

It is not till we find that this array of principles is intended to supersede, to block out, religion, that we pronounce it to be evil.

So, religion in education is neither a coercion of religious belief on students nor an exclusion of religion from the classroom. Rather, it would be the acceptance by the believer of his Church’s authority and teaching in the religious sphere. What Newman rejected was an educational system that excluded religious expression and doctrine.

So, Newman’s lament in the Biglietto speech was not in favor of a Christian coercion, but rather in favor of a Christian social and academic consciousness. Then, are the principles of liberty of conscience taught in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk

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1 Mt. 25:32-46.
2 Campaign 399
contradictory to the Biglietto speech? If we understand Christianity being the law of the land in both documents in the perspective of religion having a social element due to the fact that it is objective, then there is freedom of speech, thought, and religion. At the same time, society prohibits public immoralities like infanticide. The civil power, monarchy or other, can be Christian, which does not imply that it forces non-Christians to be Christian in belief. Rather, being Christian implies Christians follow Christian moral principles in society.

Of course, the question on social liberties can be turned around. Does being Christian, either as an individual or in society, imply respect for others in their conscience, and, therefore, rights of conscience and religion? Was official Church persecution of dissenters not a one-sided misreading of Christianity, due to unchristian influences on Church members?

So, ultimately, our question remains: did Newman's philosophy of conscience in the final Biglietto speech imply:

1. A religiously neutral State.

2. or a religiously confessional State?

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7 Diff. ii. 274.


This religiously confessional State could either be:

a) A State which is Christian in its laws, rulers and society, while respectful of other religions because of a duty of respect for conscience.

b) A confessional State tolerant of other religions as a lesser evil.

c) A confessional State, tolerant of no other religion, since error has no rights.

The implication from Newman's philosophy of religion in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* is that a neutral State had to come about due to "cultivation of the intellect" and the needed political harmony based on consensus.\textsuperscript{10} In this case, religious pluralism is a necessity growing from education, and certainly not *per se* an evil. This philosophical ethic flows from Newman's teaching on the duty of following even a culpably erroneous conscience as representing the voice of God.\textsuperscript{11} This would seem to be a religiously neutral State.

However, in the *Biglietto* speech, the emphasis is more on a State which should be Christian but is tolerant of sects for the sake of social peace, as seen above in this chapter. In the philosophical analysis of tolerance in this speech, following erroneous consciences "may be the ruin of many souls." The latter seems to favor a confessional State tolerant of other religions as a lesser evil. How can other religions be considered evil and following them the ruin of a person's soul - *Biglietto* speech - if following conscience is a right and a duty as in Newman's earlier writings?

\textsuperscript{10} Diff. ii. 267.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. 259.
To help us solve this riddle, let us look at other sources of Newman's teaching on conscience, Church and State. Features of Newman's criticism of what he referred to as the "Christian Theocracy" are to be found in two letters written in 1860 to T. W. Allies, then engaged upon his book *The Formation of Christendom* (1865). The tendency of Newman's criticism is to give a religious backing to the idea of a religiously neutral State. Newman wrote:

_I do not see my way to hold that "Catholic Civilization," as you describe it, is in fact (I do not say in the abstract), but in fact, has been, or shall be, or can be, a good or *per se* desirable._

Newman's reason is that through this union of Church with society, the "world" invades the Church. The criterion, as in the *Biglietto* speech, is the salvation of souls. Again, the theological problem of whether an individual's soul is saved or not depends on one's philosophy of conscience. If we understand Newman as saying that fidelity to even a culpably erroneous conscience is fidelity to God, then the salvation of souls is tied to a person's fidelity to conscience. Neither a merely legal recognition of Christianity by the State or an adhesion to Christianity by society as a whole are at issue here. Hence, Newman, in a second letter to Allies, concluded:

_[Since] the object of Christianity is to save souls: I ask, Have we reason to suppose that more souls were saved (relatively to the number of persons) under the Christian Theocracy than under the Roman Emperors, or the English Georges?_  

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12 *LD* xix. 421.

13 Ibid. 422.
In a letter to Lord Acton, Newman gave another twist to the mutual influence of Church and State under the Roman Emperors. Newman considered Christianity as in fact beginning the emancipation of individual freedom of religion from State control:

But did not Christianity itself commence the emancipation of the individual mind by informing the law of conscience and of faith? Were not the Martyrdoms in the first centuries a portentous novelty, bringing in a new world? and did not Hosius, Hilary . . . follow up that heroic revolution by their free words and acts in a matter of opinion, in defiance of emperors?\(^{14}\)

Coming back to the nineteenth century, Newman, in connection with the religious persecution in Spain, wrote:

I am not at all sure that it would not be better for the Catholic religion everywhere, if it had no very different status from that which it has in England. There is so much corruption, so much deadness . . . when a dogmatic faith is imposed on a nation by law, that I like freedom better.\(^{15}\)

This comparison with England brings us back to the parallel in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* whereby he considered the Pope not writing anything contrary to British law on individual freedoms at the time. How can we read this together with the *Biglietto* speech? Laws, the monarchy, and society should be Christian, but being Christian does not imply imposing faith on others. On the contrary, being Christian would imply respect for conscience, linked to social justice, peace, and public morality mentioned in the

\(^{14}\) Newman to Acton, 16 June 1877: *LD* xxviii. 206.

\(^{15}\) 17 June 1863; *LD* xx. 477.
Moreover, giving a specific religion the backing of force may involve “fire and sword” as “instruments to convince men’s minds of error.”

An ultimate solution to Newman’s paradox in his philosophy of conscience in the *Biglietto* speech and his earlier writings may lie in the philosophical distinction between the real and the abstract, the concrete and the universal. Two remarks, made almost 15 years before the *Biglietto* speech, both of around the same date, show Newman pulled in opposite directions as to the ideal and the real relation between Church, State, and conscience.

In June 1863, he wrote:

I should call myself an Anti-Liberal, because, in harmony with the Pope’s syllabus, I should say that the best thing of all is to have a Unity of religion in a country and that so real that its Ascendancy is but the expression of the universal mind.

However, in the same year, he said:

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16 *Diff. ii.* 270-275.
18 GA 215.
19 *LD xx.* 477.
Though it be true abstractedly that the true religion alone is to be allowed, yet in the concrete it is allowable to wish that there should be a general toleration of all religions. 20

Hence, Newman's toast. No doubt he was loyal to the Pope in accord with his faith, but the first requisite of all religious belief is conscience.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

This liberation [of the whole human race]
cannot be reduced to its social and political aspects,
but rather reaches its fullness in the exercise of freedom of conscience,
the basis and foundation of all other human rights.

John Paul II, Cuba, 1998

To understand Newman's toast to conscience, we have chosen a chronological
development in order to have as an ultimate guiding interpretative principle his very life.

Newman claims that

a man's life lies in his letters. Biographers varnish; they assign motives;
they conjecture feeling... they palliate or defend. ¹

Nevertheless, this writer has claimed, based on the methods of the Essay,
Apologia, and Grammar, that the best guide to Newman is Newman himself, as he lived
his life. The strength of our essay on Newman lies in our abandoning all theories in favor
of living facts The wide acclaim to the Apologia Pro Vita Sua, a historical

¹ LD xxi. 20.
documentation in place of polemical rhetoric, proved the integrity of Newman's conversions in conscience. Here we have tried to extend that approval to all his life as a toast to conscience, striking a careful balance between private judgment and religious authority. In Newman's words:

Catholic Christendom is no simple exhibition of religious absolutism, but presents a continuous picture of Authority and Private Judgment alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and low of the tide; it is a vast assemblage of human beings with wilful intellects and wild passions, brought together into one by the beauty and the Majesty of a Superhuman Power. ²

So, for example in regard to Catholicism, we noted his submission to Church authority once he was a believing Catholic, but it is clear that the same non-Catholic who began the Development of Doctrine was as equally faithful to his conscience as the converted Catholic at its end. ³ Hence, this essay aims to be an Apologia Pro Dictu Suo (an Apology for his Toast): a toast to Newman's "personal guide" to Truth amid "ghosts" in darkness and "shadows" in uncertainty. ⁴ The very facts of his life show his consistent faithfulness to conscience, the "aboriginal vicar of Christ." ⁵

Parallel to his life, our synthesis of Newman's thought on conscience followed the teaching of the Grammar. Conscience, being intellectual and emotional, judicial and critical, is both an inner light and a personal judgment. Since conscience links creature

² Apo. 194
⁴ GA 304.
⁵ Diff. ii. 248.
and creator, it possesses divine strength and human weaknesses. Conscience is together a moral sense and the voice of a Master, living, personal, and sovereign. Hence, we concluded that conscience, having the qualities of an "immortal diamond," if we wish to apply Newman's devotee, Gerard Manley Hopkin's metaphor, is both creative and receptive. Creative because it is personal; receptive because it is an assent.

To see what Newman meant by liberty of conscience as reflected in his toast to conscience and then to the Pope, we took note of several nuances in the Letter: Church and State have clear limits on a person's conscience, and infallibility has to do with general propositions while conscience has to do with practical dictates at the concrete level. Nevertheless the general trend of Newman's teaching is that the same God speaks to us through conscience and through religious authority. Conscience is a messenger from him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us from behind a veil and teaches and rules us by his representatives.

Hence it would seem impossible for there to be a theoretical conflict for a believer between his conscience and his Church. Since the dictates of conscience and the truths of revelation both come from one and the same author, these internal and external monitors recognize and bear witness to each other. We are bound to obey both. However, that was Newman's whole point in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk on an individual Catholic's

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7 Diff. ii. 248.
freedom of conscience in politics. Generally, obedience is due to authority, both Church and State, except in "very rare" occasions when conscience "may prevail," under very precise conditions. 8

Then, the question of freedom of conscience in theological reflection was raised by Newman in his treatment of the dogma of papal infallibility in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk. Wherein the limits of one and the other? Alongside that question, we noticed that the philosophy of conscience as a natural faculty present in every individual does not coincide with belief by all in the Catholic Church. Hence, not only is it feasible in conscience that someone seemingly becomes a Catholic and then leaves the Church, 9 but Christianity itself is considered as a "complement" to natural religion. 10 Hence, Newman stated the "most serious doctrine,"

the right and the duty of following that Divine Authority, the voice of conscience, on which in truth the Church herself is built. 11

So, we discussed Newman's argument in favor of conscientiously accepting Papal teaching or authority precisely because conscience has accepted the validity of those claims. In Thomistic terminology, revelation presupposes and perfects natural religion. 12 Religious authority, according to Newman, likewise presupposes and perfects natural

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8 Ibid. 258.
9 GA 200 and Dev. 86.
10 Diff. ii 254.
11 Ibid. 252.
12 Summa Theologiae, i, q.1, a.8, ad 2, "Cum enim gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat." (Since therefore grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.)

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conscience. Religious obedience not based on conscience as an acceptance by the individual of certain truths is obviously empty. For example, in the case of the Catholic who leaves the Church because of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Newman notes that the person never accepted the "living authority" of the Church. If he did accept that authority he would conscientiously accept any future dogma. But if external authority is taken away, the mind falls back of necessity upon that inward guide which it possessed even before Revelation was vouchsafed, that is, conscience searching for truth.

So, if authority depends on its being accepted by conscience, and revelation is a complement to natural religion, we reasonably concluded with Newman that the knowledge acquired by conscience is personal and, in that sense, independent of what may or may not be revealed by God. But, in the same token, conscience, by its very nature of seeking the will of God is obliged to form its judgments in accord with what it know to be from God. This is because each man's conscience is his lung needing oxygen:

I am as little able to think by any mind but my own as to breathe with another's lungs.

As an epilogue, the Biglietto speech took up the problem of conscience precisely in our theme of liberty of conscience. Newman's condemnation of Liberalism cast doubt on his defense of "personal assent" and "free inquiry" in the search for religious truth. His

13 GA 200.
14 Dev. 86.
15 GA 304.
treatment of Church and State therein cast ulterior light on our author’s belief in both truth and conscience.

Catholicism, for Newman, is for all “with an eye and a heart for the truth”. In a Catholic perspective, the opposite of liberty of conscience, the psychological pressure and physical coercion of religious intolerance, shows the need for force and fear to promote falsehood and tyranny. Hence, precisely because a toast to the Pope comes from free inquiry in theology and personal assent in conscience, we argued that Newman rightly gave first priority to conscience over authority, as the proximate norm for human conduct. Conscience is, therefore, norma normans normata (a binding law that is itself bound). However, this proximate norm is of itself in constant search of truth and holiness, which are found in God, his revelation and his representatives.

So, the ultimate conclusion of this dissertation is that Newman’s doctrine on, and life according to, conscience ultimately lead to an understanding of liberty of conscience, as later taught by Vatican II in the Declaration on Religious Liberty:

• “It is in accordance with their dignity that all, because they are persons . . . are both impelled and bound to seek the truth.”

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16 GA 295.

17 See his reflections on the use of repression, rather than instruction, in Italy. LD xix. 401.

18 Diff. ii. 248.

• "But men cannot satisfy this obligation . . . unless they enjoy both psychological freedom and immunity from external coercion."\textsuperscript{20}

• "The search for truth must be carried by free inquiry with the help of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue."\textsuperscript{21}

• "It is by personal assent that men must adhere to the truth they have discovered."\textsuperscript{22}

• "However, in forming their consciences the faithful must pay careful attention to the sacred and certain teaching of the Church."\textsuperscript{23}

Our reading of Newman states that there is both a duty to search for truth and a duty to respect the search of others for truth. Hence, in accord with Vatican II, Newman postulated free inquiry and personal assent for oneself and for others. This double understanding of liberty of conscience as implying freedom of thought, speech, and action will, I hope, be what we have found in our study of Newman as he "wrote, argued and acted."\textsuperscript{24}

This positive affirmation of Newman on liberty of conscience may be coupled with his negative warnings. In fact, Vatican II not only considers it "wrong" for authorities to use force or fear in religious matters, but also declares the right of all to be immune from coercion

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Dignitatis Humanae}, n. 3. Flannery, 800.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Apo}. Preface.
on the part of “individuals, social groups and every human power.” Newman’s conviction of the need for “full liberty of thought” determined him to fight against the “espionage, denunciation and terrorism” of a “Church within a Church” which “dares to speak in the name of the Pope.”

To the convert Emily Bowles, who urged him to speak out on the doctrinal development of papal infallibility, Newman compared his writing to “dancing on the tight rope some hundred feet from the ground.” For Newman saw some “trembling” at freedom of thought. Leo XIII’s Cardinal feared the Church slipping into a sort of Novatianism, a shrinking into ourselves and narrowing the lines of communion, using the language of despair and disarray at the prospect before us.

Ultimately, we consider Newman an authentic visionary of Vatican II and we “feel no temptation at all to break in pieces the great legacy of thought thus committed to us for these latter days.” Conscience in freedom led him on the road to Rome. Joining his praise for the

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25 Dignitatis Humanae, 2. Flannery, 800.
26 Diff. ii. 78-79.
27 LD xxiii.193.
28 Ibid. 216.
29 Ibid. 193.
30 LD xxii. 215-216.
31 “My Cardinal! it was not easy, it was not easy. They said he was too liberal, but I had determined to honour the Church in honouring Newman.” LD xxix. 426.
32 Ibid. 305.
33 Apo. 193.
“noble and independent” Bishop Dupanloup, we approve his courage of “daring to do what we think right.”

John Henry affirmed at the beginning of the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk that both the Schola Theologorum and time determine the force and interpretation of papal and synodal utterances. Our hope is that the work of scholars will further clarify Newman’s thought on liberty and truth, authority and conscience.

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34 LD xiii. 396.
35 Diff. ii. 176.
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Ari. The Arians of the Fourth Century.

Ath. i, ii Select Treatises of St. Athanasius. 2 vols.


Call. Callista: A Tale of the Third Century.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects.</td>
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