FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE IN JOHN H. NEWMAN
AND MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................... ii

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... iv

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1

II. AN ORDINARY CHILD .................................................................................... 14

III. MYSELF AND MY CREATOR ......................................................................... 28

IV. IMMORTALITY AND RATIONALISM ............................................................ 50

V. AGONY IN EXILE ............................................................................................ 67

VI. A CHRISTIAN IN CONSCIENCE .................................................................... 104

VII. DEATH AND CONSCIENCE .......................................................................... 125

VIII. CHURCH AND CONSCIENCE ..................................................................... 144

IX. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................. 172

X. EPILOGUE ....................................................................................................... 178

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................. 183
ABSTRACT

Deals with the issue of freedom of conscience in two of its principal advocates in the modern English and Spanish-speaking worlds, John Henry Newman and Miguel de Unamuno. Seemingly strange bedfellows, in their respective linguistic communities Newman is considered an intellectual defender of institutional Christianity, while Unamuno is oft characterized as its greatest heretic.

This dissertation is a comparative study of both writers from a historical-critical perspective. Our aim is to suggest that the heroic defenses of conscience by both Newman and Unamuno towards the end of their lives are a logical corollary to a succession of actions and writings from their youth onwards in the affirmation of the principles of free examination and personal choice against censorship, control and coercion.

In our research on Newman's and Unamuno's thought on truth and life, religion and ideology, conscience and authority, we therefore pursue that living and developing intelligence by which they wrote, argued and acted. Hence, we chronologically apply their own literary and philosophical thought over a life-time of writings to their own actions in freedom of conscience in academic, religious and political settings. Academics and activists in defense of conscience, they bear witness to its deeper meaning as related in their books, poems and letters. Both were poets, polemicists, and philosophers. Above all, both were people, willing to pay the price of expulsion, exile and loneliness, in their search for truth in life and life in truth.
Therefore, our approach is both literary and philosophical. In Newman and Unamuno, we respectfully shadow the development of their own autobiographical writings. Our focus is to analyze key periods of their lives in chronological order, combining principal writings and crucial decisions. Seeking out their views on conscience from childhood memories throughout philosophical classics, the agony of personal polemics, analyses of historical Christianity, poems in exile and heroic defense of conscience against authority, we find a consistency unto death.

Conclusively, we wish to deduce a theory of freedom of conscience in Newman and Unamuno vis-à-vis, churches, states and universities, as applicable to all human beings independent, but inclusive, of their religious, political and academic convictions.
Unamuno’s final public words spoken on October 12, 1936, in the Aula Magna of the University of Salamanca, cited above by Rudd, face to face with the violent arrogance of General Millán Astray, “vencéis, pero no convenceréis,” may also be duly appreciated as the peak of another writer’s brave defense of conscience against authoritarianism.³

Likewise, Mr. Kingsley’s pamphlet, “What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?”⁴ comes to mind as we seek today the meaning of Newman’s oft quoted after-dinner toast to conscience. Newman (1801-90) had written in his “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk” (1875): “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.”⁵ No doubt Newman's toast can be effectively used as a mirror to better see Unamuno.

The bibliography on Unamuno, and specifically his religious search and beliefs, is vastly extensive. However, critics up to now seem to insist on analyzing a variety of Unamuno's views, such as that as an existentialist philosopher, an Old Testament believer, a poetic Christian or a Catholic Atheist, rather than his belief in freedom of conscience as a condition sine qua non of such a search and even contradictory opinions.
One classic philosophical view of Unamuno is that of an existentialist in the footsteps of Kierkegaard. In the vein of Paul Ilie who wrote that “Unamuno's existential psychology is in the finest tradition of humanism,” Cerezo later added that, “Se diría que hay en Unamuno una profunda dimensión esencialista platónica-augustina, filtrada por el nuevo clima kantiano-fichteano del mundo moderno.” Recently Csetjei completed a comparison between the Knight of Faith of Kierkegaard and Unamuno's interpretation of Don Quixote, concluding that: “The experience of Unamuno's readings of Kierkegaard served as a stimulating factor in the writing of a commentary which, beyond any dispute, bears the marks of a sovereign author. [. . .] With the spiritual association of the Danish and Spanish-Basque thinkers, the entire European culture has becomes richer.” Csetjei does go on to note the common feature that “both Knights of Faith are relentless enemies of institutional, ecclesiastical religiosity” (720). Nonetheless our purpose is to focus on the element of freedom of conscience implicit in such an existentialist philosophy.

On the specific issue of Unamuno's religiosity and, particularly, Christianity, talented writers from Hernán Benítez to our days have addressed the topic. Benítez had synthesized his Christian religiosity as “Protestant mind” and “Catholic heart.” This interpretation may be symbolized in Unamuno's rejection of his finished statue. Unamuno showed the artist the iron cross under his vest guarding his heart, and insisted that he add the silhouette of the crucifix over his left breast.

Martin Nozick sees his appearance as a Protestant pastor in a predominantly Catholic country as “a protester in a society which had known no serious religious cleavages in three centuries,” given that “to be the Spanish Luther had once been his
ambition.” However, the protestantismo of Unamuno, according to Nozick, is in lower case “a disposition of the spirit, a religious intentionality beyond or above all official ‘shibboleth’": (47).

Nelson R. Orringer also faces the dilemma of Unamuno being either Catholic or Protestant. Again, taking a cue from the old library at the University of Salamanca, Orringer sees the Protestant pastor dress in contrast to the signs of Catholic piety present in the crucifixes hanging beside the painting of the Christ of Velásquez on his bedroom wall. Orringer meticulously goes through Unamuno's personal notes upon writing the Sentimiento trágico de la vida, searching for hidden sources, to propose that Unamuno’s religion was that of a “ritschliano católico” (17). Unamuno himself refers to the Protestant left, the free-thinkers born of the Reformation, as the thought “que enraiza mejor en mi corazón y arregla la constante lucha de éste con la cabeza” (Carta de Unamuno a Luis de Zulueta, 12 agosto 1903). Unamuno himself never hides the fact of the influence of Ritschl and his disciples. Even the phrase “Creo, Señor, ayuda mi incredulidad,” made his own by Unamuno, comes from Harnack (230). Orringer concludes:

¿es luterano Unamuno?; ¿es calvinista? Tan luterano como pueden serlo los evangélicos Ritschl y Harnack, criticados ambos por la ortodoxia alemana; tan calvinista como el nada ortodoxo Sabatier; y menos luterano o calvinista por la incertidumbre de su “piedad católica”, a base de la cual modificaba, con frecuencia ligeramente, las doctrinas reogidas de los tres. (223-2)

Rodrigo Segarra, however, comes to an opposite conclusion: Unamuno was neither Catholic nor Protestant. His faith was that of Job, an Old Testament faith, “Que
Unamuno fue un hombre veterotestamentario y, por consiguiente, en el sentido pleno de la palabra y de modo coherente y constante a lo largo de su vida, no puede ser considerado cristiano.\textsuperscript{13} Furthermore, Segarra applies certain criteria of authentic Christianity to Unamuno and finds him lacking. Instead of the intellectual rejection of dogmas which Boerigter considers as creating “tremendous problems for an understanding of Christianity,”\textsuperscript{14} Segarra sees neither a personal relationship with Christ nor Christ’s mediation nor resurrection in Unamuno (191-92). Besides, Segarra considers that, due to Spain’s intransigent Catholicism and fanatical hatred for Jews, Unamuno used, “utilizó,” the external trappings of Christianity to move along with his Old Testament faith (194).

Van Dee entitled his recent book on Unamuno, Spain’s Catholic Atheist, finding “a philosophical cocktail of Christian, Protestant, Jansenist and Modernist heterodoxy splashed all over his […] works.”\textsuperscript{15}

A return to the characterization of Unamuno as a poet, and to El Cristo de Velázquez as his masterpiece, is skillfully achieved by William T. Little.\textsuperscript{16} Based on Unamuno’s own perception of himself as primarily a poet, Little steers another road of interpretation beyond the Catholic-Protestant, Christian-Jewish, Secularist-Religious, Believer-Atheist paradigms. Unamuno’s faith is seen as an eternal search for God. So, like all prophetical poets, Unamuno sees his own search for immortality as a model for his people.

Little concludes the first chapter of his Introduction:
Therefore, at the peak of Unamuno's maturity, [...] he chose to enter the dark night of his personal soul—which he conceived of and experienced as a reflection of his nation's soul—by writing an extended poetical fiction in order to discover and raise the core of this creative voice to the level of public consciousness. He does this totally in El Cristo de Velázquez by reflecting on the supreme mystery of the death and resurrection of the Judeo-Christian God in human form as mediated by a masterpiece of Spanish painting. (19)

However, knowing don Miguel, we may possibly imagine how he might reject any of the above characterizations. Precisely because conscience is personal, and not social, one's beliefs are individual, not sectarian. Hence, Unamuno hated the idea of being labeled or pigeon-holed, a member of either an organized creed, a political party or an institutional church. Belief is both a free and personal search for truth and life:

\[
\text{Y yo no quiero dejarme encasillar, porque yo, Miguel de Unamuno, como cualquier otro hombre que aspire a conciencia plena, soy especie única.}^{17} \text{("Mi religión" 371)}
\]

\[
\text{De lo que huyo, repito, como de la peste, es de que me clasifiquen, y quiero morirme oyendo preguntar de mí a los holgazanes de espíritu que se paren alguna vez a oírme: "Y este señor, ¿qué es?" [...]. (374)}
\]

\[
\text{Y es obra de suprema piedad religiosa buscar la verdad en todo y descubrir dondequiera el dolor, la necedad y la inepticia. (375)}
\]

Hence, the thrust of this work will be to avoid the question of what Unamuno was, what group he belonged to, or what he believed, respecting his own desire not to be "pigeon-holed." What we wish to emphasize is the value of his personal, temporal, conscience throughout his life as the essential element in Unamuno's opinions and decisions. To further enhance our study, we will use the life, writings and thought of John Henry Newman as a constant comparison to Unamuno. The fact that both did not believe in rigid schemas of belief and adherence, but followed their consciences consistently in often inconsistent fashion only adds to their belief in offering conscience the freedom to
search and choose.

So, what exactly did Newman (1801-90) and Unamuno (1864-1936) mean? A succession of writings from their early years until their deaths offer us the key both writers give as to what they themselves really “meant.” Along with their books, we seek out the real “men of flesh and blood.” The Apología itself offers us the key Newman himself wished to give to what he “means.” Rather than go by books, we ought go by persons, says Newman (Letters and Diaries 22: 158). Unamuno, on the other hand, begins his main philosophical work, Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos (Sentimiento trágico), insisting that: “Y así, lo que en un filósofo nos debe más importar es el hombre” (1: 80).

In our search for Newman’s and Unamuno's thought on conscience vis-à-vis the academic, political, and religious authorities of their time, we pursue that “living intelligence” by which they wrote, and argued, and acted (Newman, Apología 11). Therefore, we may rightly apply their own literary and philosophical thought over a lifetime of writings to Newman's and Unamuno's own actions in defense of their personal conscience. Their multiple experiences in defense of personal conscience are witnessed by deep meditation and courageous decisions as related in their books, poems and letters.

Following the distinction made by John Henry Newman in his Essay on a Grammar of Assent we are concerned with that personal “assent” of conscience to authority or beliefs, that is, the act of faith rather than the content of that faith. So, the argument of intellectual assent is considered from the point of view of personal conscience. Hence, the question is not whether either Unamuno or Newman were or were
either believers, followers or members of specific groups at different stages during their lives. So, with Unamuno, we not only inquire whether he was a believer in Christ when writing the *El Cristo de Velásquez*, but also focus on the fact of his reading the poem at the anticlerical *Ateneo* (1914).\(^{20}\) In Newman's case, we analyze the fact of his reception into the Catholic Church (1845), but remember his refusing the Pope’s invitation to attend the First Vatican Council (1870).\(^ {21}\)

That is, we are concerned with how Unamuno and Newman viewed different aspects of authority during their lives. We are not focusing on how authorities viewed either Unamuno’s or Newman's decisions in conscience. Particularly, both authors had to deal with Roman Catholicism, with very different reactions. Towards the end of his life, Newman received the red hat of the cardinalate (1879), the highest honor in Catholicism, whereas Unamuno was considered the “greatest Spanish heretic of modern times” by Bishop Pildáin of the Canary Islands, at the same time when the University of Salamanca was planning to honor Unamuno by dedicating the *Casa Museo Unamuno* (Rudd 318-21).

A similar parallel also exists in the fact that both introductory quotes at the beginning of this chapter are part of incidents that took place towards the end of each writer’s life. Newman considered the “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk,” wherein the toast is contained, his “last publication” (*Letters and Diaries* 25: 29) just as Unamuno's words to General Millán Astray were in fact his final words in public. Hence, we may rightly trace back their own historical and theoretical methods in key works to their own lives to better understand their final testimonies.
This comparative essay aims to be both philosophical and literary, based especially on Unamuno's philosophy of religion in *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos* and Newman's in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, linked to the historical analysis of Christianity made by Unamuno in *La agonía del cristianismo* and by Newman in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. The personal, concrete, touches of both authors are read in Unamuno's *Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad* and Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. We conclude with the existential realities of San Manuel Bueno, mártir, as a practical application of the ideas in "Mi religión," and with Newman writing his “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk” as a concrete example of his previous ideas and life.

Our hope is to discover a reflection on conscience and its freedom as they lived these convictions throughout their lives, and to which they gave long meditation in their moments of exile and solitude. Unamuno's and Newman's final conclusions on conscience and authority, respectively in their speech and toast, may thus be duly appreciated as the peak of a “living intelligence” on conscience by which they “wrote, argued, and acted” (*Apología*, pref. 11).

Our approach is humanistic, seeking a view and expression of freedom of conscience in both as writers and witnesses, applicable as a human right to all persons. In fact, in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* Newman sought to investigate “natural truths,” rather than religious ones (93). 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 academic, political and religious convictions.
Following 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” (Letters and Diaries 24: 74).

Unamuno likewise rejects a merely religious answer “la fe del carbonero” to his search for meaning: (Sentimiento trágico 4: 128)

Esa sed de vida eterna apaganla muchos, los sencillos sobre todo, en la fuente de la fe religiosa; pero no a todos es dado beber de ella. (4: 115)

A costa, preciso es decirlo, de oprimir las necesidades mentales de los creyentes en uso de razón adulta. Exígeseles que crean o todo o nada, que acepten la entera totalidad de la dogmática, o que se pierda todo mérito si se rechaza la mínima parte de ella. (129)

Newman also believes in the need for freedom of personal inquiry for and against historical Christianity: “We are necessarily thrown back on our own judgment individually to determine, what the revelation of God is, or rather if in fact there is, or has been, any revelation at all. 22

Newman and Unamuno therefore accept a philosophy of freedom of conscience, with the given that the very character of truth and life demand that they be subject to free examination by the thinking person. Hence, the affirmation and belief in rigid dogmas lends itself to the possible proscription of free thought and investigation. In Unamuno's words: “Y lo más opuesto a buscar la vida en la verdad es proscibir el examen y declarar que hay principios intangibles. No hay nada que no deba examinarse. ¡Desgraciada la patria donde no se permite analizar el patriotismo!” 23 Whereas Newman argues: “An argument is needed, unless Christianity is to abandon the province of argument; and those
who find fault with the explanation here offered of its historical phenomena will find it their duty to provide one for themselves” (Development 31).

Our hermeneutic principle is that established in the Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine by Newman:

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. (Development 56)

Besides, we may equally apply to Unamuno his own theory on ideas being both in the writer and in the reader of his books and life, as he himself did with Cervantes.

Escribí aquel libro para repensar el Quijote contra cervantistas y eruditos, para hacer obra de vida de los que era y sigue siendo para los más letra muerta. ¿Qué me importa lo que Cervantes quiso o no quiso poner allí y lo que realmente puso? Lo vivo es lo que yo allí descubro, pusiéralo o no Cervantes, lo que yo allí pongo y sobrepongo y sotopongo, y lo que ponemos allí todos. Quise allí rastrear nuestra filosofía. (Sentimiento tragico 12: 274)

So, not only may we read Unamuno's and Newman's texts as they wrote and understood them, there and then. Hence, our ultimate goal is to research whether Newman's and Unamuno's ideas in their writings and witness, as conveyed to the reader today, can be developed into a coherent theory on freedom of conscience. Hence, as this essay advances, we seek to find in Newman and Unamuno a process of reasoning starting off from their own consciences as children, and, then, moving on in their lives to accept or reject certain authorities, especially religious, with their teaching and commands. This acceptance will be then only valid in so far as it is accepted in Newman's and Unamuno's conscience.
This latter principle implies a liberty of conscience vis-à-vis all kinds of authority be they academic, political or religious. Hence, we hope to show that both Unamuno and Newman followed consistently a path "such as to secure us against hopeless mistakes and emancipate us from the capricious ipse dixit of authority" (Grammar of Assent 211).
Notes

1 Margaret Thomas Rudd, The Lone Heretic: A Biography of Miguel de Unamuno (New York: Gordian, 1976) 301.


10 Martin Nozick, Miguel de Unamuno (New York: Twayne, 1971, 32.


CHAPTER II

AN ORDINARY CHILD

El divino aliento del Creador inspira su alma [del niño].

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.

To prove their point that there is “an instinct of the mind recognizing an external Master in the dictate of conscience,” (Grammar of Assent 102) and “es que acaso no hay concepción más honda de la vida que la intuición del niño” (Recuerdos 128), Newman and Unamuno both sketch in the Grammar of Assent and Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad, respectively, a phenomenology of conscience as supreme in the mind of an ordinary child. Newman considers that there is an “impulse of nature,” which recognizes a Moral Governor in the consciousness of right and wrong, whereas Unamuno likewise perceives a divine origin in our moral sense from childhood:

¡Cuántas veces volvemos la vista a la intuición serena de los primeros años, la que a fuerza de sencillez alcanzó la mayor profundidad! La mayor profundidad, la que sonda el ojo creador de la poesía, cuya fecunda edad es la niñez. Así como al enajenarnos en la obra artística la recreamos de nuestra fantasía, nos sentimos autores con su autor que se perdió en ella y, por tanto, sin envidia ni recelo la gozamos, así también el niño, al enajenarse en el mundo, lo recrea y el divino aliento del Creador inspira su alma. (Recuerdos 125-26)

Without using the word “innate,” Newman does see that a child immediately links his sense of right and wrong with a feeling of God. His offence is considered a sin 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 (Grammar of Assent 103-07).

The importance of this phenomenology of religion in a child is to prove the "connatural" character of conscience in every person from infancy. Such a phenomenon is present in every human being prior both in time and authority to all future authority. Newman gives the example of a child offending his parents and placing himself in the presence of God.

Unamuno considers that the ideas we have on birth are the strongest ideas throughout our lives:

Las ideas que en cierto modo traíamos virtualmente al nacer, las encarnaron como vaga nebulosa en nuestra primera visión, las que fueron viviendo con nuestra vida y de nuestra vida hasta endurecer sus huesos y su conciencia con los nuestros son las ideas madres, las únicas vivas, son el tema de la melodia continua que se va desarrollando en la armoniosa sinfonía de nuestra conciencia. (Recuerdos 125)

The application to religious authorities on earth is also drawn by both Newman and Unamuno. All divine authorities, such as revealed Religion and institutional 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 possible religious revelation and authority. Hence, religious authority, 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. Hence, both writers were to defend from the beginning an absolute independence of mind and action from organized religion. 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” (Grammar of Assent 107).

This independence of mind in the adolescent Unamuno is reflected in his religious experiences. On the one hand, he wanted to be a saint, “soñaba en ser santo” (Recuerdos 113), but, on the other, he soon saw the ignorance of people in religious matters. His fervor with the San Luis Gonzaga Congregation was interpreted by a fellow youth as a political affiliation with the Carlist cause:

Todavía recuerdo la profunda indignación y el hondo desdén que me produjo el que un chico me dijera que todos los congregantes éramos unos carlistones. ¡Carlistones! Me parecía que en este, como en otros casos, atribuía yo a la deplorable ignorancia que respecto a cosas religiosas leía que aquejaba a los hombres frivolos y mundanos. (114)

Revelation is a great “addition” of fullness and exactness to our mental image of the Divine Personality and Attributes. According to Newman, "the vivid apprehension of religious objects, on which I have been enlarging, is independent of the written records of Revelation; it does not require any knowledge of Scripture, nor of the history or the teaching of the Catholic Church" (Grammar of Assent 107). In Unamuno's case, the religious ceremonies common to the Spanish tradition are described in detail in Chapter XIII of the Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad. All the "fiestas" seem totally sociological, with no mention of the divine, until Unamuno fondly remembers, even years later, the impact the Corpus Christi procession had on him:
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’ or church’s authority and teaching. Later on, for both believers, conscience will follow God prior to and independent of any religious authority. Religious authority for the believer, therefore, only has force in so far as it is recognized in conscience to have divine authority. Hence, conscience is both chronologically and naturally prior to authority, since God is first known directly by conscience, according to Newman.

Here we have the force and weight of conscience as Newman and Unamuno 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.” The poet Newman wrote:

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 shore— one step enough for me.  

With Unamuno, there is an illusion at the end of his adolescence, to live "en renovación perpetua, comenzado a vivir cada día” (Recuerdos 121). This natural link between God and duty, as brought out in An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent and Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad, in each one’s conscience from childhood sets the stage
for our own reading of Newman's and Unamuno's childhood, considering each one as “an ordinary child” (Grammar of Assent 103)

How does this conscience develop and grow? In those same pages, Newman and Unamuno speak of the divine image being strengthened and developed by “information external to ourselves” (105). With Unamuno, the child: “Se pierde en el mundo, y al perderse en él lo hace suyo; en su espíritu virgen se abrazan la vida del mundo y la de su alma; enlaza sus fantasías de lo creado, y al dejarse llevar de la corriente de los días, que fluye bulliciosa por su espíritu, alcanza la mayor libertad en el seno de la necesidad más estricta (Recuerdos 126).

Applying our method of reading Newman and Unamuno through their own lives, let us examine key details of their growing conscience as children vis-à-vis authority paralleled to their 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 (Grammar of Assent 106). In his own case, certain “information external” to himself will shed light on his future decisions in conscience as they gradually 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 (103). The child knows good things, persons and actions, and immediately goes beyond to a sense of God.

Unamuno sees that the intuition of a child touches the meaning of life as it
presents itself to him: “Y es que acaso no haya concepción más honda de la vida que la
intuición del niño, que al fijar su vista en el vestido de las cosas sin intentar desnudarlas
ve todo lo que las cosas encierran, porque las cosas no encierran nada; siente el misterio
total y eterno, que la más clara luz; toma a la vida en juego y a la creación en
cosmorama” (Recuerdos 128).

As they looked back at their life and faced surprise after surprise, these truths
held. So, for both Newman and Unamuno, no event in a life is indifferent or purposeless.
Indeed, unforeseen and unusual circumstances can force untold influence on the
development of each life and conscience. For Newman, the Apologia Pro Vita Sua would
never have been born without the attack on his sincerity by Kingsley; the “Letter to the
Duke of Norfolk” without Gladstone; An Essay on the Development of Christian
Doctrine without his expulsion from the Anglican Church. With Unamuno, the sickness
and death of his beloved son would inspire Amor y pedagogia; expulsion from the
University of Salamanca would steer him towards Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en
los hombres y en los pueblos; exile to Fuerteventura and Paris would lead him to La
agonía del cristianismo. The intolerance of the Second Republic would possibly inspire
San Manuel Bueno, mártir. The arrogance of General Millán Astray motivates the
prophecy of "Venceréis, pero no convenceréis."

The world of nature and man are the scaffolding on which each person walks their
path. These ideas are clearly expressed in the whole thrust of Newman's and Unamuno's
autobiographical works such as the Apologia and the Paz en la guerra. Newman's
“Secretum meum mihi” made him “rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and
luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator." Unamuno's philosophy rested on the 'hombre de carne y hueso.' The meaning both gave to their lives came from the central truth of their teaching on conscience supremacy as knowing the real world in an independent ethical fashion from infancy.

The "world of nature and of man" which reflected a moral sense in Newman's and Unamuno's growing consciences as children were their homeland and family. These memories of places and people are linked in Newman and Unamuno to their concept of life and, hence, to their teaching on the presence of an individual conscience judging life as it evolves before them (Grammar of Assent 106). Reminiscing upon the events of their childhood meant for Newman and Unamuno remembering their own moral judgments as children, echoing their continuous teaching on conscience as being an innate personal relationship with a life to be lived.

Newman's vivid memory of his childhood involves 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. In the Introduction to the An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine Newman wishes 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.”

Unamuno’s memory of his childhood was, above all, related to his personal experience of the Carlist war and siege of his native town, Bilbao. Its bombing in 1874 was the catalyst of his maturity as a youth. His conscience awakened to the reality of life and history brought to his own doorstep: “Pero el suceso verdaderamente nuevo, verdaderamente imprevisto, el suceso que dejó más honda huella en mi memoria fue el bombardeo de mi Bilbao, en 1874, el año mismo en que entré al Instituto. En él termina propiamente mi niñez y empieza mi juventud con el bachillerato” (Recuerdos 75).

But not only did this event stand in Unamuno’s memory, it also formed the basis for all the future line of thought for the story of his life. His constant involvement in politics can be easily understood as a need to avert his country from the tragedy of war he himself witnessed as a child.

The first authority figure in Newman's and Unamuno's “world of men” were, of course, their fathers. Mr. Newman was 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 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” (Letters and Diaries 25: 352).
Unamuno remembers his father at the beginning of Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad in what we may consider a prophetical conversation in French with a Frenchman. Later, Unamuno was to spend time in Paris and have some works first printed in French, not to mention his philological abilities:

Murió mi padre en 1870, antes de haber yo cumplido los seis años. Apenas me acuerdo de él [. . .]. Le recuerdo, sin embargo, en un momento preciso, aflorando borrosa memoria de las nieblas de mi pasado. [. . .] Un día en que mi padre conversaba en francés con un francés me colé yo a la sala, y de no recordarle sino en aquel momento, sentado en su butaca, frente a M. Legorgeu, hablando con él un idiomas para mí misterioso, deduzco cuán honda debió ser en mí la revelación del lenguaje. (Recuerdos 9-10)

Another constant trait in Newman's and Unamuno's sense of conscience related to their childhood consciousness was their patriotism. In Newman's case, Kingsley had accused him 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 Englishman than belong to any other race (Apologia 8). In his writings Newman reveals some of his father’s traits, attracting esteem rather than admiration. As an English gentleman, his culture was that of a liberal member of the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century.

With Unamuno, the childhood memory of the worthless destruction of his town, region and country, was not mere melancholic sentimentality. Rather, the event urged him to analyze its causes, with a hope of making his first literary work worthwhile for future generations. In the prologue to his Paz en la Guerra, he addresses Spaniards, quoting Walt Whitman on one of his collections of poems: “Permitidme, españoles, que
así como Walt Whitman dijo en una colección de sus poemas: ‘¡Esto no es un libro; es un hombre!’, diga yo de este libro que os entrego otra vez: ‘Esto no es una novela; es un pueblo.’”\(^8\) Unamuno’s patriotism felt enhanced eleven years later with his ending to *Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad*. After identifying himself and his land, “Yo fío en mi pueblo porque fío en mi” (*Recuerdos* 149), he could conclude “¡Arriba, mi Bilbao, que el provenir es tuyo!” (157).

> From an early age, both thinkers were avid lovers of books related to religion. However, their childhood religiosity was without doubt more conformist than profound, more sincere in its convictions than in its manifestations. Later on, we see both the adult Newman and Unamuno lament the extravagances in some external exaggerations in pietistic devotions, from which the “national good sense” has protected English Catholics, according to Newman.\(^9\)

> While in *Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad*, Unamuno merely mentions religious devotions, in *Paz en la guerra* religion comes hand in hand with war. Religious affiliation is identified with political affiliation. Hence, those who dissent, the “other” is the enemy, “El enemigo, ¡el otro!” (*Paz en la guerra* 117). Religious leaders are personified in the curate Santa Cruz, whose authority signified terror, “su paso era el del terror” (110). Leaving a trail of victims of firing squads, Santa Cruz’s followers cried both “¡Viva Santa Cruz!” and “¡viva la religión!” Unamuno’s conclusion was simple and sad:

> Y aquel mismo hombre de terror dirigíales arengas, sacándoles lágrimas al hablarles de la guerra.

> --Os hablará de la religión [. . .]

23
--Don Manuel no anda por religión, anda por guerra . . .

--dijo uno. (103)

The difficulty of rejecting one aspect of social religion and accepting another was foremost in Unamuno's mind as his life advanced. If we are to accept the bombing of Bilbao and the blood of the Carlist wars in the name of religion as the foremost memory of his childhood and adolescence as well as the topic of his first novel, no wonder that Miguel de Unamuno would have serious difficulties with established Catholicism in his lifetime. Upon rejecting the authority of the Church in one issue, the slope was slippery to reject all. Later, in the Sentimiento trágico, he realized that:

Exigéseles que crean o todo o nada, que acepten la entera totalidad de la dogmática, o que se pierda todo mérito si se rechaza la mínima parte de ella. Y así resulta [. . .] y es que en Francia y España multitudes que han pasado de rechazar el papismo al absoluto ateísmo [. . .]. Aquí está, en efecto, el terrible peligro: en creer demasiado. ¡Aunque no! El terrible peligro está en otra parte, y es en querer creer con la razón y no con la vida. (Sentimiento trágico 4: 129)

Instead of violent priests and passive multitudes, 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 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 of an aesthetic as well as of a religious order. 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 his 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 (16).

It 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 Savior 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. (*Letters and Diaries* 26: 87)

John Henry, therefore, inherited a contented and tolerant Anglican religion, the *Via Media*, always somewhat restrained in its enthusiasm and formal in its rites. His sincere efforts in conscience to add depth to its doctrine will later prove his undoing. However, his childhood religion enjoyed the King James Bible as an ancient patrimony, guarded more with fidelity than with passion. Later on, here too instead of Unamuno striking at monarchical papacy, Newman would see the weakness of 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” (19: 482-83).

So, we see that Unamuno’s and Newman’s texts quoted above on individual conscience knowing ethical truths through a reflection of the world of a child can be aptly
applied to Newman and Unamuno themselves. The force of their argument in favor of supremacy of conscience is that moral absolutes are present in one’s conscience since childhood. The events of the world around a child are part of that development of a conscience as the person grows. Besides, the supremacy of conscience and its freedom is perceived from childhood in its very concept of right and wrong. Newman’s childhood was his own example to himself of such a natural conscience. His long journey towards “a distant shore” had begun ("The Pillar of the Cloud," Verses XC: 156)

In Unamuno’s case, his life was seen as a mystery, not a decided fate of the gods. Based on his childlike intuition of life, one senses that there is a mystery, a beyond, an inner world: “Mas sólo conservando una niñez eterna en el lecho del alma, sobre el cual se precipita y brama el torrente e las impresiones fugitivas, es como se alcanza la verdadera libertad y se puede mirar cara a cara el misterio de la vida” (Recuerdos 129).
Notes

1 Miguel de Unamuno, Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad (Recuerdos), 6ª ed. (Madrid: Espasa, 1968) 126.


CHAPTER III
MYSELF AND MY CREATOR

Llegué a que todos tienen razón

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

If Newman's and Unamuno's childhood are themselves vivid examples of their teaching on human conscience being natural and consisting necessarily in a relationship with a personal God, adolescence in Newman's and Unamuno's lives brought them to the experience of a religious crisis. What will be interesting in our analysis of this phenomenon will be to see how their concepts of conscience reacted to a personal experience of religion. The key task will be to see how Newman's and Unamuno's changes in thought were not purely subjective as an emotional phenomenon, empty of all objective reality, but rather there was a reference to a definite thought system, a questioning of authority, and a responsibility towards the future.

This question should set the stage to answer a deeper concern about conscience vis-à-vis authority. If the authority of conscience is supreme as present from the beginning of human conscience, as stated in the previous chapter, how can we avoid the trap of subjectivism? Can Newman's and Unamuno's thought on natural conscience lead to a reduction of conscience to an emotional a priori, due to man's "sense and taste of the infinite" in the dependent mode of Schleiermacher? Was Newman not answering rationalistic criticism of his Bible religion, and Unamuno of his Catholic upbringing 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 and Unamuno's doctrine of a supremacy of conscience over authority, due to the relationship of conscience to the individual, not be the death-knell to objective religion and church authority? Later, and logically, by putting conscience above the Pope, is Newman not playing into the ancient temptation of "being like God" (Gen. 3:5)? And, was not Unamuno succumbing to the pride of "praesumptio," excessive confidence in oneself, as charged by his commentator, Julián Marías? 

Admittedly, their first crisis as teenagers was that of an typical adolescent with limited maturity and boundless idealism. Both had a combination of religious fervor and philosophical readings. 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.”

Unamuno, likewise, considers his first crisis as a teenager:

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

Unamuno later was certainly not the practicing Catholic nor was Newman the
Evangelical of their early youth. Both boys before their changes clung to the upright religion and morality learnt at home. However, some taste of superstition still was remaining. At the beginning of the *Apologia* Newman stated how “even though I had formed no religious conviction [. . .] I used constantly to cross myself on going into the dark” (*Apologia* 14).

In Unamuno's case, he remembers his experience of childhood Catholic fervor and piety, practicing all Holy Mother Church teaches.

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

His conclusion on indulgences sounds more like a Lutheran critique: “Y tengo por indudable que nos los ganamos, vaya si nos los ganamos (22).

At this stage of their lives, Newman and Unamuno took an inkling towards both philosophy and a more emotional and personal Christian faith. Their teenage study was based on their first exposure to both the liberal and conservative models characteristic of the 18th and 19th century. In the same token, both thinkers were to steer away from dogmatism towards a more emotional and personal Christian faith.

Newman ventured into the literary frontiers of the philosophies of deism where the seeds of doubt flourished. 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 (*Apologia* 15-16). We notice no anti-clerical bias, the fear of so many people
between me and God, but rather a moralistic approach to religion as simply doing one’s duty. As Newman approached his first conversion, his early ritualistic religious upbringing seemed to recede and his critical powers were advancing.

The change or 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, a naturally serious man of character. This shy person was above all dedicated to God, preoccupied with the Gospel message. Mayers nonetheless always had a yearning for a more apostolic mission and pastoral ministry. He hid the simplicity and depth of his faith under the austere appearance of a rigid professor, indifferent to both sympathy 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 (Apologia 16).

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

Unamuno's change also followed a combination of philosophical and personalized
religion:

En la época de este cuarto curso, a mis catorce años, cumplió en mí, por lecturas en noches de vela y por la obra de la Congregación de San Luis Gonzaga, la labor de la crisis primera del espíritu, de la entrada del alma en la pubertad. Y voy a ver si consigo hallar palabras apropiadas y sencillas para contáros aquella brisa de la mañana de mi espíritu.
(Recuerdos 103)

Unamuno, in fact, instead of being sent to a college like Newman, found his tutors in Balmes and Donoso, with his reading of the only books available to him in the library of his father. Nonetheless, this limited library opened his mind to a whole new world:

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

Those days for Unamuno were a combination of emotional mysticism and philosophical searching. Deeply emotional and intellectually curious, the stage was set for a philosophy of life linking heart and head, will and imagination:

Aquéllos días en que me empeñaba en llorar sin motivo, en que me creía presa de un misticismo prematuro, en que gozaba de rodillas en prolongar la molestia de ellos [. . .]. (103)

Me dormía a veces con el libro bajo los ojos; otras veces, cansado, aburrido, me entretenía en pellizcar los mocos de la vela y en amontonarlos junto a la mecha para que volvieran a consumirse, mientras se consumía la vitalidad de mi mente a la caza de ideas que se me escapaban. (104)

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

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

When I was fifteen, (in the autumn of 1816), a great change of thought took place in me. I fell under the influence of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, [. . .] I neither recollect the title nor the contents, except one doctrine, which I do not include among those which I believe to have come from a divine source, viz., the doctrine of final perseverance. (Apologia 16)

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

Enamorábame de lo último que leía, estimando hoy verdadero lo que ayer absurdo; consumíame un ansia devoradora de esclarecer los eternos problemas; sentíame peloteado de unas ideas en otras, y este continuo vaiven, en vez de engendrar en mí un escepticismo desolador, me daba cada vez más fe en la inteligencia humana y más esperanza alcanzar alguna vez un rayo de la Verdad. (Recuerdos 104-05)
However, these variations did not lead Unamuno to universal skepticism, but rather to a more solid faith in human intelligence. Instead of degrading human efforts due to their pluralist conclusions, Unamuno saw that all people are subjectively “right”: “En vez de llegar, como muchos llegan, a decirme: ‘Nada puede saberse de cierto’, llegué a que todos tienen razón y es lástima grande que no logremos entendernos” (Recuerdos 105). The words “tienen razón” may be aptly read as both “being right” and “having a right.” This respect for individual intelligence and, hence, conscience was to continue the rest of his life.

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

Applying this distinction to conscience, we may deduce that conscience for Newman and Unamuno in these changes is not derogatory about their previous
superstitious and religious convictions. Rather conscience finds an objective reason for conversion, and hence changes. It was the same search for truth and meaning which spurred both on a personal love for truth, and a better understanding of religion. So we see that, for Newman and Unamuno, the same conscience that found truth was prepared to receive further insight. Nature who gives us a conscience as part of our being also gives us as part of that conscience the possibility of knowing truth constantly better in conscience through some revelation. In this sense, Newman later would write that conscience is a messenger from God both “in nature and in grace.”

A second characteristic of this conversion according to the Apologia was Newman's understanding of final perseverance and Unamuno's thoughts on “holy trust.”

On the one hand, Newman asserts the consciousness of his inward conversion and certainty that it would last until the next life with his election to eternal glory. In Unamuno's case, one of his first writings “¡Pistis y no gnosis!” (1897) likewise argues in favor of an idealistic final Christian hope linked to a moral commitment. Drawing on the historical phenomenon of the early Christians, Unamuno draws the conclusion that their hope in the second coming of Christ was a hope in the future, where the person and life of Jesus was the guide for their lives.

Jóvenes las comunidades cristianas, esperaban la próxima venida del reino del Hijo de Dios; la persona y la vida del Divino Maestro eran el norte de sus anhelos y sentires. Sentíanse henchidas de verdadera fe, de la que con la esperanza se confunde, de lo que se llamó pistis, fe o confianza, fe religiosa y no teológica, fe pura y libre todavía de dogmas. Vivían vida de fe; vivían vida de fe; vivían por la esperanza en el porvenir; esperando el reino de la vida eterna, vivían ésta.

Hence, their sense of Christian truth and hope were both directed towards a
Person. Their religious faith is neither towards an idea nor an authority nor a virtuous life in themselves, but rather towards the Person of Jesus. This God revealed in a truth, an example, and a way of life. This Person, therefore, for a Christian, is above any dogma, authority and morality. So, the need to follow conscience towards a philosophy, creed and lifestyle was ultimately the need to follow the person of Jesus.

For both searches, their beliefs involve moral commitment. Newman has no consciousness that “this belief would lead me to be careless about pleasing God” (Apologia 16). Unamuno finishes his article on faith insisting on the moral basis, that is, sincerity, tolerance and mercy: and the necessity of this kind of faith to live accordingly:

Sólo viviendo con la fe en el ideal inasequible y nebuloso cabe obrar obras de vida eterna en el presente concrecionado y necesario. Hay que vivir vida de verdadera fe en el ideal, henchidos de sinceridad, de tolerancia y de misericordia. ¡Sinceridad, tolerancia y misericordia! (“¡Pistis y no gnosis!” 1024)

Parallel to the Apologia, many confidences in the Journal, written at the time of this conversion, are indeed helpful for understanding John Henry'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” (Mozley 1: 19).

So, our view is confirmed that Newman before this religious change at age fifteen was seeking a moral perfection, rather than a religious fidelity. The demands of a conscience characterized by sincerity and uprightness became a call to love God. His former readings had drawn 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 to the full in order to be true. His conversion was to change an emotionless moralistic theory into a personal encounter with God.

Hence, besides the inner consciousness and philosophical 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 hope and a desire to live accordingly. So, Newman and Unamuno do not fall into the quicksand of a subjective conscience based on their thoughts, independent and apart from any personal commitment in their lifestyles, but rather saw a clear link between their faith, hope and life.

Newman's and Unamuno's conversions, therefore, were 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 once and always saved. We find the same openness of the young Newman and Unamuno to the call of living life to the full, the same wish to surpass self in pursuit of the truth, the same enjoyment of a lifelong purpose and the same need of an ideal. In these texts of the Apologia and the Recuerdos we note the admiration of the young disciples who find philosophical and religious masters, not only through discussion and reasoning, but through reasons that only the hearts could know, as Pascal would say. Future years will change off some of their ideas and convictions, including the rejection of their teenage mentors, but a durable foundation will subsist. Profound values of personal commitment, definite hope, and service to humanity will bear abundant fruit in Newman's and Unamuno's future endeavor to follow conscience.
As to Mayers, as with Balmes and Donoso, we note both their influence and their limits on both teenagers. 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 *Apologia*, quoted 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 cease seeking after truth. As will be his characteristic in the future, Newman’s conscience was above any teacher, because his conscience was his personal relationship of duty and friendship with truth. While preserving the essence of his conversion experience as a personal relationship with God who loves and saves him, Newman shows his independence of mind not to identify either God or truth with those who claimed to be either his representatives or teachers.

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.9

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 as the "only authentic source" is equally empty, if not dangerous. The implication is that Bishop Beveridge is authoritative in religious matters, and, hence, is the voice of God. Mayers' command to be "more disposed" to Beveridge begs the final question of Mayers' own authority to command, and the limits thereof. His rejection of Newman's opinions in favor of Beveridge's without giving reasons why smacks of religious despotism. 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.10

Unamuno, in his Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad, never tired in the hunt for ideas initially escaping his grasp. Reading Kant, Fichte and Hegel, causes him vertigo, but the critical skills seen later in his life, were also present in the young Unamuno's reading of Balmes and Donoso. The very difficulty of understanding philosophy motivates
Unamuno to seek deeper insight, due to its very obscurity: “El mismo vértigo me hacía
asirme de ella y me entrecaba en penetrar el sentido oculto, creyendo que todo lo oscuro
era profundo por ser lo más profundo lo inexpresable” (Recuerdos 105-06).

As with Newman vis-à-vis Mayers, Unamuno began to think critically about his
masters. Their readings brought him to knowledge of greater philosophers, but also to a
critical analysis of his initial masters. Soon they who opened his eyes to philosophy also
enabled him to see their limits, especially in the philosophers they presented. In fact, their
very reading of Kant, Fichte and Hegel seems inadequate to the searching mind of
Unamuno. Oversimplification leads to infidelity to the authors: “La desilusión de Balmes
fué lo que empezó a abrirme los ojos. El espíritu del publicista catalán, una especie de
escocés de quinta mano, tenía no poco de infantil; simplificaba todo lo que criticaba,
ganando la discusión en claridad cuanto perdía en exactitud la exposición de las doctrinas
criticadas” (106).

What was even worse was that Balmes himself did not seem to have direct
experience with the texts of the philosophers he criticized: “Me he convencido más tarde
de que quien no tenga de los grandes filósofos kantianos otra idea que la que de ellos nos
da Balmes no los conoce. Balmes mismo no los conocía apenas, sino de referencias y por
extractos y muy mal digeridos” (106).

Reflecting on the medieval experience of second-hand readings, Unamuno learnt
then the importance of faithful translations and direct contact with the texts themselves.
Possibly his love for languages and his yearning for reading writers in the original came
from this negative experience with Balmes:
Pero así como en pésimas traducciones de traducciones, a las veces en tercero y cuarto grados, que de Aristóteles corrían en la Edad Media, quedó de su genio el suficiente reflejo para promover y agitar escuelas y vivificar pensamientos, así del Hegel, por ejemplo, de Balmes llegaba a mí un eco apagado y lejano de la portentosa sinfonía de su gran poema metafísico. (106)

Nonetheless, Unamuno did learn a lesson, studying Balmes’ interpretation of Hegel. Though Balmes was so superficial, mere by skimping the surface of Hegel, out of these readings came pulp, “de ellas brotó pulpa” (106).

At the same time, both writers rejected a blind irrational faith in religious authority. Newman would write in a work intimately involved in his later “great change” to Catholicism: “An argument is needed, unless Christianity is to abandon the province of argument.” 11 From Mayers’ letter above, we note the pupil did not comply without reservation to the principles instilled in him with such great insistence and concern. The “absolute obedience” rejected later in the “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk” is unacceptable from Newman's first conversion, however emotional and salutary (Difficulties 2: 243).

Throughout his life Unamuno had a problem with a simplistic faith, a “fe del carbonero” (“coal-seller’s faith”) as he often quotes. In one of his first references to the term and its reality, in his Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho, según Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1905), Unamuno contrasts the latter with Sancho’s faith:
La fe de Sancho en Don Quijote no fue una fe muerta, es decir, engañosa, de esas que descansan en ignorancia; no fue una fe de carbonero, ni menos fe de barbero, descansadora en ocho reales. Era, por el contrario, fe verdadera y viva, fe que se alimenta de dudas.\textsuperscript{12}

Esta la tuya es fe, Sancho, y no la de esos que dicen creer un dogma sin entender, ni aun a la letra, siquiera su sentido inmediato, y tal vez sin conocerlo; ésta es fe y no la del carbonero, que afirma ser verdad lo que dice un libro que no ha leído porque no sabe leer ni tampoco sabe lo que el libro dice. (Don Quijote 234)

Obedience, however, though not “absolute,” is rendered unto Mayers by Newman, as Christianity was accepted by Unamuno, though their ideas were later adjusted. 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 predestination and efficacious grace (Mozley 1: 21). He even scribbled some writings, one of them drawn clearly from the Calvinistic inspiration: “These will be punished with eternal punishment” (1: 21). 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 (Apologia 17).

Besides, his conversion was not exactly according to the book, as is evident from his testimonies. He first wrote in 1821: “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.” Then adding when he transcribed the above in 1826: “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” (Mozley 1: 109).

Unamuno, likewise kept his Christian faith, but, in the historical Christ and his message, as each one understands it, not in Church dogmas and authorities:

Porque, después de todo, ¿fe cristiana qué es? O es la confianza en Cristo o no es nada: en la persona histórica y en la histórica revelación de su vida, tenganla cada cual como la tuviere. . . . fe que no estriba en sus ideas, sino en él; no en una doctrina que representara, sino en la persona histórica, en el espíritu que vivia y vivificaba y amaba. Las ideas no viven ni vivifican ni aman.13

Likewise, rejecting both the intellectualism of the irrational and the simplistic faith of the coal-worker, Unamuno insists on trust, not belief, as being the essence of faith: “Todo lo que no sea entrega del corazón a esa confianza de vida, no fe, aunque sea creencia. Y toda creencia termina, al cabo, en un credo quia absurdum, en el suicidio, por desesperación, del intelectualismo, o en la terrible fe del carbonero” (“La fe” 266).

Unamuno further explains this simplistic faith as a “vicious” illogical circle, in which Church doctrine and the people’s faith explain one another:

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

--¿Qué crees?

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

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

--Lo que yo creo (bis). (266)
So, we see a conversion to Christ in Newman and Unamuno that is unique, both in their critical acceptance of a specific teacher and a recommended doctrine.

As to their corresponding life styles, Newman's "not being careless about pleasing God" (Apologia 16), led him to copy the models proposed by his masters and books. Exerting himself to living his life within the limits of this narrow way, he made resolutions and cultivated virtue. The spectacle he offered his family was one of a solitary soul, sometimes not well 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. (Mozley 1:19)

Unamuno also obviously had difficulties with his family due to his new religious convictions. In Paz en la guerra, Pachico, a character in the novel clearly modeled on Unamuno himself, gives up his religious practice in Madrid. For a time, he attended Church services regularly, then only on feast-days, and finally gave up altogether, seeing he no longer found any meaning to the act: "El primer curso iba a misa todos los días y comulgaba mensualmente, [. . .] Así es al salir de misa en la mañana de un domingo-- [. . .]--se preguntó qué significase ya en él tal acto y lo abandonó desde entonces, [. . .] como la cosa más natural del mundo."14

However, on one trip home, his uncle noticed the change. Drawing on the youth's memory of his mother, he will leave Pachico emotionally drained and in tears. In fact, on his mother's death anniversary, his uncle convinced Pachico to confess and return to the
religion of his childhood. Pachico fought through a crisis of retrogression with an old faith struggled for rebirth. The irony of the priest’s advice against reading the Soliloquies of Augustine, as being too strong, still reflected the impact on Pachico and, as we may surmise, on Unamuno:

Y al separarse Pachico del confesionario, desilusionado del ensayo, se decía: se creerá el pobre que no he leído los Soliloquios, o que soy un niño de teta [...] Pasó la crisis y volvió a seguir Pachico el curso de sus ideas, evitando toda conversación con su tío. (Paz en la guerra 53)

So we see that the first and most tangible outcome of religious change in Newman and Unamuno was a withdrawal of these young men into themselves. The search for truth, well in keeping with their temperament, was constantly stimulated. There is no doubt that the Evangelical spirituality had a lasting influence on Newman and the Lutheran on Unamuno, not only due of the questioning of former doctrinal convictions, but also due to the rigors of the moral demands to seek which they subjected themselves. A critical judgment on their childhood world, constant personal study, and a moral preoccupation with social questions were to be preserved forever in the depths of both Newman’s and Unamuno’s religious sensibility.

Nevertheless, we notice a new element over and beyond the call to constant search for truth present in Newman and Unamuno.

That same autumn, the noble and independent spirit Newman praised the “noble and independent” Bishop Dupanloup for “daring to do what we think right,”¹⁵ 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 (Apología 19).

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

Thus, what concerns us in our understanding of conscience and its liberty in
Newman and Unamuno is to notice how, first, their tutors were worried about Newman
and Unamuno following their own opinions rather than received authority. Second, in
their teenage decisions we see Newman and Unamuno making a break with those
authorities and with what their books had taught them. The impact of their changes of
conviction was not only an emotional assurance of truth, an adherence to a different faith
due to their understanding of divine revelation, and a way of life in accord with their
change.

Their changes were such in so far as their consciences decided that such and such
was what the God of “religious imperative” wanted of them, there and then ("La fe" 266).
But when that same God who gave them those trusts, now was calling them personally to
a moral choices such as celibacy or tolerance, not mentioned either by their masters or
books, Newman and Unamuno are ready to walk the extra mile. Their lives were for God
speaking in their conscience first, and then in books, teachers and family second.

Conscience is based on “two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident
beings, myself and my Creator” (Apologia 16). “Dios en nuestros espíritus es Espíritu y no Idea, amor y no dogma, vida y no lógica” (“La fe” 266).
Notes

1 Miguel de Unamuno, Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad (Recuerdos), 6ª ed. (Madrid: Espasa, 1968) 105.


CHAPTER IV

IMMORTALITY AND RATIONALISM

Quiero decir, del único problema vital [. . . ]
de la inmortalidad del alma.

The truth is, [. . . ]
I was drifting in the direction of the Liberalism of the day.

Freedom of conscience implies a realization that truth is not immediately known
to everyone in a self-evident fashion. This is above all true in the case of fundamental
questions faced by human beings. One such question faced by both Unamuno and
Newman is the problem of human immortality. The possibility of death and the mystery
of life beyond the grave offers both writers, men of "flesh and blood," the opportunity to
discover a purely rational solution impossible. This intellectual impossibility brings both
to the conclusion that the human mind is fallible and deficient. Hence, no credence is
self-evident vis-à-vis the essential mystery of human existence: life after death.
Consequently, one essential element of religion or its denial thereof is in the realm of the
unknown to human reason. Therefore, we may conclude with Unamuno and Newman
that no kind of coercion may be exercised upon anyone in the realm of knowledge
relating to human immortality. Moreover, given the imperfect nature of human reason,
both Newman and Unamuno conclude that all knowledge has an element of subjective
"certitude" (Apologia 29).

Newman writes:
That it might be quite as much a matter of duty in given cases and to given persons to have about a fact an opinion of a definite strength and consistency, as in the case of greater or of more numerous probabilities it was a duty to have a certitude; that accordingly we were bound to be more or less sure, on a sort of (as it were) graduated scale of assent, viz. according as the probabilities attaching to a professed fact were brought home to us [. . .]. (30)

Whereas, Unamuno concludes his *Sentimiento trágico* with the statement:

*Pero es que mi obra – iba a decir mi misión – es quebrantar la fe de unos, y de otros y de los terceros, la fe en la afirmación, la fe en la negación y la fe en la abstención, y esto por fe en la fe misma; es combatir a todos lo que se resignan, sea el catolicismo, sea el racionalismo, sea el agnosticismo; es hacer que vivan todos inquietos y anhelantes.* (12: 282)

The analysis of the limitations of human rationalism brings both writers to see the realities of illness and death, teaching us that there are mysteries our human minds simply cannot reach. And precisely because our minds are limited in their knowledge of essential truths, both Unamuno and Newman will conclude in their lives and writings that no human knowledge may claim to be totally complete. Though their conclusion will go towards different definitions – “private judgment” in Newman; “sentimiento trágico” in Unamuno, nonetheless their perspective holds. No human mind may insist that their personal view or hold on truth is whole and complete, to the exclusion of all others.

Consequently, there is a freedom of conscience in belief for all, based on the incapacity of any human to know all truths by reason alone. Hence an important tenet in Newman's and Unamuno's thought on conscience and its liberty is their rejection of Rationalism as both found it historically in their lives.

In the case of Newman, a classic example of his teaching based on his life was his life-long resistance to what he called Liberalism, a close relative to the rationalism later
denounced by Unamuno. Newman knew and rejected Liberalism at both the beginning and the end of his intellectual journey. The stated purpose of the Apologia is to “simply state the facts” (13). These words fit into Newman's whole emphasis of going by real people, not by books. On arrival at Oriel College, Oxford, 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 supposed knowledge (“Note A on Liberalism,” Apologia 218).

In the Apologia, he clearly stated: “The truth is, [...] I was drifting in the direction of the Liberalism of the day. I was rudely awakened from my dream at the end of 1827 by two great blows--illness and bereavement.” (Apologia 24).

Later, in life, upon receiving the Cardinal’s hat, Newman would be proud to state that “to one great mischief [the spirit of Liberalism in religion], I have from the first opposed myself.”

In Unamuno's case, a central point in of his Sentimiento trágico, chap. V, is his finding Rationalism inadequate for solving the great human problem: that of immortality. Beginning the chapter quoting Hume, Unamuno stresses that human reason cannot prove the existence of human immortality. All arguments, he feels, come from the Gospel. Reason itself has clear limits. It cannot help us know neither our origin nor our destiny: “Y así como antes de nacer no fuimos ni tenemos recuerdo alguno personal de entonces, así después de morir no seremos. Esto es lo racional” (Sentimiento trágico 5: 131).

Likewise, Unamuno, beginning with the classical Greek conception of soul, based on its unity, simplicity and separateness of the soul as a substance, finds the philosophical
defenses of the soul’s immortality inadequate. Here, the Greek error was to deduce the existence of the soul as a substance from the fact that we conceive ourselves with a certain identity. From the consciousness of our identity, we falsely deduce the existence of the soul: “La verdad inmediata es que pienso, quiero y siento yo. Y yo, el yo que piensa, quiere y siente, es inmediatamente mi cuerpo vivo con los estados de conciencia que soporta. Es mi cuerpo vivo el que piensa, quiere y siente” (135). According to Unamuno, conscience becomes a property of the soul and the soul becomes the substantial form of the body, the motor of its organic functions. Hence, we arrive at a Greek conception of the soul, with its vegetative, sensitive and rational qualities. But this in no way proves the immortality of the soul.

Unamuno then surveys the history of philosophy concerning the immortality of the human soul, concluding: “Por cualquier lado que la cosa se mire, siempre resulta que la razón se pone enfrente de ese nuestro anhelo de inmortalidad personal, y nos lo contradice. Y es que, en rigor, la razón es enemiga de la vida”(137-38). Unamuno considers that what is rational is only what is relational. The role of reason is merely to relate irrational elements: “la razón se limita a relacionar elementos irracionales.” Hence, reason is skeptical, while real life is absolutely unstable, illogical, individual and unintelligible. There is a conflict between life and reason, what is lived and what is understood. “¿Y la verdad? ¿Se vive o se comprende?” (138).

Miguel de Unamuno does consider the view of those who do think that human reason is sufficient. To them, Unamuno replies that such an attitude is like those blind by birth. One does not desire what one does not know. However, anyone who has had a
belief in immortality at any time in their lives cannot live without its concern. Unamuno concludes: “Que aberración, y no otra cosa, es el hombre mera y exclusivamente racional” (145).

Or is immortality just something to be talked about? But, again answers Unamuno, can anyone contemplate life with its universe and not serenely consider that all this will end. No, reason is found lacking. Reason does not answer our immortal question. “No; para la razón, la verdad es lo que se puede demostrar que es, que existe, consuélenos o no. La razón no es ciertamente una facultad consoladora” (140). Later, in San Manuel Bueno, mártir, Unamuno would insist on the consoling force, though mysterious, force of religion. Reason and science are insufficient to calm our sentimental and affective needs. In so far as they wish to dethrone belief and religion, they have always failed. Science may satisfy our logical and physical needs, our longing to know and survive. Modern technology even does so even better, but it no way does it reach the heart of the problem, immortality. Outside the limits of the rational, there is a whole new world, unattainable by reason. Unamuno concludes:

Muchas y muy variadas son las invenciones racionalistas—más menos racionales—con que desde los tiempos de epicúreos y estoicos se ha tratado de buscar en la verdad racional consuelo y de convencer a los hombres, aunque los que de ello trataron no estuviesen en sí mismos convencidos de que hay motivos de obrar y alentadores de vivir, aun estando la conciencia humana destinada a desaparecer un día. (142)

Besides the fact that human reason can not prove the soul’s immortality, it likewise postulates that the individual does not live beyond death. Hence, the will to live beyond death is a seeking after the irrational, the absurd. “Y ese absurdo no puede
apoyarse sino en la más absoluta incertidumbre” (147).

However, in regard to liberty of conscience, Unamuno includes in this chapter a somber reminder of intolerance. There are some, he states, that not only have the problem of the rationalist disbelief. Also many, “muchos, muchísimos hombres de ciencia,” possessed by the anger of not believing, suffer from an “odium antitheologicum” (141). The anti-theological hatred against faith in another life is evident, not among serene scientific researchers, but rather amidst the fanatics of rationalism, “y ved con qué grosera brutalidad hablan de la fe”:

Hay gentes que parece como si no se limitasen a no creer que hay otra vida, o mejor dicho, a creer que no la hay, sino que les molesta y duele que otros crean en ella, o hasta que quieran que la haya. Esta posición es despreciable, así como es digna de respeto la de aquel que, empeñándose en creer que la hay, porque la necesitan, no logra creerlo. (141)

This intolerance and intransigence shows Unamuno’s point that reason alone may tend towards its own destruction. By canonizing one viewpoint to the exclusion of all others, the rationalist destroys the human need for further truth and consolation. By not accepting the limits of reason, the rationalist gives an absolute, “infallible,” value to his own perspective on reality. By denying the validity of knowledge beyond reason, the rationalist destroys the human capacity for further inquiry. Unamuno considers truth as a subjective affirmation of the concordance of a concept with the whole system of our perceptions. Hence, truth is coherence. What is unknown is logically not necessarily untrue. Nor is there a need for all to conform to the rationalist’s view. Unamuno sees the inner contradiction of the infallible and intolerant rationalist:
Cuando hay una úlcera en el estómago, acaba éste por digerirse a sí mismo. Y la razón acaba por destruir la validez inmediata y absoluta del concepto de verdad y del concepto de necesidad. Ambos conceptos son relativos; ni hay verdad ni hay necesidad absoluta. [. . .] Y en cuanto al sistema todo, al conjunto, como no hay fuera de él nada para nosotros conocido, no cabe decir que sea o no verdadero. (147)

Unamuno concludes that this rationalism leads to absolute relativism and skepticism: “El absoluto relativismo, que no es ni más ni menos que el escepticismo, en el sentido más moderno de esta denominación, es el triunfo supremos de la razón raciocinante” (147).

Liberalism, as criticized by Newman, was that same 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 unknown truth to reason, such as religion, becomes contradictory. The nature of religious belief is precisely to be beyond, and independent of, individual reason. The strength of religious doctrines lies in their being known from above. Both rationalism and liberalism then went in circles since reason must understand something that need not or maybe cannot be understood. All truth must pass through the sieve of one’s own mind. And all religious belief is rejected a priori. Religious content and authority must be made to the measure of the individual’s reason. Hence, Newman concluded that Liberalism was ignorant of the very “constitution of the human mind” (Apología 218).

Newman’s rejection of this rationalism 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 rationalism 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, in 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.” On the contrary, Newman insisted on his use of the term “Liberalism” in the Apologia “as a Protestant [. . .] and [. . .] in connection with the circumstances under which that system of opinion came before me at Oxford” (216).

Why did Newman reject this Protestant Oxonian liberalism in a parallel fashion as Unamuno? 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” (36). In his critique of this rationalist 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 rationalism. “Two great blows” rudely awakened him. Let us examine both events with their consequences for his “drift towards Liberalism” (24).

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 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. 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” (Mozley 1: 161). 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 cure of a few hundred a year, and no preferment, as the world calls it!” (Mozley 1: 172)

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 at Oxford University. 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.

Linked to his rejection of mere academic success, John Henry remarked that ambition 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; and solitary walks, a detachment from the vanity of this world. Liberalism was found lacking (Apologia 22).

As a side note, we notice that also Unamuno also received a medical prescription for long walks in the country:

Pocos goces más serenos y más hondos que el goce que por entonces me procuraba un paseo. Mientras el pecho se hincha de aire fresco y libre, adquiere el espíritu libertad [. . .]. El pensamiento libre yerra de una cosa en otra, se fija en lo que pasa y pasa con ello, se identifica con lo fugitivo y sueña lo que ve. ¡Qué triste tener que pasar de aquellos paseos al aula oscura!

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.

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.

Their communion of souls was kept secret by Mary during her life. There are few 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” (Mozley 1: 118).

A few weeks before her death, she wrote with the similar sincerity: “How I long to see you! . . . I can fancy your face—there, it is looking at me” (150).

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.

John Henry’s first reaction to so brutal and unexpected a tragedy was one of shock (157). 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:

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
Declines slow-wasting charm, fever's fierce distress.\(^{10}\)

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
(Apologetic 218).

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" (40). Liberalism's insistence on intellectual
greatness rejected the notion of moral greatness of virtue over sin, while its refusal to
accept revelation in religion bore no answer to the mystery of death.

Besides the incompleteness of the Liberal ideology, Newman saw the
insufficiency of their claim to life and success only in this world, what he calls "the pride
of reason" (217). 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:
On 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 county 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. (Mozley 1: 161)

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 mystery (Apologia 223). 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 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" (Mozley 1: 163).

Newman began to see a happy, serene, life beyond the grave: "She is not gone; -
still in our sight / That dearest maid shall live, / In form as true, in tints as bright, / As youth and health could give” (“A Picture,” Verses X: 32). From Mary’s happiness in eternity, he began to envisage his own destiny on earth as a share in God’s eternal bliss: “When in due lines her Saviour dear / His scatter’d saints shall range, / And knit in love souls parted here, / Where cloud is none, nor change” (Verses X: 32).

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-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 (222).

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” (33). This conviction gave Newman strength when the liberal Whately, who taught him how to think for himself, later made himself “dead to me,” even
when he "felt himself dead as regards my relation with the Anglican Church" (222). Real
death for Newman would come later. And what would count then was neither the
judgment of Whately nor that of the Anglican Church, but the viewpoint of truth.

Ending this note on Liberalism, Newman stated his frame of mind and strength
towards those who persecuted his quest for truth in freedom. Trusting in God "who the
moment I choose, will set me free," Newman was faithful to his conscience, and, so,
ultimately is faithful to truth in freedom. That same God of truth, 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 (222).

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.
Notes

1 Miguel de Unamuno, Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos (Sentimiento trágico), ed. Antonio M. López Molina (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1999) 1: 81.


6 Note A: “Liberalism.”


8 Miguel de Unamuno, Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad (Recuerdos), 6ª ed. (Madrid: Espasa, 1968) 90.

9 Mary refers to the “confession” of admiration for her brother.


CHAPTER V

AGONY IN EXILE

No hay que obligarse nunca a pensar u opinar de tal o cual manera.¹

My change of opinion arose, not from foreign influences, but from the working of my own mind, and the accidents around me.²

In an article entitled “No hipotequéis el pensamiento” published for the students of Salamanca in 1912, Unamuno links freedom of conscience to change of allegiance. Hence, he insists on the need to be always willing to change our views, avoiding classifications, and, therefore, being ever ready to change our commitment to any school or sect, leaving the door open to such possible change of thought:

Lo único que me atrevo a aconsejaros es que no hipotequéis el porvenir de vuestra mente, que no os comprometaís con doctrina alguna, que no sentéis plaza en ninguna escuela ni secta, que no os dejéis poner mote o etiqueta, que dejéis abierta la puerta a toda posible rectificación de pensamiento. Es el único modo de vivir una vida interior de libertad y de decencia. (“No hipotequéis el pensamiento” 253)

In Newman's case, his search for truth in defense of the establishment at both Oxford University and the Church of England brought him to question, then doubt, the entities he loved. The banishment of Newman from both the University and Church has a clear parallel to the treatment Unamuno received with exile from his two loves: the University of Salamanca and the land of Spain in 1924. The writer who wanted to believe in Christ³ has his books on the Index of Prohibited Books,⁴ and found himself decried as the “hereje máximo.”⁵

At the heart of both of their adventures, exiles and writings, there persists a
conviction to seek truth in freedom, not relax in a simplistic faith, with a willingness to pay the consequences. Both authors reject a "holy ignorance" whereby the believer blindly accepts authoritarian doctrine based on a religious authority’s decrees. Several times throughout his works, Unamuno quoted the Catechism of Fr. Astete on religious ignorance whereby the believer is not allowed to question belief. In his article of 1907, “La feliz ignorancia,” he adds his own words to the dictate of the Catechism:

El catecismo de la doctrina católica más usual en España, el del Padre Astete, a cierta pregunta responde así: “eso no me lo preguntéis a mí que soy ignorante – y quiero seguir siendo, debía añadir –; doctores tiene la Santa Madre Iglesia que os sabrán responder”. He aquí la fórmula más popular y más precisa de esa horrible fe implícita, o fe por delegación, que nos tiene acorchada el alma.

Neither Unamuno nor Newman have time for such blind obedience and happy ignorance. Both preferred to go out “on the open sea” in the search for truth in conscience and freedom, including criticizing in “agony” (Agonía 1034) religious beliefs, authorities and institutions. Both authors search for truth in history, despising a complacent religiosity based on ignorance. As for the metaphor of “holy ignorance” within the metaphor of the “holy donkey,” Unamuno states his view:

¿Quién no ha oído alguna vez en su vida hacer el panegírico de la ignorancia y del burro santo? Y, sin embargo, he de repetir aquí lo que en otra parte tengo dicho y es que el burro no es santo ni el ignorante, en cuanto ignorante, puede ser bueno, que yo prefiero ser ángel desgraciado a no cerdo satisfecho. (“La feliz ignorancia” 869)

Luckily for us, later readers, both have left us a written account of their search for truth in freedom and linked to freedom in truth. In this chapter, we wish to review Unamuno’s critique of historical Christianity in his La agonía del cristianismo together
with Newman's analysis of the same in his *Apologia*. Both books were written in the pain of exile, harassment and loneliness, but nonetheless reach us with all the fervor of spiritual strength.

In Unamuno's case as well as Newman's, their agony is not some abstract philosophical notion open to academic debate, but rather a real-life predicament where the writer finds himself needing a justification or, at least, an explanation of both his fate and his faith. There is no doubt that Unamuno wishes to approach the issue as a Christian. Far removed from being the kind of Christian some contemporary authors characterize, at the same time he nevertheless contradicts any possible authors who might doubt his Christianity. Unamuno's Christianity is a fight and agony for the same within his intimate self.

Having attended a religious service in Paris during his exile in 1924, he perceived the problem of how Christ could be both truth and life, how Christianity could be both social and personal: ‘‘Y aquí estriba la tragedia. Porque la verdad es algo colectivo, social, hasta civil; verdadero es aquello en que convenimos y con que nos entendemos. Y el cristianismo es algo individual e incomunicable. Y he aquí por qué agoniza en cada uno de nosotros (Agonía 948).

Hence, his agony and the reason for this book:

Agonía, [...] quiere decir lucha. Agoniza el que vivir luchando, luchando contra la vida misma. Y contra la muerte. [...] Lo que voy a exponer aquí, lector, es mi agonía, mi lucha por el cristianismo, la agonía del cristianismo en mí, su muerte y su resurrección en cada momento de mi vida íntima. (948)

This agony fits into Unamuno's idea that the goal of life is personal and
individual. To be a Christian, for Unamuno, means each one of us setting about the goal of our lives to create our own souls, immortal souls. One’s own soul is one’s own work.

Todo cristiano, para mostrar su cristianismo, su agonía por el cristianismo debe decir de sí mismo ecce christianus, como Pilato dijo [ . . ]. Debe mostrar su alma cristiana, su alma de cristiano, la que en su lucha, en su agonía del cristianismo se ha hecho. Y el fin de la vida es hacerse un alma, una alma inmortal. Un alma que es la propia obra. (949)

Unamuno here, as elsewhere, rejects a social Christianity identified with social change, seeing history is so easy to forget the individual’s effort. History, in fact, is defined by Unamuno as the “thought of God”:

Y si esto es la vida física o corporal, la vida psíquica o espiritual es, a su vez, una lucha contra el eterno olvido. Y contra la Historia. Porque la Historia, que es el pensamiento de Dios en la tierra de los hombres, carece de última finalidad humana, camina al olvido, a la inconciencia. Y todo el esfuerzo del hombre es dar finalidad humana a la Historia, finalidad sobrehumana, que diría Nietzsche, que fue el gran soñador del absurdo: el cristianismo social. (950)

Insisting on a kind of Christianity which is both personal and historical, Unamuno concludes: “Porque al morir se deja un esqueleto a la tierra, un alma, una obra a la Historia” (949).

According to Unamuno, Christ did indeed come into the world precisely to bring this agony, an agony of peace in war and war in peace. Quoting the Gospel on Christ coming to bring a sword into the world between family and friends, and even inside oneself, Unamuno interprets this saying and others on peace as referring to his concept of “agony” in Christianity: “¿Y la paz?, se nos dirá. Porque se pueden producir otros tantos pasajes y aún más y más explícitos, en que se nos habla de paz en el Evangelio. Pero es que esa paz se da en la guerra y la guerra se en la paz. Y esto es la agonía” (951).
What is important here is that Unamuno does consider his hermeneutics as authentic and, hence, he does consider himself a Christian, as Newman did some sixty years previously. This is brought to clearer light when he notices that the Christ portrayed by so many Spanish crucifixes is precisely the agonizing Christ who prayed on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matt. 27, 46). Hence, the agony felt by Unamuno is precisely the same as that felt by Christ. In this way, Unamuno even further insists on the authenticity of his Christian religious experience.

Immediately following this historical and geographical reference to Christianity in Spain, Unamuno quotes one of his favorite Gospel phrases: "I believe, help my unbelief!" (Mark 9, 23). In Unamuno's paradoxical opinion, this way of belief in doubt and searching is, in fact, the only living faith. A faith without doubts is dead. "El modo de vivir, de luchar, de luchar por la vida y de vivir de la lucha, de la fe, es dudar. Ya lo hemos dicho en otra nuestra obra, recordando aquel pasaje evangélico que dice: '¡Creo, socorre mi incredulidad!' (Marcos ix, 23) Fe que no duda es fe muerta” (952). So a faith with doubt, in agony, is indeed the faith of Christ on the Cross, the faith of the faithful follower and the faith of the Christian Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo.

So, then, Unamuno asks, what is this doubt which is an essential part of Christian faith?

¿Y qué es dudar? Dubitare contiene la misma raíz, la del numeral duo, dos, que duellum, lucha. La duda, más la pascaliana, la duda agónica o polémica, que no la cartesiana o duda metódica, la duda de vida – vida es lucha--, y no de camino–método es camino--, supone la dualidad del combate.

[... y dudo, lucho, agonizo como hombre, como cristiano, mirando al porvenir irrealizable, a la eternidad. (952-53)
Unamuno follows this statement by analyzing Christianity in its origins with clear references to Bultmann’s distinction between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith. Based on its central role in Gospels, the Passion story is the essence of the new religion.

Jesus insisted that his kingdom was not of this world. His belief was in an early end of the world, his second coming and, as a Jew, possibly believing in the resurrection of the flesh, rather than a platonic immortality of the soul. However, after Jesus died, Christ was reborn in the souls of the faithful. Again, we have a new agony between the Jewish and the Hellenic, personified in the Hellenized Jew, Saint Paul the Apostle:

Pero luego que murió Jesús y renació el Cristo en las almas de sus creyentes, para agonizar en ellas, nació la fe en la resurrección de la carne y con ella la fe en la inmortalidad del alma. Y ese gran dogma de la resurrección de la carne a la judaica y de la inmortalidad del alma a la helénica nació a la agonia de San Pablo, un judío helenizado, un fariseo que tartamudeaba su poderoso griego polémico. (960-61)

The first Christians saw that the second coming did not take place, that the end of the world did not come about, and, so, envisioned a new individualistic religion based on the fact that we all die in our utmost loneliness: “su cristianismo, so pena de perecer tuvo que hacerse una religión individual, una religio quae non religat, una paradoja. Porque los hombres vivimos juntos, pero cada uno se muere solo y la muerte es la suprema soledad” (961).

Here we notice how Unamuno applies to the historical Jesus his own theory on ideas being both in the writer and in the reader of his books and life, as he himself did with Don Quixote: “¿Qué me importa lo que Cervantes quiso o no quiso poner allí y lo que realmente puso? Lo vivo es lo que yo allí descubro, pusíralo o no Cervantes, lo que
All of which coincides, according to Unamuno, with the previously-mentioned fight or agony between what is social and what is individual in Christianity. In this case, the contrast evolves between the resurrection of the flesh, being individual and physiological, with the immortality of the soul which is social and spiritual. And here again, Unamuno finds doubt and agony in his and our Christian faith.

This constant agony of Christianity is further exasperated in history with the conflict between the spirit and the letter. Unamuno considering the oral tradition as life-giving, but once the word was made letters and books, the Gospel spirit was dead to the Gospel texts. This is not a mere anti-legalistic approach in Unamuno, but rather another application to his theory of historical personalities being alive and, in this case, possibly dead, in their later listeners and followers. Applying the comparison to Socrates, Unamuno writes:

This explanation is important in our understanding of Unamuno's contrast of
historical Christianity with faith in the historical person of Christ. Indeed, words became
dogmas, definitions came about through differences, and dissenters became heretics. All
of which, according to a previous essay of Unamuno, was a death-knell to real Christian
belief, which is an adherence to a person, Christ, within a freedom of interpretation: “¿Fe
cristiana qué es? O es la confianza en Cristo o no es nada: en la persona histórica y en la
histórica revelación de su vida, téngala cada cual como la tuviere.”10 In this vein, we can
better understand his letter “Agonismo cristiano” where Unamuno recognizes his thesis
as Lutheran:

La fe no es adhesión de la mente a un principio abstracto, sino
entrega de la confianza y del corazón a una persona, para el cristiano a la
persona histórica de Cristo. Tal es mi tesis, en el fondo una tesis luterana.
Creo me ha salido el ensayo con alma, sobre todo cuando combato la ley.
Aborrezco toda etiqueta; pero si alguna soportase, sería la de ideoclasta,
rompeideas. ¿Qué como quiero romperlas? Como las botas, usándolas.
(Ensayos 2: 60-61)

But Unamuno lamented at the Reformation. Its aim was to revive Christianity, but
it too ended up going back to the letter: “La Reforma, que fue la explosión de la letra,
trató de resucitar en ella la palabra; trató de sacar del Libro el Verbo, de la Historia el
Evangelio, y resucitó la vieja contradicción latente. ¡Y entonces sí que se hizo la agonía
vida del cristianismo [. . .]. Quisieron con la letra fijar la palabra, pero la agonía creció”
(Agonía 968).

The result was a social, nationalistic Christianity where citizens would unite for a
patriotic, national or socioeconomic goal, but never for a religious one. No wonder that
here Unamuno remembers his experience as a child seeing religion used as a weapon of
war against those who disagreed, but may have been, in Unamuno’s mind, as Christian if
not more than the general who shouted “Long live God!” Beyond this historical reference on how religion became partisan, Unamuno concludes the chapter with a phrase critiquing Reformation goals and results. It became as an effort to revive Christianity with the word of God, but ended dissolving it with the letter.

Nonetheless, from the point of view of our thesis, Unamuno also points out that freedom of thought and conscience, the liberty to examine, is the death of the word: “Porque el libre examen es la muerte de la letra” (969). It is noteworthy that Unamuno goes beyond a “free examination” of Scripture, as was one of the ideals of the Reformation, to “free examination” of Christianity as such. This means that Unamuno sees a connection between authentic Christianity as a free following of the person of Christ, as each one sees fit, and the word of Christ freely understood. However, as soon as rigid and obligatory dogmas are fixed, such freedom ends and followers are branded heretics. Therefore, the true follower of Christ, according to Unamuno, allows others the freedom to follow Christ as they view the latter in conscience. Unamuno's reference here to the bloody Carlist wars he himself witnessed could also be a reference to the possibility that as soon as respect for freedom of conscience ends, the reality of history teaches us that violence may follow even in the name of the Prince of Peace.

In the next chapter, Unamuno makes reference to the story of Abishag the Shunammite, the young virgin appointed to warm the body of the dying and aging King David. During David’s agony and after his death, Abishag was oblivious to all the politics, fighting and treachery around the King she loved. Unamuno sees in David the traditional image of Christ and in Abishag an image of the soul who loves in a personal
agonia, apart from social and political intrigues:

David ha sido para los cristianos uno de los símbolos, una de las prefiguraciones del Dios-Hombre, del Cristo. El alma enamorada trata de calentarle en su agonía, en la agonía de su vejez, con besos y abrazos de encendido amor. Y como no puede conocer al amado y, lo que es más terrible, el amado no puede ya conocerla, se desespera de amor. (972)

So, again, Unamuno is insisting on the personal nature of faith as opposed to a social commitment while at the same time stressing its incompleteness, despite the mutual love of the soul and Christ, just as Abishag and David: “La pobre alma hambrienta y sedienta de inmortalidad y de resurrección de su carne, hambrienta y sedienta de Dios, de Dios-Hombre a lo cristiano, o de Hombre-Dios a lo pagano, consume su virginidad materna en besos y abrazos al agonizante eterno” (974).

This constant emphasis of Unamuno on both these aspects implicitly excludes a sociological religion with a concomitant right towards its imposition together with the characterization of Christianity as a constant personal search in love and freedom. Hence, he would contrast the social reality of Catholicism with the personal faith of Christianity: “Todo lo cual tendrá que ver con el reino de Salomón y con las disensiones entre este y Adonías, tendrá que ver con el catolicismo, pero nada tiene que ver con el reino de David y menos su agonía, con la agonía, que es la vida del cristianismo” (976-77).

Drawing on his classical training, Unamuno sees the etymology of the Spanish word for “to wish,” querer, as derived from the Latin quaerere, to seek. So faith comes from searching, from the desire to believe, from the agony of that search. In the same way, the personal agony of Abishag with David was independent and more important than the politics of Salomon’s reign. All of which implies freedom of conscience.
In Chapter VI, Unamuno refers to two elements, keys to his understanding of freedom of conscience: the crusades and the gift of grace. Unamuno sees the crusades as an effort of the will to believe and to force others to believe. If one is happy in their belief, why does the faith of others bother them? Does the crusader not remember that faith is free and personal, and, hence, not liable to coercion by the sword of society? The reader may surmise that Unamuno draws on his own childhood experience during the siege of Bilbao and the spilt blood of Spanish history. Twisting the argument, the exile Unamuno concludes that violent believers are really insecure in their faith, and attack others, seeking to strengthen their own belief:

Y toda cruzada es uno de los actos más agónicos del cristianismo. El que va a imponer una fe a otro por la espada, lo que busca es convencerse a sí mismo. Pide señales, pide hacer un milagro para sostener su fe. Y toda Cruzada por la espada acaba por producir la conquista del conquistador por el conquistado, y el conquistador se hace nadista. (984)

The reference to grace is quite summary. Unamuno views “grace” in the context of masculine and feminine, active and passive, within a Pauline vision of Christians as forming the body of Christ:

La fe es pasiva, femenina, hija de la gracia, y no activa, masculina y producida por el libre albedrío. La visión beatifica es buena para la otra vida; pero ¿es visión o audición? La fe en este mundo viene de Cristo, que es el que resucita y no de la carne (Rom., x, 7), del Cristo que fue virgen, cuerpo de que los cristianos son miembros (1 Cor., vi, 15) según la polémica pauliniana. (987)

This contrast of masculine and feminine, free will and grace, is further explained by Unamuno in reference to his favorite quote from the Gospel, “I believe, help my unbelief” with Luther’s denomination of free will as “slave will.” Following a unique
interpretation of the role of the Virgin Mary in Christianity, Unamuno sees real faith is feminine, and never forced, a will to know that becomes a desire to love, an understanding of the will that is agony and struggle:

"Creo, socorre mi incredulidad" (Mar., ix, 23). Creo, quiere decir "quiero creer" o mejor, "tengo ganas de creer", y representa el momento de la virilidad, el del libre albedrío, que Lutero llamó "siervo albedrío", servum arbitrium. "Socorre mi incredulidad", representa el momento de la feminidad, que es el de la gracia. Y la fe, [...] proviene de la gracia y no del libre albedrío. No cree el que tiene ganas de creer. La virilidad sola es estéril. En cambio, la religión cristiana ha concebido la maternidad pura, sin concurso de hombre, la fe de gracia pura, de gracia eficaz. (987)

Though Unamuno draws this contrast between grace which does produce faith versus free will which does not, nonetheless he does not bring out the conclusion that faith is therefore a gift only granted to some. Hence, as such, coercion to faith is in itself contradictory.

Linking the Shunammite Abishag and the writer Renan, Unamuno concludes that real faith is a will to know that becomes a desire to love, an understanding of the will that is both agony and struggle. Force and coercion only lead to nothing:

¿Y la fe? La fe verdaderamente viva, la que vive de dudas y no las "sobrepuja", la fe de un Renán, es una voluntad de saber que cambia en querer amar, una voluntad de comprender que se hace comprensión de voluntad, y no unas ganas de creer que acaban por virilidad en la nada. Y todo esto en agonía, en lucha. (987)

Following the historical development of social Christianity, Unamuno draws the clear contrast between the Jesuits and Pascal. The Jesuits, the so-called Society of Jesus, "la Compañía llamada de Jesús" (1001), wished to combat the Reformation with their militaristic discipline and passive obedience "like a corpse" (1014). Unamuno sees their
military approach linked to the events of 1870 at the Vatican: the proclamation of the
"Jesuitical" dogma of papal infallibility in July and the violent fall of the Papal States that September. A strange coincidence is the fact that that very year the Catholic convert
Newman also saw the same historical link: "the definition of July involved the
dethronement of September."¹¹

The problem Unamuno sees with the iron discipline of the Jesuits is that their passive obedience implies no active learning, but only reception of defined dogmas. This intellectual acquiescence is linked to a practical servitude to religious authorities through unquestioning obedience to any command. Who would dare disobey God speaking through the Jesuitical powers-that-be?

Dogma militarista; dogma engendrado en el seno de una milicia, de una Compañía fundada por un antiguo soldado, por un militar que, después de herido e inutilizado por la milicia de espada, fundó la milicia del crucifijo. Y dentro de la Iglesia Romana, la disciplina, disciplina, en que el discípulo no aprende—«non discit—, sino que recibe pasivamente la orden, el dogma; no la doctrina, no la enseñanza del maestro, y mejor que del maestro, del jefe, conforme al tercer grado de obediencia, que Loyola encarecía a los padres hermanos de Portugal. ¡Y esta sí que es agonía! (Agonía 995)

Unamuno again links this aggressive and coercive pseudo-Christianity to the recent declaration of the Spanish bishops in favor of a crusade in Morocco, as if killing with a cross made people Christians:
¿Quiere alguien, pues, que la Iglesia Romana predique la paz? Hace poco que los obispos españoles, en un documento colectivo, la llamaban a la guerra por el protectorado civil—¡protectorado y civil!—que el reino de España, no la nación española, sigue en Marruecos, ¡la llamaban cruzada! Que cruzada tanto puede llamarse así por llevar los guerreros una cruz como emblema, como por machacar cabezas de infieles con una cruz esgrimida a modo de maza. ¡Terrible lucha! ¡Terrible agonía! (995-96)

Hence, conscience and its freedom are replaced by religious indoctrination and social force; another agony and contradictions in terms. Both learning and morality imply the freedom to search for truth and follow virtue as one sees it.

Unamuno concludes this chapter with an insight on the root of such intolerance and coercion. Those who consider themselves beyond the search for truth and the need for respect of conscience consider themselves almost divine in both their teaching and authority. Therefore, they never recognize their mistakes, “estos hombres no reconocen jamás haberse equivocado” (996).

Consequently the kind of education they promote is slavish, not free; seeks social conformity, not conscientious choice; offers simplistic dogma, not a fight for Christian faith in freedom. Unamuno deduces that if within the religious Order itself the Jesuits promote such passive and blind obedience, opening the door to institutional tyranny, one may easily deduce that the kind of education and society they propose follows the same lines:
Y así, el cristianismo, el verdadero cristianismo agoniza en manos de esos maestros del siglo. La pedagogía jesuítica es una pedagogía profundamente anticristiana. El jesuita odia la mistica. Su doctrina de la obediencia pasiva, de los tres grados de obediencia, tal como la expuso Iñigo de Loyola en su célebre carta a los padres y hermanos de Portugal, es una doctrina anticristiana y en el fondo anticivil. Con ese género de obediencia, la civilización se haría imposible. Y se haría imposible el progreso. (1001)

Unamuno sees other practical consequences in this mode of Jesuitical education. Their iron rule comes linked to a love for money. Historically, after the Reformation, they were different from monks and friars. So, instead of asking for alms, they became school-teachers in private schools, turning education into a money machine. Unamuno obviously considers public education as a community service, and not an occasion for financial profit. Nonetheless, he argues that the Society became worse than beggars, since they use education for their own monetary profit, "Acabando por tomar el oficio de la enseñanza pública como una industria; la industria pedagógica. En vez de pedir limosna se hacen maestros de escuela" (1001). Of course, a problem Unamuno does not address here, but later, is the religious freedom of students and people to accept such education.

In contrast to passive and dead faith, Unamuno proposes the example of the adversary of the Jesuits, Blaise Pascal. Probabilism was the main issue Pascal fought with them, but Unamuno sees that theory as coming from the Jesuitical idea of obedience in the famous letter of Saint Ignatius to the Fathers and Brothers of Portugal. Here Ignatius speaks of the three degrees of obedience: in action, will and judgment. The last is praised as the most virtuous, seeing that the religious submits his judgment to that of the Superior: "Porque ‘todo obediente verdadero debe inclinarse a sentir lo que su Superior
siente'.” And Unamuno adds: “Es decir, creer verdadero lo que Superior declara tal” (1006).

This unquestionable submission of one’s intellect and will to another in the name of Christ is the end of a Christian agony as Pascal understood it. He wrote a book of Thoughts, not Ideas, says Unamuno. Here, his thoughts are fluid and free, not solid and fixed like dogmas. Pascal fought the fight of reason and faith, kneeling to pray for the submission of his reason to faith. Both feared and abhorred by the Pope since he did not have a vow of papal obedience, like the Jesuits, in freedom of conscience, he sought for Christ and Christianity. But, did he submit? Unamuno concludes: “Quiso someterse. Y no encontró el reposo más que con la muerte y en la muerte, y hoy vive en aquellos que como nosotros han tocado a su alma desnuda con la desnudez de su alma” (1009).

Likewise, our query continues with Jesuitical obedience: are the concepts of freedom of inquiry and dignity of conscience aborted and suppressed? In fact, no inquiry, freedom, or even conscience is needed, since the Superior does all the deciding and defining, in virtue of his having a presupposed direct communication to Christ. Unamuno agrees with Pascal that one may even become like a beast, abdicating the use of reason. But, what one can never do is to treat others like beasts, destroying their intelligence and, possibly, their conscience, which is what passive obedience does, treating people as mere fools who should submissively pay, pray and obey.
Pascal, el hombre de la contradicción y de la agonía, previó que el jesuitismo, con su doctrina de la obediencia mental pasiva, de la fe implícita, mataba la lucha, la agonía, y, con ella, la vida misma del cristianismo [. . .]. Pero es que un cristiano puede s’abêtir, puede suicidarse racionalmente; lo que no puede es abêtir a otro, matar a otro la inteligencia. Y es lo que hacen los jesuitas. Solo que tratando de entontecer a los demás, se han entontecido ellos. Tratando a todos como a niños, ellos se han infantilizado en el más triste sentido [. . .]. En ellos no agoniza, eso es, no lucha, no vive, el cristianismo, sino que está muerto y enterrado. (1012)

So, with the Jesuits, Christianity no longer lives as a struggle in freedom. The Christian catechism answers all questions and, when the seeker asks what is not clear, he is simply told not to ask: “Esto no me lo preguntéis a mí, que soy ignorante; doctores tiene la Santa Madre Iglesia que os sabrán responder. Así contesta a una pregunta el catecismo más en curso en España, el del P. Astete, un jesuita. Y los doctores, al no enseñar ciertas cosas al creyente implícito, han acabado por no saberlas y por ser tan ignorantes como él” (1013).

Unamuno finishes this chapter with an apology and a hermeneutic for freedom of conscience. Based on a commentary on Pascal as an “orthodox heretic,” the etymology of the words “heteros”—other—and “orthos”—true—would seem to contradict each other. Nonetheless, Unamuno holds both complement each other, since the “heretic” is previously the person who freely chooses a doctrine, holds an opinion and then freely picks that which he thinks is the “orthodox” doctrine. In fact, Unamuno remembers a quote from Paul, wherein the apostle states his opinion as “heretical.” The point is that the heretic is a free-thinker who breaks with the common creed. And, as Paul shows, the heretic of yesterday is often the orthodox of today. Historically, the development of
doctrine implies that certain doctrines are rethought, accepted or rejected. Hence, the
definition of “orthodox” is in constant variation. What Paul and Pascal did was transform
their new ideas into living ideas and thus recreated orthodoxy. Which proves that
freedom of conscience can even be useful for doctrinal development in orthodoxy.

All of this is a far cry from the implicit and infantile faith of the Jesuits:

Porque herético (haereticus) es el que escoge por sí mismo una
doctrina, el que opina libremente--¿libremente?--y puede opinar
libremente la doctrina derecha, puede crearla, puede crear de nuevo el
dogma que dicen profesan los demás. San Pablo dice en algún pasaje [...] que él, respecto a cierta doctrina, es herético. “En esto soy herético”, dice
al pie de la letra, [...] pero quiere decir: “En esto profeso una opinión
particular, personal, no la corriente.” Quiere decir que en aquel punto se
aparta del sentido común para atenerse al sentido propio, al individual, al
del libre examen. (1013-14)

Quite the contrary is the above to the Jesuitical concept of perfect obedience just
like a corpse, “perinde ac cadaver.” Unamuno quotes the famous example of the holy
and submissive Jesuit going to water a stick placed in the garden just because the Prior
says so. Unamuno considers both persons as simply acting out a comedy. Even the so-
called moral and religious justification that such is part of mastering our pride is really a
presupposition that such a stupid act is the will of God. Quite the contrary thinks
Unamuno. Pride is promoted, not tamed:

Valor entendido para domar el orgullo humano, sin ver si es que no
hay más orgullo en obedecer de esa manera. Porque si está escrito que el
que se humilla será ensalzado, eso no quiere decir que se le ensalce al que
se humilló en vista del ensalzamiento. Y ese género de obediencia ha
engendrado el hinchado orgullo--orgullo luciferino--colectivo de la
Compañía de Jesús. (1014)

Maybe what Unamuno needs to bring out more clearly is the mental control
exercised by the Prior, seeing that he presents himself as God’s representative. Hence, conscience is coerced into obedience, seeing that one’s opinion and not only one’s acts would be, in that perspective, pride ruling against divine will. Disobedience would be rebellion against our Creator. Unamuno, as we see above, concludes to the contrary.

Unamuno was well aware of the real sociological pressures applied to conscience. Real freedom of conscience implies the liberty to follow one’s path in life, but likewise involves the possibilities that forces in society may, directly or not, attempt either to keep us in their flock or expel us to the four winds. Unamuno, as well as Newman, was willing to pay the price of rebellion against the Institutions of Church and State he once loved, with exile and loneliness, but equally defended the right of his ideological opponents to freedom of conscience, instruction and belief.

Honoring history, we must also mention that a decade later Unamuno would apply his own liberal principles to the rights of conscience of the Jesuits themselves. Though he would still agree, “Al libre examen reformatorio, al libre examen liberal, respondía aquel famoso tercer grado de la obediencia, la obediencia de juicio,” if they or other religious orders had the academic qualifications to teach, they should do so. Likewise, the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain because of their vow of obedience to the Pope was simply giving them a new vow of obedience to the State:

El que esto escribe, [...] que tiene formado concepto de la pedagogía jesuítica, [...]. Eso sí, ha de repetir, pues lo ha dicho más de una vez, que estima injusta la disolución de la Compañía e injusta la prohibición de enseñar a las Órdenes religiosas si sus miembros poseen los títulos que el Estado exige y se someten a la inspección y vigilancia de éste.
Unamuno saw that the II Republic was being taken over by new tyrants, disrespectful of the civil and human rights of conscientious belief:

Y como, fuera de las mandangas constitucionales, no saliese nada, los delirantes furibundos de la revolución--revoltosos y no revolucionarios--, inquietos ante la espera pública y para darse conciencia de vencedores--que no la tenían--, se entregaron, desatraillados, a la descompostura de quemar iglesias y conventos indefensos. Y empezó a antojárselos a los revolucionarios constituyentes el Coco de la reacción monárquica y empezaron a padecer, con la manía persecutoria, la perseguidora. Y se decretó aquella desvergonzada Ley de Defensa--más bien de ofensa--de la República.14

No wonder, then, that in this mood in Paris, Unamuno easily identifies himself with the “solitary priest,” Padre Jacinto, himself an example of the agony of Christianity. Unamuno found a kindred soul likewise denounced by authorities, declared an outcast, yet clinging with all the more strength to his beliefs in conscience. Padre Jacinto lived a multitude of struggles in the agony of Christianity in himself. Unamuno, above all, sees him as a Father, struggling to survive in the resurrection of his own flesh in his child:

Es una de las tragedias más intensas que he leído [...].
¡El Padre Jacinto! ¡Padre! En esto de su paternidad está el fondo y la esencia de su tragedia, de la agonía del cristianismo en él. Se salió de la Iglesia para casarse, se casó para tener hijos, para perpetuarse en carne, para asegurar la resurrección de la carne. (Agonía 1016)

But, Father Jacinto, like Unamuno, not only goes through an agony in his desire to survive death in his son. A variety of religious convictions attracted him; he was drawn to mystical solitude and political involvement; struggled between thoughts and deeds; care for the soul and the body; religion and its abuses; church and conscience; loyalties and dissent; a mother and a woman; solitude and society; life and death; meaning or suicide; a child and his demise; doubts and faith. From the viewpoint of his freedom of
conscience, Unamuno insists on his doubts, quoting him at the end of life, as an essential part of his free faith:

La que era mi vida me ha sido arrebatada para siempre, sin esperanza, sin consuelo, en la vida presente. A lo que se juntan dudas horribles, dudas involuntarias, dudas irracionales, pero desuelan el corazón y a la imaginación. Una especie de percepción instintiva de la nada del ser, nada de las cosas y nada de las personas [. . .]. Y todavía estas dudas son involuntarias y no podría ceder a ellas sin renunciar a la fe cristiana y hasta a la naturaleza humana tal como es en mí. Sería un suicidio moral seguido sin duda pronto por el suicidio propiamente dicho. (1026)

Besides identifying himself with such a person, Unamuno is also insisting on the right of the mind to examine ideas and ultimately leave one group for another, should conscience dictate it. At the heart of dissent, there is a lack of ultimate faith in a specific group or, rather, doubts about the divine presence in such an institution. So, doubts about a religious belief or group are ultimately doubts about God. Unamuno's and Jacinto’s answer is not to despair in spiritual or physical suicide, but to continue till death, searching and fighting in religious freedom and personal loneliness. Unamuno would conclude, “¡Este fue el hombre, este fue el padre, este fue el cristiano en agonía del cristianismo!” (1027) while remembering his own image of fighting all one’s life with God, like Jacob, “como Jacob” (“Mi religión,” *Ensayos* 1: 370):

Sus últimos años, retirado ya de la vida activa, de 1893 a 1912, de sus sesenta y seis a sus ochenta y cinco, fueron los más trágicos de su vida, los de su mayor soledad. Fue una vejez robusta y davidica. Fue agonía de años. “Sufro mucho. Asisto a una agonía dolorosa y deshonrada” (*Sentimiento trágico* 3: 113). ¡Siempre el mundo! Hacía sufrir el aislamiento religioso. Estuvo, como Jacob, luchando solo con el ángel del Señor, desde la puesta del sol al rayar del alba, y clamando: “¡Di tu nombre!” (*Génesis*, xxxi, 24-29). (*Agonía* 1024)
Unamuno concludes this book, reflecting again on his agony as an exile in Paris. Because he thought, wrote and acted independently from the powers-that-be in Spain and Christianity, he was now alone, in exile. The agony of his soul has received both the agony of Spain and that of Christianity. His written word is a witness to his agony, his doubts and his inner freedom in conscience. Following conscience is not only a fight till death with God, but a suffering alone inflicted by society. Unamuno’s final words are a consolation that Christ too was alone, in agony, sweated blood, but still seems to leave us abandoned: “Y, aquellas como gotas de sangre eran simientes de agonía, eran las simientes de la agonía del cristianismo. Entre tanto gemía el Cristo: ‘Hágase tu voluntad y no la mía’ (Luc., xxii, 42). ¡Cristo nuestro, Cristo nuestro!, ¿por qué nos has abandonado?” (1034)

The events surrounding Newman’s life from 1833 to 1841 can likewise be globally considered times of agony, doubt, dissent, loneliness and exile. While Unamuno wrote his La agonía del cristianismo considering more the social entity, with obvious parallels to his own life, our interest here with Newman is on how he himself understood and heroically lived liberty of conscience as his own religious convictions were unfolding.

What is indeed remarkable in this time-frame are the apparent contradictions in Newman’s decisions. First, he set out to defend the Anglican Church against Liberalism, yet eventually he ended up being considered “dead to the Church of England” (Apologia 222). Then, he started writing the Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism(Via Media). As the middle
road of the Anglican Church, in order to prove he was not becoming a Roman Catholic. Again, this effort eventually drew him close to Rome (Apologia 61). Finally, he sought in the 39 Articles the theological basis for his anti-Roman bias (71). 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]” (78). Ultimately, he was to be exiled out of Oxford and banished out of the Church.

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” (30).

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” (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
serve the Anglican Church against the dangers of Liberalism and Evangelicalism.

Liberalism showed itself in the political sphere via 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 (Apologia 116-19). 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" (37; 68).

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 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.

His opposition to Liberalism continued unabated. A painful example revealed the depth of his belief in the Anglican Church in 1834. In opposition to 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 (Letters and Diaries 4: 299-301).

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 exercised 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 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,” (Apologia 30) 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, during 1833-1836, Newman wrote the *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism (Via Media)*. Newman thought he had given the Anglican Church an original status, that of a *Via Media*, a moderate middle-of-the-road status 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 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 (*Apologia* 61-63).

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 (72-73).

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 his own lonesome agony in Sicily, Newman was no longer afraid: “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.” 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, those in favor of Liberalism did so, the Tractarians should do likewise. This, says Newman in the Apologia, was the main reason for "Tract 90" (63).

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. In regard 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 political, religious and moral drama where the command to “keep silence” is the answer to awkward questions. 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: "They pressed on me whenever I gave way; they fell back when they saw me obstinate" (Apologia 79).

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 saw 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" (79). 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 nor the doctrine condemned by authority. His one aim was "to save the Tract" (Apologia 79; Ker, 220-224).

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 adherence to the value of the 39 Articles to serve the Anglican Church's cause, but rather to keep the peace and avoid scandal.20

Again, Newman reaffirmed the principle of submission to his bishop, but there
was a clear limit. Compromise was the solution, but he added that he had no intention whatever of yielding any one point which he held on conviction (Apologia 114).

Authorities at Oxford University and in the Anglican Church had lost confidence in him, he was no longer trustworthy.

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 anything 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. (78-79)

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” (222).

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? 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” (79). “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 (68).

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” (Apologia 78), when the Heads [of colleges at Oxford] did him a “violent act” (113).

Second, since truth in religion is a revelation from God himself, change of religion would be a sin, if it were 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. (Essays 2: 337-38)
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. *(Apologia 30).*

Third, and satirically, Newman distinguishes between "the right of private judgment" and "the private right of judgment." John Henry noted 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" *(Essays 2: 340-41).*

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 *(Apologia 30).* Therefore, they demand freedom of religion when their religion is not respected, while coercing religious conformity when in power.²²

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 established 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 at 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 freedom of conscience—this is done in order to settle who the teachers are and what are their authority, rather than to substantiate this or that religious opinion or practice. Newman added that later 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 groups forming around them. John Henry concluded that we must distinguish between "party feelings and interests" and "the holy Church Catholic" (361). 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" (353).

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 firstly about the teachers: whether or not they be true or false. Here Newman seems to echo the views of John Locke on faith and reason: "The believing, or not believing that Proposition, or Book, to be of Divine Authority, can never be Matter of Faith, but Matter of Reason," But yet, it still belongs to reason, to judge of the truth, and of the signification of the Words, wherein it is delivered" (694).

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” (Essays 356). Such are those who neither seek the teacher of truth nor allow others to do so. 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, convinced that truth can fight its own battle. Rather than attempting to foresee our future convictions, Newman insisted on doing simply what we think right day by day:

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?

Has not all our misery, as a Church, arisen from people being afraid to look difficulties in the face? (Apologia 130)

We may conclude this chapter with Unamuno’s note to the word “scepsis” in La agonia del cristianismo:

Scepsis significa rebusca, no duda, [. . .] El escéptico, en este sentido, se opone al dogmático, como el hombre que busca se opone al hombre que afirma antes de toda rebusca. El escéptico estudia para ver qué solución pueda encontrar, y puede ser que no encuentre ninguna. El dogmático no busca más que pruebas para apoyar un dogma al que se ha adherido antes de encontrarlas. El uno quiere la caza; el otro, la presa. (Agonía 1068-69)

Our writers were not dogmatic, but skeptical in that sense of the word. Both were seekers, and sometimes finders. They wrote and lived to further the search for truth, with the freedom of conscience to reject doctrines, authorities and institutions, be that necessary and even painful. As for the future, neither bothered about foreseeing it. Rather
than attempting "to trace by anticipation the course of divine providence," Newman
insists on doing "simply what we think right day by day" (Apologia 130). Unamuno tells
the reader of Don Quixote to follow the star and straighten what is crooked before you,
here and now: "Sigue a la estrella. Y haz como el Caballero: endereza el entuerto que se
te ponga delante. Ahora lo de ahora y aquí lo de aquí" ("El sepulcro de Don Quijote,"
Ensayos 2: 77).
Notes


4 Hernán Benítez, El drama religioso de Unamuno (Buenos Aires: U de Buenos Aires, 1949) 134.


8 Rodrigo Segarra, La fe de Unamuno: un camino entre la niebla (Barcelona: Clie, 1995) 191-92.


19 Kevin B. Fagan, “Cult Tactics in the Confessions,” Braniff Briefly 2 (April 1995): 5. Faustus’ only answer to Augustine’s questions is silence. A shrewd tactic to avoid defeat. See also, Federico García Lorca, La Casa de Bernarda Alba (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991) 211. The first and last word of this critique of authoritarianism is the command to keep silent.


CHAPTER VI

A CHRISTIAN IN CONSCIENCE

Me repugnan los ortodoxos, sean católicos o protestantes [. . .] que niegan cristianismo a quienes no interpretan el Evangelio como ellos.

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

Their relationship with the institutional Roman Catholic Church is no doubt a lightning-rod in our comparison of John Henry Newman and Miguel de Unamuno. On the one hand, we have the most famous convert, later Cardinal, to Catholicism in the English-speaking world, while, on the other, we have the so-called “arch-heretic and master of heresies.” Even though their conclusions about the Roman Catholic Church were totally opposite, the motor of their investigation of history was the principle of free intellectual examination, “libre examen,” and the need for an argument for Christianity. Both set out to compare Catholicism with Protestantism within the historical context of Christianity.

In Unamuno’s case, this is especially vivid in Chapter IV of his Sentimiento trágico, “La esencia del catolicismo.” In his analysis of both Protestantism and Catholicism, Unamuno sees them both in the perspective of a possible answer to the human problem of immortality and salvation of the individual soul. Beginning with historical Christianity, as an affluence of both the Jewish and Hellenist spiritual currents, Unamuno adopts to great extent the reading of Harnack on the development of Christianity. Primitive Christianity really believed in the imminent second coming of
Jesus rather than the resurrection of Jesus or the immortality of the soul. From Hellenic philosophy came the idea of a personal soul; from Judaism the knowledge of a personal loving God:

Así, cada uno por su lado, judíos y griegos llegaron al verdadero descubrimiento de la muerte, que es el que hace entrar a los pueblos, como a los hombres, en la pubertad espiritual, la del sentimiento trágico de la vida, que es cuando engendra la humanidad al Dios vivo. El descubrimiento de la muerte es el que nos revela a Dios, y la muerte del hombre perfecto, del Cristo, fue la suprema revelación de la muerte, la del hombre que no debía morir y murió.  

Christology evolved around Paul of Tarsus, who never knew the historical Jesus but claimed to know the Risen Lord through a personal revelation. The center of his message was Christ Risen, without which the Christian faith would be empty. Linked to this central dogma is the dogma of the resurrection of the body at the end of time. The prior belief in the second coming and the end of the world has been changed by Paul. In Unamuno's words: “¿No ven que más que de la vida inmortal de Cristo, reducida acaso a una vida en la conciencia colectiva cristiana, se trata de una garantía de nuestra propia resurrección personal, en alma y también en cuerpo?” (Sentimiento trágico 127)

The importance of this approach by Unamuno is that nothing is presupposed. The central doctrine of Christianity may have either a simple sociological conscience or a private so-called apostolic revelation, without a necessary connection to Jesus himself, or a divine revelation from above. However, Unamuno does not presuppose, as Newman did, a divine origin to Christianity either in its doctrine or authority, and, hence, his questioning does not involve a reverential respect towards the truth as divinely revealed. Moreover, the force of questioning a revealed doctrine or dissenting from an authority’s
authenticity is greatly enhanced emotionally by the prize of eternal life to be won or lost. Hence, Unamuno's free examination has a better possibility than Newman's of picking and choosing what Unamuno considers correct.

The great event analyzed by Unamuno is the Nicene or Athanasian Creed, in the year 325. Unamuno, following Harnack, characterizes Athanasius as "un hombre de pocas letras, pero de mucha fe, y sobre todo, de la fe popular, henchido de hambre de inmortalidad." (120) But he also had the courage of faith to affirm the divinity of Christ, because if Christ were not God, how could he bestow divinity, eternal life, on us humans? This was a cosmological, eschatological Christ, not the God of the philosophers. And so nature and revelation were separated and the "Catholic Christ" was born. While the historical Jesus of Protestantism suffers the chisel of biblical criticism, the Catholic Christ lives throughout the centuries, guaranteeing faith in personal immortality and salvation.

If Arianism had triumphed, Christ would only be the perfect man, an exemplary model, a moral teacher; Christianity, no more than an ethical code. Unamuno sees the contrast Protestantism versus Catholicism between religion linked to morality, as Kant would have it, as in the former, or religion linked to eternity, as in the latter, as defined at the Council of Nicea.

Y, en cambio, el protestantismo, absorpto en eso de la justificación, tomada en un sentido más ético que otra cosa, aunque con apariencias religiosas, acaba por neutralizar y casi borrar lo escatológico, abandona la simbólica nicena, cae en la anarquía confesional, en puro individualismo religioso y en vaga religiosidad estética, ética o cultural. (123)

Athanasius also courageously affirms contradictory statements. Christ is both God...
and human. Harnack considers this as the beginning of the end of rationality in Catholicism. Dogma has said good-bye to clear thought and empirical proofs. Unamuno writes: “Y Atanasio tuvo el valor supremo de la fe, el de afirmar cosas contradictorias entre sí. ‘La perfecta contradicción que hay en el homousios trajo tras de sí todo un ejército de contradicciones, y más cuanto más avanzó el pensamiento’, dice Harnack.” Unamuno, however, adds that life is such, needing value judgments. The latter are not only contradictory, they are irrational: “Sí, así fue, y así tuvo que ser [. . .]. Las determinaciones de valor, no sólo no son nunca racionalizables: son antirracionales” (121).

The historical link between the Nicean Creed and later Vatican dogmas is established by Unamuno playing with the etymology of the word “idiot.” An “idiot” is one who is naïve, wild and sheepish. Touching this and his basic human problem, that of personal immortality, Unamuno states that the bishops at both places merely represent the genuine human spirit with our desire to never die. Hence, they search for the best reason to believe:

En Nicea vencieron, pues, como más adelante en el Vaticano, los idiotas–tomada esta palabra en su recto sentido primitivo y etimológico--, los ingenuos, los obispos cerriles y voluntariosos, representantes del genuino espíritu humano, del popular, del que no quiere morirse, diga lo que quiera la razón; y busca garantía, lo más material posible, a su deseo. (121-22)

The sacrament of the Eucharist is immediately mentioned by Unamuno as “bread of eternal life.” Faith in the divine presence in the Eucharist is obviously not susceptible of rational examination, but a question of feelings. Here reason goes one way; feelings,
another. Unamuno does not examine the issue of the controversies Protestantism later had
with this dogma, when they substituted its reality for the idealist sacrament of the word.

However, for him, this most religious belief was even beyond understanding even for the
Fathers of the Church:

Pero hasta Padres de la Iglesia hay para los cuales la inmaterialidad
de Dios mismo no era una cosa tan definida y clara como para nosotros. Y
este sacramento de la Eucaristía es el inmortalizador por excelencia y el
eje, por tanto, de la piedad popular católica. Y si cabe decirlo, el más
específicamente religioso.

Porque lo específico religioso católico es la inmortalización y no la
justificación al modo protestante. Esto es más bien ético. (123)

What we mentioned above about the effect on a believer of the dogma of immortality can
be repeated here. Free examination of this dogma and the Church also involves the force
of losing a consolation for the heart. Historically, Catholicism has not refused to use her
power to exclude dissenters from this sacrament, in accord with her own rules. Hence, a
lone heretic like Unamuno might think twice before questioning Church doctrine, above
all in public, be it that the Church refuses them admission to the Eucharist.

Tradition and its importance is at the heart of controversies between Catholicism
and Protestantism as well as at the core of Newman's decision to become a Roman
Catholic. Catholicism in its search for reasons for its doctrines appeals to the witness of
centuries. Unamuno recognizes this power of the unity of what is handed down by many.
From the early Fathers, Catholicism has invoked this argument to justify its teaching and
authority. The problem for free examination is not only to judge if one might be wiser
than the Pope, and the bishops, but understanding Christianity better than millions of
believers did throughout the centuries. Nonetheless, Unamuno turns the argument around.
Quoting Lamennais, certainty is merely a social product, “la certeza, [...] es un producto social” (127)

Even more so, Catholic apologists and mystics themselves demonstrate the origin of this traditionalist theory. Tradition merely shows us what is most useful, as de Maistre states, and, what is more useful, asks Unamuno, than the immortality of our soul? Even the blessed Enrique Suso, Dominican mystic, rejected this democratic proof from tradition:

Pero aquel formidable místico y asceta que fue el beato Enrique Suso, el dominicano, pidióle a la eterna Sabiduría una sola palabra de que era el amor, y al contestarle: “Todas las criaturas invocan que lo soy”, replicó Suso, el servidor: “¡Ay Señor, eso no basta para un alma anhelante!” La fe no se siente segura ni con el consentimiento de los demás, ni con la tradición, ni bajo la autoridad. (127)

As for sin, Unamuno notices how Catholicism does not have the same anguish as Protestantism in regard either to original sin, due to the sacrament of baptism, or with concupiscence due to the doctrine of forgiveness by the sacrament of confession. However, Catholicism does have an interpretation of the sin against the Holy Spirit, absent from Lutheran rationalism, that is, the sin of heresy, free examination:

El verdadero pecado, acaso el pecado contra el Espíritu Santo, que no tiene remisión, es el pecado de herejía, el de pensar por cuenta propia. Ya se ha oído aquí, en nuestra España, que ser liberal, esto es, hereje, es peor que ser asesino, ladrón o adúltero. El pecado más grave es no obedecer a la Iglesia, cuya infalibilidad nos defiende de la razón. (125)

However, Unamuno also sees the contradiction of Protestant Europe being scandalized by the infallibility of one man, the Pope. What difference does it make if infallibility is attributed to one man, one bible, or one church? The same problem
presents itself in all three areas and exists in both Catholicism and Protestantism. Hence, blind obedience to either religion causes a problem for free examination and liberty of conscience to act accordingly. Nonetheless, Unamuno does consider that the Catholic Church affirms the vital dimension of the human being, both feeling and reason. Hence, it creates for itself rational dogmas that defend anthropocentrism against Galileo, and human uniqueness against Darwin. Therefore, Pio Nono rejected the so-called modern civilization. Hence, Unamuno concludes that Catholicism seeks to defend life against the rationalist, technical reason of the Protestant countries.

Nonetheless, reason, free inquiry and human feelings constantly seek rational answers. Hence, faith in Catholicism is forced to make a pact with them, and therefore emerges a contradiction in conscience. Human beings need support for their faith as well as to defend it against the attack of reason. Hence, there came about in Catholicism an appeal to reason to support, if not prove, faith; to defend faith against irrational arguments:

Necesitamos seguridad, certeza, señales, y se va a los *motiva credibilitatis*, a los motivos de credibilidad, para fundar el *rationale obsequium*, y aunque la fe precede a la razón, *fides praecedet rationem*, según San Agustín, este mismo doctor y obispo quería ir por la fe a la inteligencia, *per fideum ad intellectum*, y cree para entender, *credo ut intelligam*. Cuan lejos de aquella soberbia expresión de Tertuliano: *et sepultus resurrexit certum est quia impossibile est*! “y sepultado resucitó: es cierto porque es imposible” y su excelso: *credo quia absurdum!*, escándalo de racionalistas. (127)

Therefore, Unamuno concludes that scholastic theology, a magnificent edifice with all religious conflicts resolved by Saint Thomas Aquinas and the schoolmen, is an impotent Christianity. Faith is made to pact with reason and tries to justify, the rationalist
way, the fundamental dogmas of the Catholic Church. A typical example is the doctrine of transubstantiation, whereby faith, beyond reason, in the divine presence in the consecrated bread and wine, is rationalized with Aristotelian concepts:

Y ya no se trata de hacer aceptar el dogma, sino su interpretación filosófica medieval y tomista. No basta creer que al tomar la hostia consagrada se toma el cuerpo y sangre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo; hay que pasar por todo eso de la transustanciación, la sustancia separada de los accidentes, rompiendo con toda la concepción racional moderna de la sustancialidad. (128)

This approach leads, according to Unamuno, quoting Harnack’s interpretation of the Council of Nicea, to both an unintelligible faith and a clerical-controlled church: “Que para eso, entre otras cosas, se instituyó el sacerdocio, para que la Iglesia docente fuese la depositaria, depósito más que rio, reservoir instead of river, como dijo Brooks, de los secretos teológicos” (128).

The only option is the coal-worker’s faith, “la fe del carbonero,” which blindly accepts dogma and authority, without ever opening the door to any possibility of free examination and discussion. Such simplistic faithful never have their questions answered. Or rather receive only one, inviting them to be humble listeners of the transmitted word of God: Are you wiser that the doctors of Holy Mother Church? Again Unamuno quotes the thought-stopper of Saint Teresa of Avila in the Catholic catechism: “Eso no me lo preguntéis a mí, que soy ignorante; doctores tiene la Santa Madre Iglesia que os sabrán responder” (128).

Hence, Catholicism can never achieve a living, vital, free faith. Unamuno concludes that this rationalistic, scholastic theology has led to a great setback for the
Catholic spirit. Giving the example of Duns Scotus, who wished to justify faith on the inscrutable free will of God, rather than on divine essence or goodness, Unamuno saw how ridiculous and even evil such a conception could be. So, even more was Catholicism separated from believers gifted with adult minds, and not coal-workers. And, in the perspective of free examination of the faith, became even more illogical.

Ultimately, Unamuno sees Catholicism as a swinging between mysticism, which is an intimate experience of the living God (Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa of Ávila, etc.) and scientific religion, a kind of diabolic pact between faith and reason:

Y es que el Catolicismo oscila entre la mistica, que es experiencia intima de Dios vivo en Cristo, experiencia intransmisible, y cuyo peligro es, por otra parte, absorber en Dios la propia personalidad, lo cual no salva nuestro anhelo vital, y entre el racionalismo a que combate; [. . .] oscila entre ciencia religionizada y religion cientificada. (129)

Going through the history of Catholicism, Unamuno saw how a deep dialectic runs from the early Church’s struggle with apocalyptic enthusiasm for neo-platonic mysticism, Christological humanity and divinity, Trinitarian monotheism and polytheism, nature and grace, through the controversies on human freedom and divine will: “Y así se hizo la dogmática católica un sistema de contradicciones, major o peor concordadas” (129). But, at what a price?

The previous unintelligibility and now these contradictions all create for the educated believers an impossible dilemma. Their mental needs are totally oppressed. Freedom of inquiry, conscience and choice are all eliminated. One has to believe all or nothing. Be saved or condemned. Obey or be damned. If either one doctrinal declaration or act of authority is rejected, the force of all doctrines and all authority is then rejected.
Total rebellion is the only policy. As happened with Martin Luther in the Reformation, once he rejected the power of the Papacy in one area, he was required to denounce all postulates of the Pope. Unamuno, like Newman before him, saw that if people are pushed to accept all or nothing in religion, they can easily move into atheism:

A costa, preciso es decirlo, de oprimir las necesidades mentales de los creyentes en uso de razón adulta. Exígeles que crean o todo o nada, que acepten la entera totalidad de la dogmática, o que se pierda todo mérito si se rechaza la mínima parte de ella. Y así resulta lo que el gran predicador unitariano Channing decía, y es que tenemos en Francia y España multitudes que han pasado de rechazar el papismo al absoluto ateísmo. (129)

A totally different vision of Catholicism comes from the pen of the convert Newman, but the conclusion is the same: atheism seems the alternative to Catholicism:

And in these latter days, days, in like manner, outside the Catholic Church things are tending,—with far greater rapidity than in that old time from the circumstance of the age,—to atheism in one shape or other. What a scene, what a prospect, does the whole of Europe present at this day! And not only Europe, but every government and every civilization through the world, which is under the influence of the European mind! Especially, for it most concerns, us, how sorrowful, in the view of religion, [...] is the spectacle presented to us by the educated intellect of England, France, and Germany! (Apologia 188)

Hence, Unamuno reflects at the end of this chapter, Catholicism offers a solution to the problem of human immortality and the soul’s eternal salvation. This answer satisfies the will and, hence, life. But, by rationalizing faith with dogmatic theology, reason is left wanting. Reason has her reasons. But Unamuno makes an important distinction. It is one thing for a truth to be above reason; quite another to be contrary to reason. The first case would be the divine presence in the Eucharist; the second would be transubstantiation. Unamuno feels that forcing reason to accept as above reason what is
really against reason is irrational, and, hence, rejected by believers gifted with adult reason, “dotados de razón adulta” (Unamuno, Sentimiento trágico 128). Likewise, forcing one who is not a coal-worker to be so, is a waste of time: “No sirve querer forzarse a reconocer sobrracional lo que claramente se nos aparece contrarracional, ni sirve querer hacerse carbonero el que no lo es” (130).

Freedom of conscience implies a search for truth, the option of receiving or rejecting doctrines or authorities. Catholicism, as portrayed by Unamuno, implies no such compromise for the thinking believer. If one questions, there is no answer. If one rejects any doctrine, all are rejected and one can no longer be identified with the Church. Hence, to be a Catholic in freedom of conscience would seem impossible for an educated believer.

Newman's decision in conscience to join the Roman Catholic Church is intimately linked with his writing of An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (Development). This book was written before the author became a Catholic. In fact, the outcome of the book was to remove the last obstacle on his road towards Rome. 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 friendship with Froude that certitude in religious questions demands action. In considering the question of joining the R.C. 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” (Apologia 168).

In accord with the aim 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 element of truth 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 October 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” (Apologia 137). Newman's purpose in writing the Essay on Development was not to write an apology for his conversion to Catholicism. Less still was he writing an apology for Roman Catholicism itself (Preface to the Edition of 1878, Development vii). His purpose was totally personal; how to answer his own difficulty in becoming a Catholic or not at a precise time in his life (Development ix). 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. (Apologia 36)

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” (36). As developed later in the Grammar of Assent Newman considered certitude as being in the concrete by a living human being, whereas logical inference only reaches conclusions in the abstract. Here, with the Essay on Development, 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” (36). Newman's philosophical anthropology involves the whole person with his life situation, a clear rejection of an intellectual abstraction.

Therefore, in the Essay on Development, 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 (Development 100). On the other hand, the existing developments of doctrine are the probable fulfillment of that expectation (92). This system of writing and arguing by Newman in this work follows the distinction quoted above from the Apologia between the certitude in logic due to rigid demonstration, and certitude in religious inquiry, where we arrive at certitude by accumulated probabilities (Apologia 157). For that reason, it is the whole man that reasons and moves; whereas "paper logic is but the record of it" (136) 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 the Essay on Development. The work is intended to “avow his present belief” with his desire to “suggest thoughts” and “carry forward” other inquirers (x). 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. Newman was convinced by his teacher Hawkins “to see with my own eyes and to walk with my own feet” (Apologia 41).

Besides, this characteristic of conscience can be seen in both the Essay on Development and the Apologia. He began the Essay on Development as an non-Catholic as he says in the “Advertisement,” and decided to become a Catholic when “he had got some way in the printing” (vii) But, this, his own personal certitude, did not entice him on a crusade of proselytizing for Roman Catholicism. On the contrary, in the 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: “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”
(169).

The divine character of decisions in conscience is brought out in the Essay on
Development. 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 of the book 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 on Development: “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” (29).

The historical and divine character of Christianity determinant in Newman's
certainty 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
now” when Newman decided to embrace the Church of Rome as true Christianity. His
theory of the development of doctrine was not only a hypothesis to account for a difficulty (30), but also the historical moment for his certitude on what his conscience freely wanted him to do. There was a precise here and now in his decision to write the Essay on Development, (Apologia 177) but also a precise historical “circumstance” which allowed him to freely act on his certitude in conscience, and be received into Roman Catholicism as the Church of Christ (xi).

Therefore, the argument of history which determined his conviction on the divine nature of Roman Catholicism in Essay on Development is also the argument to determine his own historical conversion, understood as his decision in conscience at that time and place. Hence, his theory of conscience was historical, changing and constantly seeking truth in life and life in truth, exactly like Unamuno (“Mi religión,” Ensayos 2: 370). His certitude in conscience was not the same at the beginning of the Essay on Development 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” (Apologia 157). The Essay on Development is in itself a testimony of history on how Newman gradually changed from a non-certitude in the Church of Rome to intellectual conviction (157). 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?

Has not all our misery, as a Church, arisen from people being afraid to look difficulties in the face? (130)

This gradual change of certitudes in religious matters finally raises the question of a truth in conscience which seems concomitant with error. How can the same religion or truth be present in contradictory conscientious certitudes? How can historical Christianity be interpreted in good faith in such diverse modes? 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 on Development we cannot doubt his sincerity as a non-Catholic (Development xi), while, at the end, we cannot fail to admire his courage to “go on the open sea” (Apologia 110). God, he believes, who lives as a Personal, All-seeing, All-judging Being in his conscience (156), is also the same Lord who provides the antecedent probability of divine protection and the subsequent probability of his action in the development of doctrine.

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 (161). 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 (Development 10).

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 the Essay on Development 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

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. (Apologia 162)

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 (162). 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. 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.

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 on Development. 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 (Development x-xi).

Again, the whole point of Essay on Development 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 in its writing is a clear dissent in conscience from both the Anglican Church and the Church of Rome. The final authority for conscience is truth itself. In the case of Church authorities, Newman discovered writing the Essay on Development that that same truth dwelt in the Church of Rome, rather than in the Church of England. The primacy of conscience is the primacy of truth itself over both the individual in error or religious authorities which teach error in truth's name.

So, we see in the Essay on Development, though linked to 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 true. Nor would he enhance himself as an authentic teaching authority of the Church. If he considered that Christ endowed the
Church with a living authority throughout the ages (Development 2: 2), he consequently included in the postscript the offer of his work to the accepted in conscience authorities (xi).

Thus, primacy of conscience as seen in Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism is the primacy of truth in freedom over the individual and religious authorities. This primacy implies the liberty of conscience to seek God in truth, follow truth when known, and obey authority in so far as it is true. The very fact of the Essay on Development and Newman's 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.

Newman was also willing to be a lone heretic. On March 15th, 1845, he wrote to his sister Jemima:

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?9

Unamuno and Newman, dissenters among strangers, banished from their loved places and people, writers and witnesses, followers of both conscience and Christ in freedom and agony.
Notes


8 Letter written on April 3, 1844.

CHAPTER VII
DEATH AND CONSCIENCE

Ya está donde se respeta la libertad de consciencia
y se oye y se escucha todo parecer.\(^1\)

Time was, [. . .] I would not brave the sacred fight
because the foe was strong.\(^2\)

Both Unamuno and Newman constantly question the meaning of death for a
person of conscience. If at the end nothing remains, nothing is achieved, our existence
has little meaning. Neither writer feared thinking about death, but rather sought meaning
to life, so that at death, something of their life would remain. Hence, it was more the
sense of either nothingness or futility at the hour of death that concerned them. However,
ultimately, the thought of death was what eventually gives meaning to their lives. In this
chapter, we wish to deepen our perception of Unamuno's and Newman's philosophy of
life from a perspective of death, analyzing the experience of death in Newman and
Unamuno which gave their lives meaning.

In Unamuno's philosophy is a faith in oneself in which the human being lives
continually in constant debate between the wanting to continue to live and the knowledge
that one has to die:

Crear lo que no vemos, sí, crearlo, y vivirlo, y consumirlo, y
volverlo a crear y consumirlo de nuevo viviéndolo otra vez, para otra vez
crearlo [. . .] y así; en incesante tormento vital. Esto es fe viva, porque la
vida es continua creación y consunción continua y, por tanto, muerte
incesante. ¿Crees acaso que vivirás si a cada momento no murieses?\(^3\)
Therefore, Unamuno aims at a philosophy of death whereby the desire for immortality has its origin in the experience of death. Here, arises a hope that all does not end with death, that we in some way outlive death:

¡Vivir, vivir lo más posible en extensión e intensidad; vivir, ya que hemos de morir todos; vivir, porque la vida es un fin en sí! Y, sobre todo, meter mucho ruido, que no se oigan las aguas profundas de las entrañas insondables del espíritu, la voz de la Eternidad! Reventar de cultura, como dice un progresista amigo mío.4

Hence, to philosophize, for Unamuno, is to do so with all one's being. Paraphrasing Unamuno's statement that one philosophizes with more than reason, with will, feeling, flesh and blood, body and soul, we may also add that we philosophize with death. Since it is the human being in all our existential reality that makes philosophy, death is a key experience in giving life meaning: “Y haga lo que quiera, filosofa, no con la razón solo, sino con la voluntad, con el sentimiento, con la carne y con los huesos, con el alma toda y con todo el cuerpo. Filosofa el hombre” (Sentimiento trágico 2: 97).

So the thought of death is the true origin of the philosophic experience. A human being cannot live without being aware of its existence and the corresponding anguish of its certainty. In fact, we cannot even consider ourselves as non-existent:

Imposible nos es, en efecto, concebirnos como no existentes, sin que haya esfuerzo alguno que baste a que la conciencia se dé cuenta de la absoluta inconsciencia, de su propio anonadamiento. Intenta, lector, imaginarte en plena vela cuál sea el estado de tu alma en el profundo sueño; trata de llenar tu conciencia con la representación de la conciencia, y lo verás. Causa congojísimo vértigo el empeñarse en comprenderlo. No podemos concebirnos como no existiendo. (3: 103)

Unamuno sees all of the visible universe, as being created by the human desire for immortality. In this perspective, one wishes to be part of all and, especially, part of every
other human being. Therefore, love for others is really a desire to become eternal in the other. A good deed lives forever.

¡O todo o nada! ¡Y qué otro sentido puede tener el “ser o no ser”!
To be or not to be shakespeareano, el de aquel mismo poeta que hizo decir de Marcio, en Coroliano (V,4), que sólo necesitaba la eternidad para ser dios: He wants nothing of a god but eternity? ¡Eternidad!, ¡eternidad! Éste es el anhelo; la sed de eternidad es lo que se llama amor entre los hombres; y quien a otro ama es que quiere eternizarse en él. Lo que no es eterno tampoco es real. (103-04)

So, for Unamuno, the possibility of annihilation is rejected by a thirst for immortality, a need to love others, a desire to be like God. Even poetry is based on the contrast between the vanity of what is fleeting and the eternity of love. Unamuno, as earlier Newman, will grow in love against a cruel destiny as they see it. A new freedom is born when one overcomes obstacles in life, achieving a sense of service: “Y el amor, sobre todo cuando la lucha contra el destino, súmenos en el sentimiento de la vanidad de este mundo de apariencias, y nos abre la vislumbre de otro en que, vencido el destino, sea ley la libertad” (104).

Our hunger and thirst for immortal life beyond the grave is a desire to be, to be more, and, ultimately, to be divine. Both in Unamuno and Newman, the sense of purpose in this life is linked to a desire for immortality and a longing for God. In Newman, the emphasis is more on a sense of mission and fulfillment of the divine will. With Unamuno, the tone is metaphysical: “¡Ser, ser siempre, ser sin término, sed de ser, sed de ser más!, ¡hambre de Dios!, ¡sed de amor eternizante y eterno!, ¡ser siempre! ¡ser Dios!” (103-4).
Therefore, while the essence of conscience for Newman is like a voice of God, Unamuno considers conscience having its essence in the thought of our death and the question of what comes later. This is understandable seeing that, for Unamuno, the desire to live, to love and be immortal are all linked to a divine imperative. Hence, living and loving, in this life and the next, are at the heart of philosophical awareness and moral obligation. At the same time, we are conscious of ourselves as both living and mortal beings. Both Newman and Unamuno are living life, believing in their future as they see it. However, the possibility of death opens their lives’ horizons:

Ese pensamiento de que me tengo que morir y el enigma de lo que habrá después es el latir mismo de mi conciencia. Contemplando el sereno campo verde o contemplando unos ojos claros, a que se asome un alma hermana de la mía, se me hinche la conciencia, siento la diástole del alma y me empapo en vida ambiente, y creo en mi porvenir; pero al punto la voz del misterio me susurra “¡Dejará de ser!” Me roza con el ala el Ángel de la muerte, y la sistole del alma me inunda las entrañas. (Sentimiento trágico 104)

The role of religion is thus explained as a pluralistic attempt to satisfy the human need for personal immortality. From an anthropological point of view, Unamuno notes that humans are the only animals that take care of their dead, refusing to hand over corpses to the ravages of indifferent nature. Respect for the dead is both the distinguishing factor for humans and the origin of all religious belief. While the living had barely a hut to live in, the dead received tumuli and cement buildings long before the living. Thus, the homes of the dead have survived in more cultures than the homes of the living. The point is that so many religions reflect so many searches for human immortality. Hence, the mystery of life after death implies the possibility of various
answers to the enigma of its contents. And these various answers suppose the free search for a plausible religious solution.

The uniqueness of each person seeking meaning to life after death is dramatized by Unamuno addressing the reader:

Recógete, lector, en ti mismo, y figúrate un lento deshacerte de ti mismo, en que la luz se te apague, se te enmudezcan las cosas y no te den sonido, envolviéndote en silencio, se te derritan de entre las manos los objetos asideros, se te escurra debajo los pies el piso, se te desvanezcan como en desmayo los recuerdos, se te vaya disipando todo en nada y disipándote también tú, y ni aun la conciencia de la nada te quede siquiera como fantástico agarradero de una sombra. (105-06)

The remedy to this problem is not to be found in indifference, as the verse reads: “Cada vez que considero que me tengo que morir tiendo la capa en el suelo y no me harto de dormir”(106). Rather, the only solution is meeting the problem head-on, since it is better to live in constant pain than to be nothing. The true hell consists in nothingness. As Schopenhauer says, the uncontrolled love of life leads to suicide. A suicide does not seek death, that is, nothingness, but, on the contrary, would like a better life. It is the supreme anguish of living better and prolonging his life that pushes the suicidal to destroy themselves. Death, then, is a tragic problem, from which there is no escape. According to Unamuno, such should lead a philosopher to a free and thoughtful examination of the quest for personal immortality.

This quest for personal immortality, the philosophical thought thereupon and the possible religious solution are totally personal. No other person can take place in either the quest, the thought or the belief: “No quiero morirme, no, no quiero ni quiero quererlo; quiero vivir siempre, siempre, siempre, y vivir yo, este pobre yo que me soy y me siento
At this point, Unamuno clearly distinguishes between self-love and selfishness. Selfishness implies a love for oneself, even if it damages others. On the contrary, one has self-love, or, better said, self-respect implies seeking the good of others as one’s own—loving thy neighbor as thyself:

¿Egoísmo decís? Nada hay más universal que lo individual, pues lo que es de cada uno lo es de todos. Cada hombre vale más que la humanidad entera, ni sirve sacrificar cada uno a todos, sino en cuanto todos se sacrificuen a cada uno. Eso que llamáis egoísmo es el principio de la gravedad psíquica, el postulado necesario. “¡Ama a tu prójimo como a ti mismo!”, se nos dijo, presuponiendo que cada cual se ame a sí mismo. (108)

The hunger for personal immortality is not foreign to any human being, since it is a presupposition to exist, as to continue existing. So, for Unamuno, life after death is no longer a right for a few, but a need without which life would have no meaning. There is no point in asking why someone wants to be immortal, since personal immortality is the only factor that gives meaning to life and the universe:

Nos preguntan que quiénes somos, viles gusanos de la tierra, para pretender inmortalidad; ¿en gracia a qué? ¿Para qué? ¿Con qué derecho? ¿En gracia a qué—preguntéis—, y en gracia a qué vivimos? Tan gratuito es existir como seguir existiendo siempre [...]. No reclamo derecho ni merecimiento alguno; es sólo una necesidad, lo necesito para vivir. (109)

Unamuno is aware of the difficulties involved in a reflection on the problem of personal immortality. As such, he considers himself a new Paul of Tarsus, preaching to the ignorant the true doctrine. So, Paul, persecuted by the Jews of his own religion, stoned and shipwrecked, arrived in Athens, intellectual center of the philosophic universe
of the time. To the stoic and epicurean heirs of Plato and Aristotle, Paul prepared to identify their unknown god. For our perspective, what is most important is that Unamuno considers this a city where freedom of conscience is practiced: “Ya está, pues, Pablo ante los refinados atenienses, ante los graeculos, los hombres cultos y tolerantes que admiten toda doctrina, toda la estudian y a nadie apedrean ni azotan ni encarcelan por profesar éstas o las otras; ya está donde se respeta la libertad de conciencia y se oye y se escucha todo parecer” (110)

Nonetheless, as soon as Paul tried to preach about the resurrection of the dead, the Athenians lost their patience and began jeering him. Unamuno, as a contemporary Paul, attempts to explain the only and true problem of the human being and, likewise, is not heard nor understood by those who should understand his philosophy. Just like what happened at the beginning of the propagation of the Christian faith, so-called intellectuals today still need sufficient patience and tolerance in order to understand another’s point of view:

Pero así que les habláis de resurrección y de vida allende la muerte, se les acaba la paciencia y os atajan la palabra diciendo: “¡Déjalo, otro día hablarás de esto!” Y es de eso, mis pobres atenienses, mis intolerantes intelectuales, es de esto de lo que voy a hablaros aquí.

Y aun si esa creencia fuese absurda, ¿por qué se tolera menos el que se les exponga que otras muchas más absurdas aún? Por qué esa evidente hostilidad a tal creencia? ¿Es miedo? ¿Es acaso pesar de no poder compartirla? (110)

If, in Unamuno's case, the crisis of conscience comes with his preaching a philosophy about life after death, in Newman's case, his philosophy of life changed radically with his own personal brush with death. The strength of conscience over personal whims becomes a drama in his death agony during a 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." Such a concept of conscience as self-will prevalent, according to the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, in the eighteenth century, Newman will call a "counterfeit." What Newman meant by this counterfeit of conscience, and what he meant by self-will were clearly illustrated during this death agony in 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 by himself 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.' 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." 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 about their selfishness.

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.9

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” (Mozley 1: 363).

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
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 (Apologia 40).

By throwing Newman into a state bordering on death, this agony was a terrible encounter with his deeper self. It became a dramatic confrontation between the forces of self-will and his whole philosophy of life. John Henry himself, a year earlier, had consoled his bed-ridden friend Thomas Mozley, also ill in bed:

Had it pleased God to have visited you with an illness [...] it would almost have seemed 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. [...] It is one especial use of times of illness to reflect about ourselves. (Mozley 1: 228)

These austere reflections on human weakness made earlier to Mozley were probably now present in the mind of our 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. His plunging into the hidden recesses of the truth of his life bears the mark of a personal punishment. God appeared to abandon his servant to the worst of temptations, that of the desert, that of loneliness before death, with the threat of spiritual failure beyond repair. Unamuno's final words at the end of La agonia del cristianismo, “¡Cristo nuestro, Cristo nuestro!, ¿por qué nos has abandonado?” sound strikingly familiar.10

This feeling of rebellious self-will—later to be called a “counterfeit of conscience” by Newman in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk11—and the empty intellectualism of the Liberals at Oxford reached a peak in Newman's mind at Leonforte during the most
critical phase of his death agony. 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 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. (Mozley 1: 366)

The above letter merits a detailed analysis to appreciate Newman's understanding of selfishness as a counterfeit of conscience and his critique of mere academic success, which would be empty of all virtue. First, we notice the rejection, just like Unamuno, of an empty rationalism which has nothing to say at Newman's hour of agony. John Henry realized that he had thoughts 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. Again, the echo of Unamuno, “y haga lo que quiera, filosofa, no con la razón sólo, sino con la voluntad, con el sentimiento, con la carne, y la con los huesos, con el ama toda y con todo el cuerpo. Filosofa el hombre” (Sentimiento trágico 2: 97). 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 his
destiny in conscience. This self-will was made up of an pride of judgment and an
impatience of heart which sometimes were able to master his conscience.

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"
(Apolo gia 40), but also that "God was fighting against me, [. . .].--at last I knew why--it
was for self-will" (Mozley 1: 365). 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 in his death-agony. 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 selfishness.

With death close, 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" (Apolo gia 30). 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 seemed more the work of his will than a duty in conscience. It was
less a divine revelation than a self-seeking by Newman. Up to now, John Henry had
chosen his path in life, not that of conscience. 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. (Verses LX: 113)

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.\(^{12}\) 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” Mozley 1: 368).

Newman notes in the Apologia that “especially when I was left by myself, [. . .] I began to think that I had a mission” (40). 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, 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 against light.” Finally, on becoming well again, he could only explain his violent
sobbing by exclaiming: “I have a work to do in England” (40). Hence, Newman's
understanding of divine, and not self, will involved freeing his judgment from whim and
fancy in order to discover truth in following conscience as one understood it, which
Newman would consider true liberty of conscience. And such a liberty involves a
decision to follow truth and value wherever they might lead.

On his return to Oxford, Newman would now brave the sacred fight, even if “the
foes were strong” (“Sensitiveness,” Verses LX: 113). If, up to now, Newman had chosen
his own easy 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 his mission for
life became the “kindly Light” to lead him on. Though later he will lose his friends,
church, employment, Oxford, and even Rome, he endeavored never “to sin against light”
(Apologia 40). Newman’s ultimate answer was to repeat the words dear to him from
youth, "Exoriare aliquis, ‘Arise, some avenger’" (40). 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 (40).

With his conscience at peace 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, 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 it to him a mission in England. Newman would now undertake it, not as a task chosen by him, but as a mandate received in conscience 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 (40).**

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” (Verses LX: 113). Liberty of conscience 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, neither total autonomy or servility of conscience is the same as primacy of conscience. Firstly, autonomy or servility would mean making oneself or another the absolute law, following one’s or another’s will. On the contrary, primacy of conscience means doing what one considers one’s duty in conscience (Apologia 30). Likewise, primacy of conscience
means seeking truth and life understood as absolute values, above self-will or any supposedly divine institution, such as the Anglican Church, which may become dead ("Note on Liberalism," Apologia 222).

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 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 the probability of error recognition and, even, ulterior strength. As happened to Newman in Sicily.

The light of conscience may grow dim amid the darkest night. The traveler, like Newman and Unamuno, may choose to follow in pride his own path, but while he searches with the light of a sincere conscience, the road to truth becomes clear. Therein is reflected a serene humility, a peaceful confidence, and trust in truth, which gives spiritual strength and a hopeful end.

Newman's strange love for Sicily ended on the sea-voyage home with his poem, "The Pillar of the Cloud":

140
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. (Verses XC: 156)\(^{15}\)

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 and the beginning of his exile from the Church of England.

(Apologia 41).
Notes


13 See *Aeneid*, IV: 625.

14 See *Iliad*, XVIII: 125.

CHAPTER VIII

CHURCH AND CONSCIENCE

De la realidad de este san Manuel Bueno, mártir, ... no se me ocurre dudar.¹

I give an absolute obedience to neither the Pope nor the Queen.²

Unamuno’s San Manuel Bueno, mártir and Newman’s Letter to the Duke of Norfolk may be dually considered as the ultimate respective justifications of supremacy of conscience over religious authority in both authors. These works were published near the end of the authors’ lives and both proved to be among their most remembered writings. Though the context and conclusion might seem totally alien to each other, I wish to suggest that both philosophers ultimately defend the right of personal conscience to dissent from their institutional Church within a context of free examination and search for truth. This is the “Kindly Light”³ Newman wishes to follow, while Unamuno searches for a religious “truth in life and life in truth.”⁴

Unamuno’s San Manuel Bueno, mártir may be read as placing the unbelieving curate, Don Manuel, as the central character, as indeed the title implies (Boerigter 457).⁵ Despite his care for others and works of charity, which gain him the possibility of canonization and being role-model for the next curate, an existential anguish grips don Manuel as he cannot believe in the immortality of the human soul after death. The fact that Unamuno portrays this reality presumably indicates his experience of a similar anguish. Besides seeing faith as a gift, not a given, Unamuno is clearly affirming the
freedom of conscience both of the curate to disbelieve and of the people to believe.

Hence, we note a contrast between his affirmation in the epilogue to the *Sentimien
to trágico* and the curate’s attitude in *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*. In the *Sentimiento trágico*, Unamuno sees his mission as:

> Pero es que mi obra—iba a decir mi misión—es quebrantar la fe de unos, y de otros, y de los terceros, la fe en la afirmación, la fe en la negación, y la fe en la abstención, y esto por fe en la fe misma; es combatir a todos los que se resignan, sea al catolicismo, sea al racionalismo, sea al agnosticismo; es hacer que vivan todos inquietos y anhelantes.⁶

In *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, however, the curate does not wish to disturb the faith of his flock. Not even in the case of “superstitions,” so-called by Unamuno, does he wish to perturb their faith. To the skeptic Lázaro who wishes to preach against such superstitions, Don Manuel warned:

> Y como supiese que este andaba predicando contra ciertas supersticiones populares, hubo de decirle:

> --¡Déjalos! ¡Es tan difícil hacerles comprender dónde acaba la creencia ortodoxa y dónde empieza la superstición! Y más para nosotros. Déjalos, pues, mientras se consuelen. Vale más que lo crean todo, aun cosas contradictorias entre sí, a no que no crean nada. [. . .] No protestemos. La protesta mata el contento. (San Manuel Bueno, mártir 131)

And the reason why Don Manuel continues his pious deceit, if it can be called such, is that he realizes that the people have a right to their religious beliefs. The role of religion is to give people hope and spirit. So, for each group, the true religion is their own, the religion that they made. Therefore, he has no right to disturb people in their beliefs if they are happy with themselves and with others. On the contrary, he sees his duty as giving life to their souls and make them dream they are immortal:
Yo estoy para hacer vivir a las almas de mis feligreses, para hacerlos felices, para hacerles que se sueñen inmortales y no para matarlos. Lo que aquí hace falta es que vivan sanamente, que vivan en unanimidad de sentido, y con la verdad, con mi verdad, no vivirán. ¡Que vivan! Y esto hace la Iglesia, hacerlos vivir. (123)

This “pious lie” of the curate seems to receive ecclesiastical approval, emphasized both at the beginning and the end of the novel. Official Church approval is lavishly granted to Don Manuel. At the opening of the story, Ángela tells how the pending beatification of don Manuel is the reason why she decides to write the novel:

Ahora que el obispo de la diócesis de Renada, [...] anda, a lo que se dice, promoviendo el proceso para la beatificación de nuestro don Manuel, o, mejor, san Manuel Bueno, que fue en ésta párroco, quiero dejar aquí consignado, a modo de confesión y sólo Dios sabe, que no yo, con qué destino, todo lo que sé y recuerdo de aquel varón matriarcal que llenó toda la más entrañable vida de mi alma [...]. (95-96)

Likewise, in the final paragraph of Ángela’s recount, a likewise ecclesiastical approval for the life of don Manuel seems in place, due to its possibly serving as a guide for the perfect parish priest. The bishop seems unaware of the mystery of don Manuel’s faith or lack thereof. Ángela has no intention of telling him due to her fear of all temporal, including Church, authorities.

Parece que el ilustrísimo señor obispo, el ha promovido el proceso de beatificación de nuestro santo de Valverde de Lucerna, se propone escribir su vida, una especie de manual del perfecto párroco, y recoge toda clase de noticias. A mí me las ha pedido con insistencia, ha tenido entrevistas conmigo, el he dado toda clase de datos, pero me he callado siempre el secreto trágico de don Manuel y de mi hermano. Y es curioso que él no lo haya sospechado. (147-48)

Several feasible interpretations of these passages seem possible. According to Martin Nozick:
Saint Manuel Bueno, Martyr is Unamuno's supreme act of contrition, a public statement of regret for having tried to involve so many in his personal turmoil, and an expression of the nostalgia the iconoclast feels for simpler times. In design it is a subtle mosaic of autobiographical hints, of metaphysical and political symbols.  

Or was Unamuno simply appealing for liberty of conscience to contemporary Church authorities, in the context of the new political situation in Spain that year, 1930? Was he insisting on faith as a gift, not granted to all, as it was not bestowed on him, but because he, Miguel de Unamuno, respects people's faith and liberty of conscience for all? Another reflection is that he focuses on the real possibility of ministers of religion actually losing either part or all of their faith, but wishing to continue in the ministry for the sake of the flock. Hence, a double respect for conscience is warranted: both towards that of the minister, as for that of the people.

Don Miguel's attitude towards Lázaro behooves a special consideration in that regard. Ángela herself asks just before the end of her story her repeated question on why Don Manuel did not try to deceive her brother with false faith, if it were a simple matter of reiterating with him what he did with his flock. A first response is that Lázaro arrived as a skeptic from America with all the "viejos lugares comunes anticlericales y hasta antirreligiosos y progresistas que había traído renovados de América" (San Manuel Bueno, mártir 116-17). Also noteworthy is the fact that the novel notices how nobody listened to Lázaro's skepticism, but rather continued in their religious beliefs. Nonetheless, at the end of the story, Ángela explains that don Manuel did not try to deceive him with his comedy or--"tragedía más bien" (146)--because it simply would not work. Only with don Manuel's truth, the truth of keeping his comedy and tragedy to
himself, the people would stay in their faith. This final conclusion revokes Unamuno's
definition of religion in “Mi religión”: “Mi religión es buscar la verdad en la vida y la
vida en la verdad, aun a sabiendas de que no he de encontrarla mientras viva (“Mi
Religión” 369). Here, don Manuel wins Lázaro over to the cause of life with the truth of
death:

Pero ¿por qué—me he preguntado muchas veces—no trató don
Manuel de convertir a mi hermano también con un engaño, con una
mentira, fingiéndose creyente sin serlo? Y he comprendido que fue porque
comprendió que no le engañaría, que para con él no le serviría el engaño,
que sólo con la verdad, con su verdad, le convertiría; [. . .] Y así le ganó
con la verdad de muerte a la razón de vida. (San Manuel Bueno, mártir
146)

Besides don Manuel and Lázaro, Ángela, as narrator, herself may well be
considered the central character of this novel. If don Manuel seems to represent Miguel
de Unamuno at the end of his life, Ángela may well suggest Unamuno's life-struggle
from faith to disbelief. This novel may portray the Catholicism Unamuno enjoyed in his
early life, which nonetheless gave way to crisis and dissent. Besides, from our
perspective of freedom of conscience, Ángela’s account may even better illustrate liberty
of conscience: the free examination and constant search at the heart of a religious “fight
with God” from morning till night, like Jacob in the Bible (“Mi religión” 370).

The novel begins with the small girl Ángela admiring her home-town curate. At
boarding school, she hears from all her companions and the nuns how great a man he is
(San Manuel Bueno, mártir 98). Beginning with her first visit home, there is a marked
crescendo in her relationship with the priest, moving from admiration to compassion,
from blind faith to intellectual curiosity, from complete assent to doubtful religiosity. Her
doubts come to the surface with don Manuel’s public exclamation in church: “¡Dios mío, Dios mío!, ¿por qué me has abandonado?” His mother’s cry that broke the silence of the church, “¡Hijo mío!” gave Ángela both the courage to question and the need to console. Faced with her religious questions, don Manuel only quotes Saint Teresa of Avila from the catechism, on not asking him but doctors of the Church. On her resolve that he is the doctor of the Church in their village, don Manuel suggests the devil is behind her questions. On her further insistence on the hypothesis were Satan to question him, don Manuel suggests the devil is behind her questions. Perhaps, we notice a satire on those who consider questioning belief to be a sign of Satan. On her further insistence on the hypothesis were Satan to question, don Manuel gives an ambiguous answer, making Ángela doubt even more and cry in loneliness. Later, concerning the question of hell, don Manuel again sidesteps the inquiry, saying it is enough to believe all that our Holy Mother Church believes and teaches. Ángela concludes that her pastor has a deep sadness in his eyes, blue as the waters of the lake (112-13). And the lake, significantly is a symbol of doubt: The snow (a sign of divine grace, accumulates on the mountain (faith), but melts upon falling into the waters of the lake (also associated with death, as the villagers believe their dead sleep beneath the waters).

Unamuno sets up a growing search for truth in life and life in truth in the dialogues of Ángela and don Manuel. Her “coal-worker’s faith” is challenged by the discreet unbelief of her spiritual guide. What is important to emphasize is that don Manuel is not deliberately encouraging her to doubt her faith, but his difficulties spur her search beyond the simplistic and dogmatic religion of her childhood. Instead of receiving
divine support in her faith from her spiritual director, he becomes the source of her anxiety. Gradually, such a situation forces her to abandon the submissive and trustful acceptance of the religion he represents in favor of the quest for truth in life and life in truth he pursues.

The return of her brother, Lázaro, provides the occasion for the truth to come into the open. Lázaro finds the priest too smart to believe all he has to teach. The death of their mother and her plea for prayer from her skeptical son is the action personifying the next step in the drama. Now, the curate turns the tables asking Lázaro to show belief, even if he disbelieves, for the peace, happiness and dreams of the people. Lázaro then asks don Manuel if such were his case, the secret comes out. Ángela, upon hearing this, sees don Manuel as a “mártir” and understands how her mother died in peace, thanks to being deceived. Nonetheless, her faith seems intact. Like Saint Monica, she prays with tears: “Nos separamos para irnos cada uno a su cuarto, yo a llorar toda la noche, a pedir por la conversión de mi hermano y de don Manuel, y él, Lázaro, no sé bien a qué” (124). At the marrow of these conversations is Unamuno’s respect for individual conscience. Brother and sister, dying mother and doubting priest, all wish to follow their sense of right and wrong, truth and life, as they freely see fit. Ángela’s ongoing journey is part and parcel of a consequent need to search beyond our preconceived notions, but with respect for both the faith and conscience, peace and joy, of others.

Later, she questions don Manuel openly about his faith in eternal life. This touches the essence of Christianity, as clearly quoted at the beginning of book: “Si sólo en esta vida esperamos en Cristo, somos los más miserables de los hombres todos” (95).
A Christian who only believes in this life is the most miserable. So, is Don Manuel one of those most wretched beings? Don Manuel’s answer is evasive: he suggests Ángela get married. This could be understood as a double evasion: either a simplistic way of avoiding the question altogether, or the response itself promotes living life out to the fullest. Both answers seem plausible in the text. Don Manuel suggests marriage “para que se te curen esas preocupaciones” and later “sí, sí, hay que vivir, hay que vivir” (126).

However, the epilogue to this passage offers another possible interpretation, as don Manuel requests and receives absolution from Ángela in the name of the people. The priest considers himself a sinner seeking forgiveness from the community. The reader may interpret these lines into don Manuel’s own doubts and understanding of Christian faith. Either he has to distract himself with other concerns or simply live life to the fullest. Possibly the latter could be read as an existentialist solution to the problem of faith in immortality: to live as if eternal life did in fact exist even though one may be unable to grasp it intellectually. Or, within the whole philosophy of Unamuno on faith, such is not an intellectual adherence to ideas, but a sinner’s trust in the Father of Christ, living life to the fullest:

El intelectualismo es quien nos ha traído eso de que la fe sea creer lo que no vimos, prestar adhesión del intelecto a un principio abstracto y lógico, y no confianza y abandono a la vida, a la vida que irradiia de los espíritus, de las personas, y no de las ideas, a tu propia vida.

[. . .] ved [. . .] que fe es confianza del pecador arrepentido en el Padre de Cristo. (“La fe” 262)§

The next dialogue in the novel regards the sacrament of the Eucharist and the notion of sin. The context is Passion Week, don Manuel recites the words of Jesus on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” , insists to Lázaro that there is no
life but this one, while to Ángela, he asks her to pray for Jesus. Later, Ángela would
probe the soul of don Manuel concerning the meaning of sin and, hence, salvation (San

These topics seem to hark back to Unamuno's treatment of eternal life, the
Eucharist, and sin the Sentimiento trágico de la vida, chapter IV, on the essence of
Catholicism. In this chapter, Unamuno first links the question of personal immortality,
Christ's resurrection, the resurrection of the dead, and the sacrament of the Eucharist as
bread of eternal life:

Y a este dogma central de la resurrección de Cristo y por Cristo
corresponde un sacramente central también, el eje de la piedad popular
católica, y es el sacramente de la Eucaristía. En él se administra el cuerpo
de Cristo, que es pan de la inmortalidad.

[...] Y este sacramento de la Eucaristía es el inmortalizador por
excelencia y el eje, por tanto, de la piedad popular católica. (Del
sentimiento trágico 122-23)

Hence, reading San Manuel Bueno, mártir in the shadow of Sentimiento trágico
de la vida, don Manuel's desperate cry of Christ on the cross may be read as the common
human feeling of agony before death. His admonition to Lázaro, upon receiving the
Eucharist, that eternal life is here below, may reflect Unamuno's thought on living life to
the full, even though one does not see an answer to the question of immortality.
Furthermore, his request to Ángela to pray for all, including Christ, is not a blasphemy of
praying for God, but rather an acknowledgement of the agony of the human Christ,
similar to our own at the hour of death. This is an agony that is ongoing, a Christ that is
always dying to give us life:
Y podemos decir, en cambio, que la más alta expresión artística católica, por lo menos española, es en el arte más material, tangible y permanente--pues a los sonidos se los lleva el aire--de la escultura y la pintura, en el Cristo de Velázquez, ¡en ese Cristo que está siempre muriéndose, sin acabar nunca de morirse, para darnos vida! (125)

The later reference to sin is also a logical parallel to the Sentimiento trágico de la vida. Ángela step by step moves from a prayer for Christ to ask, then, what sin is, since Christ is classically portrayed as the Savior from sin. Unamuno repeats his notion that our sin is precisely having been born with the consequent agony of wishing to live after death but not reaching a rational solution. In this sense, according to Unamuno, the Sentimiento trágico de la vida also sees sin in the Catholic tradition as something material and hereditary from Adam:

No ha sido la preocupación del pecado nunca tan angustiosa entre los católicos, o por lo menos con tanta aparentidad de angustia. El sacramento de la confesión ayuda a ello. Y tal vez es que persiste aquí más que entre ellos el fondo de la concepción primitiva judía y pagana del pecado como de algo material e infeccioso y hereditario, que se cura con el bautismo y la absolución. En Adán pecó toda su descendencia, casi materialmente, y se transmitió su pecado como una enfermedad material se transmite. (123)

Unamuno's identification of sin with birth is reinforced later when he asked Ángela to pray for all sinners, for all who have been born, "por todos los pecadores, por todos los nacidos" (137). Quoting Calderón as a great doctor of the Spanish Catholic Apostolic Church, Unamuno concludes that the greatest sin of man is to have been born, "el delito mayor del hombre es haber nacido" (136). Though reaching a conclusion at odds with the traditional Catholic interpretation of sin, nonetheless this thought leaves the door open to a consideration on the agony of religious belief as a natural search all
humans must accomplish. And, in San Manuel Bueno, mártir, the climate is one of freedom of conscience.

Tom Boeringer considers Ángela’s conclusions on faith:

These are statements which create tremendous problems for an understanding of Christianity, and human psychology. For if individuals have faith without knowing it, then faith is subconscious, and primarily symbolic, something that leaves no trace of itself in the individual’s consciousness. A faith thus defined would be taking on characteristics extremely unlike those attributed to faith in the Christian tradition. (459)

Ángela does believe that don Manuel and Lázaro, although they thought or feared they did not believe, were, in fact, believers. And she finally believes that God, for some inscrutable reason, made don Manuel and Lázaro believe they were unbelievers.

Boerigter is right if we were to understand “faith” in the traditional institutional sense. Hence, Ángela would be struggling with faith in a rational fashion, “as if it were a math problem” (Boerigter 459). However, if we read this conclusion in the light of Unamuno’s previous definition of faith as sincerity, tolerance and mercy, and not beliefs, the path is clear for a definition of faith with freedom of conscience at its heart. Faith is not, for Unamuno, an intellectual concurrence with dogmas. Rather it is a search for truth and life in sincerity, tolerance and mercy. Gnosis, mere knowledge, is rejected, while faith is really pistis, more a trust in a Person than an intellectual allegiance to a dogma:

Y sobre todo fe más que creencias, pistis más que gnosis; porque de la pistis, en se identifican la fe, la esperanza y la caridad; de la pistis, que da libertad, igualdad y fraternidad a los hombres: de la pistis brotan la sinceridad, para descubrir el ideal siempre y oponerlo a la realidad; la tolerancia hacia las diversas creencias que dentro de la común esperanza caben; la misericordia hacia las víctimas del pasado y del presente incoercibles y fatales.

¡Sinceridad, tolerancia y misericordia!
Hence, we may conclude that San Manuel Bueno, mártir essentially defends faith as Unamuno understands it, and the novel implies personal freedom of conscience in its search.

If San Manuel Bueno, mártir was indeed one of Unamuno's last works bringing together key elements of Unamuno's life and thought, Newman, towards the end of his life, faced another critical scenario in regard to religious freedom and institutional authority. In 1875 Newman wrote his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk as a response to British Prime Minister Gladstone's critique of the First Vatican's Council definition of papal infallibility as an article of faith five years previously.

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” (Difficulties 224).

Newman will address both issues raised by Gladstone, coming, of course, 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 either the political or the religious realm, the need is felt to philosophically justify his position.
In this chapter, we shall endeavor first to address the issues as raised by Gladstone, and 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 (Difficulties), with references to his previous philosophical work in Grammar of Assent (Assent).

A key to the reading of Newman on the question of conscience and the Church is the method of interpretation he followed. In the dedication itself, Newman addressed this issue, excluding all interpretations of papal documents except that of both theologians and time (Difficulties 176).

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. (321)

Newman, no doubt, considered himself one of the Schola Theologorum of the Church, for his readings 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 gives 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?” (245).
Coming back to the original question posed by Gladstone, Newman addressed 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.”

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 treated 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” (Difficulties 233). 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.

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. (Difficulties 243)
In this answer Newman developed a personalist ethical theory based on, in this writer’s opinion, an empiricist philosophy, whereby the real is the concrete. Universal statements are, *ipso facto*, belonging to the realm of the unreal. 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 rule without exceptions, such universal, that is, in all cases, obedience to either Church or State always has its limits.

In the *Essay on the Grammar of Assent* (Assent), Newman’s defines conscience as both a moral sense and a sense of duty. In the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* Newman again rejects a definition of conscience as the “right of self-will” and a definition of conscience that would empty it of its content (*Difficulties* 249-250). A further reflection shows that Newman thought that, in fact, such a conflict between Pope and Queen, Church and State, could never happen. However, he did go 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 and, likewise, situations when a Catholic should obey the Queen over a command of the Pope (239-42). In another part of the *Letter*, he clearly implied that the Pope did, in fact, overstep his authority (217).

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 (242): “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 (257-58). Newman concluded 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” (240). This distinction between our not owing 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 Letter to the Duke of Norfolk (256-57). Newman maintains there that obedience to the injunctions of a Pope must be withheld at the dictate of conscience. However, the main thesis comes in dramatic form at the end of the section on conscience: “I add one remark. Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, (which indeed does not seem quite the thing) I shall drink—to the Pope, if you please,—still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards” (261).

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 (Vatican I 246). 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’ (Difficulties 227). To make his point, Newman drew 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” (227). 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 tried 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 to an attorney 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 has a general authority over any act of his life. Again, however, Newman insisted that papal power may cover all one’s life, and must be applied by the individual conscience to concrete situations (231-32). 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 who 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 was 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 felt obliged to give reasons for his thesis. Newman substantiated 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” (246).

Newman based his claim on three principles:

Conscience has the antecedence of natural religion to revealed religion.

Conscience is foundational to the mission of any Church.

Conscience is coeval with creation.

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 on conscience 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 entitlement of conscience to obedience in all circumstances, based on its link to creation, and supported by traditional Catholic theological opinion (261).

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. Firstly, Revelation, according to
Newman, depends on Natural Religion. Hence, his lapidary phrase in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk: “The Pope, who comes of Revelation, has no jurisdiction over Nature” (254). The philosophy of religion espoused is that revelation is not independent of, but rather complements, natural religion. In the Grammar of Assent Newman had asserted that “belief in revealed truths depends on belief in natural” (Assent 321). In An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine Newman had affirmed the role of revelation as being parallel, but posterior, to the role of conscience in natural religion. In fact, he considered the role of conscience as being prior to the role of revelation, the former having a subjective authority, the latter an objective one.¹⁴

Secondly, conscience, as a sense of right and wrong, is “the first element in religion” (Difficulties 253). In the Grammar of Assent Newman had written 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” (304) and concluding “that no religion is from God which contradicts our sense of right and wrong” (325). Based on this philosophy of religion and conscience, Newman rejected 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” (254). Here at work is a clear rejection of Antinomianism as if papal authority were ever and above the natural law and human conscience. 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 insisted on conscience as “the least luminous of teachers.” Second, that natural religion “needs” to be “sustained and completed by
Revelation” (Difficulties 254). However, we note that in the same sentence that Newman considered conscience the “least luminous” of teachers, he also considered it “the highest of all teachers.” This paradoxical philosophy recalls Unamuno. Grasping its difficulty brings us closer to Newman’s teaching on conscience. In the same vein that Newman saw the enormous limitations of conscience, he also states its supremacy as teacher. Hence, conscience should always be followed even if easily mistaken. But, precisely because it is 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 for the second objection on the need for revealed religion, the above weakness of conscience explains why religion is at all necessary. Being human and individual, conscience tends to err and, therefore, needs help to find right and wrong. Hence, a human need for religion, and the Church. But such a necessity 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. Religion, 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 wrote: “On the law of conscience and its sacredness are founded both his [the Pope’s] authority in theory and his power in fact” (252). 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] *raison d’être*” (253). However, Newman immediately clarifies the concept of papal proclamation of moral law by not limiting the role of the Papacy, and of the Church, to “a mere republication of the Natural Law” (254). Religion 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 religion. Again, we have the paradox in Newman. On the one hand, respect for conscience must be preached by religious authorities. On the other hand, conscience needs religion.

Newman is at the same time affirming the need for the Pope to respect conscience and proclaiming all parts of the moral law are part of the Pope’s mission. Therefore, a wrong conclusion would be to make Newman teach that conscience is inherently opposed to or on a different track to Christianity. 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 to the Duke of Norfolk* in the context of Catholic coherence in his teaching on conscience and the
Catholic Church. 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" (254). 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" (252). 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 (349), we saw how he became a Catholic because he thought it was the right 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 to the Duke of Norfolk the very historical fact of the survival of the Papacy throughout the ages becomes proof of his claim to defend conscience and the moral law. Not only did Newman argue that if the Pope had trampled on the consciences of his subjects, he would not have survived (254);
but he also affirms the very fact of conscience as the only foundation for the survival of
the Papacy.

It is by the universal sense of right and wrong, [...] as first
principles deeply lodged in the hearts of men, 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] length of
life. (253)

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 had begun his chapter on conscience in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk: “I
must begin with the Creator and His creature, when I would draw out the prerogatives
and the supreme authority of Conscience” (246). 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,” 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 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 as 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. Hence, the precedence of conscience over the Pope is not only a matter of what comes later 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 its possible need for religion and church.

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 applied to his original question in the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk a personal philosophy of conscience. Before entering into Newman's theory of a Catholic conscience questioning the Pope, we see the same pattern of conscience questioning religious authority throughout Newman's life as described in this essay. Newman was born into one Church and, following his conscience, decided 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” (Assent 304).

In Unamuno's case, in the novel San Manuel Bueno, mártir, Ángela, no doubt, is the inquiring mind progressing throughout the work by questions, reflections and examples to a new faith in conscience, seeking truth and life.

This is similar to Newman's conviction, present in all his life, that truth and, in his case, true religion only needs a love for truth: “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” (295). Therefore, we note that Newman was not in favor of a “cafeteria Christianity,” according to which supremacy of conscience means a believer can 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 (302).

Returning to the text and context of the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, Newman is answering a specific question as to the freedom of a believer in the political and religious realm when the two came into conflict. 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 (256-57). Ultimately, in conflicts of Church, State and conscience; religion politics and personal decision; conscience is supreme. And being supreme, conscience
must be free to seek truth over the dictates of political and religious authority. Were it coerced, controlled or censored, it would not be free, nor true conscience.

Hence, we may conclude that even though Newman and Unamuno approach the issue of religious authority from totally different perspectives in these publications of their final days—one is the believer defending his Church, while the other is the doubter who causes his spiritual daughter to disbelieve, ultimately both authors are defending the right of free examination and choice against dogmatic and unquestioning obedience to constituted authority, whether it claims to be human or divine.¹⁵

Conscience, understood as a moral and dutiful sense in each human being, is the "kindly Light" (Verses XC: 156) to lead each one freely to "truth in life and life in truth" ("Mi Religión" 370).
Notes


11 Note the platonic gap between universal and individual concepts in Newman: 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. (Assent 215)
Hence, a universal obedience to either Pope or Queen is a universal concept and does not correspond to every individual situation.

12 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 also to “educated minds,” 321.

13 Pope Urban VII, in 1641, clearly questions the excommunication of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I by Pope Pius V.


15 See Dante’s love for the Church as la bella donna ‘the beautiful lady’ and his merciless critique of ecclesiastical authority making Dio d’oro e d’argento a ‘God of gold and silver.’ Inferno XIX. Also Paradiso, XVIII; Purgatorio, VI and Inferno, XXVII.
The main purpose of this work has been to seek in Miguel de Unamuno a coherent theory on freedom of conscience. By comparing his life, literature and philosophy, with that of John Henry Newman, a champion of conscience in Catholic circles, our hope is that this mirroring will further enhance the stature of Unamuno as a heroic defender of the principle of academic, political and religious freedom. This writer's opinion is that extant literature on Unamuno, up to now, has insisted on “what” Unamuno believed or disbelieved rather than his defense of freedom of conscience as a human right.

The emphasis here is based on Unamuno's quest for truth in life and life in truth (“Mi religión” 370), as one such odyssey, presupposing principles of free examination, ongoing search and personal choice in one's convictions. At the same time, the role of authority, be it academic, political or religious, is consistently open to questioning and, ultimately, rejection by Unamuno. In contrast, this free-thinker, Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, is likewise subject to intents of censorship, control or coercion by demotion, exile and arrest. So, our focus is not on Unamuno's views as such, but rather on his opinions as
being his, and not constrained by those of others, no matter how much power they may claim to have over him.

There are undoubtedly points of difference as well as similarities between Unamuno and John Henry, in later life Cardinal, Newman. Beginning with childhood reminiscences, Unamuno in his Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad and Newman in An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent see a natural sense of right and wrong, prior and independent of all future authority. Unamuno explains how he was educated in institutional Catholicism as practiced in Spain at the time, whereas Newman was to know the Via Media of the Anglican Church. Both were religious youths, with Unamuno fervently practicing the Catholicism of his home even to the degree of considering the ministry, whereas Newman came to relish the Bible religion of his family. Their patriotism was a love of country and culture, but Unamuno had the pain of witnessing a civil war in his town with fanatical religious overtones while Newman relished the truthfulness of an Englishman within a State Church.

Their adolescence involved both changes in conscience and challenges to traditional religiosity. Newman and Unamuno began to be avid readers of philosophy: deists like Paine and Hume are mentioned in Newman's Apologia Pro Vita Sua, while Unamuno in his Recuerdos and Ensayos speaks of Kant, Descartes and Hegel. Newman accepted, then questioned, the evangelical Protestantism of his mentor, Rev. Mayers, whereas Unamuno rejected the interpretations of Donoso and Balmes. Philosophical searching and emotional mysticism are characteristics of their love of truth and life. Though their convictions and authorities were different, both preferred to question
formerly-held doctrines in order to follow their own opinions rather than preconceived dogmas.

Both had early experience with death: Newman that of his sister and his own weak health, Unamuno that of his father and a bloody civil war on his doorstep. The question of all questions for both was that of life beyond the grave, and both found reason lacking. In Newman's case, he came across rationalist liberalism, understood as a rejection of religion, on arrival at Oxford. This dream was rudely shattered by the awareness of his infirm body while his letters, diaries and poems show how his sister's demise shattered his acceptance of an ideology reduced to this world. Unamuno followed a more philosophical path in Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos to refute the rationalist proofs—by reason alone—of the existence of God and personal immortality. Their analysis of the limitations of human reason brings both writers to see the realities of illness and death, teaching them that there are mysteries our human minds simply cannot reach. And precisely because our minds are limited in their knowledge of essential truths, both Unamuno and Newman will deduce in their lives and writings that no human knowledge may claim to be totally complete. Though their conclusion will go towards different definitions—"private judgment" in Newman; "sentimiento trágico" in Unamuno, nonetheless their perspective holds. No human mind may insist that their personal view on truth is whole and complete, to the exclusion of all others.

Freedom of conscience for both Newman and Unamuno meant agony in exile. Both were banished from their respective universities and churches. Unamuno was also
exiled from his beloved Spain, whereas Newman was considered suspect in his adopted Church. In both cases, the authors were motivated by love for those Institutions, but were willing to pay the price of dissenting followers of conscience. Neither accepted so-called blind obedience nor happy ignorance. This courage either to leave or be exiled presupposes the supremacy of conscience over institutions, however fearful.

The relationship of both with the institutional Roman Catholic Church is obviously their most notable difference. While Newman became a famous convert, Unamuno was branded the "hereje máximo." While one is its foremost intellectual proponent in the English-speaking world, the other is blamed as leading many Spanish speakers to heresy, if not apostasy. Nonetheless, both changes, for and against Catholicism, took place because both felt that was their duty, there and then. Their decisions were based on an intellectual analysis of historical Catholicism, Newman in An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine and Unamuno in La agonía del cristianismo. And, as writers, both decided to go public, in the presupposition that readers could decide for themselves. And, seeing that they did alter their institutional allegiance, such a turnaround implies the freedom of conscience of Newman and Unamuno to do so, while their persuasive writings entail they believed their followers had a similar right to search and question, doubt and decide.

Unamuno and Newman both deepen their philosophy of life from a perspective of death. By analyzing the experience of death, Newman and Unamuno gave their lives meaning. While Newman lived the reality of an agony close to death in Sicily, related in the Apologia and his poems as later giving him courage to follow his conscience,
Unamuno in the Sentimiento trágico philosophically sees the problem of personal immortality at the heart of our conscience. The role of religion is thus explained as a pluralistic attempt to satisfy the human need for personal immortality. Hence, the mystery of life after death implies the possibility of various answers to the enigma of its contents. And these various answers suppose the free search in conscience for a plausible religious solution.

The two most famous works of both authors, dealing with issues of conscience, came towards the end of their lives: “A Letter to the Duke of Norfolk” and San Manuel Bueno, mártir. Again, apparently, the differences could not be greater. While the former seeks to defend Catholicism, the latter presents its protagonist curate as a non-believer. However, a careful reading of the context and finality of both works lead us to affirm that both defend the right of conscience to dissent from authority, while obedience to authority can never be either total nor absolute. So, while Newman affirms the supremacy of a Catholic’s conscience over Church and State, Unamuno skillfully combines the disbelief of the priest with his respect for the conscience of his flock.

So, ultimately, despite following diverse paths and arriving at divergent destinations, both Newman and Unamuno believe in following conscience wherever it may lead while freely searching for truth in life and life in truth, respecting freedom of conscience for all. This is their faith: “sinceridad, tolerancia y misericordia.”

176
Notes


CHAPTER X

EPILOGUE

Y no estarás de veras completa y absolutamente solo
hasta que te despojes de ti mismo,
 al borde del sepulcro.¹

Death is the final line.²

To understand Newman's toast to and Unamuno's defense of conscience, we have
chosen a chronological development in order to have as an ultimate guiding interpretative
principle their lives themselves. Newman claims that “a man's life lies in his letters.
Biographers varnish; they assign motives; they conjecture feeling [...] they palliate or
defend.”³ Unamuno insists that “lo que en un filósofo nos debe más importar es el
hombre.”⁴ So, possibly the best epilogue to our essay are the conclusions to Newman's
and Unamuno's lives played out in defense of freedom of conscience.

In Newman's case, as late as September 1876, he had made a note in his private
journal, for the benefit of friends after his death, referring to the unjust treatment he had
received from religious authorities in return for his labors on behalf of the Church. Again,
he insists that he is not disappointed nor ambitious, but feels a “scorn and wonder at the
injustice shown me.”⁵ He knows some will read this as disappointment at not receiving
promotion in the Church, but is convinced that precisely his lack of interest in
ecclesiastical career advancement makes him follow his conscience and speak his mind
freely:
But I had no wish to get it [promotion], and it was my very consciousness that I never had had such aspiration, nor felt any such disappointment, and was simply careless whether they thought I had or no, that made me thus speak. And at other times of my life also I have used words which, when I used them, I saw could be used against me, but did not care whether they were so used or not, from a clear conscience that it would be a mistaken use of them, if they were. (*Autobiographical Writings* 273-74)

However, the University and Church that either exiled or doubted him were now to invite Newman back into their domains as a glorious son.

So, on 15 December 1877, Newman received an invitation from the President of Trinity College, Oxford, to become the college’s first honorary fellow. Newman was overjoyed:

> I have just received a very great compliment, perhaps the greatest I ever received. Trinity has been the one and only seat of my affections at Oxford, and to see once more, before I am taken away, what I never thought I should see again, the place where I began the battle of life [. . .] is a prospect almost too much for me to bear. (*Letters and Diaries* 23: 283-84)

As a way of showing gratitude to Trinity College, he took the “bold step” of dedicating the new edition of the *Development of Doctrine* to its President. In the dedication he noted the “happy coincidence, that whereas its first publication was contemporaneous with my leaving Oxford, its second becomes, by virtue of your act, contemporaneous with a recovery of my position there.”

After writing this entry, only one further line was added: “Since writing the above I have been made a Cardinal!” (*Autobiographical Writings* 275). John H. Newman, once considered by some Catholics as the “most dangerous man in England,” now became Cardinal Newman in one of the first acts of Leo XIII. Pope Leo is said to have his doubts.
Years later, he told an English visitor: “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 honoring Newman. I always had a cult for him. I am proud that I was able to honour such a man” (Letters and Diaries 29: 426).

In this essay we have not referred to Cardinal Newman with such a title, precisely because Newman only became a cardinal at age 78. All of his writings and witness were accomplished earlier in life. So, here, we agree with Frank Turner that our protagonist is not “John Henry Cardinal Newman” but simply John Henry Newman. Nonetheless, the two loves of his life, university and church, had joyously come back together in an astonishing way at the very end.

Unamuno’s conscience led him to a totally different end with his beloved university of Salamanca, country of Spain and religion of his childhood. On October 12, 1936, as a witness to his country bleeding to death on the battlefield and his own Salamanca home to foreign troops of “liberation,” the lonely old man could not take it any longer. Though not scheduled to speak, he stood up to denounce the hatred, violence and sectarianism of General Millán Astray, whose battle cry had been “¡Viva la muerte!” His conscience inspired courage to face the armed guards and cowed civilians in the Great Hall of the University of Salamanca. In answer to the General’s interruption “¡Muera la inteligencia!” Unamuno declared: “Venceréis, pero no convenceréis.”

The consequences for Unamuno were tragic: again he was demoted as Rector of the University, his friends insulted him at his afternoon café and the State confined him to house arrest. Upon his death, the Church took over his religious funeral and the military
gave his open tomb the Fascist salute. University, Church and State seemed to have vanquished the final words of Unamuno.

However, as this essay hoped to show, the free voices of conscience in both Newman and Unamuno are clear and courageous in our world today. Force, fear and falsehood have not convinced!
Notes


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183


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