
Bryce A. Evans
University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, bryce.a.evans@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.stthomas.edu/sod_mat
Part of the History of Christianity Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
https://ir.stthomas.edu/sod_mat/18
Objective and Subjective Elements of Faith in John Henry Newman and Joseph Ratzinger

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Divinity

Of the University of St. Thomas

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in Theology

© Copyright

All Rights Reserved By

Bryce A. Evans

St. Paul, MN

(2017)
This thesis by Bryce A. Evans fulfills the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Theology approved by William B. Stevenson, PhD, as Thesis Adviser, and by David P. Deavel, PhD and by Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson, PhD as Readers.

William B. Stevenson, PhD, Thesis Adviser

David P. Deavel, PhD, Reader

Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson, PhD, Reader
# Table of Contents:

**Introduction:** ................................................................................................................................. 1  

**Part I: Objectivity and Subjectivity** .......................................................................................... 17  
   A. Faith’s Objectivity..................................................................................................................... 17  
   B. The Subjective Aspect.............................................................................................................. 25  
      i. *The Individuality of the Human Person: Newman’s Personal Liberalism* ....................... 34  
      ii. *Implicit - Explicit* ............................................................................................................... 41  
      iii. *The Imagination* ................................................................................................................ 51  
      iv. *Conscience* ....................................................................................................................... 63  
   C. Conclusion: the *Apologia* and Overcoming Modernity from Within....................................... 73  

**Part II: Reading History** ............................................................................................................ 81  
   A. Development and Stability......................................................................................................... 81  
   B. Personalism and the Christian “Idea”......................................................................................... 101  
   C. Ratzinger’s Christocentric Imagination..................................................................................... 109  

**Part III: Important Objections** ................................................................................................ 119  

**Part IV: Communal Subjectivity** ............................................................................................. 124  
   A. The Church as Communal Subject in History........................................................................... 124  
      i. *Revelation as Dialogue* ........................................................................................................ 127  
      ii. *The Role of Tradition* ......................................................................................................... 130  
      iii. *The Communal Subject* ..................................................................................................... 137  
      iv. *Authority and Subjectivity* ............................................................................................... 142  
      v. *The Hermeneutic of Faith* .................................................................................................... 148  
      vi. *The Redemption of Reason* ............................................................................................... 154  
   B. History and Truth....................................................................................................................... 160  

**Conclusion:** ................................................................................................................................ 163  

**Bibliography:** ............................................................................................................................. 174
Introduction:

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”

It is a noteworthy curiosity of modern thought that, however much it may be typified by its famed “turn to the subject,” it has nevertheless been marked at nearly every crucial step by a quest, not for subjectivity, but for objectivity. It was for the sake of dispelling the illusions of intellectual caprice so as to focus us resolutely on solid, practical reality that Bacon waived consideration of formal and final causality in favor of the material and the efficient. Similarly, it was to clear away the crooked and irregular alleyways of scholastic controversy that Descartes took up his “wrecking-ball” of methodological doubt, uncovering the self-knowing cogito as the foundation of shared certainty. And it was to overcome Humean skepticism that Kant set upon a new course for knowledge through his thematization of the transcendental subject.

Yet at each juncture, the result was a recession from, rather than a securing of, the object of the mind’s quest. A tragic dimension emerges here. The more the mind sought to grasp, the

1 “Objectivity” is loosely defined here as shared knowledge independent of incommunicable individual perspectives. Naturally, the notion undergoes significant alterations through the course of the centuries. Kant, for instance, entertains a quite different understanding than Aquinas would have had in his day. Hence a broad application of the term is necessary here. As the two terms are correlative to one another, the same must go for “subjectivity” as goes for “objectivity”: its application must be similarly broad. Initially we can define it as the incommunicable sphere (or locus) of experience and action. As the paper proceeds, both concepts will attain to greater clarity.

2 See Francis Bacon, Cogitata et Visa. cf. id., The New Organon, Book II, aphorism 9.

3 cf. Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method, Part II. “When one observes their indiscriminate juxtaposition…and the consequent crookedness and irregularity of the streets…I thought that I could not do better than resolve at once to sweep them wholly away.”

4 The expression is Hume’s, but it captures well the Cartesian approach. cf. Descartes, Mediations on the First Philosophy, I: “The removal from below of the foundations necessarily entails the downfall of the whole edifice.”


6 This cannot be regarded as purely innocent or accidental. From the outset, the modern project involved a certain subordination of theory to the “relief of man’s estate” (see Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, Book I, v, 11), which cannot but also entail a subordination of the intellect to the will that inhibits the pursuit of truth. Nevertheless, this is not the whole story. There is a sincerity in these figures’ quest that needs to be respected.
less it possessed. Bacon, by effectively silencing its deepest questions, helped pave the way for a positivism that could no longer discern being as an object for the mind, but only the “factual” phenomena presented to the senses. Descartes, with his “new” foundation of knowledge, set the table for all manner of skepticism, and generated a dualist occasionalism that could no longer bridge the gap between the intellectual and material realms. The same pattern echoes down the centuries. Husserl’s clarion call in his development of phenomenology was “back to the things themselves,” but this did not prevent his desire for scientific rigor from eventually forcing him into solipsistic starting point. And Heidegger, for all his moments of brilliance in recalling the mind to an attentiveness to being-as-it-unveils-itself, ended by resolving philosophy back into a poetic agnosticism.

Amid this rather desperate slide, Kant might briefly have appeared as a beacon of hope, and would seem almost to have succeeded in his quest, if only his assertion of the universality of the forms of transcendental understanding could be believed. But this dream was short-lived. With the rise of cultural and historical consciousness in the nineteenth century, it soon dissolved into the mists of Germanic folklore. For “cultural consciousness” amounted to the realization that men of different places and tongues often think in strikingly different ways, ways not easily reducible to so many erroneous deviations from the Prussian ideal. And to this realization, “historical consciousness” provided the diachronic complement. For to be deep in history is, among other things, to see that men of different ages also think in ways far different from men of one’s own:

---

7 Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Vol II.*
8 i.e., in the development or shift from the more “realist” approach of the *Investigations* to the phenomenological idealism detailed in *Ideas.* Husserl’s legacy remains ambiguous: while many positive fruits have emerged when his methodology is paired with other complementary modes of analysis, many of his followers and intellectual descendents have only continued along the trajectory towards an ever-more isolated and incommunicable subjectivity. cf. Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology.* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2000), 211-27.
working with different assumptions, asking different questions from different angles, even estimating the value of logic in different ways. The upshot of all this is that the mind, far from being a stable bedrock of universal knowledge, is something that moves and varies over time, whose structures cannot be taken for granted from some pure *a priori* perspective that might claim to provide us with a shared framework. Kant’s bold synthesis thus left us all the more confined in the prisons of our modern minds. Yet again, each bold step forward served only to cement us further in our banishment.

Granted, it was no coincidence that Kant’s project was derailed in this way. The schematization of the structures of human subjectivity led naturally to a heightened sensitivity to the variations which the mind might undergo in different times and places. When coupled with a critical methodology that effectively sealed itself off from the “voice of being,” this newfound awareness was left without a hermeneutic by which to discern a unity within the variety.\(^{10}\) Hence, as the “turn to the subject” progressed, the danger of total relativism loomed ever greater.\(^{11}\) The roots of this development predate the nineteenth century, of course, and all of the philosophers mentioned here. The seeds of disintegrating historicism, positivism, and subjectivism can be seen as early as the fourteenth century,\(^ {12}\) and acquire a special vigor in the Protestant Reformation. The

\(^{10}\) cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today” in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: the Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 15. Commenting on the shortcomings of historical-critical scholarship, he states: “The real philosophic presupposition of the whole system seems to me to lie in the philosophic turning point proposed by Immanuel Kant. According to him, the voice of being-in-itself cannot be heard by human beings. Man can hear it only indirectly in the postulates of practical reason…small openings through which he can make contact with the real…For the rest, as far as the context of his intellectual life is concerned, he must limit himself to the realm of the categories. Thence comes the restriction to the positive, to the empirical, to the ‘exact’ science, which by definition excludes the appearance of what is ‘wholly other.’”

\(^{11}\) The next attempt at unification came with Hegel and his all-embracing theory of history. This project too was bound to fail. Knotted as it is by the often irrational decisions of human freedom, history is far too thorny a reality to squeeze into elegant philosophical schemas.

purpose here has not been to lay out a strict chronology, but to point out the fruition of these trends in late modernity and the challenge which they presented to the faith in that time.

Indeed, it is not difficult to see what a threat such a situation would pose to the life of faith. From its inception, Christianity has been concerned with the bold proclamation of sure and certain truths, truths on which men could stake their lives, and for which they have been willing to die. Yet it was just this sort of thing that modern thought had difficulty embracing. Indeed, it seemed preternaturally indisposed to such claims. No wonder, then, that attempts at a rapprochement between faith and modernity were so often plagued by perils, and that the Church in turn grew so readily suspicious of appeals to subjectivity and historical research. For these appeals, which seemed necessary if faith was to retain its vitality in the modern age, tended toward the devaluation of dogma in favor of a subjective experientialism that inevitably blunted the edge of the Church’s kerygmatic proclamation. On the Protestant stage, this trend was initiated by Schleiermacher and his definition of faith as the “feeling of absolute dependence.” ¹³ In the Catholic world, it was advanced especially by Alfred Loisy, who reduced dogma to the symbolic expression of faith’s experience, and finally relativized its value altogether.¹⁴

In response to such distortions, Catholic orthodoxy countered with a firm insistence upon the objectivity and stability of its confession.¹⁵ This took the form of a presentation that placed a heavy emphasis on faith’s doctrinal or propositional aspect and left very little room for notions of

¹⁵ Once again, like the malady it sought to address, this response had its roots in earlier controversies, specifically in the anti-Protestant polemics that sought to oppose the Reformation’s assertion of a rupture between scripture and tradition. Nevertheless, it took on new shape and energy in the controversies of the nineteenth century. cf. O’Connell, Critics on Trial, 22-39, 132-54, 333-54.
historical development. Again, the correlations here are no coincidence. The need to insist upon faith’s objectivity led naturally to a focus on its conceptual content, since it is precisely by the abstract concept that the human mind is able to transcend the particularities of its individual experience and arrive at a shared knowledge that measures the mind. Lacking this transcendence, we find ourselves still enmeshed in a subjectivism that is unable to enter into a communal profession. Hence the felt need, in the contest against modernism, for theologians to insist upon the distinct conceptual clarity of faith’s content, and the concomitant tendency to conceive of faith as a list of propositions to be believed on the basis of verified authority.

This identification of the faith’s object with its propositional content was connected in turn to an insistence upon a more or less absolute continuity of the faith’s articulation throughout history. If the content of faith simply is its propositional articulation, then any serious variation in this articulation would seem to undermine faith’s essence. Thus the only allowable form of “development” within the tradition was that of the occasional deduction drawn from the combination of various previously held propositions. Aside from such logical exercises, no other ambiguities were allowed. This naturally left little room for history in theology. Insofar as it was admitted into the field at all, it took the form of the radical “successionist” narratives typical of anti-Protestant polemicists like Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, wherein every modern credenda had to

17 i.e., not an authority dependent on subjective experience but on a combination of preambula fidei and supernatural signs, all of which can be established by apodictic proof.
18 Such were the theories of the Baroque Scholastics: de Lugo, Suarez, Molina, Vazquez, et. al.
19 This term is used by Parker and Shea to refer to an “a-historical vision of the Christian past.” See Receptions of Newman, 32.
be explicitly traceable to the oral tradition of the Apostles. But this practice more often resembled proof-texting than it did rigorous historical study.

At this point, we can risk a summarizing thesis, drawing together the abovementioned correlations: the more one exclusively emphasizes subjectivity in faith, the more likely one will be to admit fluctuations in its doctrinal articulations; and the more one exclusively emphasizes objectivity in faith, the more likely one will be to deny any such fluctuation. If the first of these tendencies finds its extreme instantiation in the modernism that eviscerates the ongoing significance of past dogmatic commitments, we can discern the opposite extreme in some of the reactions against modernism. With the rise of neoscholastic Thomism after the promulgation of *Aeterni Patris*, the fight against heresy became identified with the construction of an ideal conceptual system, built on the buttresses of a rigorous natural philosophy, whose crystalline clarity and apodictic proofs left little room for appeal to subjective experience. The result was an understanding of faith that can justly be called “ahistorical”: since truth was adequately secured through appeal to dogmatic promulgation and rigorous metaphysical reasoning, historical study became, strictly speaking, superfluous—nice window-dressing perhaps, but not essential to theology.

---


21 Once again, subjectivity that is self-aware of its limitations is more prone to see the modulations of subjectivity throughout history: as I exist in a particular historical moment (i.e., as my subjectivity is historically conditioned), so too did the men who existed before me. The ancient tension between Heraclitus and Parmenides reemerges here in a new light.

22 This statement paints in broad strokes, of course. It is not intended to typify all of neoscholastic thought, much less all of Thomism. But it does describe significant tendency of the period that would eventually come to be seen as problematic.
This resurgence of Thomism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries played a pivotal role in defending orthodoxy against the modernist incursions of its times. Nevertheless, it did not take long before certain expressions of dissatisfaction began to be voiced from various quarters in the Church regarding this mode of theologizing. The concerns centered on the question of whether faith could really survive without reference to history and subjective experience.

Concerning history, ongoing research into the writings of the Church Fathers, continuing the line of work begun in Tübingen and Oxford in the nineteenth century, was unearthing a wealth of insights (especially in the areas of anthropology, ecclesiology and liturgy) that did not appear in the neoscholastic manuals of the day, and which provided possible points of departure for a more positive engagement with certain contemporary modes of thought, especially existentialism, phenomenology and personalism. Could theology afford to consign these profound thinkers of past generations to the archives of history, assuming that all of their useful insights were already synthesized within the Thomistic system? Must it not rather continually return to revivify itself in these ever-fruitful sources?

This question became more urgent when posed in relation to the Scriptures. For neoscholastic theology very often gave the impression that it had adequately synthesized within itself not only the insights of all previous theologians, but also the very contents of the Scriptures themselves, such that theology had no real need to return even to these sources, but could occupy itself mainly with teasing out the finer details of its system. Indeed, statements were sometimes made to the effect that theology actually improved upon Scripture, insofar as it rendered its content

---


24 Interestingly, insofar as the neoscholastic Thomism of the time approached this attitude, it came formally close to Hegel, and his subordination of history to the synthetic dynamism of ideal spirit. This neglects the role played by “forgetting” in tradition, and thus the need for fresh recollection. cf. Joseph Mueller, “Forgetting as a Principle of Continuity in Tradition.” Theological Studies LXX:4 (2009), 751-81.
more clearly, purifying it of its obscurities.\footnote{A late example of this tendency can be detected in Yves Simon, “The Rationality of Christian Faith.” Thought \textit{XXXI}:4 (1956): 495-508. “Prior to theological work, revealed truths are expressed in the confused concepts of common sense and of Christian sense; it is up to theology to express the same truths with a greater degree of appropriateness and precision. The transition from the more confused to the more distinct, independently of any fresh discovery of truth, is a progress in quality and intensity; it is, in the most proper sense, a progress in intelligence.” (504) Ratzinger sees traces of the same attitude in \textit{Humani Generis} 21, which laments “how false is a procedure which would attempt to explain what is clear by means of what is obscure,” and defines the task of theology as that of showing “how a doctrine defined by the Church is contained in the sources of revelation.” Ratzinger comments: “One can hardly deny that the point of view which sees only Scripture as what is unclear, but the teaching office as what is clear, is a very limited one…” Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II}. Vol III. ed. Herbert Vorgrimler. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 197. The point here is not to imply that there is no sense in which the import of revelation is clarified by its progressive propositional articulation; it is simply to observe that there is always another sense in which scripture remains more clear and more “appropriate” than any theological gloss, such that it always behooves theology to return to scripture to be judged by it. Failure to appreciate this is an indicator of rationalism, which can conceive of no other clarity than that of the concept.} For all practical purposes, then, Scripture was reduced to the role of handmaid to theology and dogma: hauled in when a proof-text was required, but hardly functioning as a living source.

Here the question could not but be asked: had not a vital order been inverted in all this? Had not theology, and with it the teaching office, placed itself in a position over and above the Scriptures, rather than taking up the role of the servant from below? Is it revelation that is under the Church, or rather the Church that is under revelation?\footnote{See Ratzinger, \textit{Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II}, 197: “to reduce the task of theology to the proof of the presence of the statements of the teaching office in the sources is to threaten the primacy of the sources which, (were one to continue logically in this direction) would ultimately destroy the serving character of the teaching office…its primary service is to listen.”} This question relates beyond itself to that of whether revelation is best regarded simply a past event, whose content has been effectively “mastered” and which we now merely hear about through authoritative witnesses, or whether it retains an ongoing presence \textit{in} and hence a present lordship \textit{over} the life of the Church. If the latter, then it would seem that theology has a duty to constantly return to the living fonts of revelation in order to be continually renewed therein, fonts whose content can never be synthetically mastered.

This line of questioning presses to a deeper level still. For is Jesus himself merely a figure from the past whom believers only hear about, or is he someone whom they can personally know as the revelation of the Father? (Jn 14:9) If the latter, then must not theology also continually return
above all to the Source of all sources, Jesus Christ, and can this be done without admitting vital spaces for subjective experience within the structure of faith? The New Testament certainly does speak of intellectual commitments as constitutive elements of faith, but it is also inclusive of elements of experience, encounter, relationship and discipleship, all of which involve more personal modes of “knowing.” Is it possible to isolate the content of such a faith from the transformation undergone by the human subject, as though it were accessible on some neutral ground? To some it seemed that neoscholasticism, with its hyper-objectivity, had conceded too much ground to the spirit of modern positivism, adopting “positivistic criteria” to measure the certitude of faith, and reducing its “sources” to the level of positive “historical sources,” thereby

---


29 This is the principal objection of Karl Barth to what he considers an inherent tendency of Catholic theology. See Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Models of Revelation.* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 89-90: “Barth ridicules the apologist, who has to go forth from theology carrying a white flag and seeking the parley with unbelief on neutral ground.”

30 See Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II,* 178, where he accuses neoscholasticism of attempting to “make the certainty of faith measurable by positivist criteria so that it may compete with the positivism which dominates all contemporary thinking,” cf. ibid., 191: “In a typically modern spirit of positivism, it identified revelation with its historical presentation and thus falsified the original idea of ‘sources’ in the theological sense in favor of an historical idea of ‘source.’”
effectively excising any personal dimension from faith. Theology could no longer address the heart.\textsuperscript{31} Even the life of prayer and mysticism had been formalized into conceptual systems.\textsuperscript{32}

Thus the critique of a growing consortium of theological writers in the twentieth century can be summed up as follows: theology cannot leave its sources behind, or cease returning to them as though this were some already accomplished project.\textsuperscript{33} Faith and dogmatic theology cannot be one thing, and the knowing and following of Jesus another. My subjective-historical experience of knowing Christ in word and sacrament cannot simply be one thing, and revelation another. The mystical life of grace cannot be one thing, and discipleship another. The authority of the Christian conscience cannot be one thing, and that of the Church another.\textsuperscript{34} In other words there was a felt need for a renewed integration to take place in theology, wherein the collective wisdom of the

\textsuperscript{31} However much this deficiency may have been counteracted by the robust devotional life of the times, the mutual isolation of the two realms was clearly problematic. For theology risks becoming wonder-less and cavalier when isolated from devotion, and devotion risks growing shallow and prone to deviations when cut off from theology. This problematic is a crucial element of Henri de Lubac’s critique of \textit{natura pura} schemas: forced by the conditions of their dialectic to deny any direct correlation between grace and natural human desire, they effectively sealed off any avenue by which theological truth might appeal to the heart. John Henry Newman, in his preface to the third edition of \textit{The Via Media}, accounts for the possibility of such disjunctions in the life of the Church by noting the necessary complexity of her threefold mission (priestly, prophetic and kingly): the demands of truth, of worship and of political prudence do not always perfectly align in this world, though they will never contradict each other absolutely. Thus certain disjunctions can and do arise in the history of the Church without prejudice to her supernatural and divine character. Nevertheless, such disjunctions cannot be ultimate. Hence there is need for the three offices to remain in close connection with each other, moderating and enlightening one another. As devotion must at times be corrected by theology and pastoral authority, so theology must at times be tempered and measured in her conclusions by the prerogatives of charity and devotion. He gives many examples of such corrections in history. De Lubac’s may represent another. See John Henry Newman, “Preface to the Third Edition” in \textit{The Via Media of the Anglican Church}. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1888), xxxvi-xciv.

\textsuperscript{32} The ascetical manuals that proliferated throughout the modern period, while they collected much of the authentic wisdom of the saints and so retain a perennial value as places of reference, must nevertheless be regarded as highly questionable in terms of their spiritual fruits, insofar as they attempted to reduce the ways of God’s Spirit in people’s lives to a rigid and rational system, neglecting the freedom that “blows where it wills.” God always retains the rights to break the rules we might set for him, insofar as these are distinct from the rules which he sets for himself.

\textsuperscript{33} Ratzinger notes that renewal in the Church generally comes by way of someone returning directly to the scriptural word and discovering its demands anew. See Joseph Ratzinger, “Conscience in Time,” trans. W.J. O’Hara, in \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio, Vol II: Anthropology and Culture}. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 25: “something happened which we find more than once in the story of the saint. He suddenly realized that a particular passage in Scripture, which he happened to come across, is meant quite literally and that he must take it literally.”

\textsuperscript{34} Distinctions \textit{in ratio} do not necessarily amount to distinctions \textit{in re}.
Church could be tied back more directly to its personal Source, so that the Whole could once again shine out more clearly in the parts.\textsuperscript{35}

Naturally, the “movement” being referred to here—which is generally associated with term “ressourcement”—was nowhere near so uniform or explicitly articulated as this presentation would seem to indicate. Here we are seeking simply to distill a widespread agitation for reform, never entirely self-consistent and often only partially stated,\textsuperscript{36} and hence not easily categorized by a single label,\textsuperscript{37} and yet which came to be recognized as a legitimate voice of protest against the over-identification of theology with its objective and ahistorical pole: modernism cannot be defeated simply by a thrust in the opposite direction, for here modernity’s tragic breach would remain unhealed. Initially, in the anti-modernist air of the early twentieth century, this call was met with considerable suspicion and even ecclesial reprobation.\textsuperscript{38} Nevertheless, it would go on to enjoy considerable influence in the Church, especially in shaping the documents of the Second Vatican Council, after which it attained an unquestioned dominance over the theological scene in the second half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35} i.e., the personal Whole, who can be known only by persons, and who might fail to appear if the forest is lost for the trees.
\textsuperscript{36} The critique was generally prosecuted simply by highlighting counter-examples of theological method within patristic sources, rather than outright criticism of the regnant Thomism. It was only after certain Thomists sniffed out the implicit challenge in this project that the parties entered into direct controversy. In 1946, the Dominican Thomist Père Marie-Michel Labourdette published a pair of essays in the \textit{Revue Thomiste} which aimed sharp criticism at the new movement. This provoked a response, and forced ressourcement thinkers to more clearly articulate their criticism. See Aidan Nichols, “Thomism and the Nouvelle Theologie.” \textit{The Thomist} 64 (2000), 3-4.
\textsuperscript{37} Such titles as “liturgical movement,” “biblical movement,” \textit{nouvelle theologie}, and ressourcement achieve only partial success in naming the dynamic we are referring to, as it can be detected in all of these, and yet cannot be limited to any one such group of thinkers. With this said, ressourcement is probably the best term to capture the whole, as the desire to “return to the sources” is a common thread throughout.
\textsuperscript{38} Namely, in \textit{Humani Generis} and the subsequent silencing of such luminaries as Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar, though it should be noted that the document takes care not to specify any particular theologians as subject to its rebuke, and with every forceful denunciation also cracks the window open just enough so as to leave space for future developments. Ratzinger speaks of an “anti-modernist neurosis” that “crippled the Church” in the era preceding the Council. See Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{Theological Highlights of Vatican II.} (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 27.
\textsuperscript{39} Together with this post-conciliar ascendency, though, the divisions within the movement also became much more evident, especially as many post-conciliar theologians gravitated toward outright infidelity to magisterial authority.
Recent decades, however, have witnessed renewed criticism of ressourcement \(^{40}\) theology and its descendents, calling into question whether its own critiques of neoscholastic Thomism were justified, and whether it did not in fact simply return the Church to a modernist crisis that dramatically undermined the stability of the faith after the Council. \(^{41}\) To name but a few among many possible examples, Steven A. Long, in accordance with his reassertion of the baroque scholastic tradition regarding nature and grace, has argued against the centrality of history in theology, and for a return to “pure” philosophy as the only adequate foundation for a theology capable of arriving at truth amidst a sea of relativism. \(^{42}\) More recently, Mats Wahlberg has urged, against the manifestational models common in much of ressourcement theology, \(^{43}\) the necessity of a stand-alone propositional revelation as a condition of faith’s intelligibility. \(^{44}\) In these two cases, which represent a broad set of recent literature, the ultimate validity of history and subjectivity as reference points in theology is being called into question.

These arguments, and other associated with them, hearken back with greater or lesser nuance to those of the principal opponent of the ressourcement in the 1940’s: Père Réginald

---

\(^{40}\) For convenience, we will use this term to refer to the whole wide-ranging movement. See footnote 24 above.

\(^{41}\) Ratzinger describes the crisis well: “The faith no longer seemed exempt from human decision making but rather was now apparently determined by it.” Ratzinger, Milestones, 135.

\(^{42}\) This represents a broadly felt sentiment in many circles of the Church today: namely, the concern that an exaggerated focus on history prevents us from ever arriving at the question of truth. Long does seek to nuance his criticism by allowing some role for history within theology, but it remains mostly extrinsic and auxiliary to his method. See Steven A. Long, Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 212-222.

\(^{43}\) Wahlberg uses the term “manifestational” to refer to those modern theories of revelation developed in response to neoscholastic “propositionalism” to account for the role of subjective experience within the structure faith and revelation. These reactions were sometimes so exaggerated as to exclude from faith’s transmission any role to the propositional. See Mats Wahlberg, Revelation as Testimony: A Philosophical-Theological Study. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 14-17.

\(^{44}\) Again, this thesis corresponds to a widely felt sentiment in the Church, which is suspicious of a liberalism that would like to strip faith of all intellectual content. Wahlberg limits his thesis to the defense of the need for propositions in faith’s transmission, and claims to appreciate the legitimacy of complementary manifestational models. But his argument shows that he sees no real need for such complements: the manifestational needs the propositional, but the propositional is sufficient unto itself. He thus returns us to the tortured paths of baroque apologetics, which require long, complex and not thoroughly convincing series of argumentation as a prerequisite for faith. See Wahlberg, Revelation as Testimony, 14-17, 29-31, 124-212.
Garrigou-Lagrange. First in a brief article and then in a more extensive essay, Rome’s leading Dominican dogmatic theologian alerted the Church against what he took to be a renewed incursion of modernist thought within the life of the Church. His principal objection focused on the claim, advanced by some within the movement, that dogmatic content could be preserved amid changing conceptual forms. This claim, he argued, was rooted in Maurice Blondel’s dubious (re)definition of truth as the conformity of mind with life (rather than with reality), and culminated in the eventual evacuation of all objective content from faith. For without stability in its concepts, the mind can have no hope of securing a grasp of extra-mental reality:

How could, in these conciliar definitions, the word to be [i.e., the copula]...make an immutable proposition, whose two terms are continually mutable? It would mean that an iron hook can stay immovably united to the waves of the sea. How can a judgment have an immutable value if there is not immutability in the first apprehension, in the notions themselves that this judgment reunites?47

In such a case, Garrigou-Lagrange argues, faith can only reduce to one thing: spiritual experience; all dogmatic statements become relative to this measure. “Thereby,” he writes, “behold our return to Modernism.”48 When the mind neglects its potency to the to the actuality of external reality, it finds itself locked in an inescapable prison. With this order inverted, it can no longer come to certitude about anything outside of itself, whether it be the existence of God, the miraculous signs that might spur it to faith, or the conceptual content to which it is to assent.49 Thus faith is undermined. Thomism, by contrast, is nothing other than the full schematization of the

---

45 Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., "La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?" Angelicum 23 (July-December, 1946): 126-45; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Essenza e attualità del tomismo (Brescia: La Scuola editrice, 1946). This work was translated into English in 2013 as The Essence and Topicality of Thomism. trans. Alan Aversa.
46 Especially subject to Garrigou-Lagrange’s critique is Henri Bouillard’s assertion that “a theology which is not current is a false theology.” Garrigou takes this to be representative of the ressourcement movement as a whole and moves show its deleterious effects. One can wonder whether this sweeping characterization was entirely fair.
47 Garrigou-Lagrange, The Essence and Topicality of Thomism, 10.
49 Since for Garrigou, faith is exclusively defined in terms of propositional assent, everything depends on the conceptual clarity and stability of faith’s dogmatic content. Ambiguity here would deprive faith of its necessary object.
philosophical priority of act over potency, reality over mind, God over creature: the sole antidote to the modern ailment.\textsuperscript{50} To neglect it is necessarily to slide back into the pit. Hence the perils of the “new theology.”\textsuperscript{51}

The experience of post-conciliar chaos in the life of the Church has led many to return to these arguments of Garrigou-Lagrange with renewed attention and sympathy. Hence, in many quarters, a new shadow of suspicion has fallen over the figures of the ressourcement and their projects. All of this is mentioned here not to render an immediate judgment on the controversy, but simply to show that the tensions involved in the Church’s engagement with the modern world are far from resolved. The questions remain urgent. Can a purely “objective” theology be adequate to its task? Can theology survive without rigorous appeal to subjective experience and to history? Can such an appeal take its place in the heart of theology without ushering it to a destructive relativism? The ongoing vitality and integrity of faith in the modern world will depend, in part,\textsuperscript{52} on how we answer these questions.

* * *

This brief historical survey was necessary to set the stage for the topic of this paper, which will investigate how two important modern theologians, John Henry Newman and Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), have sought to correlate the objective and subjective elements of

\textsuperscript{50} Garrigou-Lagrange, \textit{The Essence and Topicality of Thomism}, 15: “It is thus necessary to save the intellect, heal it, make it understand that the first principles of natural reason and common sense have an ontological value, that they are laws of being which allow one to arrive at true certainty regarding the existence of God, upon which rests the immutable dogmas of the faith…Thomism corresponds to the profound needs of the modern world because it restores the love of truth for the sake of truth itself.”

\textsuperscript{51} Garrigou-Lagrange has in mind certain novel articulations then being circulated regarding grace, the nature-grace relation, human origins, and the Eucharistic presence, many of which received explicit reprobation from the encyclical letter \textit{Humani Generis} in 1950.

\textsuperscript{52} Ultimately, of course, faith’s vitality depends more on the witness of Christian living than on the words of theologians, but the latter do have a part to play, albeit a humble one, mainly concerned with removing obstacles from the path.
faith in fruitful and creative ways. In this pursuit we will try to avoid both saying too little and too much. We will not limit ourselves, for instance, to the simple claim that Newman’s theological vision had significant influence on the thought of Ratzinger-Benedict. This much is clear from the fact that Ratzinger was a German theologian coming of age in the mid-twentieth century, as from the numerous places in his writings where he speaks explicitly to such an influence. Two of Ratzinger’s most beloved seminary professors were devoted students of Newman’s thought, and the latter’s themes crop up repeatedly throughout the Ratzingerian corpus. Most of all, Newman’s impact on Ratzinger is clear in the words by which Pope Benedict XVI praised the great convert at his beatification ceremony: “He has long been an important influence on my life and thought…[an] enduring witness to [God’s] truth.” That Ratzinger revered Newman’s thought, and saw him as principal shaper of his own mind: this much can be taken for granted. On the other hand, we will not go so far as to try to trace any direct lines of dependence between the two thinkers. Ratzinger’s thought is far too rich to admit of reduction to any single influence. That his reading of the English cardinal was shaped and colored by an array of alternative influences: this too can be taken for granted. It would be incomplete simply to characterize Ratzinger as a Newmanian.

Rather this paper will aim to unveil a common shape that appears in the thought of both figures, one which comes to light especially as the two are read together and allowed to mutually illumine and support one another. As this mutual illumination unfolds, we will find that the common shape that emerges can provide us with a powerful resource by which to approach the

---

54 e.g., the then Cardinal Ratzinger’s address in Rome on the first centenary of Newman’s death on April 28, 1990, where he relates Newman’s doctrine of conscience to his own project theological personalism.
55 Alfred Lapple and Gottlieb Söhngen, who directed Ratzinger’s doctoral theses. See Ratzinger, Milestones, 43, 56.
theological difficulties of our age. For both of these men, whose projects parallel each other in significant respects, present us with a seeming paradox that challenges our modern dichotomies: both fought against theological liberalism and its attendant relativism, not by eschewing subjectivity and history, but rather precisely by embracing of them. To put it briefly, we can say that Newman defended the objectivity of dogma through an appeal to subjective imagination that allowed him to mediate between stability and development in Christian history. Ratzinger, in his turn, defended the continuity of tradition through an appeal to historical development that depended on an intimate correlation between faith’s objective and subjective (i.e., experiential) aspects. The specific contours of these patterns and their interrelationship will come into greater clarity as the paper progresses.

The investigation will proceed as follows: first, in a section focusing largely on Newman’s thought and only secondarily on Ratzinger’s, we will investigate the interrelationship between the subjective and the objective in its various aspects. This will lay the groundwork for an appreciation of how his theory of development depends upon his unique approach to epistemology. Second, in a section that will gradually shift its focus to Ratzinger’s thought, we will turn to the question of history, and how the poles of stability and dynamism can be correlated within a theological vision, noting especially the ways in which Ratzinger’s developments help to counter certain objections to Newman’s articulation, while carrying forward its latent possibilities; it is here that we will encounter the central idea enabling a culminating synthesis. Finally, in a concluding section, we will look to apply the insights garnered from our investigation to the contemporary life of the Church, showing how they can help us to resolve the deep tensions that continue to affect her communion and her ability to engage in the mission entrusted to her. We hope to show that these two thinkers, especially when taken together, can provide us with a model of how the light of
revelation can enable us to overcome the modern dilemma precisely from within, both for its resolution and for the faith’s advancement in the world today.

**Part I: Objectivity and Subjectivity**

**A. Faith’s Objectivity**

No honest treatment of the subjective and historical aspects of Newman’s and Ratzinger’s thought could justly begin without stating clearly from the outset that the primary concern of both men lay in the affirmation of faith’s objectivity and constancy. This is especially true of Newman, and it was the principal fault of many of his late-nineteenth-century readers that they passed over this *sine qua non* of his thought in order to isolate those elements that best suited their subjectivism.57 Ratzinger, however, in a semi-autobiographical speech on the occasion of the centenary of Newman’s death, makes clear that the latter’s project had nothing to do with such modernism: “His life’s work [was] a struggle against the growing tendency to view religion as a purely private and subjective matter, a question of personal opinion,” asserting instead that it involved an “objective reality.”58 We hear the same affirmation from Newman’s own lips on the occasion of his creation as a cardinal: “I rejoice to say, to one great mischief I have from the first opposed myself. For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of liberalism in religion.”59 His principal foe then, against which he focused his intellectual energies and in relation to which he framed his mission, was liberalism, which he elsewhere called the “anti-

---

58 Address of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, given at Rome on the first centenary of Newman’s death. 28 April 1990.
dogmatic” principle. We cannot properly understand his achievement unless we grasp this fundamental thrust.

Faith, for Newman, is essentially dogmatic, and cannot be conceived apart from its submission to an authoritatively proclaimed truth. This conviction stemmed in part from the powerful conversion experience that shaped him as a young man, wherein, he recounts, “I received into my intellect the impressions of dogma.” Thus “from the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion; I know no other sort of religion; religion, as mere sentiment, is to me a dream and a mockery.” Such “religion” is a dream and a mockery because it lacks any definite content by which to lift man out of his own pathetic measure and into the measure of God, which alone can account for true conversion of life. Genuine dogmatic faith, on the other hand, involves the necessary transcending of the narrow confines of the individual subject, of one’s own opinion, experience and private judgment, unto a horizon of truth that stands outside of and above oneself, in submission to an authority that comes to meet one with a definite message of salvation. Such was the message entrusted to the apostles, confessed by the martyrs, proclaimed through the centuries, set forth by councils and popes—“they had a message to deliver to the world…a definite message to high and low, from the world's Maker”— and the authority with which it is proclaimed belongs to its essence. That faith has such a definite content, then, that it demands the submission

---

63 John Henry Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk: On Occasion of Mr. Gladstone’s Recent Expostulations*. (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 13: “Was there ever a time when her Bishops, and notably the Bishop of Rome, were slow to give their testimony in behalf of the moral and revealed law and to suffer for their obedience to it? ever a time when they forgot that they had a message to deliver to the world.”
of our minds and can accordingly be set “irrevocably” into human language by a legitimated authority: this lies at the heart of Newman’s concern.64

Liberalism, by contrast, eviscerates faith’s authoritative power by submitting it to a human standard and to the dominance of finite reason. Newman describes it as “false liberty of thought…the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it.”65 Following the lead set forth by John Locke, many well-intentioned apologists in the Anglican world had attempted to defend Christian doctrine by appeal to rational proofs, whereby they hoped to show faith to be in accordance with reason. Locke, in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* defined the love of truth for truth’s sake as “the not entertaining any proposition with greater assurance than the proofs it is built upon will warrant.”66 This is what it meant to be rational: not to affirm anything beyond that which can be explicitly demonstrated. Thus, if faith is to concur with the canons of intellectual honesty, its assents must be warranted at each step by sufficient proofs. In this conception, reason precedes faith and secures its foundations. Faith’s assent enters in only after the proposed truth has been rationally demonstrated.67 It is not difficult to see how this apologetic tack unwittingly paves the way for a

---


65 Newman, *Apologia*, 254: “By Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place.” See Sillem, *The Philosophical Notebook*, 60.

66 John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, ch. 19. “…whoever goes beyond this measure of assent, it is plain, receives not the truth in the love of it; loves not truth for truth’s sake, but for some other bye-end.” Locke’s *The Reasonableness of Christianity* sought to justify the Christian religion in accordance with the strictures of this principle, paving the way for the liberal-rationalist reduction of faith against which Newman would fight throughout his life.

67 See John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before The University of Oxford Between A.D. 1826 and 1843*. Third Edition, 1872. [Oxford University Sermons] (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 182. Newman identifies the primary tenet of rationalism: “that we make up our minds by Reason without Faith, and then we proceed to adore and to obey by Faith apart from Reason; that, though Faith rests on testimony, not on reasonings, yet that testimony, in its turn, depends on Reason for the proof of its pretensions, so that Reason is an indispensable preliminary.”
reduction of faith to mere changing human philosophy: dogma’s authority is replaced by that of the human mind, and, as each “proof” is called into question, the body of Christian truth shrinks down to the point where it no longer has any content left but that of mere “feeling.” Thus it conduces ultimately to a doctrine of “justification by faith independently of beliefs.”

Against this reductive conception, Newman—in an objection not dissimilar to Karl Barth’s later protests against the apologetics of German Protestantism—counters: faith does not depend on human reason but on the testimony of God. It does not rely upon “intrinsic grounds” of the mind but on “the external authority of the Divine Word.” It is not a conclusion drawn from experience or logical premises, but the childlike acceptance of testimony, a “spontaneous movement,” “complete in itself,” responding at once to the trustworthiness of the messenger and to the “intrinsic excellence” of the message. As such, it is capable of taking the mind beyond that which it is able to grasp by its own machinations, and to this extent assumes the form of a

---

68 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 198: “leads [men] to think that Faith is mainly the result of argument, that religious Truth is a legitimate matter of disputation, and that they who reject it rather err in judgment than commit sin … allow themselves to stand on the same ground as philosophers of the world.” cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity.* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 91: “in faith the word takes precedence over the thought.”

69 See John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University.* (Notre Dame: University Press), 165: “Knowledge viewed as knowledge, exerts a subtle influence in throwing us back on ourselves, and making us our own centre, and our own minds the measure of all things. This is [its] tendency….to view Revealed Religion from an aspect of its own.”


73 “Faith, as a principle of knowledge, cannot be exactly analyzed or made intelligible to man, but is the secret, inexplicable, spontaneous movement of the mind (however arising) towards the external word,—a movement not to the exclusion of sight and reason, for the miracles appeal to both, nor of experience, for all who venture for Christ receive daily returns of good in confirmation of their choice, but independent of sight or reason before, or of experience after.” Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 147.

74 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 202: “The act of Faith is sole and elementary, and complete in itself, and depends on no process of mind previous to it.”

75 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 203: “two grounds,—the word of its human messenger, and the likelihood of the message. And why does he feel the message to be probable? Because he has a love for it, his love being strong, though the testimony is weak. He has a keen sense of the intrinsic excellence of the message, of its desirableness, of its likeness to what it seems to him Divine Goodness would vouchsafe” cf. id., *Lectures on Justification*, 146: “…without any other direct medium of evidence than the word of man claiming to be His.”
positive law over the mind. Newman does not hesitate to strike a seemingly stoic note here: as the truth revealed is supernatural, “vouchsafed to us from above” with “divine sanction,” it demands the strictest obedience from man: a “submission” wherein the “Catholic sacrifices his opinion,” along with his feelings and private imagination, to the Word of God. In a passage reminiscent of St. John of the Cross, Newman even speaks of a darkening of the intellect that must precede faith’s illumination:

If the Gospel be a message, as it is, it ever must be more or less what the multitude of self-wise reasoners declare it shall not be,—a law; it must be of the nature of what they call a form, and a bondage; it must, in its degree, bring darkness, instead of flattering them with the promise of immediate illumination; and must enlighten them only in proportion as they first submit to be darkened.

In this way does faith counteract that liberalism which is the “exaltation of man without submission to God.” For it reminds the rationalist who “makes himself his own center,” and all those who “walk by their own light...because self is their supreme teacher,” that “the mind is below truth, not above it.” Humble submission to God is the only path to wisdom.

---

76 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 173: “[It is] the tendency of Revealed Religion to erect positive institutions and laws.”
77 Not as the “so-called philosophical Christians” would have it, who “should be rid altogether of the shackles of a Revelation” and seek “to identify the Christian doctrine with their own individual convictions, to sink its supernatural character, and to constitute themselves the prophets, not the recipients, of Divine Truth.” See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 172-3.
81 i.e., insofar as these might contradict and are not already subordinated to the word of God. See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 39. Newman maligns emotivists in religion: “such men as consult their feelings and imaginations rather than the sure Word of God.”
Thus, while faith gravitates naturally toward wisdom, it remains distinct from and prior to it. Certainly, the purpose of faith’s many doctrines is to impress a simplicity upon us, and hence it belongs to faith to seek that wisdom which sees one thing flowing from another, and ties the parts together into a unified whole. This is the province of theology, and why the latter retains a pivotal role in the life of the Church. Nevertheless, faith comes before such comprehension and does not depend on it. First the mind assents; only afterward does it reason.

Faith from the first makes men willing, with the Apostle, to be fools for Christ’s sake. Faith sets out with putting reasoning aside as out of place, and proposes instead simple obedience to a revealed command.

This is what distinguishes gospel faith from any “mere philosophy thrown upon the world,” subject to the changing thoughts of men. It is not a product of human inference, which can at most attain to a “divine principle,” but a response to the “Divine Agent” that is capable of knowing Him as a Person and hence of recognizing His authority. Faith proceeds from personal authority, and not from personal reflection. It is no “private imagination,” much less a “private judgment.” It

---

87 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 336: “their multiplication is not intended to enforce many things, but to express one,—to form within us that one impression.”
88 Mary is thus the model of faith: “she reasons upon it; not indeed reasoning first, and believing afterwards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. And thus she symbolizes to us, not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the doctors of the Church also…” See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 313.
89 Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 300-1: “…yet profess them they can and must. Embrace them they can, and go out, not knowing whither they go. Faith, at least, they may have; Wisdom, if so be, they have not; but Faith fits them to be the instruments and organs, the voice and the hands and the feet of Him who is invisible, the Divine Wisdom in the Church,—who knows what they know not, understands their words, for they are His own, and directs their efforts to His own issues, though they see them not, because they dutifully place themselves upon His path.”
92 For Newman, argument from personality is argument from authority. See Newman, *Apologia*, 38: “the argument from Probability, in the matter of religion, became an argument from Personality, which in fact is one form of the argument from Authority.”
95 Newman several times identifies “private judgment” as the founding principle of Protestantism. See Newman, *Development of Dogma*, 35. This becomes an important theme for Ratzinger, who repeatedly connects dogmatic authority with the essential “we” structure of Christian faith. See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 90.
does not develop from below, but rather descends “from above” as a “substantive message…guarded and preserved in a visible polity.”

It is this “visible polity” that preserves the faith in its objective character as something prior to human reflection, “public, fixed and permanent,” and it was so that the Gospel might be “acknowledged and authenticated” as such that God “framed a Society of men to be its home, its instrument, and its guarantee.” For revelation cannot be recognized except as infallible, and no infallible revelation could be given were there not an infallible authority to secure it. Thus does Newman call the Church a “divine creation,” an “Oracle of Truth,” a “teacher sent you from God,” with “a claim on [men’s] love and obedience.” Submission to her is part and parcel of the believer’s submission to God and His revelation, and must necessarily extend to a reverent adherence to the linguistic formulations of her dogmatic definitions. For, crucially, “the right exercise of words is involved in the right exercise of thought.” Hence the dogmatic principle: any doctrinal relativism is abhorrent to Newman’s spirit.

If all this sounds rather austere, it should be noted here above all that Newman’s principal objection to liberalism was its failure to produce a religion of the heart. Here we begin to see something of Newman’s paradoxical approach. The real flaw of liberalism, he says, is that it imagines “that belief belongs to the mere intellect, and not to the heart also.” In one sense, then,

---

96 Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, 36: “the Gospel is no mere philosophy thrown upon the world at large, no mere quality of mind and thought, no mere beautiful and deep sentiment or subjective opinion, but a substantive message from above, guarded and preserved in a visible polity.”

97 Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, 85: “He willed the Gospel to be a revelation acknowledged and authenticated, to be public, fixed, and permanent; and accordingly, as Catholics hold, He framed a Society of men to be its home, its instrument, and its guarantee.”


99 Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, 14: “[they] considered the Church to be a divine creation, ‘not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ,’ the Ark of Salvation, the Oracle of Truth, the Bride of Christ, with a message to all men everywhere, and a claim on their love and obedience.”


the problem is not that liberalism is “too subjective,” but rather that it is not nearly “subjective” enough. It does not strike deeply enough. Rather it flits about the surface, imagining itself detached and indifferent to the matters it ponders, holding itself as “a critic and a judge, not an inquirer...he negotiates and bargains...[and] will not throw himself upon and into the evidence.”  

But this is precisely what distinguishes mere philosophy from faith: “one is held as a matter of indifference, the other as a matter of life and death; one is held by the intellect only, the other also by the heart.” Faith is held by the heart as by the conscience, which by “secret instinct” prompts men to embrace the revealed word. Thus it avoids the “fatal error of secular reason” which imagines truth can be judged without “preparation of heart” and “approached without homage.” Rather, remembering that man does not set the conditions for God, it earnestly seeks and humbly embraces the revealed word once it is discovered.

Only in this way, only if revelation comes down from above to address the depths of man’s conscience with divine authority, can religion truly be a matter of life and death. Only this can account for that “spirit that made the martyrs.” A religion of private judgment would lack the mettle to inspire such sacrifice, just as any human authority would lack the leverage to request it.

---

103 Thus the irreligious, passive man, with a dead conscience. See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 70.
105 Newman uses this term to refer to our implicit trust in the senses, which he compares to religious faith. See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 213.
106 Newman sees a profound connection between faith and conscience. See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 19: “the inward law of Conscience brings with it no proof of its truth, and commands attention to it on its own authority, all obedience to it is of the nature of Faith.” cf. id., Lectures on Justification, 146: “[Faith] is an original means of knowledge...founded on a supernaturally implanted instinct; an instinct developed by religious obedience, and leading the mind to the word of Christ and of His Apostles as its refuge.”
108 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 198.
109 See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 72: “when he [St. Thomas] was slow to believe, his fault lay in thinking he had a right to be fastidious, and to pick and choose by what arguments he would be convinced, instead of asking himself whether he had not enough to convince him already...”
Only divine authority could inspire and call forth such an otherwise disproportionate act of love. In other words, dogma is the only proportionate condition for martyrdom. Only if I first stake my life on my profession am later I willing to die for it. This is central to Newman’s appreciation of dogma: “Dogmatism was in teaching, what confession was in act.”\footnote{111 Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 359.} This tells us something, perhaps, about the experience that marked him as a youth: the “impression of dogma” he received there struck him with such force that only a transcendent source, a truth larger than the mind, could account for it. It also tells us something about the deepest reasons for Newman’s insistence that faith must involve a transcendence of the finite subject in submission to an authority outside and above oneself: faith has to be dogmatic precisely in order to strike man to the heart. \textit{Cor ad cor loquitur}.\footnote{112 In highlighting the fruitful tension and inner-correlation between what we are here calling the “objective” and the “subjective” in Newman’s thought, this investigation will follow a similar path to that of John F. Crosby’s recently published book, which develops the relationship between Newman’s “theocentrism” and his “personalism.” See John F. Crosby, The Personalism of John Henry Newman. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2014).}

\section*{B. The Subjective Aspect}

From the conclusion of the preceding section it should now be clear that Newman’s insistence upon the objectivity of faith in no way entailed a denigration of human subjectivity. Indeed, it is his appreciation of human subjectivity that most impresses one upon examining Newman’s writings, and this appreciation which captivated the French modernists who read him so ravenously in the late nineteenth century.\footnote{113 See Keith Beaumont, “The Reception of Newman in France at the Time of the Modernist Crisis,” in Receptions of Newman, 518, on the “newmanisme” of the period.} While the failure of these men to appreciate also Newman’s dogmatic principle led them to gravely miscarry the import of his writings, the later neoscholastic attempt to read Newman into their own objective formalism was no less detrimental.
to an adequate reception of his thought. No neoscholastic manual could ever produce one of those numerous passages in Newman’s corpus that evidence such a finely nuanced grasp of the inner workings of the human mind:

The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation. It passes on from point to point, gaining one by some indication; another on a probability; then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next seizing on testimony; then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory; and thus it makes progress not unlike a clamberer on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself; by personal endowments and by practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him, and unable to teach another. It is not too much to say that the stepping by which great geniuses scale the mountains of truth is as unsafe and precarious to men in general, as the ascent of a skilful mountaineer up a literal crag. It is a way which they alone can take; and its justification lies in their success. And such mainly is the way in which all men, gifted or not gifted, commonly reason,—not by rule, but by an inward faculty.

The reader of Newman becomes accustomed to this experience, oftentimes breathtaking, of having his mind set before him and explained as if for the first time, words being given to experiences he had previously only half-sensed and guessed at, which he had perhaps always suspected but could never bring out into a fully explicit articulation. Such creative perception, such profound phenomenological insight, such delicate sensitivity, could only be the product of a modern mind, one who appreciated the modern predicament and did not seek simply to extract himself from it.

Newman was indeed a lover of the human mind and heart, and could imagine no final opposition between objective “dogmatic correctness” and a “so-called religion of the heart.” As

114 Mark McInroy details the neoscholastic “sanitization” of Newman’s thought that hindered its reception until the mid-twentieth century. See McInroy, “Roman Catholic Receptions of the Grammar of Assent,” in Receptions of Newman, 80-5.
115 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 257.
116 Edward Sillem highlights the anticipations of Husserl’s phenomenology in Newman’s thought. See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 127-39. cf. Bouyer, Newman’s Vision of Faith, 203: “no one has ever grasped so firmly the essential intentionality of human consciousness. This intentionality makes it not only meaningless but entirely vain to try to understand or describe the most subjective reactions of the human consciousness without paying full attention to the objects on which it is focused.”
117 Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 193. He sees this divide as a product of an insuperable fissure at the foundations of Lutheranism between the intellectual and the fiduciary. As we have seen, though, for Newman a religion without dogma would be no religion of the heart at all. cf. Joseph Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents
we have seen, a principal fault of liberalism for Newman was its supposition “that belief is a matter of the intellect only and not also of the heart.” The heart, then, in its orientation to the truth, is a fundamental category for Newman, and it plays a crucial role in his theology and anthropology. His dogmatism cannot be properly appreciated in isolation from this complementary principle. His deep respect for human subjectivity, and especially for Christian subjectivity and conscience, constitutes one of the principal shaping forces of his mind.

This respect is evident in Newman’s hesitancy to impose too much upon the minds of the faithful, and his ultimate discomfort with a model of faith that would leave no breathing space for reason and personal conscience. Dogma is not meant simply to steamroll the human mind, reducing it to a purely passive submission, but rather to become an internal enlivening force. This is why the Church, according to Newman, must exercise her dogmatic authority with great moderation so as not to overburden the faithful, not imposing judgments as a “luxury of devotion” but solely as a “stern painful necessity.” Hence, he says, “she has ever shown the utmost care to contract, as far as possible, the range of truths and the sense of propositions, of which she demands this absolute reception.” Hence “she only speaks when it is necessary” and imposes only the “strict interpretation” of her pronouncements, which extends only to the conclusions themselves and not to reasons by which they are adduced. By the same measure, Newman

---


cf. Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 57: “Dogma was conceived, not as an external shackle, but as the living source that made knowledge of the truth possible in the first place.”


Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, 87. Hence not even the capitula of Trent are regarded as infallible, but only the canons themselves. Newman cites other historical examples. See ibid., 88: “in the Third Council, a passage
expresses his “repugnance to impose upon the faith of others more than what the Church distinctly 
claims of them.” 124 Such an attitude, far from the charge of minimalism hurled at it by certain 
“tyrannous ipse-dixits” 125 of Newman’s day, is simply the respectful reverence with which the 
generous piety of the faithful deserves to be met. 126

This same reverence is reflected in Newman’s ecclesiology, wherein he is always careful 
to leave space for the prophetic current alongside the episcopal, even as he is equally careful to 
avoid any merely democratic interpretations. 127 Episcopal authority is of course beyond question 
for Newman, but he shuns any one-sided portrayal that would construe its teachings solely as 
external imposition, failing to take into account the Spirit that stirs from within. 128 Rather, he 
prefers to speak in terms of a shared breath that moves between the magisterium and the faithful, 
a “conspiratio,” the two partakers of which ought always to be taken “together, as one twofold 
testimony, illustrating each other, and never to be divided.” 129 As both share the same truth, there 
can be no dichotomy between the teacher and the taught. Certainly, the correspondence between 
inspired obedience and inspired teaching is a crucial aspect of this mutuality, but the same Spirit

---

124 Newman, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, 94.
125 See Newman, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, 84.
126 See Newman, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, 94: “To be a true Catholic a man must have a generous loyalty towards 
ecclesiastical authority, and accept what is taught him with what is called the pietas fidei, and only such a tone of mind 
has a claim, and it certainly has a claim, to be met and to be handled with a wise and gentle minimism. Still the fact 
remains, that there has been of late years a fierce and intolerant temper abroad, which scorns and virtually tramples 
on the little ones of Christ.”
127 Hence he is careful to distinguish the sense in which the faithful are to be “consulted” from any sense that would 
imply a submission of the hierarchy to a lay authority. It is not the opinion or judgment of the faithful that is consulted, 
but their testimony and “feelings” as an indicator of the apostolic tradition. See John Henry Newman, On Consulting 
128 cf. Joseph Ratzinger, Journey to Easter: Spiritual Reflections for the Lenten Season. (New York: Crossroad 
Publishing, 1987), 145: “Catholicity is not therefore only an external thing, but also an internal characteristic of 
personal faith.”
129 Newman, Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine, 71. The language is drawn from Pope Pius IX’s Ineffabilis 
Deus.
that inspires obedience also endows the faithful with a certain ‘\textit{sensus}’ for faith’s mysteries,\textsuperscript{130} “a sort of instinct, or \textit{φρόνημα}” planted “deep in the bosom of the mystical body.”\textsuperscript{131} This “sense” or “feeling,” especially when it expands to become the \textit{con-sensus} of the whole, can and, Newman insists, should become an important locus of magisterial discernment, wherein the shepherds can encounter a “faithful reflection” of their teaching as in a mirror.\textsuperscript{132}

Thus it behooves the shepherds to respect and even to consult the \textit{consensus} of the faithful in the exercise of their office; not because authority as such comes from below, but because such a \textit{consensus} can serve as a witness to the apostolic faith, much as a barometer testifies to the state of the atmosphere.\textsuperscript{133} Newman delights to point out those rare examples in Church history wherein it is the faithful (and decidedly \textit{not} the bishops) who are responsible for doctrinal preservation and development.\textsuperscript{134} Such examples show that faith also murmurs from within even as it is spoken from without. This inner voice, this resonance of the faith from within, which can be called an ecclesial conscience,\textsuperscript{135} deserves its proper respect. Newman even suggests that a holy fear is

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[130] Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 72. Newman favorably cites the words of the Bishop of Birmingham (William Bernard Ullathorne): “it is the devout who have the surest instinct in discerning the mysteries of which the Holy Spirit breathe the grace through the Church, and who, with as sure a tact, reject what is alien from her teaching.”
\item[131] Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 73. Newman goes on to cite a French translation of Johan Adam Möhler’s \textit{Symbolique}, in which he discovered a parallel line of thought: “The Spirit of God, who governs and enlivens the Church, gives birth to an instinct in man…an eminently Christian tact, which leads to all true doctrine…this shared feeling, this conscience of the Church is the tradition in the subjective sense.”
\item[132] Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 72. The language is again taken from Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham.
\item[133] See Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 54. This was the method Newman saw employed by Pius IX prior to \textit{Ineffabilis Deus}.
\item[134] See, for example, Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 76.: “I see in the Arian history a palmary example of a state of the Church, during which, in order to know the tradition of the Apostles, we must have recourse to the faithful.” cf. ibid., 70, regarding dogma of beatific vision before the last judgment: “does this not imply that the tradition, on which the definition was made, was manifested in the \textit{consensus fidelium} with a luminousness which the succession of Bishops…did not furnish? that the definition was delayed till the \textit{fideles} would bear the delay no longer? that it was made because of them and for their sake, because of their strong feelings?”
\item[135] See Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 73; note 131 above.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
appropriate before this supernaturally implanted genius.\textsuperscript{136} While the magisterium does not strictly depend upon its affirmations, she is at her best when she pays it heed and nurtures it:

The \textit{Ecclesia docens} is more happy when she has such enthusiastic partisans about her...than when she cuts off the faithful from the study of her divine doctrines and the sympathy of her divine contemplations, and requires from them \textit{fides implicita} in her word, which in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition.\textsuperscript{137}

Apropos here is Newman’s conviction that Christianity must be internal, and can never be relegated to mere external religiosity.\textsuperscript{138} He laments that “the great mass of men” eschew “all religion that is inward,” preferring a “mere pharisaical excellence” or the formality of “mere duty” to the spontaneity of devotion that follows on the “apprehension of Almighty God.”\textsuperscript{139} These, he argues, miss the essence of Christianity, which is no “assault from without,” but an “inward influence,” an “intimate visitation” capable of taking an “inward hold upon us,” and enabling us to grasp its language and logic from within: “catching and mastering it, almost before the words were spoken.”\textsuperscript{140} The forms and subscriptions with which dogma confronts us, therefore, ought not to be mistaken for the sum total of faith. They exist at the service of an inner principle of life, to nurture and protect it, and their importance (qua \textit{external} safeguards) diminishes in proportion as its life grows strong.\textsuperscript{141}

If the structure of justification can be taken as an analogous guide here, we can say that the truth which transcendently exceeds and precedes the mind also becomes something of an

\textsuperscript{136} See Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 70: “Their opinion and advice indeed was not asked, but their testimony was taken, their feelings consulted, their impatience, I had almost said, feared.”

\textsuperscript{137} Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine}, 106.


\textsuperscript{139} Newman, \textit{Sermons Preached on Various Occasions}, 24-5, 42-3.

\textsuperscript{140} Newman, \textit{Sermons Preached on Various Occasions}, 49, 53.

\textsuperscript{141} See Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 188: “The stronger and more living is an idea, that is, the more powerful hold it exercises on the minds of men, the more able is it to dispense with safeguards, and trust to itself against the danger of corruption...forms, subscriptions, or Articles of religion are indispensable when the principle of life is weakly.” Hence the internal dynamism of faith toward wisdom, which perceives the inner logic of the mysteries as it grows. cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches During the Second Vatican Council,” trans. Peter Verhalen, \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I}, 103: “…to lead the Church beyond all external obedience to authority to a trust which has the source of its strength in the insight of a believing conscience.”
immanent principle within the mind as the latter is taken up by it. 142 Thus, just as the Gospel law
is no “outward yoke” but an “inward principle” of liberation, 143 so also is dogmatic faith not an
“external shackle” but a “living source,” 144 “springing up out of the immortal seed of love.” 145
Newman speaks of faith as flowing out of that justification which acts as an “indwelling power”
within us, in us but not of us, 146 uniting itself to our intellects and wills: 147 “the secret power of
God acting directly without observation upon the hearts of men.” 148 As such, faith cannot be
equated with a purely passive submission, but must involve an active internal impulse, which
necessarily unfolds out onto an experiential apprehension of the truth, even if it does not strictly
depend upon this experience at the outset. 149

The mind is active and not passive: in faith, as in all vital apprehensions that carry practical
import for man’s life, it must “throw itself in upon the evidence” if it is to come to truth. This is a
crucial principle for Newman. According to it, and in opposition to modernity’s most basic
assumptions, he rejects mathematics and formal logic as paradigms for human knowledge. 150
Useful and important as these disciplines may be in abstract affairs, 151 they collapse before
concrete reality, which always calls for something more than a disinterested neutrality if it is to be truly apprehended in all of its complex richness. In matters of religious faith above all, space must be left for those antecedent presumptions and anticipations which, as the “creation of the mind itself,” drive the mind beyond what any mere “evidence” or “proof” could deliver to it from without. Theologians err, therefore, when they seek to settle all difficulties by appeal to the pure objectivity of syllogisms or hyper-formalized conceptual systems of perfect logical consistency. These, Newman fears, too often present faith as a kind of logical certainty before which the mind can assume a merely passive stance, a stance that naturally coincides with that cold externalism that knows nothing of Scripture’s pathos. Unbiased neutrality is not an adequate standpoint from by which to adjudicate matters of faith, leading men to liberalism rather than true belief. Hence his quest for a “finer instrument.” See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 150-70. cf. Thomas Norris, “The Development of Doctrine: A Remarkable Philosophical Phenomenon,” 479-80.

Hence the “homage which nature exacts of those who would know her hidden wonders. She refuses to reveal her mysteries to those who come otherwise than in the humble and reverential spirit.” (Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 9) Detached neutrality is not an adequate standpoint, and this is especially true when it comes to the matters of faith: “They cannot, like mathematical proof, be passively followed with an attention confined to what is stated, and with the admission of nothing but what is urged.” (ibid., 275) “Every thing turns on the real meaning of the terms employed, which can only be understood by the religious mind.” (ibid., 89) cf. Joseph Ratzinger, The Theology of History in Bonaventure. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 67-8: “without detriment to the objectivity of faith, the true meaning of Scripture will be found only by reaching behind the letters…demands of each individual reader an attitude which goes beyond the merely ‘objective’ recognition of what is written.” cf. ibid., 71: “[There is] an essential relationship between humilitas and revelatio…a simple, inner familiarity with the mystery of the Word of God.”

See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 225-6: “Mere evidence would but lead to passive opinion and knowledge; but anticipations and presumptions are the creation of the mind itself.” Hence, we must admit “the legitimate influence and logical import of the moral feelings” (ibid., 195). cf. John Henry Newman, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent. (Notre Dame: University Press, 1979), 271: “Certitude is not a passive impression made upon the mind from without by argumentative compulsion, but in all concrete questions…it is an active recognition of propositions as true.” cf. Ratzinger, Biblical Interpretation in Crisis, 7: “Pure objectivity is an absurd abstraction. It is not the uninvolved who comes to knowledge; rather, interest itself is a requirement for the possibility of coming to know.”

See John Henry Newman to Henry James Coleridge, 5 February 1871, in The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman. ed. Charles Stephen Dessain. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 25:280: “Let those who think I ought to be answered, those Catholics, first master the great difficulty, the great problem, and then, if they don’t like my way of meeting it, find another. Syllogizing won’t meet it.” cf. id., Oxford University Sermons, 266: “the great practical evil of method and form in matters of religion,—nay, in all moral matters,—is obviously this:—their promising more than they can effect. At best the science of divinity is very imperfect and inaccurate, yet the very name of science is a profession of accuracy.”

See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 262: “When they witness…the coldness, the formality, the secular and carnal spirit which is compatible with an exact adherence to dogmatic formulaires; and on the other hand, when they recollect that Scripture represents religion as a divine life, seated in the affections and manifested in spiritual graces, no wonder that they are tempted to rescue Faith from all connexion with faculties and habits which may exist in
which to perceive faith’s convicting power. The grounds of belief are not only external but also internal; its origins are not reducible to “apodictic” proofs: “They believe on grounds within themselves, not merely or mainly on the external testimony on which Religion comes to them.”

Accordingly, faith demands a thoroughgoing account of that Christian subjectivity which not only stands at the origins of belief but also perdures as a shaping force throughout the course of its preservation. Just as it is the upright conscience that—with that aid of illuminating grace—gives rise to those “spontaneous presentiments and desires” that condition faith’s assent, so Newman also says it is love that provides the inner sense of balance by which faith is prevented from sliding into the distortions of superstition and bigotry. A sort of hermeneutic circle emerges here:

Right Faith is the faith of a right mind. Faith is an intellectual act; right Faith is an intellectual act, done in a certain moral disposition. Faith is an act of Reason, viz. a reasoning upon presumptions; right Faith is a reasoning upon holy, devout, and enlightened presumptions…as far as, and wherever Love is wanting, so far, and there, Faith runs into excess or is perverted.

Conspiratio: the heart is measured by faith, and the heart becomes faith’s “measure.” Newman refers to love as a spontaneous instinct which, continuing and perfecting the work of the pious instincts in which faith originated, provides faith with an internal measure that prevents it from perfection without Faith, and which too often usurp from Faith its own province, and profess to be a substitute for it.”

cf. ibid., 266: “Other objections…its leading to familiarity with sacred things, and consequent irreverence; its fostering formality; … its weakening the springs of action by inquiring into them; its stimulating to controversy and strife; … its leading the mind to mistake system for truth, and to suppose that an hypothesis is real because it is consistent.” cf. Joseph Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 175: “how little intellectualism and doctrinalism are able to comprehend the nature of revelation, which is not concerned with talking about something that is quite external to the person, but with the realization of the existence of man, with the relation of the human ‘I’ to the divine ‘thou’, so that the purpose of this dialogue is ultimately not information, but unity and transformation.”

156 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 225. Accordingly, faith is essentially personal for Newman. See ibid., 225: “though not believing merely because their fathers believed, but with a faith of their own, yet, for that very reason, believe on something distinct from evidence—believe with a faith more personal and living than evidence could create.” cf. Lectures on Justification, 179.

157 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 226.

158 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 239.

159 Naturally, the two do not “measure” each other in exactly the same sense of the term. The heart is first measured by faith’s content, and then, once attuned to the latter, becomes an indicator that be “consulted” to maintain faith’s proper proportions. There is room for a rhythm between a priori (see Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 195) and a posteriori in Newman’s thought. See Thomas Norris, “The Development of Doctrine,” 475.
overstepping its bounds. Thus is faith a “test of man’s heart…what he thinks likely to be…his convictions, tastes, and wishes.” Christian faith lives only when the believing heart is attuned to its mysteries. It is not enough for the latter to submit to an extrinsic message that is “utterly alien” to its knowledge. It must nourish a taste of that message from within its inner experience. This is why Newman pays such close heed to the mystery of the human heart, and why he refuses to neglect it in his presentation of dogmatic faith. In what follows we will seek to further unfold the various aspects of this theme in his work.

i. The Individuality of the Human Person: Newman’s Personal Liberalism

Closely tied to Newman’s attentiveness to subjectivity is his appreciation of human individuality. He is remarkable for his regard for the uniqueness of each human person and each human mind. Indeed, the words he applies to Saint Paul could well be applied to him: he was a “special friend and intimate of human nature” with a unique capacity for sympathy with mankind and “the tenderest interest in the souls of individuals.” It was this “personal attachment” and “keen affection” that caused him to “prefer ‘the cords of Adam’ and the voice of persuasion” to the imposition of authority, and the same that engendered his fond esteem for the concrete

---

160 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 240-1: “the Faith of a religious mind, a right religious Faith, which is instinct with Love towards God and towards man. Love towards man will make it shrink from cruelty; love towards God from false worship…the principle of Love, acting not by way of inquiry or argument, but spontaneously and as an instinct, will cause the mind to recoil from cruelty, impurity, and the assumption of divine power.”

161 Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 226-7. “…evidence is something, and not every thing…what is to come of the evidence, being what it is…this he decides according to (what is called) the state of his heart.” (227) cf. id., *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 73: “the same sensitiveness and delicacy of conscience, which is the due disposition for faith, is also its safeguard and its nutriment, when at length it is possessed.”


163 i.e., first the experience of the well-tuned conscience which anticipates in some measure the mysteries to be revealed, at least by way of anticipation and desire (See Newman *Oxford University Sermons*, 248-9), and second in the experience of discipleship, which grows out of and perfects the anticipations of conscience. On the importance of “inner experience” for Newman, see Keith Beaumont, “The Reception of Newman in France at the Time of the Modernist Crisis,” in *Receptions of Newman*, 175.


reasonings of individual men: the “thousand various shapes” and the “infinite hues and tints and shades of colour” that each mind will develop in the consideration of any single idea.\textsuperscript{166}

Newman was no friend, then, of those rationalisms that sought to provide a uniform straightjacket by which to measure all minds in terms of an \textit{a priori} idealism.\textsuperscript{167} Rather than uniformity, he delighted in the “diversity with which men reason”\textsuperscript{168} and in the diverse modes by which they hold ideas as true. Doctrines or ideas, according to Newman, are “percolated…through different minds;”\textsuperscript{169} they “expand variously according to the minds…into which they are received; and the particularities of the recipient are the regulating power…or, as it may be called, the form of the development.”\textsuperscript{170} Herein lies the limitation of purely abstract analyses: for the same idea, abstractly considered, can take on radically different shapes depending on how it is held by different persons: “as distinct from itself as are their faces.”\textsuperscript{171} Thus, even an abstractly true opinion can be rendered false by a false mode of holding it:

\begin{quote}
We must never say that an individual is right, merely on the ground of his holding an opinion which happens to be true, unless he holds it in a particular manner…with that particular association of thought and feeling, which in fact is the interpretation of it.\textsuperscript{172}
\end{quote}

Accordingly, someone in formal error may be closer to the truth than someone holding a technically correct opinion in a fallacious manner.\textsuperscript{173} Formal analyses of truth and falsity, then, are

\begin{footnotes}
\item[167] See Edward Sille, \textit{The Philosophical Notebook}, 23-66. See also ibid., 104: “Though the human mind can unravel much that is hidden from us in darkness, the mental processes involved in doing so are fare more complex than any of those suggested by Descartes or Locke.” cf. Frederick D. Aquino, “Philosophical Receptions of the \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 1960-2012,” in \textit{Receptions of Newman}, 57-66. Aquino nicely details Newman’s critique of Locke’s \textit{a priori} approach to human knowledge.
\item[171] Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 267: “It is probable that a given opinion, as held by several individuals, even when of the most congenial views, is as distinct from itself as are their faces.”
\item[173] See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 100: “an opinion being abstractedly true, and yet the person who holds it wrong in his mode of holding it…men who maintain the very reverse may be nearer the truth than he is.” Note the fascinating analysis of human thought that follows in the same passage: “It often happens that, in pursuing the successive stages of an investigation, the mind continually reverses its judgment to and fro, according as the weight
\end{footnotes}
incomplete until the personal condition of the knower—his desires, feelings and presumptions—is taken into account.\footnote{cf. Dulles, Models of Revelation, 279: “Truth of revelation cannot be divorced from the mind in which it inheres, as in written sentences.”}

The same insight applies to the ways in which different men argue and respond to arguments. Formal logic is inadequate to give us the real grounds by which men estimate the value of proofs and evidences, which “recondite reasons”—it is the burden of the Grammar of Assent to show—are far too profound to admit of any simple measurement.\footnote{See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 288-342, on informal and natural inference. cf. id., Oxford University Sermons, 272: “Who shall analyze the assemblage of opinions in this or that mind, which occasions it almost instinctively to reject or to accept each of these and similar positions?...the recondite reasons which lead each person to take or decline them, are just the most important portion of the considerations on which his conviction depends...The science of controversy...has done very little, since it cannot analyze and exhibit these momentous reasons...has done worse than little, in that it professes to have done much, and leads the student to mistake what are but secondary points in debate, as if they were the most essential.”} The same argument can be the more or less convincing to different minds depending on their condition, and even the same mind can respond to the same argument in different ways at different times.\footnote{Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 271: “How very differently an argument strikes the mind at one time and another, according to its particular state, or the accident of the moment.” cf. id., Grammar of Assent, 142-4.} While most modern thinkers would attribute such diversities to so many departures from the rational ideal by men of insufficient intellectual rigor, Newman, quite strikingly, prefers to honor them as flowing from legitimately rational judgments, more rational even than the syllogisms of “paper logic.” Indeed, he accuses those who would dismiss this popular mode of rationality of intellectual shallowness:

Nor can it fairly be said that such varieties do arise from deficiency in the power of reasoning in the multitude; and that Faith, such as I have described it, is but proved thereby to be a specimen of such deficiency...Clear, strong, steady intellects, if they are not deep, will look on these differences in deduction chiefly as failures in the reasoning faculty, and will despise them or excuse them accordingly...men of exact or acute but shallow minds, who consider all men wrong but themselves...who regard the pursuit of truth only as a syllogistic process, and failure in attaining it as arising merely from a want of mental conformity with the laws on which just reasoning is conducted.\footnote{Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 210-11.}
We come into contact here with what Edward Sillem calls Newman’s “Personal Liberalism,” which he distinguishes sharply from that “spirit of liberalism in religion” against which Newman battled throughout his life. The latter liberalism, as we have seen, sought to establish an autonomy of reason by setting up strict standards according to which men could be justified in accepting propositions as true and so live in keeping with their rational dignity. This was the liberty that it called for: the freedom of reason to apply its universal standard. Anything less, it claimed, would reduce man to intellectual slavery. In establishing this universal norm, however, liberalism absolutized the explicit measures according to which man assesses his own thought (e.g., logic, empirical evidence, mathematical necessity), and neglected the possibility that human thought is too deep a thing to be able to comprehend itself. Thus, by imposing a universal form upon all thinkers as the only legitimate measure of validity, it dramatically constricted the range of human thought. Faith, as the most pertinent example, becomes positively irrational because its judgment does not admit of reduction to syllogistic form.

Newman does not allow himself to be determined by this problematic. He does not oppose liberalism, for instance, by denying that human reason has a legitimate autonomy, or by denying that freedom is a condition of man’s rational dignity. Rather, by his “personal liberalism,” we can say with Sillem, Newman argued that “liberalism” was not nearly liberal enough. Reason, for him, was a far broader and richer reality than anything man could comprehend by his explicit formulations. No one grasps the Logos by his system. “How a man reasons is as much a mystery as how he remembers.”

Who shall analyze the assemblage of opinions in this or that mind...the recondite reasons which lead each person to take or decline?...[but these] are just the most important portion of the considerations on which his conviction depends.

---

179 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 259.
180 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 272.
If this is true, if Newman is correct in his claim that “the human mind...is unequal to its own powers of apprehension” and that “it embraces more than it can master,”\textsuperscript{181} that it might not even be aware of the views it holds and by which it is nourished,\textsuperscript{182} if it is thus a mystery to itself that cannot be fully comprehended, then liberal-rationalist philosophers are out of place in their demand that every human judgment conform to the strictures of formal logic, and Newman is justified in allowing vital space for a truly personal (i.e., irreducible) mode of judgment in his theory of knowledge.\textsuperscript{183} This is the freedom he calls for: the freedom of actual minds to think according to their actual methods. As we read in the \textit{Grammar of Assent}, “it is the mind that reasons, and that controls its own reasonings, not any technical apparatus of words and propositions.”\textsuperscript{184} Indeed, the most important human judgments are of this personal nature. They are not reducible to formulaic rules because they strike at the heart of human existence and call upon man’s moral sense. Science may be public and hence assessable by universal grounds “common to all,”\textsuperscript{185} but this corresponds to the tangential manner in which its claims affect the


\textsuperscript{182} n.b. the arresting passage from Newman, \textit{Consulting the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine}, 101-2: “It is a curious phenomenon in the philosophy of the human mind, that we often do not know whether we hold a point or not, though we hold it; but when our attention is once drawn to it, then forthwith we find it so much part of ourselves, that we cannot recollect when we began to hold it, and we conclude (with truth), and we declare, that it has always been our belief.”

\textsuperscript{183} See Sillem, \textit{The Philosophical Notebook}, 74: “He refused to allow philosophers to tell him how men \textit{ought} to think, when he knew that what they said conflicted with the way in which men \textit{do} think.” cf. ibid., 87: “The Rationalist held that philosophical system and formal logic ruled over the individual’s mind; Newman held that the illative reason of the individual judged the value of a philosophical system and the cogency of a logically reasoned argument.”

\textsuperscript{184} Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 276.

\textsuperscript{185} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 271: “A science certainly is, in its very nature, public property; when, then, the grounds of Faith take the shape of a book of Evidences, nothing properly can be assumed but what men in general will grant as true.” cf. ibid., 229-30: “when we come to what is called Evidence, or, in popular language, exercises of Reason, prejudices and mental peculiarities are excluded from the discussion; we descend to grounds common to all; certain scientific rules and fixed standards...current language becomes the measure of thought; only such conclusions may be drawn as can produce their reasons; only such reasons are in point as can be exhibited in simple propositions; the multiform and intricate assemblage of considerations, which really lead to judgment and action, must be attenuated or mutilated into a major and a minor premise. Under such circumstances, there is as little virtue or merit in deciding aright as in working a mathematical problem correctly.”
human heart. 186 Faith, as an existential matter, on the other hand, is of a personal nature, and the
grounds by which its claims are adjudicated are hidden in those secret judgments of the heart that
decide what is probable and what is improbable, what is good and what is bad, what is desirable
and what is undesirable. Syllogisms, accordingly, take a back seat for Newman in the realm of
religion, for these seek to make public what is ultimately personal, and to compel by logic what
can only be arrived at by a free personal judgment. Logic has an important role to play in human
thought, but it is not that by which man is most decisively shaped. 187

Newman is thus keen to arouse a sense of personal responsibility in man, a sense that is
numbed by the passive stance that liberal rationalism assumes before questions of truth. 188 This
stance allows man to hide behind universal forms. But Newman wants each man to feel as though
“individually addressed” by the claims of revelation; 189 addressed in that inner sanctum where the
“original element within us” is “fixed in each individual,” where the “moral perception” or “ethical
sense” abides in the disciplined heart. 190 It is here where the “right or renewed heart” ventures
forth in the embrace of faith; 191 here that we make the judgments that determine us before our

186 See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 113: “No man is entitled to seek the truth about existent things by
deductive reason alone.” Sillem highlights Newman’s contention that formal inference falls short of providing us with
knowledge of concrete reality while also distinguishing his position from that of William Froude, who concludes that
no such knowledge is possible at all.
187 See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 88. As we shall see further on, Newman assigns to logic an important but
primarily negative role in human thought: it is not that by which the mind moves to new truth in creative judgments,
but that by which it critically reflects upon its judgments in a more complex and formal way so as to verify and
188 See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 330: “Men are too well inclined to sit at home, instead of stirring themselves to
inquire whether a revelation has been given; they expect its evidences to come to them without their trouble; they act,
not as suppliants, but as judges…”
189 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 95.
190 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 59-60.
191 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 203.
Judge. This place, the place of conscience, which is irreducible, irreplaceable and hence of eternal value, is where Newman says we “realize our individuality.”

This is where Newman’s personalism comes to the fore. External evidences, sensible miracles, and deductive arguments are all things that are by nature universally accessible and that present themselves equally to all men regardless of moral standing: their undeniability corresponds to their lack of moral import. They do not address the heart but the “intellect only.” But while man is not ethically responsible for his embrace of such certainties, “man is responsible for his faith, because he is responsible for his likings and dislikings, his hopes and his opinions…;” “though a given evidence does not vary in force, the antecedent probably attending it does vary without limit, according to the temper of the mind surveying it.” The claims of Revelation therefore admit of being “estimated variously according to the desire of it existing in each breast…Those who had love…were inclined to believe.” Before God, man must realize his individuality. This is the conviction that lies at the heart of Newman’s personalism, and its appreciation is essential if we are grasp the thrust of his opposition to modern liberalism.

192 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 155.
193 cf. Bouyer, Newman’s Vision of Faith, 45: “immortality of soul, for Newman, is just another name for its individuality. For every one of us has to come to realize that he is irreplaceable in the eyes of God…in the eyes of God…each one is worth quite as much as the whole world.” cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “The Dogmatic and Ascetical Meaning of Christian Brotherhood” in Man Before God: Readings in Theology. (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1966), 115: “every man stands in direct relation to God…he is never exhausted within this species, but is known and loved by God as a person, as an individual. .more than as a mere part of a community, man is always called personally to an eternal destiny. It is thus valid to see every man as a partner of God, one whom God calls by name, whom God loves with an eternal love.”
194 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 155.
195 See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 1-15. Sillem does not hesitate to apply this title to Newman’s thought, noting especially that, unlike most modern philosophers, his thought is always exercised with and for other concrete minds. Cor ad cor loquitur. Newman is thus always aware that his philosophy is itself the product of a concrete mind, and this is why he always speaks in the first person when reflecting philosophically. Hence, egotism is true modesty in philosophy, and it is impossible to read Newman’s thought without coming to know his person. cf. John Crosby, The Personalism of John Henry Newman, 66-87.
196 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 192.
197 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 193.
ii. Implicit - Explicit

The foregoing presentation of Newman’s personalism has opened up an entrée for us onto one of the most crucial facets of Newman’s thought: namely, his distinction between the explicit and the implicit modes of human cognition. For his rejection of the liberal reduction of reason “to strictly precisionist and formal forms of argument”199—wherein what is distinctive of the individual person is subordinated to universal forms—implies that there is another mode of reasoning, one more “subtle”200 and “spontaneous”201 than any formal mechanism, which can account for the diversities of human thought.202 This is what Newman calls “implicit” reason: a notion fundamental to his theological and philosophical vision. By the term “implicit” Newman refers to a mode of cognition that is both prior to and more fundamental than those expressions of thought that have been brought out into full reflexive consciousness (i.e., explicit expression) through the measures of language and formal analysis. These latter are the thoughts of which we are fully conscious, and which we often mistake for the sum of our intellectual life. Newman argues, however, that they are in fact rooted in a deeper level of judgment, one of which we are not fully aware. By this assertion he seeks to relativize the normativity of formal logic for human thought, without jettisoning altogether its proper utility.

200 See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 230: “…too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms.”
201 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 257: “a living spontaneous energy within us, not an art.” cf. Avery Dulles, “The Ecclesial Dimension of Faith,” 429: “The reasons of the heart are governed by a spontaneous logic more subtle, but often more reliable, than syllogistic deduction.”
202 See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 52: “Newman worked his way for the first time into a new philosophy of his own, based on his idea of the self as a person, a being higher than Reason, and on knowing as an inward spontaneous activity of the person’s mind—not a mere mechanical manipulation of logical laws.”
At the root of this contention is Newman’s conviction that the human mind remains a mystery to itself, and “takes no external survey”\textsuperscript{203} of its own activities. In a manner corresponding to the irreducible fullness of the concrete realities which it apprehends, it defies any fully explicit articulation. Again: “the human mind in its present state is unequal to its own powers of apprehension; it embraces more than it can master.”\textsuperscript{204} This assertion may sound paradoxical—for how can the mind know without being aware of its knowing—but Newman is armed with a host of examples that illustrate its validity. He notes, for instance, how peasants and uneducated men often make sound judgments even when they lack the sound rationale by which to explain them—though their explanations be fallacious, their conclusions are often accurate;\textsuperscript{205} or how men of great genius are similarly unable to trace out for others the paths by which they arrive at their insights, their logic being impenetrable to the masses who must take them on trust for the evident fruitfulness of their discoveries;\textsuperscript{206} or how a person can hold a position without knowing it,\textsuperscript{207} or be affected an entire day by some thought or other before being able to accurately name it;\textsuperscript{208} or how certain men can spend their whole lives burdened by a single idea which they might struggle for decades to put adequately into words.\textsuperscript{209} All of this, he says, points to the reality that the mind

\begin{footnotesize}
\addcontentsline{toc}{footnote}{Footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{203} See \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 83–4, where Newman compares moral virtue to intellectual \textit{genius}. The excellent man “takes no external survey of himself” and so is unlikely “to elicit justly the real reasons latent in his mind for particular observances or opinions.”}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{204} Newman, \textit{Letters and Correspondence, Vol II.}, ed. Anne Mozley. (London: Longmans, Green & co., 1903), 278.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{205} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 261.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{206} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 216-7.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{207} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 321.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{208} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 321: “certain persons do not know themselves, but that they are ruled by views, feelings, prejudices, objects which they do not recognize? How common is it to be exhilarated or depressed, we do not recollect why, though we are aware that something has been told us, or has happened, good or bad, which accounts for our feeling, could we recall it!”}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{209} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 324: “how many men are burdened with an idea, which haunts them through a great part of their lives, and of which only at length, with much trouble, do they dispossess themselves?... The life of some men...has centred on the development of one idea; nay, perhaps has been too short for the process.”}
\end{footnotesize}
does not fully master itself; and that it admits simultaneously of both conscious (i.e., explicit) and “unconscious” (i.e., implicit) modes of intellection.

Newman explains this distinction as that between the mind’s original act of judgment or apprehension and its subsequent reflection upon itself. First, there is a simple and spontaneous movement by which the mind embraces the reality set before it, and then a reflexive self-measuring by which it contemplates its own act:

This may be taken as an illustration of the difference between the more simple faculties and operations of the mind, and that process of analyzing and describing them, which takes place upon reflection. We not only feel, and think, and reason, but we know that we feel, and think, and reason; not only know, but can inspect and ascertain our thoughts, feelings, and reasonings: not only ascertain, but describe…

It is only in the second step, where men “reason upon their reasonings,” that the mind becomes “explicitly” aware of itself. For Newman, however, this self-awareness remains always incomplete and imperfect. Hence it can be no exhaustive measure of the mind’s activities. The many “aspects” which the mind generates in its attempt to articulate the object of its apprehension never fully correspond to that object’s integral “idea” or “impression.” This is what accounts for that “unconscious” possession of ideas that Newman speaks of, as well as for the “implicit

---


211 e.g., see Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 279, 322, 323. cf. Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 11, where Ratzinger speaks of how the liturgy was able to impress upon him the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection “before any rational comprehension.”

212 Newman, *Oxford University Sermon*, 256. cf. ibid., 258: “Here, then, are two processes, distinct from each other,—the original process of reasoning, and next, the process of investigating our reasonings.” cf. id., *Grammar of Assent*, 157-63, on the differentiation between simple and complex assent.


215 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 321: “The impression made upon the mind need not even be recognized by the parties possessing it. It is no proof that persons are not possessed, because they are not conscious, of an idea.” This contention will lie at the basis of Newman’s doctrine of development. cf. ibid., 323: “…the reality and permanence of inward knowledge, as distinct from explicit confession. The absence, or partial absence, or incompleteness of dogmatic statements is no proof of the absence of impressions or implicit judgments, in the mind of the Church.” cf. Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 182-4, where Ratzinger speaks of the tradition as “embracing what is said and what is unsaid, what in turn the Apostles in their turn are not able to express fully in words, but which is found in the whole reality of the Christian existence of which they speak, far transcending the framework of what has been explicitly formulated in words.” Thus the content of faith’s apprehension “has its
“reasoning”—most fully manifested in the operations of the “illative sense”\(^{216}\)—by which the mind is capable of making sound judgments independently of the explicit formal inferences whereby the conclusions would follow with logical necessity from formulated premises. Thus:

In spite of the inaccuracy in expression, or (if we will) in thought, which prevails in the world, men on the whole do not reason incorrectly…They may argue badly, but they reason well; that is, their professed grounds are no sufficient measures of their real ones…men advance forward on grounds which they do not, or cannot produce, or if they could, yet could not prove to be true, on latent or antecedent grounds which they take for granted.\(^{217}\)

“All men have a reason” even though “not all men can give a reason,”\(^{218}\) just as they can “be possessed, ruled, [and] guided by an unconscious idea.”\(^{219}\) Such seeming paradoxes, coming from a man who professed such a healthy suspicion of them,\(^{220}\) and who insisted on the importance of method and system in the cultivation of a sound intellect,\(^{221}\) are no sign of intellectual lightness on the part of their author.\(^{222}\) Rather, as we have seen, they flow from the resolute seriousness with which he observed the human mind in its concrete existence, which reality forced upon him a reconsideration of the role of formal logic in assessing human thought.

That logic and explicit reasoning do have an important role to play is beyond question for Newman; he wishes only to point out their limitations. As a philosopher, he profoundly appreciates the need for man to reflect upon and seek to order his thought. This is one of the ways in which he defines philosophy: the mind’s attempt, primarily through the tools of logic, to analyze, clarify, and order its operations for the sake of purifying its judgments and bringing them into conscious place not only in the explicitly traditional statements of Church doctrine, but in the unstated—and often unstatable—elements of the whole service of the Christian worship of God and the life of the Church.”

\(^{218}\) Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 259.
\(^{219}\) Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 322.
\(^{222}\) See John Henry Newman, *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects*. (London: Longman, Green & co., 1907), 174: “It is a property of depth to lead a writer into verbal contradictions; and it is a property of simplicity not to care to avoid them.”
and communicable expression. While the mind does not depend on these processes in its initial apprehensions, they are nevertheless necessary if it is to arrive at that certitude and wisdom toward which it is ordered. Thus “it is the object of science to analyze, verify, methodize, and exhibit” the impressions made upon the mind on the implicit level. The explicit level of human rationality retains an important office. “The right exercise of words is involved in the right exercise of thought.”

Nevertheless, in discharge of this commission, it is vital that “explicit reason” also retain a keen awareness of its limits, and that it not mistake itself for a comprehensive survey. “Words,” Newman says, “are incomplete exponents of ideas,” and this poverty of language to measure thought necessitates a humility in reflective reason’s judgments. While explicit reason can determine whether or not a given articulation is logically sound, and so can force the mind to reassess its grounds if necessary, it cannot rule out the possibility that the mind remains correct in its judgment on some other unnamed grounds. For this would be to assume that what is articulated exhausts the mind’s apprehension. And this Newman denies:

Clearness in argument certainly is not indispensable to reasoning well. Accuracy in stating doctrines or principles is not essential to feeling and acting upon them. The exercise of analysis is not necessary to the integrity of the process analyzed. The process of reasoning is complete in itself and independent. The analysis is but an account of it.

…an account which is imperfect. This is not to say that the mind’s judgments cannot be called into question or revised in the case of error; only that such revision, when it occurs, will not be necessitated by any single logical analysis. It will flow rather from an accumulation of contrary

---

223 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 257: “Reasoning…is a living spontaneous energy within us, not an art. But when the mind reflects upon itself, it begins to be dissatisfied with the absence of order and method in the exercise, and attempts to analyze the various processes which take place.”
impressions that force a new apprehension on the implicit level. Logic can play an auxiliary role in this process, spurring a critique leading either to a rejection or to a refined and more fully conscious assent, but the mind is not moved by logic alone. Discursive thought vitally extends its range and purifies its insights, but the deep, central and conservative apprehensions that govern its life abide at a deeper level. Newman’s claim, then, is that formal logic should recall its zone of competence and limit its claims accordingly. If this is forgotten, then “current language becomes the measure of thought” and “the multiform and intricate assemblage of considerations, which really lead to judgment and action, must be attenuated or mutilated into a major and a minor premise.” In such a situation, the mind inevitably grows stultified in its capacity to acquire fresh knowledge, for such formal argumentation, which is “mainly a test of reasoning,” is a critical and not a creative faculty. It checks against undisciplined growth, but provides no impetus of its own. It pulls down, but “will not be able to build up.”

Creative apprehensions require a deeper movement, one that defies explicit articulation, being irreducible to formula or mathematical measurement. If reason is strictly defined as the “faculty of proceeding from things that are perceived to things which are not,” of “gaining

228 cf. Newman, Grammar of Assent, 188-9. Assents cannot be withdrawn unless compelled by other incompatible assents of equal or greater weight: e.g., a certitude by other certitudes.
229 See Newman, Apologia, 158: “The whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it.” cf. id., Grammar of Assent, 157-72.
230 See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 47, on the relationship between real and notional assents: “To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter is the conservative principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement.”
231 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 229-30.
232 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 276: “since argumentative forms are mainly a test of reasoning, so far they will be but critical, not creative. They will be useful in raising objections, and in ministering to scepticism; they will pull down, and will not be able to build up.” cf. Ratzinger, “What Divides and Unites Denominations?” trans. W.J. O’Hara, in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 9, where he asserts that creative breakthroughs “can never be done by merely rational calculation.”
233 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 286: “mathematics…indisposing us for arguments drawn from mere probabilities.”
234 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 206.
knowledge upon grounds given…asserting one thing, because of some other thing,” then explicit reasoning is that progression which is mappable according to universal forms, and implicit reasoning is that which escapes by its subtlety any such analysis. And it is Newman’s contention that the bulk of the mind’s work is performed on this implicit level, the explicit level being limited to abstract, non-existential matters, at least insofar as it lives in isolation from the implicit ground. The reason why this implicit level escapes analysis, for Newman, is that it is inseparable in its concrete act from what he calls man’s “moral sense” or “moral perception.” In all concrete-existential matters, man does not decide on evidence or formal inference alone, but always in the light of certain moral factors: on the basis of the presumptions that lay hidden in his breast, his secret antecedent judgments about what is probable, his sympathies, his innermost desires and hopes, all of which elude easy detection, and yet which “practically colour[s] the evidence…and interpret[s] it for him,” converging together with accompanying impressions and the impulse of conscience to finally move man to action through an “illative” judgment. Newman laments that these two aspects of man’s inner life, the intellectual and the moral, are so frequently separated in the world, and he faults this unreal separation for most of the world’s intellectual maladies.

235 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 207.
236 See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 120. Theology and philosophy can be existential, and do in fact retain a vital function in the life of the mind, provided they remain in subordination to the real impressions that precede and ground them.
237 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 273.
238 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 227. cf. ibid., 200: “probability is to fact, as the soul to the body; that mere presumptions may have no force, but that mere facts have no warmth. A mutilated and defective evidence suffices for persuasion where the heart is alive; but dead evidences, however perfect, can but create a dead faith.” cf. Joseph Ratzinger, Biblical Interpretation in Crisis, 18-19: “preparation is required to open us up to the inner dynamism of the word. This is possible only when there is a certain ‘sym-patheia’ for understanding, a readiness to learn something new, to allow oneself to be taken along a new road…” Thus philosophy “may not deny to humanity the ability to be responsive beyond the categories of pure reason and to reach beyond ourselves toward the open and endless truth of being.”
239 If the speculative and the practical intellect are distinct in principle, for Newman, they are inseparable in act. Eventually, this irreducible convergence is what Newman will seek to describe in his account of the “illative sense”.
240 See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 5: “The human mind…may be regarded from two principal points of view, as intellectual and as moral…it is our great misfortune here, and our trial, that, as things are found in the world, the two are separated, and independent of each other.”
Everything becomes abstract and unreal when reality is assessed by the “intellect only;” supposed clarity is purchased at the price of consequence. In fact, Newman says, the intellect and heart must be seen as deeply interwoven. Only this can account for the way in which men actually think. Purely intellectual measurements, which can take no account of moral insight, must fail to the grasp the whole of human thought, and reduce the knower to a mere critic.241

At the forefront of Newman’s mind in all of these considerations is the question of faith. For he is keen to show that while faith is distinct from reason as popularly conceived, it is nevertheless fully rational and can be called an act of reason strictly speaking:242 it is “the reasoning of the religious mind,”243 albeit not that of any so-called “pure reason.” It is the acceptance of truth on the basis of testimony, which testimony is received by the judgment of a heart shaped by religious presumptions.244 These include especially those dictates of the upright conscience that resonates with the message and recognizes the nobility of the messenger.245 In this way, by an implicit judgment of the heart that coincides with the illative apprehension of converging evidences, that impression is created in the mind which constitutes faith’s fundamental content. Only in a “second” step,246 wherein faith reflects on itself, does this impression proceed

241 cf. Ratzinger’s frequent insistence “that the concept of reason be broadened.” See Joseph Ratzinger, “Eschatology and Utopia,” trans. James M. Quigley, in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 24: theology must “insist that the concept of reason be broadened and that not only the demand for what can be empirically verified, but also the demand for the values by which the empirical is set in order, be seen as one of the tasks of reason.” cf. id. “Jesus Christ Today,” trans. Thomas Caldwell, in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol II, 100: “in this shrinking of the question of knowledge lies not only the problem of our modern idea of truth and freedom, but the problem of our time altogether…Positivistic intelligence offers the soul’s organism no ethical power.”

242 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 207: “Faith, simply considered, is certainly an exercise of Reason… It is an acceptance of things as real, which the senses do not convey, upon certain previous grounds; it is an instrument of indirect knowledge concerning things external to us”

243 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 203.

244 Newman moves on to further clarify and specify this account through his theory of the “assemblage of concurring and converging probabilities” that are capable of moving the mind to certitude through the illative sense. cf. Newman, Apologia, 38-9.


246 It is a valid questions whether this “second” should be regarded as temporal or merely logical. In the Oxford Sermons, Newman seems to envision a pre-dogmatic stage of faith, but how this can be brought into accord with his emphasis on dogma in other places, especially in his Catholic period, is a matter of some difficulty. cf. Newman, Grammar of Assent, 109.
to the explicit articulation of dogma and system. Thus, while dogma is essential to faith, it is not faith’s most basic aspect. First comes the impression of the object, then the natural progression, through reflection, to explicit judgment and expression. It is true that this progression belongs internally to faith’s dynamic, which cannot but seek wisdom, but this reflection should not be mistaken for the whole. It is the province of theology to “analyze, verify, methodize, and exhibit” faith’s impressions so as to bring them out into explicit form and order them systematically according to their internal rationale. But this work depends on something prior to it, from which it must never be isolated.

If faith’s explicit reasoning becomes detached from its implicit grounds, then there is the danger that dogma and system will lose all sense of faith’s inner proportions, yielding results that are foreign to the believing heart. Newman offers the analogy of a blind man professing to

---

248 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 320. By this progression, theological reflection brings to explicit articulation those “truths, which unlearned piety admits and acts upon, without the medium of clear intellectual representation.” (ibid., 65) Again, this raises the difficulty of how such affirmations can correspond to Newman’s assertions in other places that the “darkening of the intellect” through submission to dogma must precede its “illumination” in a unified apprehension. cf. id. *Grammar of Assent*, 109: “Knowledge must ever precede the exercise of the affections…We love our parents, as our parents, when we know them to be our parents; we must know concerning God, before we can feel love, fear, hope, or trust towards Him. Devotion must have its objects; those objects, as being supernatural, when not represented to our senses by material symbols, must be set before the mind in propositions…in religion the imagination and affections should always be under the control of reason…religion cannot maintain its ground at all without theology. Sentiment, whether imaginative or emotional, falls back upon the intellect for its stay, when sense cannot be called into exercise; and it is in this way that devotion falls back upon dogma.” Here the priority of dogma is affirmed. How are we to overcome this apparent dilemma? One option would be to distinguish between different senses of the term “intellect” in Newman’s corpus: i.e., as explicit (the “mere intellect”) and as implicit (the union of intellect and heart). In this way, the darkening of the intellect in the explicit sense need not conflict with the illumination of the intellect in the implicit sense. Another related avenue would be to distinguish different ways of approaching “faith”: i.e., according to its abstract essence, and as concretely embodied in historical-ecclesial existence. Abstractly considered, apostolic faith presupposes an unspeakable apprehension that enables it to issue in dogmatic confessions, an unconscious assent that formally precedes reflex consciousness (cf. *Grammar*, 157). Historically, this faith is only transmitted through the witness of the Church, whose word must be trusted as a precondition of the apprehension. Even here, however, a certain “down payment” would be necessary, as the Church’s authority is only granted in light of the divinity of Christ, which lies at the heart of all dogmatic pronouncements: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” In the end, then, there is a need to affirm a formal priority of impression over articulation, even while at the same time affirming a strict unity obtaining between the two, such that the impression cannot stand without dogmatic articulation (and submission to it) as a co-constitutive element of its apprehension.

lecture on the subject of light and color. Such a man, he says, might well begin to articulate a clear and impressive system on the basis of the abstract notions he has grasped, but inevitably his lack of familiarity would show itself:

...at length on a sudden, he would lose himself in some inexpressibly great mistake, betrayed in the midst of his career by some treacherous word, which he incautiously explained too fully or dwelt too much upon; and we should find that he had been using words without corresponding ideas. 250

Inquiry requires a “personal familiarity” with its subject matter. 251 Similarly, faith’s explicit reasoning and articulation depend on the prior reasoning of the heart. Recognizing this is what prevents that slide into rationalism wherein explicit reason confuses its own grounds for the true grounds of faith.

“The heart has its reasons which reason itself does not know.” 252 Newman’s account of implicit reasoning in its differentiation from the explicit can be read as a development of Pascal’s distinction between l’esprit de géométrie and l’esprit de finesse, and as a distinctly non-fideist reading of the latter’s “reasons of the heart.” 253 It is certain that Newman read Pascal, and the spiritual affinity between the two thinkers is beyond doubt. 254 This is manifest not only in the space that each of them afford to more intuitive modes of apprehension—a feature that can also be related beyond them back to the intellectus of Thomas Aquinas 255—but also in their insistence upon the

250 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 62.
251 See Note 8 in Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 62: “not only are the principles proper to a given subject-matter necessary for a successful inquiry into that subject-matter, but there must be also a personal familiarity with it.”
253 cf. Ratzinger, Journey to Easter: Spiritual Reflections for the Lenten Season, 135-142, where Ratzinger comments on Richard of St. Victor’s dictum that “love is an eye”: “All the effective advances in theological knowledge have their origin in the eye of love, in the strength of its gaze.” (138)
255 John Coulson hints at this on page 57 of his Religion and Imagination: ‘in aid of a grammar of ascent.’ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). In this he may be supported by Oxford University Sermons, 323, where Newman relates the wordless apprehension of faith’s content to the intuitive vision of heaven, proper to the Seraphim: “…such, too, seems to be the first life of infants; nay, in heaven itself, such may be the high existence of some exalted orders of blessed
ethical aspect of man’s quest for truth. As Newman says, “Truth there is, and attainable it is, but…its rays stream in upon us through the medium of our moral as well as our intellectual being.” Thus it is that, in both thinkers, our speculative considerations cannot be separated from the demands of action, and the embrace of truth must ultimately coincide with a “wager” or “venture” on man’s part. Man’s deepest reasoning, therefore, cannot involve the “intellect only” but must be a reasoning of the heart, the account of which will only be complete when the role of conscience is acknowledged.

iii. The Imagination

Our account of Newman’s doctrine of implicit reasoning would be incomplete if we did not proceed to unfold another crucial facet in his account of human subjectivity. For, granting that there are such things as implicit “apprehensions” or “impressions,” the question naturally arises as to where or by what power of mind such intuitions are received. The answer comes with Newman’s theory of “imagination,” which he regards not simply as the sub-rational fabricator of sensible phantasms—something we would share with the animals—but as a properly human and truly

spirits, as the Seraphim, who are said to be, not Knowledge, but all Love.” Aquinas himself relates man’s intellectus to the angelic and divine mode of knowing, which is not abstract and discursive, but direct and intuitive. cf. Ratzinger, Theology of History in Bonaventure, 91-93, where Ratzinger speaks approvingly of Bonaventure’s doctrine of the sapientia nullaformis: a “supra-intellectual” mode of apprehension wherein “love…creates knowledge in the darkness of the intellect.” (91) “Comprehension of Christ was realized here on the highest level of love, on the level of the Seraphim.” (93)


256 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 247. cf. id. Oxford University Sermons, 298: “Faith… is altogether a practical principle. It judges and decides because it cannot help doing so…but not in the way of opinion, not as aiming at mere abstract truth, not as teaching some theory or view. It is the act of a mind feeling that it is its…to judge and to act”

257 Those who would please God must “reason in His fear.” See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 277. cf. Bouyer, Newman’s Vision of Faith, 202-3: “belief in God, in the Christian God, is essentially mysterious…that truth which our hearts believe and love—the heart here being not just the seat of emotions but that apex mentis where moral conscience and intellectual consciousness are one, the ultimate source of our free decision to be or not to be what we were meant and made for.”


259 cf. Newman, Grammar of Assent, 102, which appears to equate man’s faculty of recognizing wholes with a similar “instinct” in “brutes”. But this need not be read to imply more than a similarity-in-difference, especially when we take it in light of Newman’s usage of the term “imagination” elsewhere. What is sub-rational in animals can become intellectual and personal in man. cf. ibid., 67.
intellectual faculty whereby the mind is able to grasp wholes and to envision concrete unities through its encounter with external reality. These are the deep impressions of which Newman so often speaks—the “personal” and “direct” apprehensions of truth that differentiate what is “energetic” and “real” from the merely passive and “notional”—which coalesce to form a “master vision” that practically governs the mind in its implicit and explicit judgments.

To better understand this doctrine of Newman’s, it will be helpful to have recourse to some features of English romanticism that significantly parallel Newman’s vision, and indirectly helped to shape it. While the relationship is more one of common sources than of direct dependence, the comparison can help to illumine for us the drift of Newman’s mind. He himself admits a certain resonance here, writing of his appreciation for such romantic figures as Coleridge, Wordsworth and Byron, and acknowledging the significant service rendered to his intellect by that poetic vision—the “sacramental system” as he called it—which he first discovered in the writings of

---

260 e.g., see Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 65-6: “They believe in His existence, not because others say it, not in the word of man merely, but with a personal apprehension of its truth.” Newman returns again and again to this theme. See, for instance, the following from the *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*: “Men confess that He is infinite, yet they start and object, as soon as His infinitude comes in contact with their imagination and acts upon their reason.” (309-310) “After all, you do not know, you only conclude that there is a God; you see Him not, you but hear of Him.” (276-78) “it is not that he really feels the mysteriousness of religion, but he infers it…he has not real sight or direct perception of it…he does not more than load himself with a form of words instead of contemplating, with the eye of the soul, God Himself, the source of all truth, and this doctrine as proceeding from His mouth.” (174-5)


264 In the *Apologia*, Newman suggests that the romantic movement in English literature helped to prepare the ground for the Oxford Movement in several respects. See Newman, *Apologia*, 99-100. cf. John Coulson, “Newman on the Church—his final view, its origins and influence,” in *The Rediscovery of Newman*, 125. Coulson reports that Newman, upon first reading Coleridge in 1835, remarked at how much he recognized of his own though there: “surprised how much I thought mine is to be found there.” While this is no evidence of direct dependence, it does argue for a deep sympathy and similarity. Elsewhere, Newman denied having read Coleridge, but by this he was meaning that Coleridge had no direct impact on his thought, which had already matured on the relevant points of contact prior to his reading. His concern seems to have been to avoid any correlation with Kant. See John Henry Newman to W.S. Lilly, 17 August 1884, in *Letters and Diaries*, 30:391.

Bishop Butler, and which helped him to overcome his youthful skepticism.\textsuperscript{266} He describes this sacramental vision of reality as “the doctrine that material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen,”\textsuperscript{267} an insight which he sees flowing from the doctrine of creation, insofar as “the very idea of an analogy between the separate works of God leads to the conclusion that the system which is of less importance is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous.”\textsuperscript{268} Thus the unity of all God’s works can be detected in each part, each individual phenomenon representing more than itself, and pointing beyond itself to something higher. We can discern here that talent for “seeing together”—what Newman calls “contuition”\textsuperscript{269}—that typifies the romantic reaction against the cold divisions of rationalism.

John Coulson, in his work relating the \textit{Grammar of Assent} to this romantic background, takes Coleridge as representative of this tendency. Coleridge attacks modern conceptualism by asserting, against its standard assumptions, that poetry and metaphor constitute the “first order” of human language, and that literal prose expressions are secondary derivatives from these primary forms.\textsuperscript{270} The mind is originally creative in its apprehension of reality, active rather than passive,\textsuperscript{271} employing its imagination to discern those subtle unities and interrelations of existence that escape merely conceptual analyses, tending as these do to isolate rather than to unite. This is what any

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{266} Newman, \textit{Apologia}, 30, 37: “of this conclusion the theory, to which I was inclined as a boy, viz. the unreality of material phenomena, is an ultimate resolution.”
\item \textsuperscript{267} Newman, \textit{Apologia}, 37
\item \textsuperscript{268} Newman, \textit{Apologia}, 30. cf. Ratzinger, \textit{Theology of History in Bonaventure}, 70-85, on the “symbolic mode of thought” that characterizes Bonaventure’s \textit{Hexaemeron}, allowing an appreciation of the “sign-character of the entire creation” together with Scripture. There is, Ratzinger writes, a “parallel between the revelation of Scripture and that of creation.” In both cases, the revelation is hidden behind the letters that veil it; in both cases, the unveiling of the revelation is the task of the Spirit who transcends the level of the literal in a living, existential movement which penetrates into the realm of the intellectual-spiritual.” (85) This he regards as “a movement beyond the discursive thinking of the present exegesis in favor of a simple, inner understanding.” (70)
\item \textsuperscript{270} Coulson, \textit{Religion and Imagination}, 7-11.
\item \textsuperscript{271} Coulson, \textit{Religion and Imagination}, 10.
\end{itemize}
good poetic metaphor achieves: by transferring to one object that which is proper to another, it helps us to see reality anew by allowing us to appreciate at a deeper level the analogies that tie all things together in a vision of sacramental unity. In executing this function, the poem or metaphor does not depend on a prior conceptualization of its content, as moderns tend to assume. If anything, the order of dependency is the inverse: explicit reason presupposes a unity that it cannot procure for itself, but can only receive from the imagination. It is the poem that gives rise to its explanation—its secondary analysis—not the explanation that gives rise to the poem.

When this order is reversed, the poetic imagination suffers, just as religion suffers when the order between explicit reason and belief is upended. As religion becomes dry and formulaic when reason is made the foundation for faith, so too does poetry grow staid and artificial when abstract theory is made the foundation for its expression. And sooner or later, just as religion dissolves into philosophy in the former case, so too does the pretext of poetic form give way to the paraphrase in the latter. But real poetry does not admit of paraphrase any more than genuine faith admits of reduction to formal inference. Such is the parallel danger to faith and imagination in the modern age. They are intertwined, and the projects of Newman and Coleridge accordingly mirror each other in their efforts to set things back in their proper order.

272 cf. Dulles, Models of Revelation, 133.
273 See Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 24-26, 31. cf. Newman, Lectures on Justification, 50, where the “metaphorical” is associated with “real knowledge” in opposition to literal notions. This relates to Ratzinger’s above-mentioned complaint regarding Humani Generis that “the point of view which sees only Scripture as what is unclear, but the teaching office as what is clear, is a very limited one.” (Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 197) A connection can be made here also to the status of contemporary literary criticism, which generally subordinates literary and poetic form to the destructive critique of reductive empirical or political reason.
274 Coleridge saw the two threats as closely related. See Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 12: “he was as strongly convinced as von Hugel that the most dangerous threat to religion was to yield to ‘the pleasure from clear and distinct notions,’ since the quintessential characteristic of religious language is of ‘words that convey all their separate meanings at once’...” that is, poetry. Thus he argued for the “dependence of religion upon imagination.”
275 Both paraphrase and philosophical articulation are necessary, of course, and flow naturally from their predecessors as necessary aspects of their reception and appreciation, but they must observe the proper order.
In fact, according to these men, the “real ideas” that drive the mind in its work are not abstract concepts but the concrete unities apprehended at the level of the imagination. In this insight they are undoubtedly influenced by the thought of eighteenth century philosopher Abraham Tucker, whose works Newman possessed, and who first posited the imagination as the faculty by which the mind is able to know individuals qua individual through a process he called “associative coalescence.” By this he meant the instinctive genius by which the mind sees “the distinction of parts within an antecedent unity” and so is enabled to grasp wholes as such. This, in turn, is what Newman and Coleridge intend by the term idea: it refers to our imaginative “grasp of something as a whole” in response to a “living unity” encountered in reality, “an intuition not sensuous” which draws parts together into harmony in such a way as to serve as a kind of poetic symbol or “living educt of the imagination.” Such ideas, in turn, accumulate together, mutually refining and reinforcing one another, to give rise to an insight into the unity of all reality: a total “vision, analogous to eye-sight” of the “integral wholeness of the visible world in its analogical relation to the invisible world.” This overall view, derived from the sum total

---

276 On ideas in Newman see Coulson, “Newman on the Church,” in The Rediscovery of Newman, 126: “they are therefore to be distinguished from a reductive analysis into clear and distinct parts or strictly definable concepts…[as] terms for what we can experience, but cannot precisely define.”

277 See Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 203-20. Again, the influence here is not necessarily direct, but most likely mediated through the general culture. Tucker’s views were developed especially through the philosophical work of the painter Joshua Reynolds, to whom Sillem attributes the following quote emblematic of romanticism: “Reason, without doubt, must ultimately determine everything: at this minute it is required to inform us when that very reason is to give way to feeling.”

278 Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 126, here referring to Coleridge’s notion of idea.

279 Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 126.


281 Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 126, quoting Coleridge’s Church and State.

282 Symbol, as drawing many things into one. cf. Dulles, Models of Revelation, 131-136, where Dulles relates Coleridge’s appreciation of symbolism. “Symbolism gives not speculative but participatory knowledge…[it is] never a sheer object.”

283 Coulson, “Newman on the Church”, 142.

284 See Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 23: “By such means, by the accumulation of analogies, the order of the Universe or the moral law is apprehended as distinct from being comprehended.”

285 See Tillman, Introduction to Oxford University Sermons, xxxiv-xxxv. Citing Newman’s Theological Paper on Faith and Certainty, Tillman writes: “insight into this reality [i.e., the ordered unity of creation], Newman says, is like a ‘vision, analogous to eye-sight, which my intellectual nature has of things as they are.’” Thus, she proceeds, “there
of the impressions (actively) received by the creative imagination, \textsuperscript{286} constitutes the framework by which the mind arrives at its sense of what is probable and improbable, setting the conditions both for the convergence of probabilities that triggers the illative “ecstasy of assent,” \textsuperscript{287} and for the ultimate derivation of explicit beliefs from implicit apprehensions. \textsuperscript{288} Only the imagination can account for such “leaps;” the explicit-conceptual order is subordinate to it.

In other words, on both the implicit and the explicit levels, I arrive at my judgments about the reality of things according as they are made credible and \textit{real} to my imagination, and fit within my overall view of things. \textsuperscript{289} Naturally, there is a two-way dialectic at play here, as my “overall view” is also subject to adjustment from its confrontation with stubborn new realities: every instance is viewed in relation to the whole, and the whole in relation to all instances. But the discovery of new truth is, insofar as this discovery is “real” or “imaginative,” \textsuperscript{290} always occasioned by a coalescence between the individual instance and the “interrelated symbolism” of my

\begin{quote}

could hardly be a thinker more aware of and concerned to communicate the integral wholeness of the visible world in its analogical relation to the invisible world…"
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{286} See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 97: “As from a multitude of instinctive perceptions, acting in particular instances, of something beyond the senses, we generalize the notion of an external world, and then picture that world in and according to those particular phenomena from which we started, so from the perceptive power which identifies the intimations of conscience with the reverberations or echoes (so to say) of an external admonition, we proceed on to the notion of a Supreme Ruler and Judge, and then again we image.”

\textsuperscript{287} John Coulson, \textit{Religion and Imagination}, 22. cf. ibid, 70: “Real assent is always to a world.”

\textsuperscript{288} See Sillem, \textit{The Philosophical Notebook}, 11: “ideas hold together in our vision or way of seeing the realities surrounding us…this vision is inseparable from…the person whose vision it is; a metaphysical system is not a mere logical chain of abstract ideas, or a cascade of deductions laid down by the ‘reason’. Knowing is an activity of individual minds which admits of many degrees of perfection varying according to the intimacy of the individual possession of, or mental hold on, the real extramental objects which he knows…we have ‘to realise’ what we think, say or write, or set our ideas in concrete realities.” cf. ibid., 75: “a person thinking about the real things he knows form experience is guided in his thinking by the impression they make on his mind in real or concrete apprehensions…as by what Newman calls the ‘higher logic’ of facts.”

\textsuperscript{289} Coulson observes that early drafts of the \textit{Grammar of Assent} used the term “imaginative assent” in place of “real assent.” See \textit{Religion and Imagination}, 60.
“worldview” as a whole.\footnote{See Coulson, \textit{Religion and Imagination}, 56: “we are properly referring to a structure of interrelated symbolism…to respond to metaphor and symbol is to be bound, not to an instance, but to an interrelationship as a whole.” Edward Sillem draws the connection to the German notion of Weltanschauung in The Philosophical Notebook, Vol II, 131.} Crucially, as we have repeatedly insisted, such judgments will always be simultaneously intellectual and moral. For conscience, as the vivid apprehension of the commanding God, is also an integral element within man’s imaginative world.\footnote{Newman, in his \textit{Letter to the Duke of Norfolk}, describes conscience as an “impression of the Divine Light in us”, the natural law “as apprehended in the minds of individual men” and “commanding obedience.” (41) cf. id. \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 102, where Newman compares the “instinct” of conscience, by which we image an “external Master” from the phenomena of its dictates, to the “instinct” of the imagination, whereby we move from the varied impressions of sense to the discernment of unities. cf., ibid., 67.} Accordingly, duty enters into the equation of assent as a vital conditioning force. Indeed, such judgments cannot but be profoundly moral, since imagination is constructive of personality: the unity it apprehends is correlative to the unity that lies at the heart of the person.\footnote{Thus capacity to see the unity of things is rooted in a basic “sympathy” between the self and reality. See Tillman, “Introduction” to \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, xxxiv-xxxv: “insight into this reality [the ordered unity of creation], Newman says, is like a ‘vision, analogous to eye-sight, which my intellectual nature has of things as they are, arising from the original, elementary sympathy or harmony between myself and what is external to myself, I and it being portions of one whole, and, in a certain sense, existing for each other.”} In this sense, significant imaginative judgments about reality will always carry something of the structure of conversion. As impressions give rise to judgments about probabilities, and probabilities begin to converge stereoscopically toward a new center, such that I am forced for the sake of consistency and an imaginable “world” to abandon my present standpoint and “leap” into a new perspective, I am confronted with a moral challenge addressed to the depths of my conscience. For even as such “leaps” are conditioned by accumulating probabilities and can be regarded as thoroughly rational, they nevertheless leave space to man’s freedom and call forth a decision from him that can feel very much like a dying.\footnote{“Leap” is not Newman’s term, of course, but rather “venture.” In fact, he assiduously avoided the former term in order to distance himself from Kierkegaard’s Protestant fideism. Nevertheless, Coulson defends its use as a valid description of the way the mind moves under the impulse of the illative sense, provided the necessary corrections are made to clarify that it indicates a fully rational act made in the light of converging evidences and testimonies. In such cases, it is fully reasonable to stake my life on something even prior to possessing demonstrative proof that might walk me all the way to the goal: I must move spontaneously beyond what evidence can attain in its finite increments. In this sense there is an analogy to be drawn between the “venture” and the “leap,” cf. John Coulson, \textit{Religion and Imagination}, 70-1: “the decision to abandon one’s own subjectivity and accept as true positions held by other} One’s integrity is thus challenged.
Naturally, the more radical the "conversion" called for in such a situation, the more powerful and compelling the new center of unity must be in order to justify the illative venture. If the conversion is to be total, it will require an impression that is comprehensive in its integrative power.

Ultimately, of course, Newman’s doctrine of imagination derives not so much from his Romantic contemporaries as from his reading of the Church Fathers, wherein he recognized a common fascination amid varying articulations with a single comprehensive idea, a distinct integrating impression that could alone account for that eager longing and intimate attention that ties the saints together across the centuries. He discerned in their writings a central image, one capable of collecting all “the scattered rays of light,” and of drawing apparently divergent truths around a common center and logos, allowing the Fathers to delight in the higher symmetries of faith’s paradoxes. We witness this same delight at play in many of Newman’s sermons, where he frequently employs the method of the Fathers in developing divine attributes only to bring home to the imagination the startling paradox of the incarnation: for instance, that God’s omnipotence should find its supreme expression in the swaddled babe, in the impotence of imprisonment and

people… is to acquire a personal depth… we find ourselves by being in equilibrium with others now and in the past; the polygon of oneself expands into the circle of a world unseen”… “in one respect we leap, but in retrospective we experience that leap as precipitated by an accumulation of probabilities.” cf. John Henry Newman, Loss and Gain. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 316-7: “Certainty, in its highest sense, is the reward of those who, by an act of the will, and at the dictate of reason and prudence, embrace the truth, when nature, like a coward, shrinks. You must make a venture; faith is a venture before a man is a Catholic; it is a gift after it.” cf. John Henry Newman, “Ventures of Faith” in Parochial and Plain Sermons, IV:20. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 992-9.

295 The correspondence owes itself to the fact that Newman and the Romantics were both influenced by 18th century divines and their reading of the Fathers. See Coulson, “Newman on the Church,” in The Rediscovery of Newman, 125-6. Coulson mentions the Fathers’ Platonism, in particular, as a crucial factor, insofar as the platonic appeal to illumination or memoria, like the appeal to imagination, admits of operations of the intellect that are irreducible to piecemeal reconstructions: the unity precedes the parts.

296 See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 36-46, where Newman compares the saints’ “continuous watching and waiting for Christ,” their “personal attachment” to and “intimate, immediate dependence on Emmanuel,” to the “subtle instincts” of animals, whereby we can be certain that the objects they correspond to are real and present, reasoning thereby that we can be also that the object of the saints' devotion is also real and present, i.e., in the Eucharist.

297 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 27: “Revelation meets us with simple and distinct facts and actions, not with painful inductions from existing phenomena, not with generalized laws or metaphysical conjectures, but with Jesus and the Resurrection… the life of Christ… collects the scattered rays of light.”
death, and in humble signs of bread and wine. Yet such paradox, such awful mystery, which might seem an impediment to faith, is offered precisely as a motive for faith, insofar as its tensions ultimately manifest a “consistency and symmetry” so profound that its author could only be divine: “I believe the infinite condescension of the Highest to be true, because it has been imagined.”

This symmetry must be sought in order to be perceived, but once “seen” and impressed upon the imagination, it carries its own authority.

Such is the power of the “image of Christ,” so transcendentally comprehensive in its integrative capacity that it inspires men to leave their old “worlds” behind and step into the new imaginative world of faith. This idea, this image or impression lodged deeply in the Christian imagination, is the center and essence of Christianity for Newman, prior to all articulated expressions in dogma or theological system:

As God is One, so the impression which He gives us of Himself is one; it is not a thing of parts; it is not a system…It is the vision of an object. When we pray, we pray, not to an assemblage of notions, or to a creed, but to One Individual Being; and when we speak of Him we speak of a Person, not of a Law or a Manifestation. This being the case, all our attempts to delineate our impression of Him go to bring out one idea…an individual idea in its separate aspects.

Just as sensual “impressions” correspond to their objects by their wholeness and indivisibility, and impress upon us a “persuasion of their reality” from the “spontaneous congruity and coincidence”

---

299 Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 88; cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger’s address to the Communion and Liberation movement at Rimini in August 2002. Ratzinger speaks of the knowledge of beauty that “pierces man” and “strikes the heart,” ranking it above deductive or second-hand knowledge. “True knowledge is being struck by the arrow of Beauty that wounds man, moved by reality…being struck and overcome by the beauty of Christ is a more real, more profound knowledge than mere rational deduction.”
300 See Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 88: “I adore a truth, which, though patent to all who look for it, yet, to be seen in its consistency and symmetry, has to be looked for.” cf. Mark McInroy, “Roman Catholic Receptions of the Grammar of Assent” in *Receptions of Newman*, 85-7, which compares Newman’s vision to that of Pierre Rousselot, who in *The Eyes of Faith* argues that in faith “perception of credibility and belief in truth are identically the same act.” The perception of symmetry is at once intellectual and moral for Newman, as he goes on in the above passage to observe that the mystery also perfectly corresponds to the reversal of sinful pride and the healing of conscience.
by which they unite diverse aspects, so also does the “impression” of the Gospel, by its profound inner harmony and consistency, and by its perfect correspondence to the impressions and anticipations of conscience,\(^{303}\) inspire us to give our full assent to it as an “idea or vision” that is whole and indivisible in itself: “not as the subject of a number of propositions, but as one, and individual, and independent of words.”\(^{304}\) The knowledge which revelation aims at, then, is not so much concerned with concepts as with this “intimate kind” of impression upon the soul;\(^{305}\) it “addresses itself to our senses and imagination” so that we respond to it as something we have “looked upon,” seen, heard, and touched.\(^{306}\) Faith’s knowledge, for Newman, is rooted in the “imagination” as in an intellectual faculty.

Accordingly, “particular propositions,” which are necessary for faith’s expression and preservation as aspects of the one idea,\(^{307}\) “can never really be confused with the idea itself,”\(^{308}\) in

\(^{303}\) cf. Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 119: “no mere promise was sufficient to undo the impression left on the imagination by the facts of Natural Religion; but in the death of His Son we have His deed.” cf. Ratzinger, *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, 19-20: “For the mainstream of the modern exegesis, the event is the irrational element. It lies in the realm of mere facticity, which is a mixture of accident and necessity. Meaning lies only in the word...[But] what is useful as a methodological principle for the natural sciences is a foregone banality as a philosophical principle; and as a theological principle it is a contradiction...The event itself can be a ‘word.’” (20)

\(^{304}\) See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 330-1. N.B., however, the crucial difference: “religious impressions differ from those of material objects, in the mode in which they are made... no such faculties have been given us, as far as we know, for realizing the Objects of Faith.” Therefore we are dependent upon “secondary and intelligible means” to receive and communicate the impression: “we form creeds as a chief mode of perpetuating the impression.” (333) “Catholic dogmas are, after all, but symbols of a Divine fact.” (332)

\(^{305}\) Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 332: “an impression of this intimate kind seems to be what Scripture means by ‘knowledge.’ ‘This is life eternal,’ says our Saviour, ‘that they might know Thee the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.’”

\(^{306}\) See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 121-2 with reference to 1 Jn 1:1. cf. *ibid.*, 332: “Knowledge is the possession of those living ideas of sacred things, from which alone change of heart or conduct can proceed. This awful vision...” cf. *ibid.*, 176: “To them Christ was manifested as He is to us, and in the same way; not to the eyes of the flesh, but to the illuminated mind, to their Faith.” cf. Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*: 336: “[Aquinas says]: ‘The light of Faith makes things seen that are believed.’ He says moreover, ‘Believers have knowledge of the things of Faith, not in a demonstrative way, but so as by the light of Faith it appears to them that they ought to be believed.”


\(^{308}\) See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 331.
which they live and which they can never fully exhaust. Indeed, such doctrinal statements must never be isolated from the impression which they express:

Though the Christian mind reasons out a series of dogmatic statements, one from another, this it has ever done, and always must do, not from those statements taken in themselves, as logical propositions, but as being itself enlightened and (as if) inhabited by that sacred impression which is prior to them, which acts as a regulating principle, ever present, upon the reasoning, and without which no one has any warrant to reason at all...though the development of an idea is a deduction of proposition from proposition, these propositions are ever formed in and round the idea itself (so to speak), and are in fact one and all only aspects of it.

The Christian imagination thus governs Christian thought, as the “image,” “idea” or “impression” it grasps is prior to all explicit articulations. It provides the “atmosphere” through which the textual prose of doctrine gains its “illuminative power.”

With all of this said, it needs to be noted in the same breath that this “imaginative apprehension”—which Newman will eventually come to call a “real apprehension”—bears within itself an innate dynamism toward articulated expression in the form of dogma and system, and can be said to contain them implicitly within itself. This is because it is internal to the original impression that its sublime harmony coincide with the divine authority with which it confronts the mind. Thus the impression begs to be brought out into explicit articulation in authoritative statements and theological discourse; this indeed is a primary means by which the

---

309 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 331-2: “Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea which they are designed to express, and which alone is substantive; and are necessary only because the human mind cannot reflect upon that idea, except piecemeal, cannot use it in its oneness and entireness, nor without resolving it into a series of aspects and relations. And in matter of fact these expressions are never equivalent to it.”

310 Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 334. cf. id., *Grammar of Assent* 249: “we must not hurry on and force a series of deductions, which, if they are to be realized, must distil like dew into our minds, and form themselves spontaneously there, by a calm contemplation and gradual understanding of their premises.”

311 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 191: “Texts have their illuminating power, from the atmosphere of habit, opinion, usage, tradition, through which we see them.”


313 cf. Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 109, where it is affirmed that imagination cannot be separated from dogma: “Without a proposition or thesis there can be no assent, no belief, at all...in religion the imagination and affections should always be under the control of reason... Sentiment, whether imaginative or emotional, falls back upon the intellect for its stay...devotion falls back upon dogma.”
impression is preserved and communicated. This is why Peter, at the very dawn of gospel faith, is spontaneously impelled to cry out “Thou are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” giving birth thereby to the whole dogmatic system, and spurring a tradition of reflection that up to the present day has not ceased to draw out the implications and inner necessities flowing from this foundational statement. It is why theology never ceases to be essential to faith’s inner vitality: for the symmetries of the first impression demand that faith’s explicit knowledge also gravitate toward a “moral center,” giving birth to a Wisdom in the mind by which faith’s harmonies are more perfectly known (i.e., with reflexive appreciation), and its inner authority more powerfully experienced. It is why, in short, faith continually gives rise to the process of development, “till what was at first an impression on the Imagination has become a system or creed in the Reason.”

In this sense, dogma and theology are never simply ancillary aspects of faith, but are rather contained within it in nuce from the very beginning, and help to constitute its essence. Our understanding of revelation’s “impression” would be profoundly impoverished if it were thought to exclude these vital conceptual elements. Nevertheless they live only within the “imaginative” apprehension of the Christian “idea.” Newman thus envisions the implicit and explicit aspects of faith within a dynamic interplay of mutual reinforcement and clarification that excludes any isolation of one from the other. Faith cannot exist apart from a profoundly personal apprehension, and this apprehension cannot exist apart from its own inner transcendence toward a universal

---

314 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 333: “we form creeds as a chief mode of perpetuating the impression.” cf. ibid., 320-1: “naturally…the inward idea of divine truth passes into explicit form by the activity of our reflective powers.” cf. ibid., 329: “the mind…naturally turns…with a devout curiosity to the contemplation of the Object of its adoration, and begins to form statements concerning Him.”
316 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 287: “It is not the mere addition to our knowledge which is the enlargement, but the change of place, the movement onwards, of that moral centre, to which what we know and what we have been acquiring, the whole mass of our knowledge, as it were, gravitates.” cf. ibid., 291-2: “till the whole becomes in imagination like a spirit, every where pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them their one definite meaning.” Thus faith aims to explicitly “[discern] the whole in each part.”
authority, together with its demand for a publicly expressible form. Dogma and “impression” thus interpenetrate and need one other; faith responds to revelation’s impression as to God’s definite word. Newman’s unique response to modernity here begins to take shape: in the realm of faith, subjectivity and authority are internal to one another. In other words, revelation is addressed to the human conscience.

iv. Conscience

We arrive now at the linchpin. For prior to the assertions of the preceding paragraphs it might have seemed that our foray into Newman’s account of subjectivity had taken us far afield from the initial claims regarding dogma and objectivity. How, we might ask, can faith begin as submission to unexperienced truths authoritatively proclaimed if it is based in an imaginative apprehension? Or how can it be essentially dogmatic if its essential content escapes full verbal articulation? It is Newman’s doctrine of conscience that overcomes this tension and ties the apparently discordant strands together. For conscience “throws us out of ourselves, and beyond ourselves” and makes us willing to give our lives for goodness and truth, and the integral role it plays within man’s intellectual and imaginative life refers what is eminently personal outward toward an objective measure that transcends any individualistically conceived subjective confines. The grounds of this transcendence, however, remain rooted in the inner depths that are constitutive of the mind itself. There is, therefore, no question of heteronomy, any more than there is of subjectivism. In this way, Newman heals the breach, so keenly felt in the modern age, between the authority of truth and the freedom rightfully claimed by the rational subject. At the same time,

318 See Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 325-6. Faith and dogma are listed to correlative principles, faith responding to dogma as to God’s work, generating theology.
320 cf. Joseph Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 142: “[The] bond of religious knowledge…does not in any way eliminate the personal responsibility of reason, nor does it put any obstacle to it.”
he calls into question the assumption that rational certainty must be arrived at by grounds that are common to all.

We have already seen how, for Newman, the “intellectual” and the “ethical” aspects of the human mind must never be isolated from each other in “existential” matters, but must ever be intertwined, acting in concert. The reason for this is that, in all considerations that are not purely abstract, the “intellectual” and the “ethical” bear implications for one another. If a question touches my lived reality, then my answer to it will carry ramifications for my duties in relation towards it. And, vice versa, if I am convinced in conscience regarding certain duties, or if I am lax regarding them, this will inevitably factor into my judgments regarding realities to which those duties might relate. Try as we might to isolate the two sides, they are inseparably bound, and it is to our benefit to recognize this fact. This is why questions of faith or doctrine that might at first seem purely speculative have a moral relevance, and why certain philosophies can rightly be described as base.

These considerations come to the fore most prominently in Newman’s efforts to justify faith as a legitimately rational act. Faith’s judgment can be fully legitimate—i.e., in accordance with the demands of the rational subject—even while not being reducible to apodictic demonstration on universally approvable grounds, because it pertains to matters for which the moral ballast of the soul is decisive in the interpretation of the evidence. As we have seen, “though a given evidence does not vary in force, the antecedent probability attending it does vary without limit, according to the temper of the mind surveying it,” such that “a good and a bad man will

321 “Existential” is not Newman’s term; he speaks more of the “concrete” in opposition to the “abstract.” But the term is used to here to refer to those matters that carry a moral significance for the person insofar as they enter into the concrete order of things with which he must interact in order to realize himself. Existence is never abstract.
think very different things probable.” In other words, faith depends on the “moral sense,” an aspect of conscience, which is itself irreducible to explicit rational measures, but which is fully justified in its assessments nonetheless. Faith can neither survive nor come to be apart from this faculty. It presupposes for its act the imperative of “duty” which it can only receive from the dictates of conscience.

Such is the case for faith, but the implication is that the same rule applies to all of the mind’s judgments in “concrete” or “existential” matters. Faith is legitimate because it comports with the way the mind works in general. In abstract questions the immoral man may be a fine judge of evidences—“irreligious men are adequate judges of the value of mere evidence, when the decision turns upon it”—but in concrete considerations he meets his limit. Here finer instruments are required. Newman speaks of certitude, the “bell” by which the mind springs from the obscurity of converging probabilities to the clarity of assent, as the conscience of the intellect, and compares its attunement (or “illative sense”) to that of moral phronēsis. In certain passages we find these two faculties (conscience and certitude) set in parallel to one another, such that the two “triggers” appear as mirror images operating in distinct fields, one in the arena of assent what

325 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 191: “since probabilities have no definite ascertained value, and are reducible to no scientific standard, what are such to each individual, depends on his moral temperament.”
326 See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 73: “the same sensitiveness and delicacy of conscience, which is the due disposition for faith, is also its safeguard and its nutriment, when at length it is possessed.”
327 See Newman, Apologia, 38-9, on the relationship between duty and certitude. cf. id., Oxford University Sermons, 215: “We are so constituted, that if we insist upon being as sure as is conceivable, in every step of our course, we must be content to creep along the ground, and can never soar. If we are intended for great ends, we are called to great hazards; and, whereas we are given absolute [i.e., apodictic] certainty in nothing, we must in all things choose between doubt [i.e., ‘difficulty’] and inactivity, and the conviction that we are under the eye of One who, for whatever reason, exercises us with the less evidence when He might give us the greater.” cf. ibid., 228: “it cannot be helped. Act we must, yet seldom indeed is it that we have means of examining into the evidence of the statements on which we are forced to act.” Thus faith’s judgment is predicated on the demand for action. cf. id., “Ventures of Faith” in Parochial and Plain Sermons, IV:20, 922-9.
328 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 228: “This is the way judgments are commonly formed concerning facts…”
329 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 191.
the other is in the arena of action.\footnote{e.g., Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 190; “Our conscience too may be said to strike the hours, and will strike them wrongly, unless it be duly regulated for the performance of its proper function. It is the loud announcement of the principle of right in the details of conduct, as the sense of certitude is the clear witness to what is true. Both certitude and conscience have a place in the normal condition of the mind. As a human being, I am unable, if I were to try, to live without some kind of conscience; and I am as little able to live without those landmarks of thought which certitude secures for me; still, as the hammer of a clock may tell untruly, so may my conscience and my sense of certitude be attached to mental acts, whether of consent or of assent, which have no claim to be thus sanctioned. Both the moral and the intellectual sanction are liable to be biased by personal inclinations and motives; both require and admit of discipline; and, as it is no disproof of the authority of conscience that false consciences abound, neither does it destroy the importance and the uses of certitude, because even educated minds, who are earnest in their inquiries after the truth, in many cases remain under the power of prejudice or delusion.”} But if we read such descriptions in light of what has been said regarding the necessary intertwining of the mind’s speculative and practical aspects, the two correlates will be seen to be internal to each other’s acts.\footnote{cf. Mark McInroy, “Roman Catholic Receptions of the \textit{Grammar of Assent}” in \textit{Receptions of Newman}, 75-76.} The trigger of one does not fire without that of the other; assent is often a matter of action and actions often imply assents. Conscience provides the mind with crucial “presumptions” and “first principles” that lie at the basis of its judgments,\footnote{See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 66-68.} and it can impel men to make decisions that the “mere intellect” could not make on its own. “Act we must,”\footnote{Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 228.} Newman says of the assent of faith, “not knowing how to choose…sooner or later he must; or rather, he must choose soon, and cannot choose late, for he cannot help thinking, speaking, and acting, and to think, speak and act, is to choose.”\footnote{Newman, \textit{Sermons Preached on Various Occasions}, 7. cf. id., \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 89: “men who investigate in this merely intellectual way, without sufficient basis and guidance in their personal virtue, are bound by no fears or delicacy.”} Newman thus speaks of the moral implications of assent,\footnote{See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 252, on the role of the “sense of duty” in generating assent. cf. id., \textit{Apologia}, 39, on the relation between duty and certitude.} and of the conscience as decisively shaping our imaginative vision of reality, enabling the upright man to come to certitudes that unconscientious
men cannot.\textsuperscript{337} As “a constituent element of the mind,”\textsuperscript{338} it shapes the imagination which in turn shapes the illative sense.

There is, then, a two-way influence to be acknowledged. On the one hand, Newman says that “knowledge must ever precede the exercise of the affections” and that “imagination and affections should always be under the control of reason.”\textsuperscript{339} Conscience, which operates primarily through affection and imagination,\textsuperscript{340} must accordingly act in light of what the mind already knows through the clarity of assents and propositions. On the other hand, conscience is an “original principle” that does not depend on any process of “reasoning” prior to it,\textsuperscript{341} and it positively shapes the mind in its judgments of what is real.\textsuperscript{342} This tension can be resolved only if we conceive of the two poles (conscience and intellect) as internal to one another. Thus we return to the hermeneutic circle mentioned above: faith shapes the heart, and the “right state of heart” acts as a safeguarding criterion for faith;\textsuperscript{343} the imagination governs judgment, and judgments shape the

\textsuperscript{337} See \textit{Sermons Preached on Various Occasions}, 20: “The natural conscience of man, if cultivated from within…would lead him on…into the fullness of religious knowledge.” cf. id., \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 106: “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…There are those who think it philosophical to act towards the manifestations of each [of good and evil] with a sort of impartiality, as if evil had as much right to be there as good…It is otherwise with the theology of a religious imagination. It has a living hold on truths which are really to be found in the world, though they are not upon the surface. It is able to pronounce by anticipation, what it takes a long argument to prove—that good is the rule, and evil the exception. It is able to assume that, uniform as are the laws of nature, they are consistent with a particular Providence. It interprets what it sees around it by this previous inward teaching, as the true key of that maze of vast complicated disorder…”

\textsuperscript{338} Newman, \textit{Letter to the Duke of Norfolk}, 42.


\textsuperscript{340} See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 100-101: “Conscience has an intimate bearing on our affections and emotions…emotions constitute a specific difference between conscience and our other intellectual senses…[Conscience] is always emotional…it always involves the recognition of a living object, towards which it is directed. Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons…this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible…thus the phenomena of Conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive…”

\textsuperscript{341} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 183: “No one will say that Conscience is against Reason, or that its dictates cannot be thrown into an argumentative form; yet who will, therefore, maintain that it is not an original principle, but must depend, before it acts, upon some previous processes of Reason?”

\textsuperscript{342} See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 98: “Conscience has a legitimate place among our mental acts…there are things which excite in us approbation or blame, and which we in consequence call right or wrong.”

\textsuperscript{343} Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 234.
imagination; “conscience is a simple element in our nature, yet its operations admit of being surveyed and scrutinized by Reason;” the impressions of conscience give rise to assents, and assents shape conscience. The two cannot be separated: they mutually interpenetrate and ground one another. In the realm of Christian faith, this means that conscience tends toward and stands in need of dogma and ecclesial authority as a sort of midwife to its development, and that dogma requires conscience as its presupposition and inner measure; conscience, after all, being that place in us from which we become willing to offer our lives for the sake of truth.

Newman thus locates conscience at the very foundation of faith. It is by conscience, he says, and not by “proofs,” that the truths of “natural theology” are brought home to us in a real way. By its intimation of an absolute moral imperative, by its pleasant approbations and stinging accusations, the well-heeded conscience tends toward the formation in us of an impression of a

---

345 Instructive here is the analogy Newman draws in *Development of Doctrine* between the individuals’ conscience and the Church’s dogmatic principle: “What Conscience is in the history of an individual mind, such was the dogmatic principle in the history of Christianity.” By the dogmatic principle, Newman refers not to the dogmas themselves but to the impulse or presumption that drives the Church to formulate them in the first place. This instinct did not always yield perfectly accurate results, but it was nevertheless true in its formal direction, and led eventually to the proper clarification of Church teaching. Recognizing that the revelation it received was authoritative, it sought to find words to embody materially what it held formally as principle. Conscience in the individual, then, being the formal principle of right and wrong, seeks to embody its instinctive knowledge in distinct propositions. It contains an inner dynamism that attains to its definiteness only in propositional commands. Those commands, however, are in turn only really intelligible to conscience. See John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 358. cf. Bouyer, *Newman’s Vision of Faith*, 147: “when the illative sense of the Church is at work, it performs the function of conscience and so would be identical to conscience…the act of tradition may be described as the functioning of the conscience of the Church.”
346 See Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 74: “I have no intention whatever of denying the beauty and the cogency of the argument which these books [of Natural Theology and Evidences] contain; but I question much, whether in matter of fact they make or keep men Christians… the best argument…an argument which is ‘within us’ – an argument intellectually conclusive, and practically persuasive…is that which arises out of a careful attention to the teachings of our heart, and a comparison between the claims of conscience and the announcements of the Gospel.” cf. id., *Oxford University Sermons*, 63: “it is as absurd to argue men, as to torture them, into believing.”
347 See Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 99: “conscience does not repose on itself, but vaguely reaches forward to something beyond self, and dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions, as is evidenced in that keen sense of obligation and responsibility which informs them. And hence it is that we are accustomed to speak of conscience as a voice, a term which we should never think of applying to the sense of the beautiful; and moreover a voice, or the echo of a voice, imperative and constraining, like no other dictate in the whole of our experience.”
348 See Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 99: “Conscience is ever forcing on us by threats and by promises that we must follow the right and avoid the wrong.” cf. ibid., 105: “there are things which excite in us approbation or blame, and which we in consequence call right or wrong; and which, experienced in ourselves, kindle in us that specific sense of
personal God,349 one who beholds us at every moment and who in his goodness holds us responsible for our actions, rewarding the good and threatening the wicked with punishment.350 It is thus that conscience “does not repose in itself”351 but “throws us outside of ourselves” in search for a good word from the God who thus threatens us,352 since it convinces us well enough that we are alienated from this providential Being,353 while offering us no clear directives as to how our situation is to be rectified.354 In this way we arrive at a fundamental awareness of our need for salvation. A yearning is kindled in us that opens us up to the message of revelation. Conscience yearns for a definitive message.

Conscience accordingly becomes the primary receiver of revelation, for it recognizes in Christ and in his disciples the righteousness which it seeks,355 and resonates with a proclamation pitched directly to the heart of its dilemma. Newman speaks of the honest man as having “that

pleasure or pain, which goes by the name of a good or bad conscience.”

349 See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 103: Conscience “involves the impression on his mind of an unseen Being with whom he is in immediate relation...What a strong and intimate vision of God must he have already attained.” cf. ibid., 304: “Conscience, too, teaches us, not only that God is, but what He is; it provides for the mind a real image of Him.” cf. id., Oxford University Sermons, 18: “Conscience implies a relation between the soul and a something exterior, and that, moreover, superior to itself; a relation to an excellence which it does not possess, and to a tribunal over which it has no power.”

350 See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 64: “he has within his breast a certain commanding dictate, not a mere sentiment...but a law, an authoritative voice, bidding him do certain things and avoid others...it commands...it praises, it blames, it promises, it threatens, it implies a future, and it witnesses the unseen.”


352 See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 65: “its very existence throws us out of ourselves, and beyond ourselves, to go and seek for Him in the height and depth, whose Voice it is.”

353 See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 309-10: “My true informant, my burdened conscience, gives me at once the true answer to each of these antagonist questions:—it pronounces without any misgiving that God exists:—and it pronounces quite as surely that I am alienated from Him.”

354 See Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 67: “It suggests to him a future judgment; it does not tell him how he can avoid it...it does not tell him how he is to get better.”

355 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 80-1: “Their conscience still speaks, but having been trifled with, it does not tell truly; it equivocates, or is irregular. Whereas in him [Christ] who is faithful to his own divinely implanted nature, the faint light of Truth dawns continually brighter; the shadows which at first troubled it, the unreal shapes created by its own twilight-state, vanish; what was as uncertain as mere feeling, and could not be distinguished from a fancy except by the commanding urgency of its voice, becomes fixed and definite, and strengthening into principle, it at the same time develops into habit. As fresh and fresh duties arise, or fresh and fresh faculties are brought into action, they are at once absorbed into the existing inward system, and take their appropriate place in it.”

69
within him which actually vibrates to the lessons” he receives from the teachers of religion.\textsuperscript{356} For insofar as “[God’s] representative was in their hearts” already “as a lawgiver and a judge,” the conscientious can “respond to the Apostle's doctrine, as the strings of one instrument vibrate with another.”\textsuperscript{357} For such persons, the mere existence of Christianity is evidence enough to warrant belief in its message, as it perfectly corresponds to their inborn sense of need.\textsuperscript{358} “No mere promise was sufficient to undo the impression left on the imagination by the facts of Natural Religion; but in the death of His Son we have His deed—His irreversible deed—making His forgiveness of sin, and His reconciliation with our race, no contingency, but an event of past history.”\textsuperscript{359} The deed of Christ’s redemption aligns directly with conscience’s secret hopes, such that meager evidence is sufficient to impel it to surrender itself to the authoritative proclamation that comes to meet it in the gospel.

Dogmatic authority, then, and the conscience that constitutes the most intimate foundations of the human heart, can in no way be set at odds with each other for Newman.\textsuperscript{360} Each is grounded in the other. For that which conscience dimly gropes after comes to meet it in God’s saving Word, whose voice conscience represents in each man’s breast, and which now offers to conscience its transcendent justification. Conversely, the ecclesial authority that represents this Word in dogmatic form depends on the “prior representative” that dwells in men’s hearts as its most basic

\textsuperscript{356} Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 105. Thus “elements, latent in the mind” give rise to an “image of God” in the mind, “over and above all mere notions.”
\textsuperscript{357} Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 248-9. cf. ibid., 236: “those who believe in Christ, believe because they know Him to be the Good Shepherd; and they know Him by His voice; and they know His voice.”
\textsuperscript{358} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 66.
\textsuperscript{359} Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 119.
\textsuperscript{360} See Joseph Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches During the Second Vatican Council” in \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I}, 103: “That the Church is founded on authority and not on personal preference was the basic insight of his [Newman’s] long Christian path. But because this authority on its part rests not on positivistic conclusions but on trust in tradition, trust in God who reveals himself, it does not for him contradict the conscience, which is God’s organ in man… Conscience in the proper sense—not to be confused with personal preference—is the basis for papal authority.”
presupposition. The Pope and the magisterium would have no authority were it not for conscience, for such authority presumes the faith of the faithful, which lives from conscience. Hence the famous lines from the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*: “did the Pope speak against Conscience in the true sense of the word, he would commit a suicidal act. He would be cutting the ground from under his feet;”\(^{361}\) “the championship of the Moral Law and of conscience is his *raison d'être*;”\(^{362}\) “I shall drink—to the Pope, if you please,—still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards.”\(^{363}\) This implies that conscience (as distinct from the counterfeit of self-will) must be obeyed even when its dictates appear to contradict the word of the Church, for “he who acts against his conscience loses his soul.”\(^{364}\) Ecclesiastical power can never contradict this prior “power.”\(^{365}\)

---

\(^{361}\) Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, 45: “…it is by the universal sense of right and wrong, the consciousness of transgression, the pangs of guilt, and the dread of retribution, as first principles deeply lodged in the hearts of men, it is thus and only thus, that he has gained his footing in the world and achieved his success.”

\(^{362}\) Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, 45: “…The fact of his mission is the answer to the complaints of those who feel the insufficiency of the natural light; and the insufficiency of that light is the justification of his mission…this sense is at once the highest of all teachers, yet the least luminous; and the Church, the Pope, the Hierarchy are, in the Divine purpose, the supply of an urgent demand. Natural Religion…needs…to be sustained and completed by Revelation.”


\(^{364}\) Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, 48, citing the Fourth Lateran Council. This carries implications for the standing of those outside the Church due to their fidelity to an erroneous conscience, assuming that this error arises through no fault of their own. cf. ibid., 70. See also Ratzinger, “The Dogmatic and Ascetical Meaning of Christian Brotherhood” in *Man Before God*, 129: “The harsh and woeful words of our Lord concerning the Judaic mission of his time (Mt 23:15) should be a warning to the Church against a false proselytizing, to respect another’s intellectual freedom, and to encounter that person always in the true love of brotherhood.” cf. id., “What Unites and Divides Denominations?” in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*. Vol I, 8: “one cannot live ecumenism against one’s own Church, but only by trying to deepen it in relation to what is essential and central. This means that one must seek the center in one’s own Church, and this, after all, for all Christians and Churches is truly one…one may not seek the center in traditions that are purely one’s own, which are not found in the whole of the rest of the oecumene.” This point relates back to another important passage from Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 202: “It is conceivable that a man might travel in his religious profession all the way from heathenism to Catholicity, through Mahometanism, Jansenism, Unitarianism, Protestantism and Anglicanism, without any one certitude lost, but with a continual accumulation of truths, which claimed from him and elicited in his intellect fresh and fresh certitudes.” All conversion is positive.

\(^{365}\) As Ratzinger puts it, insofar as the Church’s only power is the power of conscience, then its primary expression must be that of suffering in witness to the Truth which sets a limit on all worldly power. See Joseph Ratzinger, “Conscience in Time” in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*. Vol II, 22: “Conscience was recognized in principle as setting a limit to power…the power of conscience consists in suffering, in the power of the Crucified; only in that way can it be kept from inaugurating yet another kind of enslavement. It redeems only as the power of the Cross; its mystery lies in this powerlessness and it must remain powerless in this world in order to remain itself.” cf. id., “Free Expression and Obedience in the Church” in *The Church: Readings in Theology*. (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1963), 215: “might she [the Church] not be taken to task for taking the reins a bit too tightly, for the creation of too many norms…might she not be rebuked for trusting too little in the power of truth which lives and triumphs in faith, for
Nevertheless, “conscience has rights because it has duties,” and for the believer these duties include the effort to seek as far as possible to harmonize its commands with those of the Church: “the onus probandi of establishing a case against [the Pope] lies, as in all cases of exception, on the side of conscience.” Without this effort it would contradict itself, for it is determined by an inner dynamism of transcendence that attains to its definition only in the propositional articulation of God’s revelation.

Dogma meets the human heart in its most personal of judgments. Its universal certainty is not arrived at by grounds that are “common to all,” but rather, as in all cases of certainty, by the most personal grounds of all: by the heart’s implicit judgments, shaped as these are by the vivid apprehensions of an imagination alive to the voice of the Creator as it addresses the intimate core of each person. Such reasonings are unique to each man, and incommunicable as such:

Conscience is a personal guide, and I use it because I must use myself; I am as little able to think by any mind but my own as to breathe with another's lungs. Conscience is nearer to me than any other means of knowledge. And as it is given to me, so also is it given to others; and being carried about by every individual in his own breast, and requiring nothing besides itself, it is thus adapted for the communication to each separately of that knowledge which is most momentous to him individually.

This uniqueness, however, need not prevent a shared enjoyment of truth, since it is precisely at this incommunicable and irreducible level—where freedom lives and individuality is realized—that the universal authority of the Creator, which ties all things together, sounds forth. His voice echoes in each breast, as in all of the real apprehensions that mark man’s consciousness, bidding each to

entrenching herself behind exterior safeguards instead of relying on the truth...‘wherever the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.’”

367 Newman, Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, 48. “Unless a man is able to say to himself, as in the Presence of God, that he must not, and dare not, act upon the Papal injunction, he is bound to obey it, and would commit a great sin in disobeying it.”
368 cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “Jesus Christ Today” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol II, 94: “Christian exodus involves a conversion...overcoming of self-reliance and the entrusting one’s self to the mystery...that losing of self in love which is resurrection because it is a dying.”
369 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 304.
honesty and humility in his response to reality. Revelation brings this dynamic to its perfection.

Dogmatic faith, then, does not crush the personal subject but in a real sense depends upon it, provides it with its deepest grounds, and brings it to its fullest freedom and inner realization—it enables conscience to flower forth into martyrdom.

**C. Conclusion: the *Apologia* and Overcoming Modernity from Within**

If modernity is defined by its quest for a universally available ground of certitude in the “neutral” standpoint of scientific rationality, we find Newman running in the exact opposite direction: not that he denies certitude—far from it—but rather that he seeks its grounds in that which is incommunicable and proper to the person as such. Thus, from another angle, we can regard Newman as running in the same direction as modernity. For insofar as modernity’s desire for universal objectivity drives it to seek bedrock within the structures of the human subject, Newman’s project pursues the same goal still more radically. Indeed, he takes the modern quest a step further than it is generally willing to go, discovering with Augustine in the depths of the subject the transcendent “light,” the opening to the Other, which alone makes sense of the human person and allows his life to become one of witness. In this way, Newman overcomes modernity from within. This is the fundamental shape of his thought, and we discover it not only

---

370 See Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 9: “She [nature] refuses to reveal her mysteries to those who come otherwise than in the humble and reverential spirit.”

371 No man dies for an inference, but real assents are typified by the fact that they are rooted in what is personal to us, in that incommunicable center of our responsibility, in our conscience, which makes us willing to die for our convictions. That is the test of conscience’s power, the force of its inexorable demand, and Christian faith is verified in the fact that it lends conscience the only material proportionate to its formal force. Dogma alone can create martyrs. See Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 89: “Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion…No one, I say, will die for his own calculations: he dies for realities.” For more on the relationship between conscience and suffering, see Ratzinger, “Conscience in Time” in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol II*, 17-27. Conscience shows its true power by resisting the forces of the world in the only way available to it, that is, by suffering and dying for the sake of its convictions.

372 In addition to describing conscience as an “impression” and a “voice,” Newman also refers to it as a “light,” indeed as “the true light that enlightens every man.” See Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 64.
in the corpus of his writings, but more significantly as embodied in his person in the course of his life.

A consideration of Newman’s *Apologia pro vita sua* can thus serve as a summarizing conclusion to our reflections, for it exemplifies the unity between his thought and his person. The *Apologia* seeks to detail the history of Newman’s mind in the gradual development of ideas that led to his eventual conversion to Roman Catholicism. In this it is far from a standard autobiography. Nevertheless, at the same time, it is also far from a modern catalogue of free-floating ideas. The fact that he responds to his critics precisely by relating his story—“…the true key to my whole life; I must show what I am, that it may be seen what I am not…I wish to be known as a living man…”373—reflects his conviction that truth is revealed precisely in the incarnate, historical life of man. “It is the concrete being that reasons…the whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it.”374 Thus, far from succumbing to modern isolation of thought from reality, Newman heals its breach by his incarnational sensibility.

But what is also clear from the *Apologia*, as from his other works, is that he does not heal this breach from the perspective of an external observer, but truly “from within.” For his writings show him to be a thoroughly modern man. Indeed the very self-knowledge displayed in the *Apologia* manifests the modern turn to the subject. In recounting his youth, Newman notes the impact left upon him from reading Hume and Voltaire, along with the Calvinist William Romaine, who encouraged in him a solipsistic doubt of the reality of the material world: “…confirming me in my mistrust of the reality of material phenomena, and making me rest in the thought of two and

373 Newman, *Apologia*, 15. “…as a living man, and not as a scarecrow which dressed up in my clothes. False ideas may be refuted indeed by argument, but by true ideas alone are they expelled…I will draw out, as far as possible, the history of my mind.”

two only absolute and luminously self-evident being, myself and my Creator.”375 On repeated occasions, he admits of the distinction between material reality and its phenomena, even to the point of questioning the objective existence of space and time.376 Only the romantic “sacramental system” he received from Butler and Keble was able to deliver him from such doubts.377 Thus it is clear that he is not insensitive to the concerns of modern epistemology in his apology for the faith, nor does he simply deny the bases for its questions. He even grants many legitimate difficulties with regard to the question of God, and admits that these have the power to shake his soul.378 “How dreadful, and yet how plausible!”: this was his initial reaction to the writings of Voltaire.379 Newman was a modern man who felt the power of its critique from within.380 Yet he overcomes this critique by resituating the life of thought within the full context of the life of man. The life of the mind does not stand on its own: “the whole man moves.”381 And this concrete man is not a mere computer unfolding the necessary deductions of “paper logic.” He is set in flesh, shaped by a historical imagination, by sympathy, emotional prejudice, anticipatory desire and a sense of duty, all of which affect his assessment of the antecedent probabilities pertaining to the question of what is reasonable or convincing. This, Newman explains, is why his conversion took as long as it did, even as many of his disciples and enemies saw the implications of his principles long before he did.382 Not only was his imagination “stained” by a “false

376 Newman, Apologia, 80: “The fundamental idea is consonant to that to which I had been so long attached: it is the denial of the existence of space except as a subjective idea of our minds.”
377 Newman, Apologia, 37: “material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen.”
381 Newman, Apologia, 158.
382 Newman, Apologia, 159-60: “All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I did...Great acts take time.”
“conscience” holding him back from Rome,\textsuperscript{383} he was also bound by ties of loyalty and affection to his Church, to his friends, to his nation and to his followers. Thus his discernment was driven by the test of “daily duty”: theory could not be divorced from the demands of action and of one’s duty before God.\textsuperscript{384}

Hence Newman cannot describe the flow of his ideas without adverting to the question of conscience. Throughout the account, it is this that leads him by the hand: not merely what truth demands for truth’s sake, but what conscience demands for God’s sake. This is the ghost that haunts him, the shadow on the wall, the knock upon his heart.\textsuperscript{385} He acts or refrains from acting in accord with his conscience—it is this voice which, in the light reason, acts as the final criterion of truth. This is why in the preface he equates his intellectual life with “the intercourse between myself and my Maker.”\textsuperscript{386} Despite all appearances to the contrary, Newman’s account is not merely an intellectual memoir but truly a spiritual autobiography.

By the same token, the idealism and skepticism of the modern age are not merely intellectual problems, but spiritual problems. This is what is set in relief by Newman’s life. The fundamental issue with “liberalism,” as Newman understands the term, is not a faulty premise here or a misdrawn conclusion there. It is a matter of one’s fundamental relation to and disposition towards truth. Is the truth something set before the mind to be determined by it according to its own needs and criteria? Or is it rather that before which the mind is set, the ultimate judge, to which the whole thinking man is bound by the obligation of duty? The basic error of liberalism

\textsuperscript{383} Newman, \textit{Apologia}, 27-28: “My imagination was stained by the effects of this doctrine [that the Pope was the Antichrist] up to the year 1843; it had been obliterated from my reason and judgment at an earlier date; but the thought remained upon me as a sort of false conscience.”

\textsuperscript{384} Newman, \textit{Apologia}, 144: “what is a higher guide for us in speculation and in practice, than that conscience of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood…” cf. ibid., 196: “Do what your present state of opinion requires in the light of duty, and let that \textit{doing speak}…” cf. ibid., 201: “…a conviction forced upon me in the \textit{course of duty}.”

\textsuperscript{385} Newman, \textit{Apologia}, 116.

\textsuperscript{386} Newman, \textit{Apologia}, 17.
and its concomitant pathologies is that it opts for the former stance in opposition to the latter, and this decision is spiritual before it is intellectual. The human mind is not set apart from the world to play its self-congratulatory games. It is set before man and before God, and it can only operate authentically insofar as it remains consciously within that setting. “Truth for truth’s sake” is only comprehensible if man is for God’s sake.387

Ultimately, what emerges in the Apologia is that while Newman is in one sense the main character of his drama, he is not really the chief protagonist. He is being led step by step by another character, mysterious at first, but gradually becoming more clear as the narrative unfolds. This character is the conscience, the very voice of Truth, who addresses Newman and bids him along a path of sacrifice, and indeed of heroism.388 Such a voice cannot be accounted for if we understand truth merely as an abstraction or notional proposition or philosophical posit. But this is never really what Newman means by the term “truth”:

It is faith and love which give to probability a force which it has not in itself. Faith and love are directed towards an Object; in the vision of that Object they live; it is that Object, received in faith and love, which renders it reasonable to take probability as sufficient for internal conviction. Thus the argument from Probability, in the matter of religion, became an argument from Personality, which in fact is one form of the argument from Authority.389

We see here the “preference of the Personal to the Abstract”390 which so definitively shaped Newman’s character and thought, and the stance of his life before the truth. In the end, what is affirmed by the his life is that Truth is first and foremost a Person, a person who addresses man’s heart and conscience and calls him to life and freedom.

387 Cf. Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 328, where Newman counters Locke’s reductive definition of “love of truth for truth’s sake” as distinct from “some other by-end” with the following statement: “It does not seem to have struck him [Locke] that our “by-end” may be the desire to please our Maker, and that the defect of scientific proof may be made up to our reason by our love of Him…calculation never made a hero.”
388 Newman, Apologia, 55: “We promote truth by a self-sacrifice.”
389 Newman, Apologia, 38.
390 Newman, Apologia, 45.
Newman thus leads us to a personal notion of truth, and it is here that we discover the crucial link that ties his vision together with that of Joseph Ratzinger. For the insight that lies at the center of Ratzinger’s theological project is the realization that, in Christianity, the Truth reveals itself precisely as a person: Jesus Christ. Hence we read, in the oft-quoted line from Deus Caritas Est, “being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a definitive direction.” Ratzinger sees this insight as the key to any effective response to the contemporary world’s hesitations before the claims of truth. He is well known, of course, for his opposition to relativism’s false solution to the problem posed by the potentially divisive and totalitarian nature of truth-claims. Like Newman, he is great defender of objective truth and of the human mind’s capacity to know it. But what is often less appreciated is the degree to which he, again like Newman, sympathizes with the modern (or post-modern) plight and embraces its concerns from within.

In Lumen Fidei, promulgated by Pope Francis but written mainly by Benedict XVI, we find a concerted effort to speak into this plight and to offer the Christian faith as its ultimate remedy. In light of our preceding investigation, it can be regarded as a thoroughly Newmanian document: the contemporary world’s suspicions are treated with sympathy, even as the need

---

391 Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 1.
393 Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei, 7. Pope Francis acknowledges in this paragraph that his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI had nearly completed the first draft of the encyclical, which would have completed his trilogy on the theological virtues, before leaving office. While Francis notes that he made a few additions, the majority of the text bears all the distinctive signatures of Ratzinger’s though.
394 Newman is explicitly cited only once, in paragraph 48, regarding the integrative character of Catholic Truth, but traces of his thought permeate the whole document.
395 Lumen Fidei, 25: “Truth itself, the truth which would comprehensively explain our life as individuals and in society, is regarded with suspicion. Surely this kind of truth—we hear it said—is what was claimed by the great totalitarian movements of the last century, a truth that imposed its own world view in order to crush the actual lives of individuals. In the end, what we are left with is relativism, in which the question of universal truth—and ultimately this means the question of God—is no longer relevant…in this regard, though, we can speak of a massive amnesia in our
for objective truth is insisted upon;\textsuperscript{396} the personal nature of faith is repeatedly emphasized,\textsuperscript{397} and the heart is identified as its organ,\textsuperscript{398} as the place where truth and love (the intellectual and the ethical) are united and recognize their need for one another;\textsuperscript{399} love is thus regarded “as a source of knowledge”\textsuperscript{400} endowed with its own logic,\textsuperscript{401} opening us up to a new vision of reality;\textsuperscript{402} faith, which moves by love, is accordingly both a matter of hearing from authority (dogma)\textsuperscript{403} and of seeing for ourselves (image),\textsuperscript{404} which two modes are united in Jesus, who as the Word made flesh is the Truth in person;\textsuperscript{405} the rational light of truth therefore acquires a personal countenance which is capable of addressing us in love;\textsuperscript{406} and, crucially, this fact opens up the possibility of a truth contemporary world. The question of truth is really a question of memory, deep memory, for it deals with something prior to ourselves and can succeed in uniting us in a way that transcends our petty and limited individual consciousness. It is a question about the origin of all that is, in whose light we can glimpse the goal and thus the meaning of our common path.” cf. ibid, 34: “Truth nowadays is often reduced to the subjective authenticity of the individual, valid only for the life of the individual. A common truth intimidates us, for we identify it with the intransigent demands of totalitarian systems.” cf. ibid., 47: “we find it hard to conceive of a unity in one truth. We tend to think that a unity of this sort is incompatible with freedom of thought and personal autonomy.”

\textsuperscript{396} Lumen Fidei, 24.
\textsuperscript{397} Lumen Fidei, 8, 11, 13, 18.
\textsuperscript{398} Lumen Fidei, 26: “Here a saying of Saint Paul can help us: "One believes with the heart" (Rom 10:10). In the Bible, the heart is the core of the human person, where all his or her different dimensions intersect: body and spirit, interiority and openness to the world and to others, intellect, will and affectivity. If the heart is capable of holding all these dimensions together, it is because it is where we become open to truth and love, where we let them touch us and deeply transform us. Faith transforms the whole person precisely to the extent that he or she becomes open to love. Through this blending of faith and love we come to see the kind of knowledge which faith entails, its power to convince and its ability to illumine our steps. Faith knows because it is tied to love, because love itself brings enlightenment. Faith’s understanding is born when we receive the immense love of God which transforms us inwardly and enables us to see reality with new eyes.”
\textsuperscript{399} Lumen Fidei, 27: “If love needs truth, truth also needs love.”
\textsuperscript{400} Lumen Fidei, 28.
\textsuperscript{401} Lumen Fidei, 27: “love is itself a kind of knowledge possessed of its own logic.”
\textsuperscript{402} Lumen Fidei, 27: “One who loves realizes that love is an experience of truth, that it opens our eyes to see reality in a new way, in union with the beloved.”
\textsuperscript{403} Lumen Fidei, 29.
\textsuperscript{404} Lumen Fidei, 30.
\textsuperscript{405} Lumen Fidei, 31: “How does one attain this synthesis between hearing and seeing? It becomes possible through the person of Christ himself, who can be seen and heard. He is the Word made flesh, whose glory we have seen (cf. Jn 1:14). The light of faith is the light of a countenance in which the Father is seen. In the Fourth Gospel, the truth which faith attains is the revelation of the Father in the Son, in his flesh and in his earthly deeds, a truth which can be defined as the "light-filled life" of Jesus. This means that faith-knowledge does not direct our gaze to a purely inward truth. The truth which faith discloses to us is a truth centred on an encounter with Christ, on the contemplation of his life and on the awareness of his presence.”
\textsuperscript{406} Lumen Fidei, 33.
that no longer threatens the person’s autonomy but offers him the liberation of love,\textsuperscript{407} creating in him the capacity for a shared knowledge of the truth via love’s transcendence to community.\textsuperscript{408}

Such is Benedict XVI’s answer to the crisis of the modern world: not primarily a philosophical response to a merely philosophical problem, but a theological response to what is fundamentally a spiritual malady. The mind that seeks its grounds exclusively within its own sealed structures comes to fear anything that approaches it from without, which can only appear as a foreign imposition. Such fear, accordingly, will not be cured by new arguments, but only by a renewed encounter with the Truth as Person: not a truth of bald abstractions whose universality stands as an ideological threat to personal authenticity, but the Truth who is revealed as Love, who thus, far from threatening the person, rather opens the path to redemption and true authenticity. It is the contention of this paper that this response shares a common shape with that of Blessed John Henry Newman, to which it owes much, and which it in turn helps to illuminate, as both seek to correlate the subjective depths of the person to the objective truth that comes to meet it in

\textsuperscript{407} \textit{Lumen Fidei}, 34: “The light of love proper to faith can illumine the questions of our own time about truth. Truth nowadays is often reduced to the subjective authenticity of the individual, valid only for the life of the individual. A common truth intimidates us, for we identify it with the intransient demands of totalitarian systems. But if truth is a truth of love, if it is a truth disclosed in personal encounter with the Other and with others, then it can be set free from its enclosure in individuals and become part of the common good. As a truth of love, it is not one that can be imposed by force; it is not a truth that stifles the individual. Since it is born of love, it can penetrate to the heart, to the personal core of each man and woman. Clearly, then, faith is not intransient, but grows in respectful coexistence with others. One who believes may not be presumptuous; on the contrary, truth leads to humility, since believers know that, rather than ourselves possessing truth, it is truth which embraces and possesses us. Far from making us inflexible, the security of faith sets us on a journey; it enables witness and dialogue with all.” cf. Ratzinger, “Jesus Christ Today” in \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol II}, 98-99: “Truth has been discredited in history because it has been offered from a position of domination and made an excuse for force and oppression. Plato had already seen the danger that comes when one sees truth as a possession and thus as power for domination…” But Jesus “is the image of God, because his the shining forth of love, and therefore the cross is his ‘glory’…The truth, the real truth, has made itself tolerable to man, has become a \textit{way}, in that it has appeared and now appears in the poverty of the powerless…in Christ, poverty has become the genuine sign, the inner ‘power’, of truth.”

\textsuperscript{408} \textit{Lumen Fidei}, 47: “We tend to think that a unity of this sort is incompatible with freedom of thought and personal autonomy. Yet the experience of love shows us that a common vision is possible, for through love we learn how to see reality through the eyes of others, not as something which impoverishes but instead enriches our vision. Genuine love, after the fashion of God’s love, ultimately requires truth, and the shared contemplation of the truth which is Jesus Christ enables love to become deep and enduring.”
revelation: *Cor ad cor loquitur*. In what follows, we will seek to further illustrate this relationship, especially as it is manifest in the ways in which Newman and Ratzinger approach the theological interpretation of history.

**Part II: Reading History**

**A. Development and Stability**

The foregoing investigation into the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in faith has laid the foundations for what follows. For, as we saw in the introduction, the question of objectivity and subjectivity bears implications for the question of the relationship between faith and history. The more one views faith as objective to the exclusion of all subjectivity, the less one will be able to admit of changes in faith’s articulation through the centuries. Conversely, the more one views faith as subjective to the exclusion of all objectivity, the less one will be able to account for faith’s stability and normativity through history. So long as objectivity and subjectivity are thus viewed to stand in competition with one another, then, we will be forced to choose between a modernism that allows for no real continuity in tradition and an exaggerated dogmatism that tendentiously reads its conclusions back into the past. Newman’s genius, however, in correlating objectivity and subjectivity such that they grow in direct and mutual proportion to one another, allows him to read history in such a way that he can account both for faith’s development and for its stability in history. This is what becomes clear in his classic *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, to an analysis of which we will now turn.

---

Newman’s original concern in examining the history of the early Church was to render the
tradition of Christian orthodoxy intelligible in a skeptical modern age, and initially, to do so by
justifying his proposal of Anglo-Catholicism as the *Via Media* between Roman and Protestant
extremes.410 On the one hand, his studies had already convinced him of the untenability of the
Protestant position as an orthodox Christian option: “to be deep in history,” he wrote, “is to cease
to be a Protestant.”411 On the other hand, several facets of Roman Catholic belief and practice
appeared to him as obvious novelties, foreign to the ancient tradition.412 The alleged virtue of the
Anglican vision—or rather, of the theoretical vision proposed by the Oxford Tractarians—was its
pristine fidelity to the classical Catholic tradition of the Fathers, admitting neither of Protestant
attenuations nor of Papist accretions. By this proposal, Newman hoped to offer an orthodoxy that
could stem the liberalizing tide already threatening to eviscerate the English Church.413

The trouble that emerged for this thesis, however, was the lack of an adequate criterion by
which to validate the specifically Anglican version of orthodoxy. The Protestant *sola scriptura*
was clearly insufficient to bear the dogmatic assertions of the first Christian centuries.414 But the
alternative “canon” of St. Vincent of Lerins—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—
appealed to by Pusey, Keble and other Tractarians as an abiding rule for Christian doctrine,415 was
almost equally unsuited: it refuted the Gnostics only so far as it also justified the semi-Arians and

---

Tradition*, 51-2. Biemer argues that, prior to 1842, Newman had espoused a more or less mechanical and static notion
of tradition, along the lines of Lerins and his fellow Oxford Tractarians, and that only the crisis of Tract 90 forced him
to articulate a more vital and dynamic view. Against this, Marvin R. O’Connell and Mary Katherine Tillman argue
that the notion of development is already present in *Arians of the Fourth Century* and certain early tracts. See
O’Connell and Tillman, “Development: The context and the content,” 452. cf. Ratzinger, *Commentary on the
Documents of Vatican II*, 156: “[at the Council] the idea of material tradition was abandoned more and more in favour
of that of tradition as a process.” cf. ibid., 265: “the whole structure of reform” depends on the realization that “going
back is at the same time, and from within, a moving forward.”
Monophysites in their exceptions to Nicaea and Chalcedon, the decrees of which Councils appeared as “novelties” to these heretical sects. The challenge for Newman was thus to articulate a reading of Christian history that could defend the various “novelties” of the orthodox tradition, while also refuting the novelties of the liberals, who were citing the ambiguities of history as an excuse to abandon dogmatic commitments. In other words, he needed to show how the tradition could simultaneously change and remain the same: “it changes…in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” The Essay on Development was the fruit of this quest, a fruit which coincided with his entrance into the Catholic Church, and which would itself become a landmark text in the tradition it seeks to illustrate.

The thesis which Newman was pursuing was not entirely new. As Owen Chadwick has pointed out, the medieval scholastics admitted of a certain growth in the body of Christian knowledge along the analogy of a rational inference, whereby the latent contents of a given premise are drawn out either by analysis or by combination with some other premise. This theory, Chadwick notes, was given a very literal interpretation by later modern commentators such as

---

416 Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 11-18. cf. id., Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine, 63-4: “It had long been to me a difficulty, that I could not find certain portions of the defined doctrine of the Church in ecclesiastical writers.” cf. id., Development of Christian Doctrine, 367: “the Council of Antioch might put aside the Homoüsion, and the Council of Nicaea impose it.”


418 Such is the judgment of Ratzinger in “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 66: “A body remains identical with itself precisely by continuously becoming new in the process of life. For Cardinal Newman the notion of development was the bridge to his conversion to Catholicism…I believe that it numbers among the decisive and fundamental concepts of Catholicism, it is far from having been considered adequately…true identity with the origin exists only where there is a living continuity that develops it and in so doing preserves it at the same time.”

419 Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman, 23-25: “In defining a doctrine, the Church was not putting into revelation a truth which was not there before the definition. It was displaying more clearly the inner content of the revelation, explicating what was implicit…The deduction from two premises is implicated in those premises. The conclusion of the syllogism is an explication…logic afforded the precise analogy which was needed—to explain how there could be addition without change.”
In contrast to the rigid assertions of the uniform continuity typical of Bishop Bossuet, these thinkers posited that Christian doctrine could legitimately grow when one divinely revealed proposition was combined with another premise, drawn either from elsewhere within the Sacred Deposit or from the certain truths of natural reason. Thus, by syllogism, the Church could arrive at a “new” proposition of divine truth—already virtually contained within Revelation if not explicitly stated—that could now be dogmatically affirmed: a “theological conclusion.”

The difficulty with such a theory is two-fold. First, when such conclusions involve the combination of a divine truth with a truth of natural reason, it is plausible and indeed likely that the minor (natural) premise will not be beyond dispute. Yet if the theological conclusion of such a syllogism be dogmatically defined, then that previously contested premise must be affirmed with a certainty it did not previously merit. A new proposition would thus appear to be drawn up into the realm of divine faith. This consideration led Suarez to affirm that the Church’s Magisterial...
definitions are occasions of ongoing revelation in the Holy Spirit, allowing the Church to affirm natural propositions with divine authority. The Magisterium, of course, declined to assume that level of authority, but however much other thinkers may have tried to finesse the matter, Suarez’s conclusion is difficult to avoid if we assume this model of development. However much the Holy Spirit’s activity in enlightening the magisterium must be affirmed, it cannot be construed as ongoing revelation.

The second difficulty with the theory lay in its failure to comport with the actual outlines of history. Not only do we witness several heretics across the ages fashioning apparently valid syllogisms from scriptural premises, we also see the Church discerning the orthodox response in a manner not easily reducible to syllogistic reasoning. The doctrines surrounding purgatory, indulgences and Marian piety emerged more out of venerable practice than from any set of logical deductions, yet they cannot be simply dismissed on that score, any more than can the canon of the Scriptures or Eucharistic transubstantiation. Admitting these examples and the kind of development they exhibit was crucial for Newman’s journey into the Church.

reason: namely, that the will belongs properly to the nature and not to the person as such. See Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman, 26-33.

424 Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman, 42-44.
425 Greenstock, following John of St. Thomas, attempts to circumvent such a criticism by proposing that the instrumental use of the minor premise by the major elevates the minor beyond its natural capacities, allowing it to effect a supernatural certitude beyond the natural knowledge of reason. (See Greenstock, “Thomism and the New Theology,” 577-8). But this seems dubious. While it is no doubt true that instrumental causality elevates the secondary premise beyond its innate capacities, it is also true that the modality with which the conclusion is affirmed cannot exceed the modalities of any of the premises from which it is drawn. Even if I am absolutely certain of the major premise, if I am only conditionally certain of the minor, then I can be no more certain of the conclusion derived from the two. Hence it is difficult to see how I can assent with divine faith to a proposition whose merits depend on derivation from a truth of natural reason. Greenstock implies that in such a case, the light of the divine truth in the major premise is communicated also to the minor premise in virtue of the exact correspondence of the middle terms, but this is precisely the kind of “ongoing revelation” that Suarez proposes and which the Church rejects.
426 We might think, for example, of the Arian use of Mt 24:36 or Jn 14:28 in support of the thesis that the Son is inferior to the Father, or of the Nestorian use of Ps 2 and Heb 1:5 in support of adoptionism. Cf. Newman, Lectures on Justification, 148: “mere argumentative belief...leads as readily into heresy as into the Truth.” Cf. id., Development of Christian Doctrine, 351: “what the Christians of the first ages anathematized, included deductions from the Articles of Faith, that is, false developments, as well as contradictions of those Articles.”
On Newman’s hands, then, was the task of presenting a theory of growth or development in Christian doctrine through the centuries which conformed to the actual patterns of history and at the same time excluded any notion of “ongoing revelation,” then very much in vogue among Christians seeking to conform their faith to the sentiments of the times.\footnote{See Chadwick, \textit{From Bossuet to Newman}, 74-86.} As mentioned, this task would require some way of affirming the paradox of a simultaneous identity and change within the tradition, and, if this change was to involve a real learning on the part of the Church, also a simultaneous knowing and not-knowing. “The Church does not know more than the Apostles knew,”\footnote{John Henry Newman to R.F. Hutton, 20 October 1871, in \textit{Letters and Diaries}, 25:418. cf. Biemer, \textit{Newman on Tradition}, 60-62. Biemer cites several passages from an unpublished paper of Newman on development that appears in \textit{Gregorianum} 39 (1958), pp. 585-96: “The Apostle could answer questions at once...(but) the Church does in fact make answers that the Apostles did not make.” (593) “[the fullness of faith] habitually, not occasionally resided in the minds of the Apostles.” (596) cf. Ratzinger, \textit{Theology of History in Bonaventure}, 93, where Ratzinger describes Bonaventure’s vision of Church history as revolving back to the wordless, mystical vision of the whole enjoyed by the apostles: “the revelation of the final age will involve neither the abolition of the revelation of Christ nor a transcendence of the New Testament. Rather, it involves the entrance into that form of knowledge which the apostles had; and thus it will be the true fulfillment of the New Testament revelation which has been understood only imperfectly up till now.”} even as the list of dogmas which we now know to belong of necessity to the faith has grown significantly since the death of John the Evangelist. The saving essence of the faith must remain qualitatively and quantitatively unchanged, even its creedal and conceptual articulations have undoubtedly advanced. How can this be?

Newman solves the dilemma by drawing a powerful distinction. It first emerges in the discussion regarding the “development of ideas in general” that introduces the \textit{Essay}. Here, in his first paragraph, Newman once again asserts the active role of the mind in knowing. In opposition to the merely passive “impressions” of Locke, he states that as soon as our minds apprehend an object “we judge: we allow nothing to stand by itself: we compare, contrast, abstract, generalize, connect, adjust, classify: and we view all our knowledge in the associations with which these
processes have invested it.”\textsuperscript{430} The output of these processes of judgment are the various “aspects”\textsuperscript{431} under which we know and seek to know the things we encounter. Of these aspects not all are of equal value. Some are less sure than others, some better grounded; some more peripheral, and others more central; some will need refinement and purification whereas others are more or less accurate from the beginning.\textsuperscript{432} But crucially, none of the aspects resulting from our judgments are fully adequate to the object of those judgments.\textsuperscript{433} None of them can exhaust its contents. They are all partial and perspectival, and the integral “idea” truly adequate to the object only corresponds to sum total of all possible aspects.\textsuperscript{434}

This implies that our explicit knowledge of things is always incomplete and progressive.\textsuperscript{435} For who of us can know all of the possible aspects of a thing, a variety potentially infinite in number? A certain aspect may at some point take the lead in our conception, an essence or nature may emerge that allows us to tentatively assess the whole, but this will always be by way of an abstraction that necessarily takes a step back from the concrete reality of the original.\textsuperscript{436} The marble sculpture can only really be known when the full sweep of its circumference is beheld at

\begin{footnotes}
\item[433] cf. John Henry Newman to J.D. Dalgairns, 10 January 1847, \textit{Letters and Diaries}, 12:5. Newman mentions as one of the two most prominent principles within the essay that “no real idea can be comprehended in all its bearings at once.”
\item[434] Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 34. cf. O’Connell and Tillman, “Development: The context and the content,” 467: “All of our statements about God taken altogether can never say what is implied in the original idea, which is ever independent of words.”
\item[435] cf. Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 116: “Not only do we see Him at best only in shadows, but we cannot bring even those shadows together, for they flit and fro, and are never present to us at once.” cf. id., \textit{Lectures on Justification}, 75: “[w]e use words about it beyond our comprehension.” cf. id., \textit{Idea of a University}, 114: “the intellect in its present state…does not discern truth intuitively, or as a whole. We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance but as it were, by piecemeal and accumulation, by mental process, by going round an object, by the continual adaptation of many partial notions…and the joint action of many faculties and exercises of mind.”
\item[436] See John Henry Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 44: “in processes of this kind we regard things, not as they are in themselves, but mainly as they stand in relation to each other. We look at nothing simply for its own sake…‘Man’ is no longer what he really is, an individual presented to us by our senses, but as we read him in the light of those comparisons and contrasts which we have made him suggest to us. He is attenuated into an aspect, or relegated to his place in a classification.”
\end{footnotes}
once, something no individual can accomplish on his own.\textsuperscript{437} It is only through “the action of mind upon mind,” minds all possessed by the same idea, that the full truth progressively emerges.\textsuperscript{438} Only then, through the gradual accumulation of perspectives, can all the possible aspects be collected and allowed to balance, purify and strengthen one another. Only then, as it were asymptotically, does the full idea begin to appear.\textsuperscript{439}

But this last point introduces another crucial dimension. The whole collective venture towards truth depends on the fact that all of the “minds” involved are indeed possessed by the same idea, even as their explicit judgments only admit of diverse, partial aspects. Otherwise, we would be condemned to a subjectivism utterly incapable of attaining to truth.\textsuperscript{440} For without an objective reference beyond our various aspects how could our collective effort be guaranteed a coherent direction? The idea must live of its own accord: it must be “of a nature to arrest and possess the mind, may be said to have a life, that is, to live in the mind…it becomes an active principle within them, sending them to an ever-new contemplations of itself.”\textsuperscript{441} The object thus necessarily “impresses an idea of itself on our minds” and henceforth it is more this idea that works out its conclusions in us than we that work out our conclusions in it.\textsuperscript{442} Thus, in the midst of all the partial aspects by which we consciously judge the object, the integral idea is also present, as an

\textsuperscript{437} cf. Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 34-5. This further implies that knowledge must always be a communal venture.


\textsuperscript{439} See Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 55: “Whole objects do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are, to use a mathematical phrase, thrown into a series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, and with more or less exactness approximating, as they accumulate, to a perfect image.” Obviously, the term “idea” here is applied in a different sense than the one detailed above in the section on imagination. As we shall see directly, elsewhere Newman speaks of a single Christian idea that is impressed upon the minds of all Christians.

\textsuperscript{440} We would, accordingly, fall necessarily under the brunt of Garrigou-Lagrange’s critique, who sees in the appeal to subjectivity the first step toward modernist relativism. If our “notions” cannot be guaranteed with objective stability, how can we ever arrive at truth? “How can a judgment have an immutable value if there is not immutability in the first apprehension, \textit{in the notions themselves} that this judgment reunites?” Only if there is something else besides the notions to guarantee stability.

\textsuperscript{441} Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 36.

\textsuperscript{442} Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 55.
“impression” that exercises a governing role over the whole process. Crucially, for Newman, Christianity is but one integral idea and not a set of ideas, even as it is an idea that gives rise to manifold aspects.\(^{443}\)

It becomes immediately evident here how important Newman’s doctrine of imagination and implicit knowledge is for grounding his theory of development. For it is that which is impressed upon the imagination, the “imaginative idea,” of which the knower may be only partially aware in his explicit consciousness but of which his mind is nevertheless fully possessed on the implicit level, that serves as the bedrock of constancy amid changing articulations. Language is only able to communicate realities by relating them to others within its field of vision—a tree is a tree, for instance, by relation to other trees—but in this it necessarily grasps only parts and misses that which belongs incommunicably to the whole in its concrete uniqueness.\(^{444}\) That which is incommunicable in others requires something incommunicable in us for its proper apprehension.\(^{445}\) Thus the aspects of things that men develop through explicit words and concepts—which will frequently require balancing and purification—must be rooted in something deeper within the person, something that can serve to check and order these developments vis-à-vis a more direct contact with the reality in question.\(^{446}\)

\(^{443}\) See Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 53: “As God is one, so the impression which He gives us of Himself is one; it is not a thing of parts; it is not a system; nor is it anything imperfect and needing a counterpart. It is the vision of an object.” cf., ibid., 55: “Christianity is a fact, and impresses an idea of itself on our minds…that idea will in course of time expand into a multitude of ideas, and aspects of ideas, connected and harmonious with one another, and in themselves determinate and immutable, as is the fact itself which is thus represented.” cf. id., Oxford University Sermons, 316: “the slow growth of centuries [is]…anomalous in its details, from the peculiarities of individuals, or the interference of strangers, but still, on the whole, the development of an idea, and like itself, and unlike any thing else, its most widely-separated parts having relations with each other, and betokening a common origin.” cf. ibid., 330: “As God is One, so the impression which He gives us of Himself is one…”


\(^{445}\) cf. Newman, Lectures on Justification, 140: “In spite of our arbitrary abstractions, each existing man exists to himself, as an individual, complete in himself, independent of all others, differing from all others, in that he is he, and not they nor one with them, except in name.” The point is extended to objects of faith.

\(^{446}\) This is a frequent theme in Newman. See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 249: “we must not hurry on and force a series of deductions, which, if they are to be realized, must distil like dew into our minds, and form themselves
Thus the fundamental distinction drawn in the *Essay* is one between the (implicit) impression of the integral idea and the various (explicit) aspects according to which it is judged. It achieves fuller definition in the *Grammar of Assent*, where we find the distinction between “real” and “notional” apprehensions, and between corresponding “real” and “notional” assents. The designation “real” accrues to our apprehensions of and assents to those concrete objects which, when encountered, leave a distinct impression upon the mind, whereas the term “notional” attaches to our apprehensions of and assents to the lines of relation by which we connect those objects to others within our field of knowledge. Hence the notional apprehension is always to one degree or another abstract and partial, and so conceptual, while the real apprehension is always concrete, individual and whole, something communicated by an impression upon the imagination which subsequently makes an energetic demand upon our field of action. The latter is deep and focused, playing a fundamentally conservative role in governing the activity of the mind; the former, conversely, is comparatively shallow and broad, that by which the mind makes connections spontaneously there, by a calm contemplation and gradual understanding of their premises.” cf. id., *Lectures on Justification*, 3, where Newman laments the danger of premature systematization on the basis of limited or isolated notions. Notions may be compatible in themselves, yet “the case is altogether altered when one or other is made the elementary principle of the gospel system,—when professed exclusively, developed consistently, and accurately carried out to its limits.”

The claim being made here—i.e., that the real-notional distinction is equivalent to, or a development of, the impression-aspect distinction—requires some nuance. The “real ideas” mentioned in the *Essay on Development* are not perfectly identical with the “real apprehensions” of the *Grammar*, though the two are deeply interrelated. Nevertheless, the striking parallel in description (as witnessed, for instance, between the first paragraphs of the *Essay on Development’s* first section (33) and the *Grammar’s* account of notional apprehensions (44) cannot be ignored.

Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 49: “what is concrete exerts a force and makes an impression on the mind which nothing abstract can rival.”

Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 44: “we regard things not as they are in themselves, but mainly as they stand in relation to each other.” cf. ibid., 47: “To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter is the conservative principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement.” Thus the imagination conserves and accounts for the stability of knowledge, while the explicit level presses forward to greater and greater accuracy of articulation.

Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 31: “intellectual ideas cannot compete in effectiveness with the experience of concrete facts…Not that real apprehension as such, impels to action, any more than notional; but it excites and stimulates the affections and passions, by bringing facts home to them as motive causes.” cf. ibid., 76: “in real [assents, the mind] is directed towards things, represented by the impressions which they have left on the imagination. These images, when assented-to, have an influence both on the individual and on society, which mere notions cannot exert.”
and advances in its knowledge. Eventually Newman describes notional apprehensions explicitly as “aspects,” and describes them in parallel fashion to the “aspects” outlined in the Essay, just as he describes the “real” apprehensions in parallel fashion to the integral “ideas” of his earlier work. Thus the impression-aspect distinction finds its completion in the real-notional distinction.

It is important to note once again here that this distinction in no sense entails a separation. The real impression of the object and the notional delineation of its aspects occur simultaneously, and may or may not be consciously distinguished by the apprehending subject. While in the Grammar Newman has no trouble setting real apprehensions and assents into explicit propositional form, the implication in the Essay on Development is that the Christian idea can never be fully grasped by any single proposition and must accordingly be approached through a variety of angles. In the latter case, the impression of the integral Christian idea would not be consciously apprehended in any conceptual form, whereas in the former the impression would be graspable by proposition. In either case, the overall sense given is that the two modes—real and notional—

451 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 47.
452 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 44, 49, 57. cf. id., Lectures on Justification, 9: “If there be such a thing as a real apprehension of Christ, it must necessarily be beyond explanation. It is a feeling, a spiritual taste, perception, sight, known only to him who has the blessedness to experience it. It is something beyond and above nature.”
453 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 93. cf. ibid., 44: “Instinctively, even though unconsciously, we are ever instituting comparisons between the manifold phenomena of the external world, as we meet with them, criticizing, referring to a standard, collecting, analyzing them.” Thus, as Tillman and O’Connell put it, “there is a general, natural and direct correspondence between a given explicit dogma and the inward idea held by faith which the dogma represents, despite reason’s inability to spell out explicitly and exactly all the lines of that correspondence.” (O’Connell and Tillman, “Development: The context and the content,” 454.) cf. Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 122: “Newman sees mind and imagination, abstract idea and image, as contributing by their conjoined partnership to all human thinking.”
454 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 55: “It is characteristic of our minds, that they cannot take an object in, which is submitted to them simply and integrally. We conceive by means of definition or description; whole objects do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are…thrown in a series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, and with more or less exactness approximating, as they accumulate, to a perfect image.”
455 The discontinuity here again suggests a distinction between “real ideas” and “real apprehensions,” the former being received by the latter in a mode that immediately combines implicit content with an explicit expression. This is a necessary nuance to keep in mind as we proceed with our investigation, even if a detailed investigation of this relationship would inject too much complexity for our present purposes. Newman also at times suggests the possibility of a notional apprehension of a real idea.
pass into and inform one another: the real apprehension grounds and governs the notional, while the notional conditions and defines our conscious appreciation of the real.\textsuperscript{456} This corresponds with our earlier statements regarding the interrelationships between the implicit and the explicit, imagination and judgment, conscience and dogma. As the real demands the notional for its appreciation and preservation, the notional depends on the real for its foundations.

Also noteworthy here is the fact that the ultimate factor by which Newman differentiates the real from the notional is its heightened capacity to make practical demands upon the subject. A real apprehension, begetting a real assent, is something that subsequently shapes the orientation of the person’s life. It is an apprehension the assent to which forces me to adjust my life to its reality, and indeed, to stake my life upon its truth if challenged.\textsuperscript{457} It is therefore crucial for Newman that Christianity be essentially rooted in a real apprehension and assent, and only secondarily in the notional, though this need imply no derogation of the notional.\textsuperscript{458} For this reason, in Newman’s understanding, the real must always take priority over the notional, and not vice-versa.\textsuperscript{459} It is the impressed idea that is the governing principle over the development of the

\textsuperscript{456} Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 44: “Nay, as if by one and the same action, as soon as we perceive them, we also perceive that they are like each other or unlike, or rather both like and unlike at once. We apprehend spontaneously, even before we set about apprehending, that man is like man, yet unlike; and unlike a horse, a tree, a mountain…yet in some, though not the same respects, like each of them…we are ever grouping and discriminating, measuring and sounding, framing cross classes and cross divisions, and thereby rising from particulars to generals, that is from images and notions.”

\textsuperscript{457} That is to say, it involves the conscience. See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 35. Though a man should die even for a notional assent if forced by necessity to choose between denial or death, real assent is differentiated by the fact that a man would “spontaneously challenge so severe a trial” to witness to its veracity. Clearly, Newman has martyrdom on his mind in this passage. cf. ibid., 87, where real assent is defined by the affect it has upon man’s conduct. cf. id., \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 332: “Knowledge is the possession of those living ideas of sacred things, from which alone change of heart or conduct can proceed.”

\textsuperscript{458} Newman, \textit{Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects}, 293: “The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.”

\textsuperscript{459} See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 47. cf. ibid., 90: “…man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise. It is very well to freshen our impressions and convictions from physics, but to them we must go elsewhere.” cf. id., \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 123, where the inherent weakness of a merely notional grasp of Christianity is highlighted: “Hitherto they have learned revealed truths only as a creed or system; they are instructed and acquiesce in the great Christian doctrines; and, having virtuous
conceptual aspects, not the aspects over the idea.\textsuperscript{460} This by no means entails a relativization of the aspects; rather, as implied above, these are absolutely essential to the knowledge and appreciation of the object, and the accuracy of their development is crucial for the “life” of the “idea.” But they are nonetheless secondary and subordinate to the real impression, from which they can never be considered in isolation;\textsuperscript{461} this all the more so in that they are liable to imbalance and inaccuracies when not held in the context of all other possible aspects.\textsuperscript{462} We witness again here the unique role which Newman affords to the imaginative faculty of human knowledge, in some sense ranking it ahead of the explicitly ratiocinative faculty, though not in any way opposing the two.\textsuperscript{463}

This unity-in-distinction between the real-impression and the notional-aspect, rooted as it is in Newman’s articulation of the relationship between imagination and truth, is precisely what grounds Newman’s theory of the development of doctrine, for it is this that enables Newman to feelings, and desiring to do their duty, they think themselves really and practically religious.” cf. ibid., 331-2: “Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea.”

\textsuperscript{460} cf. Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 334: “though the Christian mind reasons out a series of dogmatic statements, one from another, this it has ever done, and always must do, not from those statements taken in themselves, as logical propositions, but as being itself enlightened and (as if) inhabited by that sacred impression which is prior to them, which acts as a regulating principle, ever present, upon the reasoning, and without which no one has any warrant to reason at all…though the development of an idea is a deduction of proposition from proposition, these propositions are ever formed in and round the idea itself (so to speak), and are in fact one and all only aspects of it.”

\textsuperscript{461} See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 45-46: Newman bemoans the “gratuitous idealism” of those who invert this order, and attempt “to draw the individual after the peculiarities of his type.”

\textsuperscript{462} See Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 36: “one aspect of Revelation must not be allowed to exclude or dominate another.” cf. id., \textit{Lectures on Justification}, wherein Newman frequently attributes the woes of theology to isolation of one aspect from another. See ibid., 16: “what Saints and Martyrs have in substance held in every age, though not apart from other truths which serve to repress those tendencies to error…when exclusively cherished by the human mind… detached and isolated.” cf. ibid., 32: “justification and sanctification are…parts of one gift, properties, qualities, or aspects of one; that renewal cannot exist without acceptance, or acceptance without renewal.” cf. ibid., 4, 101. cf. id., \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 88-9.

\textsuperscript{463} Newman’s creative response to the problem of modern skepticism is evident again here: rather than simply calling a procedural foul and disqualifying its questions as misplaced, he absorbs its critique and overcomes it from within through a two-fold assertion: a) that the quest for knowledge is of a communal nature, operating within a tradition, and b) that the conceptual aspect of reason is secondary and subordinate to the real, impressed “idea” of the object. Further, the “real” apprehensions before which reason is always responsible is the voice of conscience, which, closely allied with the illative sense, informs the soul not only of whether or not it is reasonable to give one’s assent, but whether duty demands it. Truth, for Newman, is something toward which we are responsible as an aspect of our relation to our Maker.
affirm a simultaneous knowing and not-knowing in the life of the faith—an identity even in change.⁴⁶⁴ For as it is with ideas in general, so also with the “idea” of Christianity: its content is judged according to various and partial aspects, none of them adequate or comprehensive of themselves, but all of them needing the others in order to be balanced and refined by the whole set of alternative aspects.⁴⁶⁵ And because these “aspects” consist in relations of the object to other judged aspects of reality, there is always the possibility that the foibles of a given culture or age may inhibit or obscure the articulation of the faith in that age, which obscurities will then need to be adjusted, purified or counterbalanced at a later time.⁴⁶⁶ Hence the stream is not always “purest nearest the source…[belief] is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full.”⁴⁶⁷ In this respect, the knowledge of the Christian faith is progressive and never complete.

Yet, at the same time, this knowledge is constant and full, for prior to and above these sometimes disparate notional apprehensions there lies the real apprehension of the integral “idea” of Christianity, which, impressed upon the mind of the Church, is whole and complete in itself and

⁴⁶⁴ cf. Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 206: “the unity and identity of the idea with itself through all stages of its development from first to last.” cf. ibid., 186-7: “a mere formula either does not expand or is shattered in expanding. A living idea becomes many, yet remains one. The attempt at development shows the presence of a principle, and its success the presence of an idea.” cf. Biemer, Newman on Tradition, 60: “The deposit of faith is not ‘a list of articles that can be numbered,’ and it is ‘not a number of formulae.’”

⁴⁶⁵ Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 55: “…they accumulate, to a perfect image…We cannot teach except by aspects or views, which are not identical with the thing itself.”

⁴⁶⁶ cf. Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 39: “it may be interrupted, retarded, mutilated, distorted, by external violence…But whatever the risk of corruption from intercourse with the world around, such a risk must be encountered if a great idea is duly to be understood.” cf. ibid., 173: “unity of type, characteristic as it is of faithful developments, must not be pressed to the extent of denying all variation, nay, considerable alteration of proportion and relation, as time goes on, in the parts or aspects of an idea.” cf. ibid., 176: “it may happen that a representation which varies from its original may be felt as more true and faithful than one which has more pretensions to be exact.” cf. ibid., 17: “real perversions and corruptions are often not so unlike externally to the doctrine from which they come, as are changes which are consistent with it and true developments.” cf. Ratzinger, “Free Expression and Obedience in the Church,” 208, where Ratzinger expounds on the paradox of the simultaneously irreformable and reformable nature of the Church: “‘Dark I am and Comely’…the institution as institution also bears its burden of humanity; it too shares the human vanity of the stumbling block.”

⁴⁶⁷ Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 40.
essentially unchanging: 468 *semper idem*. This is the principle which gives stability to the faith even amidst the ever-changing 469 stream of its articulations, the bedrock of constancy which governs and directs the development of its doctrines. 470 Though the apostles may not have recognized the language of *homoousios* or *hypostasis*, yet they shared pre-eminently in the same real apprehension from which those later definitions of faith took their rise, and bequeathed to the Church the normative testimony of what that apprehension entails. 471 This fundamental apprehension and assent, passed down as a living principle from generation to generation, continues to shape the life and profession of the Church’s faith throughout the whole course of her history, each new twist and turn spurring a new aspect or development. 472

Seeing this is what led Newman into communion with Rome. 473 For he saw that the ancient Catholic tradition could not be reduced to the merely conservative principle of St. Vincent of Lerins, nor to a set of logical deductions from past statements. 474 Since the apprehended “idea” could not be reduced to the conceptual, neither could its developments. Despite the protestations

---

468 cf. Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 328: “if Almighty God is ever one and the same, and is revealed to us as one and the same, the true inward impression of Him, made on the recipient of the revelation, must be one and the same.” cf. ibid., 336: “That idea is not enlarged, if propositions are added, nor impaired if they are withdrawn: if they are added, this is with a view of conveying that one integral view, not of amplifying it. That view does not depend on such propositions: it does not consist in them; they are but specimens and indications of it…portions or aspects of that previous impression.”

469 Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 40: “It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”

470 Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 47: real apprehension “is the conservative principle of knowledge.”


472 Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 53: “Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea which they are designed to express, and which alone is substantive; and are necessary, because the human mind cannot reflect upon that idea except piecemeal, cannot use it in its oneness and entirety, or without resolving it into a series of aspects and relations.”


474 cf. Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 187-8: “[the Council] refused to quote again the text of Vincent de Lerin….it has another conception of the nature of historical identity and continuity. Vincent de Lerin’s static *semper* no longer seems the right way of expressing the problem….This kind of new orientation simply expresses our deeper knowledge of the problem of historical understanding…[acknowledging that] explanation, as the process of understanding, cannot be clearly separated from what is being understood…[This] dissolved the clear antithesis of object and subject, without leading to an identification of both.”
of some,\footnote{\textit{e.g.}, Greenstock and Garrigou-Lagrange.} doctrinal development is not mathematical:\footnote{Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 41: “Arguments will come to be considered as suggestions and guides rather than logical proofs; and developments as the slow, spontaneous, ethical growth, not the scientific and compulsory results, of existing opinions.” cf. ibid., 10. cf. Biemer, \textit{Newman on Tradition}, 128. cf. O’Connell and Tillman, “Development: the Context and the Content,” 464: “Newman does not mean some kind of syllogistic or \textit{demonstrative} development such as a scholastic philosopher might mean, whereby this follows \textit{with necessary} from that…”} the Church’s implicit judgments cannot be fully mapped by explicit reason.\footnote{cf. Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 334-5: “the early Fathers…for the charge of weak reasoning, commonly brought against those Fathers; for never do we seem so illogical to others as when we are arguing under the continual influence of impressions to which they are insensible.”} Rather the living principle spurs new conclusions in a host of different ways, all of them enmeshed within the incarnate and historical life of the Church. Newman catalogues several such “kinds” of development—political, historical, logical, ethical, metaphysical—a list suggesting no simple linear path of explication, but rather a complicated history, messy and risky, conditioned by the “numberless vicissitudes of the world.”\footnote{Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 43. cf. id., \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 317: “Wonderful it is, to see with what effort, hesitation, suspense, interruption,—with how many swayings to the right and to the left—with how many reverses, yet with what certainty of advance, with what precision in its march, and with what ultimate completeness, it has been evolved; till the whole truth "self-balanced on its centre hung," part answering to part, one, absolute, integral, indissoluble, while the world lasts!” cf. id., \textit{Letter to Norfolk}, 76, where Newman discusses later Councils trimming and balancing earlier ones that might have otherwise led to excess.} This is the reason why revelation demands an infallible monarchical principle for the preservation of its integrity,\footnote{See Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 148-165.} and hence the reason why the “notes” of the true Church are to be found preserved in communion with the Petrine See, where that principle—which belongs properly to the whole of the communion—is ultimately concentrated and enfleshed.\footnote{One might ask here whether this does not rather unrealistically demand that the Pope somehow transcend the “vicissitudes” of history himself. To this objection Newman would likely respond: no more than it would demand a council or a scriptural writer to transcend. It belongs to the essence of Christian belief that divine authority can appear and be recognized in the history of human flesh. The “illative” sense is what allows us to such discern universal truth precisely in the world of particulars. What no amount of mathematical calculus can achieve, the human subject can by the “leaps” it takes at the promptings of conscience, which structures the subject all the way down. The Church, too, can make definitive judgments from what would otherwise be merely “probable” historical evidence because she possess an illative sense of her own, one which comes into its exercise through the decisions of popes and councils. cf. J.D. Holmes, “A note on Newman’s historical method” in \textit{The Rediscovery of Newman}, 97-99.} While logical truth can be preserved...
by mere rule, personal truth requires a personal locus of authority.\textsuperscript{481} no revelation is given unless an authority is given to secure it.\textsuperscript{482}

All of this implies that the original content of the governing real-impression, though surely inclusive of intellectual commitments, cannot be limited to the conceptual dimension. While certain logical and metaphysical modes of development admit of strong intellectual bases, the historical, ethical and political modes suggest a converse path wherein intellectual conclusions are discerned from the basis of ethical attitudes, habitual practices or situational exigencies.\textsuperscript{483} The truth of Christianity must be held by the heart as well as by the mind. For Newman, as we have seen, truth is never reducible to the notional operations of paper logic.\textsuperscript{484} It is a vision that is real, concrete and personal, set within the landscape of man’s relation to God and all of the demands

\textsuperscript{481} As J.D. Holmes puts it, citing a passage from the Grammar of Assent, there is “a personal element in history…‘far too subtle and spiritual to be scientific.’” (Holmes, “A note on Newman’s historical method,” 99) But “dead things have no history.” (Development of Christian Doctrine, 351) cf. Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 111, on the difference between existential knowledge and the abstract knowledge that is subject to the uniform and “mechanical manipulation of rules.” cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches During the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 93: “If I equate revelation with the text…then there is nothing living but rather something dead—having settled down in illo tempore. Then revelation is delivered up to historicism; it is subjected to human criteria. If, on the contrary, it is true that Scripture is the objectification of revelation which precedes it, which cannot be caught in any human word, then exegesis must look beyond the letter and read the text in connection with what is alive…what is living, revelation itself, is Christ…Christ is alive.”

\textsuperscript{482} See Newman Development of Christian Doctrine, 88.

\textsuperscript{483} See Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 199: “life passes on to its termination by a gradual, imperceptible course of change.” For examples of ethical development in the history of Church, see Newman, Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine, 70, on the development of the dogma of beatific vision of the saints from the devotion of the faithful, and 64, on the liturgy as a source of theological discernment. See also Pope Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi, 45-48, where he presents the doctrine of purgatory as emerging out of the ancient ecclesial practice of prayer for the dead.

\textsuperscript{484} Newman, Grammar, 151: “It is the mind that reasons and assents, not a diagram on paper.” cf. id., Apologia, 158: “I had a great dislike of paper logic. For myself, it was not logic that carried me on; as well might one say that the quicksilver in the barometer changes the weather. It is the concrete being that reasons…the whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it.” cf. id., Lectures on Justification, 62-3: “Our duty is to be intent on things, not on names and terms; to associate words with their objects, instead of measuring them by their definitions; to speak as having eyes, and as if to those who have eyes, not as groping our way in the dark by intellectual conceptions, acts of memory, and efforts of reason…to have a meaning and grasp an idea…words too may mean more than they need mean grammatically or logically; and what they do mean may be determinable historically, that is, by the records of antiquity…If no word is to be taken to mean more than its logical definition, we shall never get beyond abstract knowledge.” cf. Biemer, Newman on Tradition,128: “All consequences of the idea given in revelation, in so far as they are true developments and explicitations, are identical with the idea itself. They are not just the deductions of mere logic, ‘like an investigation worked out on paper.’ It is the life of faith and not mere logic that has worked out these truths from revelation…in life, and not just on paper, that the revealed idea has expressed itself.” cf. Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 63.
for action which that landscape entails. Hence, the impression of the Christian “idea” results in a nexus of deeply intertwined ethical and intellectual commitments whose content is grasped more by the integral “vision”\(^{485}\) of faith than by abstract notions.\(^{486}\) Again, the illative “sense” by which the mind “sees” the grounds for its assent always operates in concert with the “voice” of conscience by which man “hears” his duty.\(^{487}\) There is a sensibility appealed to here that cannot be reduced to physical sensation any more than to conceptual reason.\(^{488}\)

Everything depends, then, on the “idea” or “impression” as it is held by the “imagination,” which power cannot be equated merely with the mind’s capacity to formulate and recall sense phantasms. Such a faculty would be highly fallible, sub-intellectual, and hence incapable of truly governing intellectual developments. But the proposal that lies at the foundation of the theory of development is precisely that which we detailed above regarding the imagination as a truly intellectual faculty: it is a power of human knowing capable of influencing logical and metaphysical developments, yet one that is itself non-conceptual and equally as practical as it is theoretical. This is what allows Newman to acknowledge the dynamism of the Christian tradition, for it grounds the distinction that enables him to discern the consistent \textit{logos} beneath the flowing

\(^{485}\) Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 359: “...we recognize this central Image as the vivifying idea both of the Christian body and the individuals in it...the Thought of Christ...a mental vision.” cf. id., \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 176: “To them Christ was manifested as He is to us, and in the same way; not to the eyes of the flesh, but to the illuminated mind, to their Faith.”

\(^{486}\) cf. B.C. Butler, “Newman and the Second Vatican Council” in \textit{The Rediscovery of Newman}, 239-41: “This notion of the life of an idea, with its implied depreciation of formal logical process as dominant in the real history of the human mind, is the major theme of the \textit{Grammar of Assent}, where the resultant ‘real assent’ is contrasted with the conclusions of purely logical inference...It is characteristic of ‘real assent’ that, whereas the conclusions of logical inference have a universality which is also impersonal, real assent is a fully personal commitment.”

\(^{487}\) See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 190, on the analogy of conscience with certitude, 252, on the moral nature of assent.

stream of history. However many questions such a doctrine might raise, it is crucial
nevertheless to recognize how fundamental it is to Newman’s thought, both to his theory of
development and to his epistemological response to modern skepticism. Indeed, his whole
project can be seen to rest on this revolutionary positioning of the imagination as a faculty, in a
certain sense, over and above strictly logical ratiocination.

In this specification of the imagination and its “real” impressions vis-à-vis the notional
aspects of our thought, Newman was truly prescient, anticipating much of the late nineteenth and
eyearly twentieth-century quest for the pre-rational grounds of rational thought, and laying the
groundwork for the movement for reform that so definitively shaped the Church in the twentieth

---

489 cf. Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 303: “As the world around varies, so varies also, not the principles of the
doctrine of Christ, but the outward shape and colour which they assume…as Wisdom only can apply or dispense the
Truth in a change of circumstances, so Faith alone is able to accept it as one and the same under all its forms.”
490 It might be wondered, for instance, how the concrete impression can serve as a properly intellectual principle,
rooted as it is in particular material reality, which philosophy has traditionally considered to be intrinsically
unintelligible, only becoming strictly knowable through abstraction. Does not this step elevate subjectivity over
objectivity, the relative over the absolute? We should not assume, however, the Newman was ignorant of such
tensions. He was well versed in the history of philosophy, particularly in Plato and Aristotle. Though he is sometimes
accused of nominalism, he was by no means anti-intellectual or anti-universal. He is only keen to make sure that we
maintain the right order between thought and existential reality—“Let units come first, and (so-called) universals
second; let universals minister to units, not units be sacrificed to universals” (*Grammar of Assent*, 223)—lest a
pretended-wisdom not loose its footing in experience and proceed to insensible deductions. cf. Newman, *Lectures on
Justification*, 33, 50-1, 61-2.
492 As we have said, this should not be taken to imply that reason can in no way critique or purify the imagination.
Newman states quite clearly that it can and must: “…the imagination and affections should always be under the control
of reason.” (*Grammar of Assent*, 109) But it is equally clear that in this very operation, reason is itself shaped and
influenced by the controlling nexus of real apprehensions that form, as it were, the imaginative air in which logical
inference lives and breathes. “…methodical processes of inference, useful as they are, as far they go, are only
instruments of the mind, and need, in order to their due exercise, that real ratiocination and present imagination which
gives them a sense beyond their letter, and which, while acting through them, reaches to conclusions beyond and
above them. Such a living *organon* is a person al gift, and not a mere method or calculus.” (ibid., 250) Thus we
envisage within man’s ratiocination a cyclical rhythm of mutual influence between the logical reasoning (which tests
and purifies particular apprehensions) and the illative imagination (which ultimately governs on all particular
reasoning). On this theme, see also in the *Grammar of Assent*, 174, on the role of real apprehensions in certitude; 205,
on the lack of an objective test for certitude; 239, on the role of good sense over logic; 241, on feeling over deduction;
249, on the Image vis-à-vis deduction; 251, on supra-logical judgment; 253, on the role of personality in reasoning;
260, on concrete reasoning; 263, on instinctive perception; 268-9, on the eye of experience; 283, on the role of the
Illative sense throughout the process of rational argumentation.
493 We have in mind here the line stretching back to Pascal, and forward to Bergson, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Buber,
Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, and more recently, MacIntyre. cf. Frederick D. Aquino, “Philosophical Receptions
century. Indeed, the principal concerns of the ressourcement can be viewed as emerging precisely out of this line of thought. Whatever else Blondel might have intended by his adaequatio realis mentis et vitae, this was surely part of it: that the abstract conceptualism of Cartesian rationalism had alienated us from reality, and that the road to reconciliation passed by way of a renewed and deeper conception of what “truth” is; that the things we truly “know” are those things by which we live our life, which shape our action and take their shape from that action;494 that this is what “real” knowledge is, as opposed to that which is typically dismissed today as “theoretical” and so not taken seriously.495 The later theologians of the ressourcement were concerned that, in its reaction against modernism, neoscholastic Thomism had transformed the faith into something basically abstract, hyper-notionalized in such a way that it had grown detached from the real apprehensions in virtue of which those notions were originally intelligible.496 Hence faith had come to appear as a mere “theory,” aloof from reality, with little or no power to affect men’s lives. Men, after all, do not die for notions. As Newman himself put it: “no man will be a martyr for a

494 Marvin O’Connell notes that Blondel had not read Newman until late in his career, after his basic views had already been established. [See O’Connell, *Critics on Trial*, 185.] Regardless, the standpoints of the two thinkers converge on important points, albeit amid some important differences in emphasis and expression. At the very least, a strong parallel emerges between Blondel’s definition of truth and Newman’s notion of the ethical development. See Yves Congar’s commentary on the following Blondelian definition of tradition as: “the progressive understanding of the riches possessed objectively from the beginning of Christianity…transformed by reflection from ‘something lived implicitly into something known explicitly.’” Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 27-28.

495 See O’Connell, *Critics on Trial*, 87-90, 155-165. cf. John Coulson, “Newman on the Church” in *Rediscovery of Newman*, 142-3: “for Blondel ‘tradition’…came to mean the continuing and development experience of the presence of Christ, collectively, by the Church…The consequences of theological procrastination are more than intellectual; they involve that separation of intellect from feeling which is the dissociation of sensibility. Claudel characterizes this crisis as…”the tragedy of starved imagination.”

496 cf. Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, p 177: “one cause of corruption in religion is the refusal to follow the course of doctrine as it moves on, and an obstinacy in the notions of the past.” cf. id., *Oxford University Sermons*, 309: “they who are preoccupied with their own notions. They are soon persuaded that another agrees with them, if he disagrees with their opponents. They resolve his ideas into their own…” cf. Coulson, *Religion and Imagination*, 15: “If we fail, therefore, to concede a middle ground between hard fact and mere fantasy…religion will become de-mythologized into notions.” cf. ibid., 82, where he speaks of religion being “starved into notions.”
conclusion.”\textsuperscript{497} That for which men do die, which gives dogma its force, had to be rediscovered as the soul of theology and of Christian history.

\textbf{B. Personalism and the Christian “Idea”}

We have already discussed what Newman means in general by the term “idea” in his affinity with the romantic thinkers of his time: how it refers not so much to abstractions held by the “intellect only” as to those focal points of the “imagination” that facilitate the apprehension of unity amid diversity, and how these “living educts” are distinct from the linguistic (or doctrinal) articulations to which they are nonetheless intrinsically related. Moreover, since conscience lies at imagination’s center, such “ideas” must also address man to some extent at his personal core, where he finds himself responsible beyond himself to a transcendent personal authority. Such is the personal notion of truth that we detailed in the first part of this paper. The “real apprehensions” described in the \textit{Grammar of Assent} in their differentiation from the “notional apprehensions” of aspects are but further articulations of this personal knowledge in its opposition to any knowledge that is merely abstract.

The question now before us is that of what Newman specifically means by the “idea” of Christianity, to which he so often refers and which grounds his theory of development. What is this common impression that unites the minds of Christendom and underlies the course of doctrine’s developments, around which all resulting doctrines must be gathered if they are to remain transparent to their source of unity and life?\textsuperscript{498} We know from what has been said that it is “one,” that it is “not a thing in parts,” that it exerts a moral influence on the person who receives it, and that no number of words can be adequate to explicating its depth. But what is it exactly that

\textsuperscript{497} Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 89.
Newman has in mind by referencing this Christian “idea?” The answer often remains unspoken and implicit in Newman’s writings, but the many hints and half-sentences scattered throughout his corpus point together in one common direction. The fundamental “Object” of the Christian’s faith can only be a person: Jesus Christ,⁴⁹⁹ the Logos, who is at once manifold in the life and belief of the Church and personally distinct in his incarnate reality.

It is precisely the Incarnation that Newman regards as the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. He calls it “the central truth of the gospel,”⁵⁰⁰ the article of belief upon which the Church stands or falls,⁵⁰¹ which “occupies the principal place” in the Gospel’s “system of truth.”⁵⁰² Indeed, the whole history of theology and doctrinal development takes its departure from the Petrine confession that the man Jesus is, in fact, the Christ, the Son of the living God. “This world of thought,” he says, “is the expansion of a few words uttered, as if casually, by the fishermen of Galilee.”⁵⁰³ This is because the mystery of the Incarnation concentrates all of the truths that can been known about God, whether from natural reason or from the revealed words of Scripture, into the form of a concrete person, and so “addresses itself to our senses and imagination.”⁵⁰⁴ In this way, it achieves what previously neither philosophy nor religion could ever deliver. Prior to revelation, religion could provide material for the imagination and the affections, but only in ways that were untrue, through imperfect and distorted media. Philosophy, on the other hand, could deliver many profound truths about the absolute, but always in a mode that was abstract and


⁵⁰⁰ Newman, Development of Doctrine, 324.

⁵⁰¹ See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 35.

⁵⁰² Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 17.

⁵⁰³ Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 317.

⁵⁰⁴ Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 121-2: “the Gospel, by affording us, in the Person and history of Christ, a witness of the invisible world…” cf. ibid., 34, 269.
unimaginable.\textsuperscript{505} It could never conceive of the most profound truths: that the Infinite one could be truly personal,\textsuperscript{506} one on whom the affections could be trained,\textsuperscript{507} that His omnipotence could express itself (at its peak) in the mode of weakness,\textsuperscript{508} that He could reveal himself by the mysterious means of “self-denial” in order to “impress upon our minds the personal character of the Object of our worship.”\textsuperscript{509} But it is precisely these truths that appear in the Gospel, revealed in that incarnate economy that “collects the scattered rays of light” around the definitive symbol of Christ.\textsuperscript{510} Therefore, if we do not “know Him by His names”—i.e., His Incarnate names—we have but a “half-knowledge” of God.\textsuperscript{511} In accord with the “method of personation” that Newman sees as typical of the Scriptures, what might otherwise be an abstraction comes to be perfectly known only in the concrete person of Jesus.\textsuperscript{512}

Because Truth has been thus “committed to One come in the flesh,”\textsuperscript{513} Newman always speaks of faith’s “Object” in personal categories, as one who is known, attended to, and loved.\textsuperscript{514}

\textsuperscript{505} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 24. “The God of philosophy was infinitely great, but an abstraction; the God of paganism was intelligible, but degraded by human conceptions. Science and nature could produce no joint-work; it was left for an express Revelation to propose the Object in which they should both be reconciled.”
\textsuperscript{506} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 32. cf. ibid., 22: “Natural Religion teaches, it is true, the infinite power and majesty, the wisdom and goodness, the presence, the moral governance, and, in one sense, the unity of the Deity; but it gives little or no information respecting what may be called His Personality.” cf. ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{507} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 23.
\textsuperscript{511} See Newman, \textit{Sermons Preached on Various Occasions}, 88.
\textsuperscript{512} See Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 30. Newman notes the pattern by which Adam is presented as the personification of sin and Satan as the personification of evil as being fulfilled in Christ, who sums up all divine truths in his incarnate person, not just on the level of literary device but in ontological truth. cf. Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{Mary: the Church at its Source}. (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1997), 27: “In theology, it is not the person that is reducible to the thing, but the thing to the person.” cf. id., “Christocentric Preaching” in \textit{The Word: Readings in Theology}, 213: “What a world of difference it makes when a sermon on God’s majesty stems from the Christmas crib rather than the tract \textit{de Deo Uno}.”
\textsuperscript{513} Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 121.
\textsuperscript{514} e.g., see Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 193: “…love of the great Object of Faith, watchful attention to \textit{Him}, readiness to believe \textit{Him} near, easiness to believe \textit{Him} interposing in human affairs, fear of the risk of slighting or missing what may really come from \textit{Him}.”
Indeed, the “true Object” to be placed before the faithful is none other than Jesus Christ, personal attention to Him being practically “the definition of a Christian.” Newman accordingly insists that He who is the foundation of the Church’s very existence always be placed at the center of her belief and practice. Doctrinal correctness, along with all ecclesiastical discipline, is intended solely to focus us more perfectly on Him, as indeed it was the devout love of Him that spurred their development in the first place. Thus we can say that the foundation and essence of faith, for Newman, is the real apprehension and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, lodged in the heart that recognizes in Him “the very Object…correlative to its own affections.”

In his sermon on “Personal Influence, the means of propagating the Truth,” Newman describes the process by which the believer comes to this recognition in his life. He imagines a perfect “Teacher of the Truth” as one who never disobeys the dictates of his conscience but always follows it perfectly, and ponders what sort of influence this man might have on those who meet him. Doubtless, many would become annoyed at such a presence, and would accordingly reject him or dismiss him as a dreamer. Others, however, those who are honest at heart, would be attracted by the majesty of such a figure, and would find themselves drawn in by curiosity and wonder. Such, Newman says, is the convincing power of Christ in the hearts of those who receive him, and the secret to the perseverance of his doctrine through the centuries. By a mysterious and untraceable influence, men find themselves “as it were, individually addressed” by the example

---

517 See Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 108: “the sole self-existing principle in the Christian Church, and everything else is but a portion or declaration of Him.”
of holiness that they meet in Christ and his saints. “At length, with astonishment and fear, they would become aware that Christ's presence was before them,” and would find themselves “changing into that glorious Image which they gazed upon.”\textsuperscript{524} In this way, Newman describes what contemporary parlance might call the “encounter with Christ”: “the keen, vivid, constraining glace of Christ’s countenance…the piercing, soul–subduing look of the Son of man.”\textsuperscript{525}

We see here, then, that Newman’s abovementioned personalism is not limited to a personalism of the subject. It is not only a matter of recognizing the unique and incommunicable core of the knowing person that defies any reduction to universal forms. It also extends to a personalism of the object, for in fact the primary object to which the human person responds is also a person: above all, the Person of God, revealed to faith in the Person of Jesus.\textsuperscript{526} The incommunicable in us thus corresponds to the incommunicable outside of us—\textit{Cor ad cor loquitur}—and this implies further that, in the field of knowledge in general, persons themselves can be and indeed are the most fundamental objects of personal knowledge. It is no stretch to see this facet of Newman’s thought as a certain anticipation of what later twentieth century thinkers would come to call the “dialogical principle,”\textsuperscript{528} which received its classic articulation in Martin Buber’s \textit{I and Thou}.\textsuperscript{529} Indeed, it is possible to detect a deep kinship between these two thinkers,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{524} Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 96.
\item \textsuperscript{525} Newman, \textit{Sermons Preached on Various Occasions}, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{527} cf. Coulson, \textit{Religion and Imagination}, 39: “Revelation is ‘the actual unveiling of a Person to the conscience, heart, reason of human beings,’ its character is that of personal relationship.” cf. Bouyer, \textit{Newman’s Vision of Faith}, 169: “the basis of the whole of Newman’s vision of faith: the meaning of human life…is personal encounter with God.”
\item \textsuperscript{528} See Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol I: Prolegomena}, trans. Graham Harrison. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 626-7. Balthasar highlights the independent and simultaneous emergence of this \textit{I-Thou} principle in the writings of Ferdinand Ebner, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Franz Rosenzweig, all in the year 1918. He quotes Rosenzweig’s articulation of the common insight: “it is the ‘thou’, the discovery of the ‘thou’, that brings me to the awareness of my ‘I’.”
\item \textsuperscript{529} Martin Buber, \textit{I and Thou} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958). It is possible that Buber had read some of Newman through the translations of Stein and Przywara.
\end{itemize}
Newman and Buber, one which will be vital for our appreciation of Ratzinger’s reception of
Newman.

Buber famously characterizes modern thought and culture as dominated by what he called
the I-it relation, wherein man’s comportment with reality is determined by an instrumentalizing
rationality which analyzes, synthesizes, compares, contrasts, categorizes, and generally treats of
being as an impersonal “object” to be dominated by the “subject.” The sickness of modern
consciousness lies, for Buber, in its profound inability to conceive of reality or self apart from this
relation. This he sees as a profound alienation, because for him, the I-it is not what is first, final or
most important about reality. Rather the whole dignity of the person, and with it the dignity of
being, is rooted in the ability to discover the Thou beyond the self. Indeed, this I-Thou relation is,
according to Buber, the very basis of man’s self-conscious identity, the ground on which the I-it
is founded and to which it must return if it is to be finally fruitful and properly human in its
operations. Man is constituted in his relation to the Thou, and to be man he must remain ever
ordered to that relation. Buber’s prescription then for the healing of the modern crisis is a
rediscovery of the Thou—in men, in being, and in God—such that we might once again find a
home for ourselves in the cosmos.

The parallels between Buber’s description of the I-Thou—I-it distinction and Newman’s
real–notional distinction are striking. Both explain their oppositions as differentiations between
modes of knowing; both align their subordinate modes with operations typically assigned to
reason; both portray their preeminent modes in terms of a non-conceptual or pre-conceptual

530 For Buber, of course, this is but one aspect among others, as relation concerns also the realms of ethics and ontology.
Yet Newman likewise enfolds ethical considerations into his epistemological treatise: the voice of conscience is a real
apprehension to which we are responsible, and its operation is deeply intertwined with that of the illative sense,
conditioned by the sum total of real apprehensions that impress themselves upon the subject’s imagination. These two
cannot be separated: assent is a matter conscientious duty, and conscience a matter of illation.
“perception” which is at once theoretical and ethical in its import;\textsuperscript{531} and, most importantly, both lament the negative consequences when the prerogatives of the preeminent are elapsed in favor of the subordinate. Newman’s description of this circumstance, when the notional is isolated from the real, could have been taken from a page in Buber’s \textit{I and Thou}:

In processes of this kind we regard things, not as they are in themselves, but mainly as they stand in relation to each other. We look at nothing simply for its own sake…’Man’ is no longer what he really is…He is attenuated into an aspect, or relegated to his place in a classification. Thus his appellation is made to suggest, not the real being…but a definition…he is made the logarithm of his true self, and in that shape is worked with the ease and satisfaction of logarithms…thus it comes to pass that individual propositions about the concrete almost cease to be, and are diluted or starved into abstract notions. The events of history and the characters who figure in it lose their individuality. States and governments, society and its component parts, cities, nations…all that fullness of meaning which I have described as accruing to language from experience, now that experience is absent, necessarily becomes to the multitude of men nothing but a heap of notions, little more intelligible than the beauties of a prospect to the short-sighted, or the music of a great master to a listener who has no ear.\textsuperscript{532}

This passage bears striking similarities to Buber’s account of what becomes of man under the reign of the \textit{I-it} relation. In both cases, the person disappears when the proper order is inverted.\textsuperscript{533} While these two thinkers clearly come from different intellectual worlds—and there is no intention of conflating them here—they are at one in elevating the human person above all abstract notions, and in giving the knowledge that apprehends persons priority over that which grasps only at aspects of things.

This kinship becomes especially important as we turn to consider the unique contribution of Joseph Ratzinger in his reception of Newman’s vision. For we will see his insight flowing from a natural confluence of these two streams. That Ratzinger was struck by the insights of Buber’s

\textsuperscript{531} See Brendan Sweetman, “Martin Buber’s Epistemology.” IPQ 41.2: 149-153.
\textsuperscript{532} Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 44-45. cf. \textit{Lectures on Justification}, 140: “In spite of our arbitrary abstractions, each existing man exists to himself, as an individual, complete in himself, independent of all others, differing from all others, in that he is he, and not they nor one with them, except in name.”
\textsuperscript{533} See Buber, \textit{I and Thou}, 13, 16-7, 43, 67-72.
personalism is indisputable. He recognized in it the language of the Augustine, and made it one of the principal integrating themes of his theological project. Throughout his diverse academic corpus, and again in his pontifical teaching, one detects this personalism as an overriding concern: to reconnect and re-center all of theology upon the Thou encountered in faith. This, in turn, becomes the central prism through which Ratzinger reads Newman. The Christian “idea,” which must remain at the center of everything in the Church, is nothing other than the person of Jesus Christ, a person who can truly be known (i.e., “real-ly” apprehended) in faith’s I-Thou encounter. Once again: “being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a definitive direction.” Faith, for Ratzinger as for Newman, is not merely a notional assent to abstract theses on the basis of an external authority that is discerned through credible reports of ancient miracles. It is a real, present, I-Thou encounter, which carries its evidence and authority in itself.

534 See Ratzinger, Milestones, 44: “We then found the philosophy of personalism reiterated with renewed conviction in the great Jewish thinker Martin Buber. This encounter with personalism was for me a spiritual experience that left an essential mark, especially since I spontaneously associated such personalism with the thought of Saint Augustine, who in his Confessions had struck me with the power of all his human passion and depth.”
535 Ratzinger explicitly relates Newman’s thought to twentieth century personalism in his speech on the centenary of Newman’s death (Rome, 28 April 1990): “For us at that time, Newman's teaching on conscience became an important foundation for theological personalism, which was drawing us all in its sway. Our image of the human being as well as our image of the Church was permeated by this point of departure. We had experienced the claim of a totalitarian party, which understood itself as the fulfillment of history and which negated the conscience of the individual. One of its leaders had said: ‘I have no conscience. My conscience is Adolf Hitler.’ The appalling devastation of humanity that followed was before our eyes. So it was liberating and essential for us to know that the "we" of the Church does not rest on a cancellation of conscience, but that, exactly the opposite, it can only develop from conscience. Precisely because Newman interpreted the existence of the human being from conscience, that is, from the relationship between God and the soul, was it clear that this personalism is not individualism, and that being bound by conscience does not mean being free to make random choices - the exact opposite is the case.”
536 cf. Beaumont, “The Reception of Newman in France at the Time of the Modernist Crisis” in Receptions of Newman, 174. Beaumont differentiates Newman from both the modernists and the neo-scholastics, in that the latter employ “a purely intellectual conception of Christianity, as a changing (or unchanging) set of ideas.” Newman, by contrast, though he “uses the word ‘idea’…gives to this word a unique (and doubtless idiosyncratic) meaning…when he speaks in the Essay on Development of the ‘idea’ of Christianity, he is using the word to mean not just a concept, but a dynamic living reality: it is at once the thought of Christ in people’s minds (it is doubtless on account of this aspect that he uses the word ‘idea’), and the living presence of Christ in our ‘hearts’ or ‘souls’ and in the sacramental and prayer life of the Church.”
537 Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 1. This is not to say that faith is based on experience, or that the dogmatic witness of the Church is not essential to its act, but rather that it comprises a certain experience, apart from which the dogmatic witness is not fully intelligible.
C. Ratzinger’s Christocentric Imagination

As the above makes clear, revelation for Ratzinger cannot be simply identified with any list of propositions deposited in the “sources” of Scripture and tradition. These are but the “objectifications” of something that precedes them and which remains ever greater than them.\(^{538}\) If revelation is identified with the (written or oral) “text,” he says, it is necessarily reduced to a mere report from the past that is no longer capable of addressing man in his present depths. Delivered up to the “human criteria” that investigate historical “sources,” it can attain only to the status of the informative “letter,” and never to that of the transformative “spirit.”\(^{539}\) But revelation’s primary purpose, Ratzinger insists, is “not information, but unity and transformation.”\(^{540}\) God wishes to address man’s innermost depths in order to raise him, who is “the creature of dialogue,”\(^ {541}\) to a more perfect “relation of the human ‘I’ to the divine ‘thou,’”\(^ {542}\) wherein he is constantly addressed and related beyond himself in that mode of listening that makes him “contemporaneous with the presentness of God.”\(^ {543}\) Revelation, therefore, does nothing to compromise the situation in which “every man stands in direct relation to God…known and loved by God as a person…[and] called personally.”\(^ {544}\) Faith is not simply a hearing “about something

---

\(^{538}\) See Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches During the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communion. Vol I, 93: “revelation precedes its objectifications in Scripture and tradition, remaining always greater than they.” This against the “two-source” theory of revelation embraced by neo-scholasticism and presented to the Council fathers in the initial schemata on revelation at the Second Vatican Council. On this theory, Ratzinger says “the formula is completely false if one looks at in on a metaphysical [vs. epistemic] level, for there the sequence is reversed: revelation does not flow from Scripture and tradition, but both flow from revelation, which is their common source.”

\(^{539}\) Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communion. Vol I, 93: “If I equate revelation with the text…then there is nothing living but rather something dead—having settled down in illo tempore. Then revelation is delivered up to historicism; it is subjected to human criteria.” cf. Laurence Paul Hemming, Benedict XVI, Fellow Worker for the Truth: An introduction to his Life and Thought. (London: Burns & Oates, 2005), 143-7.

\(^{540}\) Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 175.

\(^{541}\) Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 171.

\(^{542}\) Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 175.

\(^{543}\) Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 171. cf. ibid., 175: “this end [of revelation] is nothing but man’s being constantly addressed by God…the constant relating of man to the one man who is the Word of God himself.”

that is quite external to the person” from a heteronomous authority,545 but “a profoundly personal contact with God, which touches me in my innermost being and places me in front of the living God in absolute immediacy.”546

All of this flows simply from the fact that Jesus Christ himself is the fulfillment of revelation and that the encounter with his person is the essence of revelation’s reception in faith. For Jesus is the place where God’s dialogue with man attains to its goal—“it has become union”547—such that after him there is nothing more to be said. His person is the Word that sums up all possible words that can be written or spoken, and all such words must now be read in light of the Spirit that lives in him. “God does not arbitrarily cease speaking,” as certain legalistic models of revelation as divine promulgation might have it. Rather, according to the sacramental view embraced by Ratzinger and the Second Vatican Council, Christ is the incarnate and definitive “image” in which the Father is truly “seen,” and by entrance into his dialogue with the Father, man comes to discover his eternal destiny.548 In this dialogue, man’s personhood is not threatened but rather augmented, since the encounter can only develop from that center of conscience wherein man is most keenly related to his Creator. While this relationship depends on the mediation of the Church for its birth and proper sustenance, this does nothing to threaten its truly personal nature: “The ‘we’ of the Church does not rest on a cancellation of conscience, but…exactly the opposite, it can only develop from conscience.”549 Man’s direct and personal relation to God cannot be contradicted by the authority of ecclesial faith, because the heart of this faith is liberating encounter

545 Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 175.
547 Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 175.
548 Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 175. cf. ibid., 171: “Instead of a legalistic view that sees revelation largely as revelation as the issuing of divine decrees, we have a sacramental view…for the mystery of God is ultimately nothing other than Christ himself—it is the person (Col 1:27). From this there follows an understanding of revelation that is seen basically as dialogue.”
with a person, to which encounter ecclesiastical authority must conduce man if it is to remain true to itself and not reduce revelation to a dead artifact.\textsuperscript{550} Dogmatic authority implies and, in some sense, relies upon an inner participation in the truths it propounds.

We have already seen how this vision of revelation forms the centerpiece of Ratzinger’s response to the modern crisis of truth, in which he discerns not primarily an intellectual malady but rather the eclipse of truth’s personal dimension and of the spiritual relation that this involves. It is Jesus who is the \textit{Logos}. He who says “\textit{I am the Truth}” (Jn 14:6). But when this is forgotten, when reason is divorced from encounter and notional assessment from the real apprehension, the result is an ideology which tends to assert its universal claims at the expense of human persons. Ratzinger discerns here the root of modern relativism: from the mounting traumatic experiences of ideological truth claims it is judged that it is better to avoid such claims altogether, that potentially controversial “truths” are best relegated to the realm of private taste and sentiment, and that man’s public existence should rely solely upon only those “facts” that can be verified by the objectivity of science. Ratzinger, of course, sees through the false promise of this pretended “neutrality.” Nevertheless, he does not respond first by reasserting old and rejected notions, however important these may be. Rather he responds by seeking to trace everything back to the person of Christ, a person whom we know as the revelation of infinite love, and who thus does not ultimately threaten the human person but rather safeguards and elevates him precisely by means of his unique divine truth.\textsuperscript{551}

Accordingly, it is vital to the Church’s mission that she rediscover and represent Jesus as the center and sum of revelation, locating faith’s \textit{semper idem} primarily in him rather than in those “objectifications” that necessarily fall short of explicating his full incarnate reality. This non-

\textsuperscript{550} “…nothing living but rather something dead.” (Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches,” 93)

\textsuperscript{551} See Pope Francis, \textit{Lumen Fidei}. 
identity between “the Word” and his many “words” allows—in Newmanian fashion—for a flexibility and dynamism in faith’s articulation through history. For if revelation is Christ, exceeding what words can master, and if it accordingly embraces both “what is said and what is unsaid…what the Apostles in their turn are not able to express fully in words,” then it is clear that tradition cannot be “merely a process of handing-down words” if it is to transmit revelation adequately. It too must have some means of embracing what is “unstatable,” and of gradually articulating what it thus embraces, as though seeking progressively to “catch up” with a content that always overwhelms its capacities. The material conception of tradition must accordingly be complemented by the formal, which understands tradition not as “propositional statement” but as a “fundamental hermeneutical decision” that allows for faith’s “dynamic realization” in a process leading to “ever deeper insight.” As Newman saw, the “static semper” of Vincent de Lerins will not suffice to account for this reality. Faith’s continuity cannot be viewed simply as a “rigid

552 Ratzinger notes this realization as a defining mark of the Second Vatican Council. See Joseph Ratzinger. *Theological Highlights of Vatican II.* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 75: “the tendency to see the Church less statically and more in terms of the dynamism of history—the history of salvation.”

553 Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 182: “in place of a narrowly doctrinal conception of revelation, as had been expressed in the Tridentine word theology, to open up a comprehensive view of the real character of revelation, which—precisely because it is concerned with the whole man—is founded not only in the word that Christ preached, but in the whole of the living experience of his person, thus embracing what is said and what is unsaid, what in turn the Apostles in their turn are not able to express fully in words, but which is found in the whole reality of the Christian existence of which they speak, far transcending the framework of what has been explicitly formulated in words.”

554 Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 184: “the transmission of which cannot be merely a process of handing-down words…It [tradition] has its place not only in the explicitly traditional statements of Church doctrine, but in the unstated—and often unstatable—elements of the whole service of the Christian worship of God and the life of the Church.”

555 See Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 175: “subsequent history cannot surpass what has taken place in Christ, but it must attempt to catch up with it gradually.”

556 See Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 182-3: “‘Tradition’ appeared…not so much as a material principle as a formal one. Primarily, it means a fundamental hermeneutical decision, namely that faith is present in no other way than in the historical continuity of the believers and must be found in it and not against it.” cf. ibid., 156: “the idea of material tradition was abandoned more and more in favour of that of tradition as a process.” cf. ibid., 190: “tradition as the dynamic realization of faith, not as a propositional statement by the Apostles.” cf. ibid., 178: “[Dei Verbum] speaks of a constant perfecting of faith through the gifts of the Holy Spirit and sees the effect of these as an ever deeper insight into revelation.”

557 See Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 187: “[The Council] refused to quote again the text of Vincent de Lerin [which he used to attack Augustine’s anti-Pelagian teachings]…It is not that Vatican II is taking back what was intended in those quotations: the rejection of a modernistic evolutionism…but it has another conception
external identification” with past formulations, but must rather take the form “a preservation of the old, established in the midst of progress,”\textsuperscript{558} whose “going back is at the same time, and from within, a moving forward.”\textsuperscript{559} Christ is not simply a memory from the past, but an ever present reality, whose final coming the Church also awaits.\textsuperscript{560} Doctrinal development, accordingly, continually advances forward through the “inner relecture” of Christian history,\textsuperscript{561} a reading that never rests in the mere letter but always presses on to the level of the spirit, so that it might “read the text in connection with what is alive”: that is, with the living Christ, who, present in the Church, “binds us irreversibly to that beginning \textit{in illo tempore} and at the same time leads us forward to his full maturity.”\textsuperscript{562} Tradition can only live in personal connection with Christ.

The movement of this life toward full maturity coincides with the quest for wisdom that, for Ratzinger as for Newman, necessarily marks the dynamism of Christian faith in history. As we saw with Newman, so also for Ratzinger, the encounter, while always transcending the logical content of its articulations, cannot exist without passing over into explicit doctrinal confession, of the nature of historical identity and continuity. Vincent de Lerin’s static \textit{semper} no longer seems the right way of expressing the problem.”\textsuperscript{558} See Ratzinger, \textit{Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II}, 168. cf. ibid., 155-6: “the dogma of 1854 was a further milestone, for which—in default of biblical proof—tradition was made responsible, which could now, however, no longer be understood as the simple passing on of something that had been handed down once and for all, but had to be understood in terms of growth, progress and the knowledge of faith that Romanticism had developed.” cf. id., “Communio: a program” in \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I}, 125: “Our understanding of the depth and breadth of tradition develops because the Holy Spirit broadens and deepens the memory of the Church in order to guide here ‘into all the truth.’ According the Council, growth in the perception of what is inherent to the tradition occurs in three ways: through the meditation and study of the faithful, through an interior understanding which stems from the spiritual life, and through the proclamation…It can only teach what is handed on. As a rule, it must find new language to hand on the tradition in each new context so that…the tradition remains genuinely the same…to express more completely and more comprehensively what the tradition states.”\textsuperscript{559} Ratzinger, \textit{Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II}, 265.

\textsuperscript{560} See Ratzinger, \textit{Theological Highlights of Vatican II}, 76: the Church cannot be exclusively oriented toward the past, even though the Church does possess in the unique Christ-event its changeless and enduring center. But the Church must also bear in mind that this very Christ, to whom it looks back and from whom it proceeded, is also the Lord who comes. It is with its eyes on him that he Church marches into the future. A Christ-centered Church is thus oriented no merely toward past salvific events; it will always also be a Church moving forward under the sign of hope. Its decisive future and its transformation are still ahead.”\textsuperscript{560} See Ratzinger, \textit{Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II}, 170.

which movement is partly constitutive of its essence. The believer in Jesus cannot but cry out: “My Lord and My God,” “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!” Thus, to use a patristic image, the spiritual revelation that essentially transcends words becomes clothed in the flesh of words, which must be read according to the hermeneutic of faith if they are to be properly understood.563 These statements, in turn, give rise to new questions and to a series of subsequent derivations, which theology, in its quest for the inner “logic of faith,”564 seeks to tie together into a coherent system that will correspond to the initial simplicity of vision. In this process of growth and clarification, it is inevitable that there will be a shift in emphasis from the historical to the ontological, “from the work of Christ to His Person [ontologically conceived].”565 But this dynamic, essential as it is, must always be viewed in subordination to the original encounter that it serves,566 and should accordingly guard itself against premature absolutizations.

This process of development can be regarded as an aspect of the “ongoing” incarnation of the Word in history. As the utterly unique and incomprehensible “culture” of Christ encounters the various cultures in which believers encounter Him, it finds itself articulated by the native genius of each, even as it simultaneously transcends and purifies them. In this way, the Word continues to descend to man in the historical life of the Church in order to raise him up to himself, even as this process only brings to explicit expression what is already contained in the original incarnation.567 There is again a two-way dynamic here, what Ratzinger calls “dynamic inter-culturality,” somewhat similar to the interactions between weather systems or magnetic fields and

566 Ratzinger, “Christocentric Preaching” in *The Word: Readings in Theology*, 207: “This facilitated a necessary clarification in theology but the new emphasis was apt to be misleading…the clarification of the ontological difficulty in the doctrine of the hypostatic union was essential to the proper Christian belief, yet as far as salvation was concerned, of less import than the acknowledgment of God’s past activity among men in this world through Jesus Christ.”
567 See Joseph Ratzinger, “Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures.” Address to the Presidents of the Asian Bishop’s Conferences and to the Chairmen of their Doctrinal Commissions, March 1993.
their surroundings.\textsuperscript{568} The Word assimilates to Himself everything that belongs properly to man and to human culture, and so receives from culture a more manifold concrete expression, just as culture receives from Him its transcendent perfection. Thus the Word continues to be clothed in the flesh of history in order to be more perfectly known. As Christ is \textit{ever greater} than any of these assimilations, the process is never complete, and faith’s articulations will always be suspended in a middle between faith’s certitude and its awareness of the inadequacy of its notions.\textsuperscript{569} Nevertheless, it is the task of theology to draw out these assimilations and to synthesize them into a system that can present the unity of Christ ever more powerfully to the human imagination and intellect.\textsuperscript{570}

Ultimately, however, the goal of Christian preaching, which theology serves, is not to “proclaim a system of truths logically proceeding one from another, but [to expound] a reality.” Christianity “is no mere ‘metaphysical system’ to be explained to men; it is a reality in which they must train themselves.”\textsuperscript{571} Thus everything must resolve to the simplicity of the original encounter with Christ. As Bonaventure teaches, the \textit{sapientia nullaformis} that marked the Church’s beginnings must also come to reign at its end. That mystical contemplation wherein love keeps watch amid the silence of the intellect, that original revelation that receives its “objectification” in the body of the Scriptures and which coincides with their “spiritual sense,” must be discovered

\textsuperscript{568} These images are to be taken, of course, with the necessary corrections for Christ’s transcendence.

\textsuperscript{569} This is not to call into question the possibility of definitive dogma “committed irrevocably to words.” It is only to recognize that dogma will always involve mysterious and paradoxical assertions that press up against the limits of our notions: e.g., the assertion of the God-man must put our notions of “God” and “man” to the test. Newman argues that mysteries occur when the transcendent object of faith forces us to employ notions in excess of their ordinary limits. See Newman, \textit{Grammar of Assent}, 55-56.

\textsuperscript{570} cf. Norris, “The Development of Doctrine,” 484, where Norris describes Newman’s doctrine of development as “Christ striding through human history, enfleshed in, but not swallowed by, the vicissitudes of that history.” “The development of doctrine, then, involves uniquely the unfolding presence and deepening incarnation of Christ in history through the faithful remembering and reliving of what has been received (\textit{anamnesis}) and the faithful giving of it to humankind whom Christ came to gather into the kingdom of the Father (\textit{diakonia})…moves between \textit{anamnesis} and \textit{diakonia}, not parroting the past, but creatively unpacking its riches…”

again behind the letter of history.572 This is the “vanishing point” toward which theology trends.573 “the comprehension of Christ…realized here on the highest level of love, on the level of the Seraphim.”574 In this way, the Church gains an “entrance into that form of knowledge which the apostles had,”575 who, as Newman teaches us, “would without words know all the truths concerning the high doctrines of theology.”576 This, for Ratzinger, is theology’s primary goal: to move from contemplation to contemplation, and from wisdom to wisdom—from what the apostles knew to what the Church will know, from implicit simplicity to explicit simplicity, in order to return everything to the harmony of the mystical vision at the center. *Omega revolvit ad Alpha*.577

Accordingly, it is Ratzinger’s project to tie everything back to this fundamental center.578 Everything must remain transparent to the One in whom “word and reality [are] reconciled” and in whom the “antithesis between intellectual dogmatic faith and the yielding-up of one’s whole existence in trust [is] overcome,” because he is “indissolubly, both the truth and the way.”579 Dogma must accordingly be united with relationship and discipleship, doctrine with encounter, notions with the real imaginative apprehension, if they are to adequately communicate the content of revelation, which is personal and must be known personally. “Where there is no relationship with God” we cannot come to know Christ as he is in himself, but only to know the “various aspects of him.”580 Good theology, therefore, always “develops revelation from its Christological

579 Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 177. cf. ibid., 180: “the human relation to God does not consist of two more or less independent parts, but is indivisibly one.”
580 Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 137. cf. id., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 175: “We can see again here how little intellectualism and doctrinalism are able to comprehend the nature of revelation.”
center,” and never abstracts from the Christian encounter and relationship with that center. This implies that faith’s explicit articulations should never rest in themselves, but must understand themselves as words at the service of the higher, personal, incarnate Word, to which they point and on which they rely for their ultimate meaning. Because they represent aspects of a prior whole that cannot be properly apprehended in isolation from that whole, their value is relative to the “real-ly” apprehended unity which grounds them.

Such transparency to the center is jeopardized, however, by an excessive stubbornness in attachment to notional articulations, and here we gain deeper insight into the reasons for theological reform. Granted, certain articulations can strike so much at the heart of revelation that they become practically identified with the preservation of its encounter in the historical life of the Church: this applies to certain formulations of the apostles and to the dogmatic decisions of councils and popes, which enjoy such a level of enduring validity that they can never be contradicted. But this is not the case with every articulation. If the cultures that receive the Word are progressively purified by that Word, then their words of articulation must also be subject to progressive purification, and, by implication, to certain imperfections at their inception. The stream is not always “purest nearest the source.” In Newmanian terms, if notional aspects trace the lines of relation connecting the integral “idea” to other realities within our field of knowledge, and if all such aspects are inherently interrelated as fragments of the same whole, then these notions must be open to occasional adjustment when, in course of time, previously underappreciated aspects of the faith emerge from the center to throw the others into new relief, or when the earthly realities to which notions relate are themselves impacted by new discoveries or apprehensions that call for new calibrations. To falsely absolutize the notional aspects of theology in such situations

581 Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 180.
would be to risk obscuring their transparency to the center, such that this center’s fundamental outlines become hidden from view in a twin temptation to fideism and rationalism: fideism insofar as stagnated theological language might force us to bracket our understanding of faith from our natural and experiential knowledge, rendering faith’s object unrelatable and hence unencounterable; rationalism insofar as a strict adherence to ultimately inadequate notions might force us to deny the mysteries of faith when these notions are paradoxically outstripped. Many heresies in Church history have developed from one of these two errors. The goal, of course, is not simply to abandon traditional notions, but rather to continually resituate and refine them within the matrix of faith and reason such that they can always serve as proper avenues and instruments of the “real” encounter.

By reading Ratzinger and Newman together in this way, and by viewing Ratzinger’s christocentrism precisely as a development and continuation of Newman’s own project, we arrive at a diagnosis of the fundamental concern that lies at the heart of the ressourcement’s critique of neoscholasticism. In its exaggerated objectivism that tended to reduce revelation to its distinct propositional content, neoscholasticism had also tended to isolate and absolutize notions at the expense of personal apprehension. In such a circumstance, however, faith is “starved into notions” and loses its consonance and inner vitality. The multiplicity of statements, then, “forms no harmonious and consistent picture upon [the] imagination…[as] the tapestry of human life [seen] on the wrong side…nothing has a meaning, nothing has a history, nothing has relations.” But theology serves faith precisely by helping it to discern “the whole in each part” so that “the

582 Again, Newman suggests that theological mysteries occur when the inadequacy of our notions lead us into apparent contradictions. Thus our notions of divine unity and divine three-ness appear contradictory, but only because they are partial and incomplete. The problem is in the weakness of our minds, not in God. See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 55-56, 115-117. cf. id., Oxford University Sermons, 345.
584 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 292.
whole becomes in the imagination like a spirit, everywhere pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them their one definite meaning.”\textsuperscript{585} This “whole,” this integral “idea,” as we have seen, is nothing other than the person of Christ Himself, the Incarnate Word of the Father, who is encountered in the real apprehension of faith. By their treatments of subjectivity and history, then, both Ratzinger and Newman are seeking to root the notional back into the real: every doctrine, every system, every theological inference and conclusion back into the person of Christ from which all derive. For He is the perfect revelation of the Father:

“\textit{Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father already}.”

**Part III: Important Objections**

At this point it will be appropriate to raise certain vital objections to our schema as it has been presented thus far. For, undoubtedly, some of the affirmations made above have provoked serious questions among the philosophically astute. Has not a fundamental order been dangerously inverted in all of this? Plato also knew of a common method of reasoning among men, as of the impressions that commonly held sway in their minds; yet it was the principal project of his philosophy to seek a universal means by which such beliefs (\textit{doxa}) could be justified and so attain to a genuine knowledge (\textit{episteme}) that could adequately ground the pursuits of the \textit{polis}. This quest, along with its implicit prioritization of \textit{episteme} over \textit{doxa}, has definitively structured the subsequent history of the philosophical tradition. But Newman’s prioritization of the implicit imagination over and above explicit ratiocination, and Ratzinger’s of the personal encounter over and above the propositional, seemingly amount to a reversal of this order. Does this not eviscerate the philosophical project? What can be left after such an upheaval but a descent into relativism, as

\textsuperscript{585} Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 291.
indeed the postmodern world dramatically illustrates? Clearly, before drawing any final conclusion, these considerations need to be directly addressed.

On the philosophical level, one of the primary questions put to Newman’s epistemological schema is whether it does not blur the distinction between the phenomenological and the properly epistemological.586 Granted that men do reason in such a manner, does it follow that they are justified in doing so? There can be no question that Newman achieves a profound analysis of the concrete workings of the human mind, and that his descriptions of its processes have contributed a great deal to the illumination of human experience. But can this description amount to a vindication? If so, how can we any longer distinguish between good and bad reasoning, if each man has a personal standard that is not surveyable by explicit forms? Will every man be justified according to his private measure, a measure for which there is no “internal test of accuracy”?587 Is he not thereby rendered incapable of convincing others or of being convinced by them? But this would seem to make a public truth impossible, which is exactly the opposite of Newman’s stated intentions.

If we reply that this objection fails to consider the role of conscience in human judgments, the intimate participation of which faculty secures the transition from “fact” to “value” in the human experience by relating all judgments to our moral duty before God,588 this still falls short of securing a “common measure between mind and mind” by which men can enter into conversation with one another about the truth.589 For conscience is evidently differently attuned in

588 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 348: “All is dreary till we believe, what our hearts [read: conscience] tell us, that we are subjects of His Governance; nothing is dreary, all inspires hope and trust, directly we understand that we are under His hand, and that whatever comes to us is from Him, as a method of discipline and guidance.”
589 See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 283: “One function indeed there is of Logic, to which I have referred in the preceding sentence, which the Illitative Sense does not and cannot perform. It supplies no common measure between
different men, and the autonomy of its voice in each breast does not allow for “coercion” by the tools of logic. If language is thus an “imperfect exponent” of human thought and “feeling,” the prospects of authentic communication about profound realities begin to dwindle. Hence the accusation, frequently directed at Newman, that he embraced, or at least prepared the ground for, a perilous nominalism and a subjectivism that could only give way to an insoluble relativism.\textsuperscript{590} Wittgenstein’s incommensurate language games appear to be the consequence of Newman’s epistemological foundations.\textsuperscript{591}

All of this is relevant for questions of faith, for if language cannot measure reality in a communicable way, dogma is evacuated of its significance, since dogma attempts to set transcendent realities into linguistic form: an impossible task. Hence modernists like Henri Brémond could assert that “what cannot be done after Newman…is to equate faith with submission to authority…instead, faith must accord with the dictates of conscience.”\textsuperscript{592} Nothing that authority proposes in its linguistic definitions can communicate faith’s essence. Rooted in the personal, faith can only be personal, not public. Dogma is at best the “expression” of this deeper truth, and, arising from below as it does, can only arrive at the normativity of a “consensus,” never the authority of a proclamation “from above.”\textsuperscript{593} Thus for the same reason that Newman is accused of an irrational fideism, he is also accused of liberal anti-dogmatism. Despite his protestations to the contrary, his fundamental theology and epistemology relativize both dogma and reason to the norm of inner

\textsuperscript{590} See McInroy, “Roman Catholic Receptions of the Grammar of Assent,” in Receptions of Newman, 76-8.
\textsuperscript{591} See Aquino, “Philosophical Receptions of the Grammar of Assent,” in Receptions of Newman, 67: “when we strive to account for the basic disagreement among people rooted in radically different communities, it seems especially difficult to secure a common standard by which they can assess the claims at hand.”
\textsuperscript{592} McInroy, “Roman Catholic Receptions of the Grammar of Assent,” in Receptions of Newman, 78.
feeling, of the wordless impression, which bears no real responsibility to the authority of either dogma or reason.

The same critique can be leveled against Ratzinger’s Christocentrism. For if the encounter with Jesus communicates a personal truth beyond the power of words to grasp, in what sense can it be commensurate with verbal formulas at all? How can it norm them, or be normed by them? The two would seem to operate on distinct and independent planes, and if the stability of faith through history is said to consist in one, it is difficult to see what implications this bears for the other. So long as one claims to “know” Christ, in what sense is he responsible to formulations of prior ages? Is this determination not simply rendered up to the personal judgment of each believer, according to the dictates of each one’s personal relationship with Jesus? Again, if there are to be any normative judgments about what counts as authentic development, will this be anything more than a consensus that depends fundamentally on the personal standpoint of each believer for its validity? The appeal to encounter, then, seems to amount to an appeal to subjective experience, which accordingly takes priority over any explicit formulation.

Newman himself anticipates the essence of this objection in his Oxford University sermon on “The Theory of Development in Religious Doctrine,” where he notes the seeming incapacity of finite words or “ideas” to communicate infinite and transcendent reality. In words that we could imagine coming from either a liberal or a traditionalist interlocutor, he asks:

How should any thing of this world convey ideas which are beyond and above this world? How can teaching and intercourse, how can human words, how can earthly images, convey to the mind an idea of the Invisible? They cannot rise above themselves… yet (it seems) we are to say what we, without words, conceive of them, as if words could convey what they do not contain.  

594 cf. Ratzinger, Biblical Interpretation in Crisis, 10: “The criterion according to which something is considered more or less developed, however, is not at all so evident as it first seems. In fact, the judgment essentially depends upon the theological values of the individual exegete.”

595 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 338-9. “…there is no such inward view of these doctrines, distinct from the dogmatic language used to express them…our ideas of Divine things are just co-extensive with the figures by which
This puts the issue plainly. For as words and formulas appear incapable of conveying the transcendent God, revelation must either be transcendent and beyond words or formulaic and thus immanent—a mere report from afar rather and not an encounter. Either it will transcend words utterly or it will consist in words and nothing more. It cannot be both. Therefore it seems we must choose again between modernism and traditionalism. Faith’s doctrinal formulations must have an absolute significance or none at all, for they are either the unchanging revelation itself or mere relative expressions that communicate nothing essential and so change from person to person and from age to age.596

Newman responds to this objection by appealing to his sacramental imagination, which, as we have seen, allows an inner transcendence to finite words and impressions such that they can speak to us of higher realities.597 In this sense they can carry more than their own weight: “something are they besides themselves, which we cannot compass, which we cannot utter.”598 We have already treated this theme at length in this paper, and indeed, it goes a long way toward answering the present difficulty. Faith’s impression cannot exist in the absence of explicit certitude and confession, as it contains the dynamism toward their formation within itself, just as these formulations cannot exist without pointing to the impression. But the question remains as to how impressions so personal can arrive at a common measure and a communal expression that is truly normative for all believers, as dogma presupposes. That faith must speak is one thing; that it should always say the same thing is another. A full response to this question will thus require the unfolding

we express them, neither more nor less...when we draw inferences from those figures, we are not illustrating one existing idea, but drawing mere logical inferences.”

596 n.b. extrema tangunt: liberals and traditionalists agree in their objectivist literalism.

597 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 340: “Still there may be a certain correspondence between the idea, though earthly, and its heavenly archetype.”

598 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 347. cf. ibid., 337-51. Newman names mathematics and music as prime examples of fields of knowledge wherein real ideas are truly grasped, yet only by means of an imperfect conceptual economy.
of yet another decisive aspect in our investigation, one which Newman anticipates in many implicit ways, but which awaits Ratzinger’s particular genius for its full articulation. We will now proceed to a direct consideration of this final, integrating theme.

**Part IV: Communal Subjectivity**

**A. The Church as Communal Subject in History**

The final response of Ratzinger and Newman to the modern crisis of faith comes not with a rejection of the “turn to the subject” but with a critique of the individualism on which that turn founders. For it is the assumption of the atomic individual as set forth by Descartes that seals the subject within itself and denies it any transcendence. But the Christian understanding of subjectivity can have nothing to do with such notions, insofar as Christian subjectivity is always a subjectivity set within the broader embrace of the Church, which takes the individual beyond himself in the liberating encounter with Christ. While this critique is only developed in its full outlines by Ratzinger, it is nevertheless latent in many passages of Newman’s corpus and remains implicit as a foundation of his overall vision.

We have already seen how, for Newman, man’s innermost personal depths are characterized by the call of conscience which refers man beyond himself toward a universal authority and thus toward a common measure of action. As this supreme authority can only be one, so its voice is also one in all men, even if it is in each case utterly personal in its resonance. Thus Newman’s “personal liberalism” does not necessarily inhibit the collective apprehension of truths. As Sillem notes, “his method of philosophizing differs radically from that of Descartes or Locke” in that knowledge for Newman is “the more intimately our own when held in union with other people...[for] other people act upon our minds at a deeper level than things, methods or
arguments.”599 This is true in part because the consciences of others can speak to our own as echoes of the creator’s voice, reflections by reference to which we can arrive at a deeper appreciation of the shared impression that is within us. For the one God creates but one impression of himself in the hearts of men:

If Almighty God is ever one and the same…the true inward impression of Him…must be one and the same; and, since human nature proceeds upon fixed laws, the statement of that impression must be one and the same.600

This is true both on the level of natural religion and on that of revelation. As the common impressions of conscience tend toward the articulation of a common law of action, so too does the common impression of the revealed divine “idea” lead to the articulation of a shared law of faith: “we may as well say that there are two Gods as two Creeds.”601 This implies once again that revelation is “no private imagination,”602 that it is an impression shared by many, which thus draws many minds together in the formation of a “social mind” or collective “mental constitution” wherein its truths can be firmly lodged.603 This communal mind becomes, as it were, the proper subject of tradition and doctrinal development. As we have seen, development can only take place within a community in which all members are possessed of a single “idea.”

The Church can thus be said to be endowed with a mind and a conscience of its own: the consensus fidelium, which as the “voice of tradition” can serve as a barometer of faith.604 God accordingly continues to speak through the “Church collective.”605 The infallibility of popes and

599 Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook, 8.
600 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 328.
601 Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 328.
603 See Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine 178: “Doctrines expand variously according to the mind, individual or social, into which they are received.” cf. ibid., 189: “That it is not brought into exercise in every instance of doctrinal development is owing to the varieties of mental constitution, whether in communities or in individuals, with whom great truths or seeming truths are lodged.”
604 See Newman, Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine, 73, 76.
605 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 265.
councils is but the authoritative concentration of what is already present in this universal communion, as the dogmatic principle which the pastors guard and serve is first of all something implanted in the heart of the body of believers. The “supreme authority” in the Church, therefore, even prior to the explicit judgments of its pastors, is that of “Christian fellowship,” the enfleshed life of which fellowship is what gives the texts of belief their “illuminating power.” In this we see to what extent the heritage of revelation is entrusted to a “visible polity,” and how it is that Newman can speak, in his “organic view of the Church,” of the Church’s “individuality and…personality.” The Church is indeed a living subject, one in which the subjective life of each Christian is fostered and developed, and in which the personal apprehensions of the faithful find their inner norm: she is the pillar and bulwark of truth. (1 Tim 3:15)

Ratzinger brings these insights to their full development by explicitly identifying the Church as the receiving subject of revelation, the historical life of whose tradition becomes the locus of the living encounter with Jesus Christ. This is a crucial moment in the arc of

---

607 See Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 360: “A conviction that truth was one; that it was a gift from without, a sacred trust, an inestimable blessing; that it was to be revered, guarded, defended, transmitted; that its absence was a grievous want, and its loss an unutterable calamity…Councils and Popes are the guardians and instruments of the dogmatic principle: they are not that principle themselves; they presuppose the principle.”
608 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 73.
609 See Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 191. cf. Ratzinger, Theological Highlights of Vatican II, 161: “the processes of history take time. The new insights gained in the struggle…begin first to gradually take on flesh and blood in the everyday life of the Church; only after this can they develop their full force.”
612 Newman, Letter to Duke of Norfolk, 35. Elsewhere, Newman will qualify this affirmation, stating that “the Church is no person” and therefore has no intellect of its own. See Biemer, Newman on Tradition, 60. As we shall see, Ratzinger will be somewhat more radical on this point.
613 Here we do not wish to conflate the views of Ratzinger and Newman. In detailing the notion of communal subjectivity, Ratzinger certainly brings something Germanic to the table that would likely sound unfamiliar to the English ears of Newman. Nevertheless, there is reason to see this contribution as a legitimate development of Newman’s overall vision, one which fills out the picture in crucial ways. Though it might initially appear susceptible to the charge of irrational mysticism, in fact, as we shall see, it is rooted in the realism with which Ratzinger approaches the sacraments, especially the Eucharist: it is a sacramental mysticism.
development we have been tracing thus far, and its exposition will bring our investigation to its synthetic climax.\textsuperscript{614} According to Ratzinger, by entering into the mind of the Church, the Christian believer is enabled to read history around the figure of Christ, who comes to light precisely as history’s center. Thus a shared subjectivity emerges together with a shared memory and a shared history to engender a unity of mind and heart that admits of articulation in a normative common confession: “interior unity of the Spirit” includes “intellectual unity.”\textsuperscript{615} In Newmannian terms, we can say that the shared impression of Christ creates shared presumptions in the hearts of believers that correspond to certain truth claims which can be gradually drawn forth in the life of the Church.

What is intimately personal therefore has “inseparably to do with the community” insofar as it is 	extit{ipso facto} “introduced into the ‘we’ [of communion]” by the structure of faith wherein “the Lord…gives himself as the center and form of [my] own existence” such that “I myself become open, torn from my closed solitude and received into the living community of the Church.” This community, which lives in history, thus becomes the “mediator of my encounter with God” insofar as its history becomes my history.\textsuperscript{616}

\textit{i. Revelation as Dialogue}

This commitment to what we might call the Church’s “historical subjectivity”\textsuperscript{617} stems from Ratzinger’s abovementioned conviction regarding the essentially dialogical nature of revelation. In his study of Bonaventure for his habilitation thesis,\textsuperscript{618} he discovered that the modern

\textsuperscript{614} Let the reader not be deceived by the relative brevity of this section devoted exclusively to Ratzinger’s thought; his contribution is decisive, and it is here that we encounter the central concept on which our argument hinges.

\textsuperscript{615} Ratzinger, “The Dogmatic and Ascetical Meaning of Christian Brotherhood” in \textit{Man Before God: Readings in Theology}, 120. cf. id. \textit{Journey to Easter}, 145: The deepest source of the unity of the Church is “oneness of heart”: “When the center of myself is outside myself, the prison of the ‘I’ is laid open and my life begins to share in the life of another—Christ. When this happens it produces unity.”

\textsuperscript{616} See interview of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI by Fr. Jacques Servais, S.J., Rome, October 2015.

\textsuperscript{617} i.e., the Church is a subject that lives in and through progressive historical insight.

conception of revelation—i.e., as the objectified, discrete propositional content of Scripture and tradition—was quite foreign to the medieval mind of the Seraphic Doctor. Rather, for Bonaventure, *revelatio* is first and foremost something active, an event of unveiling that necessarily occurs *between* persons: between the one who reveals himself and the one(s) to whom this revelation is addressed. As such, the receiving subject enters into the very notion of revelation. As Ratzinger writes:

‘Revelation’ is always a concept denoting an act. The word refers to the act in which God shows himself, not to the objectified result of this act. And because this is so, the receiving subject is always also a part of the concept of ‘revelation.’ Where there is no one to perceive ‘revelations,’ no re-*vel*-ation has occurred, because no *veil* has been removed. By definition, revelation requires a someone who apprehends it.

But this implies that revelation cannot be conceived as a monologue wherein the divine object would merely inform men *about* himself through a series of true propositions. God does not simply tell us *about* himself, but reveals his very *self* to us by entering into a historical interaction with a person, an interaction of words and deeds that calls forth a response from man. He addresses man personally, and of its nature this address beckons for the response by which alone the revelation can be fully received and hence completed. Revelation, then, is not a

619 See Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*. (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 48-49, on the Suarezian origins of this propositional model in contrast to the more nuanced vision of St. Thomas, which attends much more closely to the subjective dimensions of faith.

620 See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 210: “Word never stands on its own; it comes from someone, is there to be heard, and is therefore meant for others. It can only subsist in this totality of ‘from’ and ‘for’.”


622 See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 95-6: “No real dialogue yet takes place where men are still only talking about something…the testimony of God is inaudible where language is no more than a technique for imparting ‘something’. God does not occur in logistic calculations.” cf. ibid., 96: “Originally there was no such thing as a series of doctrinal propositions that could be enumerated one after the other and entered in a book as a well-defined body of dogmas…Christian doctrine does not exist in the form of discrete propositions but in the unity of the *symbolum*.”

623 See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 210: “Christian faith is not centered on ideas but on a person, an ‘I’, and on one that is defined as ‘word’ and ‘son’, that is, as ‘total openness’.” cf. id., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 181: “A comprehensive view of Revelation, precisely because it is concerned with the whole man, is founded not only in the word that Christ preached, but in the whole of the living experience of his person, thus embracing what is said and what is unsaid, what the Apostles in their turn are not able to express fully in words, but which is found in the whole reality of the Christian existence of which they speak, far transcending the framework of what has been explicitly formulated in words.” See also Tracey Rowland, Foreword to Christopher Collins, *The Word Made Love*, viii, on Ratzinger’s central affirmation that the Truth is a Person, known in the Church.
monologue, but a dialogue in which the recipient has a constitutive role—one which unfolds over
time in a dramatic history of interaction that reaches its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ,
in whom the communication between God and man attains to the perfect consummation of
communion.624 In Him, man, formerly hampered by sin, is finally rendered capable of fully
receiving God and of rendering Him a full response. Hence all of revelation can be viewed as
summed up and contained in the person of Christ.625

From this it becomes clear how, for Ratzinger, revelation cannot be conceived apart from
history. While its origin lies beyond history, it is only accomplished in history, in the active-
receptivity of humanity,626 in the Logos becoming sárξ.627 This means, first of all, that Scripture
can only be adequately understood in light of the whole arc of salvation history as it is formally

624 On the dialogical and christocentric character of Ratzinger’s theology of revelation, see Christopher S. Collins, The
Ratzinger the fullness of the identity of the Word of God spoken in the context of ecclesial faith, among the Chosen
People of God, is the person of Jesus Christ. Christ both emerges out of tradition and Scripture and is the summation
of the revelation of Scripture, and he is therefore the key to its authentic interpretation. Consequently, he is best
approached on his own terms and not according to those who do not have the benefit of the horizon of the communal
and ecclesial hermeneutic of faith. He must be approached as he is presented in Scripture and from within tradition.
For Ratzinger, Christ is also the form of authentic tradition, emerging from the narrative of the past and yet bringing
to fulfillment the new development of the revelation of God for all generations. What has been handed on in faith
from the time of Abraham to John the Baptist was oriented toward the coming of Christ. And since his coming, the
living tradition of the church has had as its raison d’être the ongoing attempt to understand and appropriate the
meaning of his identity and how he accomplishes the new and everlasting covenant between God and humanity.”

625 See Emery de Gaál, The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan,
2010), 66-7: “against an intellectualist reading, Ratzinger demonstrates that for Bonaventure revelation is far wider
and richer than merely that which the human intellect can comprehend or that which is contained in scripture.
Revelation is historical and contextual: it is Jesus Christ.” The vision articulated here was clearly taken up by the
Second Vatican Council in Dei Verbum, 2-5.

626 We witness already here the Marian outlines of ecclesial faith. See Joseph Ratzinger, Daughter Zion: Meditation
on the Church’s Marian Belief. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983) 28: “She emerges as the personal epitome of the
feminine principle in such a way that the principle is true only in the person, but the person as an individual always
points beyond herself to the all-embracing reality, which she bears and represents.” cf. Henri de Lubac, The Splendor
of the Church. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 213: “When, ‘as the silent Mother of the silent Word’ she held
blindly to the mysteries of them in her heart, she prefigured that long train of memory and intense meditation which
is the very soul of the tradition of the Church.”

627 See Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 193-5: “God comes to pass for man through man, nay, even more
concretely, through the man in whom the quintessence of humanity appears and who for that very reason is at the
same time God himself.” (194) “The meaning that sustains all being has become flesh; that is, it has entered history
and become one individual in it; it is no longer what encompasses and sustains history but a point in it. Accordingly
the meaning of all being is first of all no longer to be found in the sweep of mind that rises above the individual, the
limited, into the universal…it is to be found in the midst of time, in the countenance of one man.” (193-4)
revealed in Christ, and in the dialectical relationship that emerges between the Old and New Testaments around his central figure. Ratzinger sees the New Testament writings fundamentally as interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures through the hermeneutical key of the Christ-event, which thus simultaneously interpret this event as the definitive Word: the fulfillment of Israel’s history which points forward to the fulfillment of all time. They understand the present in light of the past, and the past in light of the present, and in this correlation also grasp the essence of the future. This pattern, Ratzinger says, is formal to all true apprehensions of Christ, who can never be known simply as present or simply as past: “only that which possesses roots in yesterday and the power of growth for tomorrow and for all time has true power over today and in today.” Hence, “knowledge of history arises in the interplay between the Old and the New Testament.”

**ii. The Role of Tradition**

This dynamic is not left behind with the death of the last Apostle and the closing of the scriptural canon. Though, objectively considered, the divine self-disclosure is completed in Christ, its subjective appreciation must continue to unfold in the life of the Church. “Certainly Scripture is closed objectively. But its meaning is advancing in a steady growth through history; and this growth is not yet closed...[it] develops in a constant process of growth in time.” Ratzinger supports this claim by noting an example in the book of Acts, wherein the Apostles at first believe their mission to be limited to the Jews, and only after successive events are led to recall the words

---

628 *Novum in vetere latet et in novo vetus patet.*
of Jesus in a new light and so to realize the mission to the gentiles.\textsuperscript{633} Elsewhere he cites the example of the immanent expectation of the eschaton—evident in many schematic statements throughout the New Testament—which must later be re-read in light of the unfolding life of the Church.\textsuperscript{634} In each of these cases Ratzinger sees fulfilled the promise of Jesus to the Apostles: \textit{“the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”}\textsuperscript{635} The Holy Spirit continues to teach Christ’s disciples in the life of the Church, reminding them anew of His words such that their appreciation of the gift given in Him can be continually deepened and sharpened. There can be no artificially construed end-point to this dynamic. While a “material” understanding of tradition might conceive it as “the handing down of fixed formulas and texts,” it is better seen as a “living process” wherein “the Holy Spirit broadens and deepens the memory of the Church in order to guide here ‘into all the truth.’”\textsuperscript{636}

\textsuperscript{633} See Ratzinger, \textit{Revelation and Tradition}, 42: “It is one of the striking facts that can clearly be observed from the Acts of the Apostles that the Twelve at first did not undertake a mission to the gentile nations but endeavored to convert Israel and so to realize the necessary conditions for the kingdom. It was only the shock of various historical events, especially the execution of Stephen, that of James and, decisively, the arrest and flight of Peter, which brought the original community, as the sources show, to recognize the failure of the attempt to convert Israel as definitive, and consequently to go to the pagans and so create the Church instead of the kingdom.”

\textsuperscript{634} See Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life.} (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1988), 41-5: “The Word of Jesus only persists as something heard and perceived by the Church. After all, it can scarcely enter the historical arena save by being heard and, once heard, assimilated. But all hearing, and so all tradition, is also interpretation: in throwing light on one aspect, it allows another to fall into the shadow.” (40) “Only reality itself, in its forward movement, can clarify what the schema leaves obscure. Only as the actual course of history unfolds does reality fill the schema with content and shed light on the meaning and interrelatedness of its various aspects. The fundamental and all-important hermeneutical insight here is that subsequent history belongs intrinsically to the inner momentum of the text itself…through the appearing of the reality which was still to come, the full dimensions of the word carried by the text come to light.” (42) cf. id., \textit{Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration}, xix: “any human utterance of a certain weight contains more than the author may have been immediately aware of at the time.”

\textsuperscript{635} In 14:26. See Ratzinger, \textit{Revelation and Tradition}, 42: “They did this, as the reports, particularly the 15\textsuperscript{th} chapter of Acts, show, as a new decision in the Holy Spirit. By doing so they opened out that new interpretation of the message of Christ which is the essential basis of the Church.”

\textsuperscript{636} Ratzinger, \textit{Milestones}, 59.
Thus salvation history (i.e., history) does not come to a close in Christ, as Augustine thought, but continues to unfold from Christ, who is thus seen to inhabit the center of history. This is the vision articulated by Bonaventure in his response to the Joachimite crisis, which shook the Franciscan Order of his time by positioning Francis at the dawn of the new age of the Holy Spirit wherein the Church and Christ’s revelation would be surpassed. Rather than rejecting Joachim’s historical vision tout court (à la Thomas Aquinas), Bonaventure sought to purify his insight by centering it more fully on the figure of Christ. In his *Hexaemeron*, he develops a novel method of scriptural exegesis by positing, beyond the traditional three-fold division of the *spiritualis intelligentia*, also the *figurae spiritualis*—which treat of Christ and the Anti-Christ—and, most importantly, the *multiformae theoriae*. These latter are the many “intimations” of the future that lie hidden in the scriptural word, compared to that word as so many innumerable *rationes seminales* springing from the original seed. Bonaventure writes:

> Who can know the unlimited number of seeds which exist? For from one single seed, entire forests grow up: and they in turn bring forth innumerable seeds. So it happens that innumerable theories can arise from Scripture which only God can grasp.

Bonaventure has in mind here the correlative reading of the Old and New Testaments in terms of one another, which continues to progressively mature in the life of the Church such that

---

637 See Ratzinger, *Theology of History in Bonaventure*, 9-10: in *City of God*, Augustine presents Christ as the end of intelligible history, after whom there is no longer any direction or meaning to be discerned in the succession of ages apart from the rising and falling of various earthly kingdoms, a view which Bonaventure, on Ratzinger’s reading, decisively rejects. Certainly, Christ is the goal (*telos*) of history, but not in such a way that the ages following his appearance lose intelligible shape or cease to unfold the import of his reign.

640 i.e., the analogical, tropological and anagogical senses. See Ratzinger, *Theology of History in Bonaventure*, 7.
641 Ratzinger, *Theology of History in Bonaventure*, 7. Ratzinger sees here an endorsement of a more “symbolic” mode of thought. See ibid., 77: “In the *Hexaemeron*, the symbolic mode of though is employed even more emphatically than the rational-scholastic concept of Scripture and history [which treats history as sub-rational]…the symbolic approach dominates the entire concept of history in this work…”
ages of the Old are seen to unfold in parallel fashion to the ongoing history of the New. Thus, as its historical life progresses, the Church is able to discover more and more “seeds”—*multiformae theoriae*—in her study of the scriptural word, continually reading the present in light of the past and the past in light of the present according the central axis of Christ, thereby grasping ever more the essence of the future.  

Ratzinger writes: “Scripture points to the future; but only he who has understood the past can grasp the interpretation of the future because the whole of history develops in one unbroken line of meaning in which that which is to come may be grasped in the present on the basis of the past.” In this sense, the full import of the revelation of Christ continues to dawn on the subjective consciousness of the Church, and this allows Bonaventure to grant a certain eschatological and revelatory significance to the figure of St. Francis without thereby diminishing the centrality or definitiveness of Christ. Salvation and its history cannot be viewed, as it were, from the outside, as though it were a completed and “self-enclosed *Ding-an-sich*.” There is no neutral standpoint from which to assess revelation’s content. Rather, we are still within salvation history, and, in this sense, revelation continues. As Ratzinger concludes:

This meaning [of Scripture] develops in a constant process of growth in time. Consequently, we are able to interpret many things which the Fathers could not have known…and so, new

---

645 Ratzinger, *Theology of History in Bonaventure*, 6-20. cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 20: “Every new situation of humanity also opens new sides of the human spirit and new points of access to reality. Thus, in her encounter with the historical experiences of humanity, the Church can be led ever more deeply into the truth and perceive new dimensions of it that could not have been understood without these experiences.”


647 i.e., the way of Francis reveals the final age of the Church that is to come before the eschaton. Ratzinger reads Bonaventure’s work in the *Hexaemeron* in terms of his attempts to resolve the crisis of his order. See Ratzinger, *Theology of History in Bonaventure*, 1-5.

648 See Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 41: “the Gospel does not confront the Church as a self-enclosed *Ding-an-sich*...this should not turn us into skeptics...Jesus’ message becomes intelligible for us through the echo effect it has created in history. In this echo, the intrinsic potential of that message, with its various strata and configurations, still resounds.”

649 See Ratzinger, *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, 22: “the exegete must realize that he does not stand in some neutral area, above our outside history and the church. ...The first presupposition of all exegesis is that it accepts the Bible as a book. In so doing, it has already chosen a place for itself...”

650 See Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 43: “only through the harvest of historical experience does the word gradually gain its full meaning...the reader himself is taken up into the adventure of the word. He can understand it only as a participator, not as a spectator.”
knowledge arises constantly from Scripture. Something is taking place; and this happening, this history, continues onward as long as there is history at all. This is of fundamental importance for the theologian who explains Scripture. It makes it clear that the theologian cannot abstract from history.⁶⁵¹

Theology, then, cannot remain indifferent to the great events and epochs that shape the history of the Church, precisely because it is through these moments that the Spirit continues to enrich the Christian memory in its appreciation of revelation.⁶⁵² Therefore, theology must always continue to take its bearings from the saints and great converts of Christian history.⁶⁵³ Indeed, Ratzinger suggests that the understanding of faith cannot remain unaffected by the lives of such figures, and points to certain theological developments which would not have been conceivable apart from the experience of the saints.⁶⁵⁴ The full meaning of Scripture can only be unlocked through the lives of disciples who are led by the Spirit.

From this it is obvious why Ratzinger cannot accept the Protestant dictum of sola scriptura. Even if it were possible to speak with Josef Geiselmann of a “material sufficiency” of Scripture—and this Ratzinger finds dubious⁶⁵⁵—it would be impossible to isolate its true meaning
from its proper history in the living ecclesial tradition. Thus tradition is revealed as the indispensable locus from which to access the Scriptures. To accept the “varied literature” of the Bible “as one book” is already to accept the decisions “of the ancient Church” and of the Fathers, thus “Scripture ultimately always only exists una cum traditione,” which is its present “hermeneutical center.” Ratzinger notes that the apostolic preaching that produced the New Testament was itself already the explication—i.e., “an unfolding”—of the Christ-event, not only in terms of the past but also in terms of the ecclesial present as this is illuminated by the Spirit: “It is also an interpretation of the Christ-event itself on the basis of the pneuma, which means on the basis of the Church’s present. The latter is possible because Christ is not dead but living, not only Christ yesterday but Christ today and tomorrow.” This interpretation “in the Spirit” is thus already the beginning of ecclesial tradition, which continues to interpret the New Testament by reference to the ever unfolding present of the Church, who continues to be guided by the Spirit “into the fullness of Truth” as she strives to view everything in light of the full arc of salvation history.

It is in this sense that Ratzinger regards tradition as a kind of memory, which gathers all the fleeting moments of the ages into a cohesive vision of the whole. Memory, he says, is the

---

656 See Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 109: “And this again means that there can be no such thing as pure sola scriptura, because an essential element of Scripture is the Church as understanding subject, and with this the fundamental sense of tradition is already given.”


659 Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*, 41-42. [emphasis added] cf. id., *Theology of History in Bonaventure*, 81-2: “the event of Francis effectively shattered a concept of tradition which had become too canonical…All tradition is of no avail against the immediate word of the Lord…The Church of the present is understood to be a new criterion of interpretations with equal rights. With this, the purely retrospective allegory of early Scholasticism is limited by a principle of interpretations which shows a decidedly progressive character.”

660 See Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 148: “The Church, as living memory, is the locus of faith, through which the unity of history is established.” cf. Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 35-6: “we also gain a new confidence in the internal continuity of
mediator between being and time, between the chaotic-nihilism of continual becoming and the unified stability of meaning (logos). As such it stands at the foundation of intelligence and of what it means to be human. Drawing on the work of psychologist Wolfgang Köhler, Ratzinger claims that the ultimate factor by which man is distinguished from other animals is not invention (homo faber) but the capacity to preserve, communicate, and so to pass on what is learned to succeeding generations, establishing—beyond the mere individual memory—that communal memory which gives rise to history, and hence to humanity:

[Intellect] manifests itself in the transcendence of time, of the moment; intellect is basically memory—a context that fosters unity beyond the limits of the present moment…It is as memory that intellect proves itself qua intellect.663

But precisely as such, and in the same moment:

…memory generates tradition; tradition realizes itself in history; as the already existing context of humanity, history makes humanity possible—for without the necessarily transtemporal relationship of person to person, humanity cannot be awakened to itself, cannot express itself.664

Tradition, then, is constitutive of humanity, as the basis of the communal and historical awareness that is the necessary condition of personal existence.665 But if humanity requires such a collective

the Church’s memory. In both her sacramental life and in her proclamation of the Word, the Church constitutes a distinctive subject whose memory preserves the seemingly past words and action of Jesus as a present reality.” 661 See Joseph Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 23.
662 In his experiments with chimpanzees, Köhler found that they demonstrated the capacity to invent tools but lacked the ability to pass on what they had learned. See Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 87-8: “Despite the invention of which they are capable, the fact that animals have no intellect is revealed in their inability to transform invention into tradition and so into a historical context.”
663 Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 87.
664 Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 87: “The inseparable connection between humanity and history becomes apparent: humanity and historicity, intellect and history, are inextricably related. The human spirit creates history; history conditions human existence.” - “tradition properly understood is, in effect, the transcendence of today in both directions…tradition, as the constitutivum of history, is constitutive of a humanity that is truly human, of the humanitas hominis.” - “How can memory actually become tradition?...How else but by communication, by a sharing-with [Mitteilung]? By the transmission of memory to others. Communicability becomes, then, a second mark, along with transtemporality, of the concept of ‘intellect’ and, at the same time, a second contextual element of tradition…tradition is dependent on man’s ability to speak.” See also ibid., 88: Ratzinger depicts the causal chain from memory to tradition to history to humanity. In this analysis, memory, language, communication, reason, intelligence, tradition, and history all appear co-constitutive principles of one another. See Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith, 60-61.
665 Ratzinger presents this thesis in direct opposition to the atomistic notions of modern individualism.
consciousness in order to exist, there is need for a notion of subjectivity that transcends the limits of the isolated Cartesian ego; there is need of a communal subject in whom the memory of tradition can inhere: “Tradition requires a subject in whom to adhere, a bearer, whom it finds (not only, but basically) in a linguistic community…It [tradition] is possible only because many subjects become, as it were, one subject in the context of a common heritage.” 666 Humanity, in other words, is possible only if we discover ourselves as members of a larger whole, within the “We”—the collective subjectivity—of a linguistic culture, wherein there subsists the common memory that conditions and enables our personal self-awareness. 667

iii. The Communal Subject

This is a crucial dimension of Ratzinger’s thought, for if the subjectivity of the Christian memoria were understood to be merely that of the individual, then the content of faith would be subjected to the conditioned limitations of each believer, and the path to modernist relativism would be set. 668 But this is not the subjectivity which Ratzinger intends. Rather it is the Church herself who, taken as a whole, is the subject of this memoria, in whom the unity of history emerges together with the unity of the Scriptures and the unity of faith. 669 In absence of this common

---

666 Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 88.
667 cf. Ratzinger, “Communio: a program” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 128-9. Here Ratzinger defines “tradition as growth into identity,” which definition “clarifies what it means to be Catholic: the Lord is whole wherever he is found, but that also means that together we are but one Church and that the union of humanity is the indispensable definition of the Church.” [emphasis added]
668 as Garrigou-Lagrange saw very well. cf. Ratzinger, Eschatology, 44: “the unity of faith cannot rest upon a hypothetical reconstruction of some primitive nucleus. Rather does it find its support in the unity of the believing subject—the Church, which is responsible for our different experiences with the word and holds them together as one.” cf. Benedict XVI, “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia Offering Them His Christmas Greetings”: “…[the Church allows] the ‘hermeneutic of reform’, of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.”
669 Ratzinger views the Church not as an aggregate but as a subject who is best understood in personal terms. See Ratzinger, Mary: the Church at the Source, 27: “The type remains true to its meaning only when the noninterchangeable personal figure of Mary becomes transparent to the personal form of the Church herself. In theology, it is not the person that is reducible to the thing, but the thing to the person. A purely structural ecclesiology is bound to degrade Church to the level of a program of action. Only the Marian dimension secures the place of affectivity in faith and thus ensures a fully human correspondence to the reality of the incarnate Logos.”
recollection, not only would the act of faith reduce to something merely individualistic, but in the same stroke its object would disintegrate into a mere catalogue of disjoined propositions to be believed, and would no longer present someone to believe in. The Church provides the hermeneutic space, the locus of memory, wherein the parts can converge around the center to form a whole.

In explaining this notion of communal subjectivity, Ratzinger rejects the doctrine of the isolated and autonomous individual, bequeathed to modernity by Descartes, in favor of what he regards as the far more ancient and biblical understanding of communal intersubjectivity. The Hebrew Scriptures frequently instance a notion of “corporate personality” in their presentation of patriarchal figures as representative of larger bodies: in the king the entire nation is encompassed, in Jacob the people of Israel are writ large, in Adam the whole of humanity is subsumed, such that all mankind can be addressed as Adam (“God says to man”), and the people as Israel (“my servant Israel, Jacob whom I have chosen”). This pattern is fulfilled in the Pauline presentation of Christ as the New Adam, in whom inheres the new people of God, the new mankind. The image of the

670 See Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 21-23: “God does not exemplify loneliness but ec-stasy, a complete going-out-from himself. This means that ‘the mystery of the Trinity has opened to us a totally new perspective: the ground of being is communio.’ [Ratzinger cites De Lubac, Le Foi chretienne] From this perspective, we can now understand how the unity of the object can include that of the subject: belief in the Trinity is communio; to believe the Trinity means to become communio. Historically, this means that the ‘I’ of the credo-formulas is a collective ‘I’, the ‘I’ of the believing Church, to which the individual ‘I’ belongs as long as it believes. In other words, the ‘I’ of the credo embraces the transition from the individual ‘I’ to the ecclesial ‘I’.” - “The seat of all faith is, then, the memoria Ecclesiae…without this believing subject, which unifies the whole, the content of faith is neither more nor less than a long catalogue of things to be believed; within and by the Church, they are made one. The Church is the locus that gives unity to the content of faith….”

671 cf. Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches During the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 90: “the whole is always of interest. Faith always creates from the whole…today, too, the proclamation of faith must be catholic—that is, it must live from the whole, draw again and again directly from the Bible, drink again and again from the great, pure sources of all times.”

672 See Ratzinger, Called to Communion, 35-6: “Today the [Cartesian] concept of subject is gradually unraveling; it is becoming evident that the ‘I’ locked securely in itself does not exist but that various influences pass in and out of us. At the same time there is a renewed understanding that the ‘I’ is constituted in relation to the ‘thou’ and that the two mutually interpenetrate. Thus, the Semitic view of the corporate personality—without which it is difficult to enter into the notion of the Body of Christ—could once again become more easily accessible.”

673 See Joseph Ratzinger, “Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology.” Communio XVII:3, 452-3: “Christ, whom Scripture calls the final Adam, that is, the definitive human being, appears in the testimonies of faith as the all-
Church as the Body of Christ needs to be understood in this light. It is not a mere Stoic metaphor for the divisions of labor within the body-politic of a perfect society. Rather it is an exposition of the fact that, in the redeeming the world, Christ has handed himself over so thoroughly as to give his own personal “I” to man, such that his filial identity can now truly be claimed by men, and they can join Him in addressing God as Father.⁶⁷⁴

This reality finds its pinnacle expression in the Christian Eucharist, where the self-giving of the Son is expressed in flesh and blood, and Christ gives his body—i.e., his very self⁶⁷⁵—to be taken in by believers. Ratzinger recalls Augustine’s famous reflection on the inverse metabolism at work in this mysterious exchange: in communion it is not Christ who is transformed into us, but we who are transformed into Christ. “When we truly communicate, this means that we are taken out of ourselves, that we are assimilated into him, that we become one with him and, through him, with the fellowship of our brethren.”⁶⁷⁶ As such, the communion of liturgy can be viewed as the encompassing space in which the ‘we’ of human beings gathers on the way to the Father.” - “In Christianity there is not simply a dialogical principle in the modern sense of a pure ‘I-thou’ relationship, neither on the part of the human person that has its place in the historical ‘we’ that bears it; nor…on God’s part who is, in turn, no simple ‘I’, but the ‘we’ of Father, Son, and Spirit.”

⁶⁷⁴ See Ratzinger, “Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology,” 33-40. cf. Joseph Ratzinger, The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 45-55. “The belief that we have all become a single new man in Jesus Christ will always call us to let the separating particularity of our own egos, the self-assertion of human selfhood, melt into the community of the new man Jesus Christ.” (55) cf. id., Principles of Catholic Theology, 73: “For one who has grown up in the Christian tradition, the way begins in the ‘thou’ of prayer: such a one knows that he can address the Lord; that this Jesus is not just a historical personage of the past but is the same in all ages. And he knows, too, that in, with and through the Lord he can address him to whom Jesus says ‘Father’. In Jesus, he sees likewise the Father. For he sees that this Jesus does not have his life from himself, that his whole existence is an exchange with the Other, a coming from him and a returning to him. He sees that this Jesus is truly ‘Son’ in his whole existence, is one who receives his inmost being from another, that his life is a receiving. In him is to be found the hidden foundation; in the actions, words, life, suffering of him who is truly Son it is possible to see, hear and touch him who is unknown. The unknown ground of being reveals itself as Father…as Person.” cf. id., Called to Communion, 33: “Through baptism…we are inserted into Christ and united with him as a single subject;…Only Christ’s self-identification with us, only our fusion into unity with him, makes us bearers of the promise.”

⁶⁷⁵ See Ratzinger, Called to Communion, 36: “The body is man’s self, which does not coincide with the corporeal dimension but comprises it as one element among others.”

⁶⁷⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, God is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 78. cf. id., Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: the Church as Communion. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 78: “Eucharistic Communion is aimed at a complete reshaping of my own life. It breaks up man’s entire self and creates a new ‘we’. Communion with Christ is necessarily also communication with all who belong to him: therein I myself become part of the new bread that he is creating by resubstantiation of the whole of earthly reality.”
principal locus from which the communion of the Church as the Body of Christ is continually being born and brought to life through the transcendence of the isolated ego into the greater “I” of Christ:

The outward action of eating becomes the expression of that intimate penetration of two subjects...Communion means that the seemingly uncrossable frontier of my ‘I’ is left wide open and can be so because Jesus has first allowed himself to be opened completely, has taken us all into himself and has put himself totally into our hands. Hence, Communion means the fusion of existences...my ‘I’ is ‘assimilated’ to that of Jesus, it is made similar to him in an exchange that increasingly breaks through the lines of division. This same event takes place in the case of all who communicate; they are all assimilated to this ‘bread’ and thus are made one among themselves—one body...Communion makes the Church.

Ratzinger views this transition from the isolated “I” of the autonomous self into the new subjectivity of Christ as essential to the nature of conversion and faith. Noting the radicalism of the Pauline “no longer I who live but Christ who lives within me,” he characterizes conversion as a “death-event” in which the old “I” gives way before the “not-I” and so is drawn to live beyond itself in an entirely new existence: “It is snatched away from itself and fitted into a new subject...it must really release its grip on itself in order then to receive itself anew in and together with a greater ‘I’.” But the unity of this new “I” entails that this transition cannot occur in isolation from the greater “We” that finds its unity in the same head: “I can have the one Lord only in the unity that he himself is, in the unity with the others who also are his body.” All who have “put

---

677 Ratzinger, Called to Communion, 37. cf. id. “The Dogmatic and Ascetical Meaning of Christian Brotherhood” in Man Before God: Readings in Theology, 118-9: “when he allows the Lord to give himself as the center and form of his own existence, man interiorly merges, as it were, with Christ and becomes with him ‘one individual’” such that he “participates in the mode of existence of Christ” and can say with him “Our Father.”

678 Gal 2:20. See Ratzinger, Nature and Mission of Theology, 50: “[in this phrase] St Paul describes the distinctive element of Christianity as a personal experience which revolutionizes everything and at the same time as an objective reality.”

679 Ratzinger, Nature and Mission of Theology, 51: “It is a death-event. In other words, it is an exchange of the old subject for another. The ‘I’ ceases to be an autonomous subject standing in itself. It is snatched away from itself and fitted into a new subject. The ‘I’ is not simply submerged, but it must really release its grip on itself in order then to receive itself anew in and together with a greater ‘I.’” - “[conversion] is the surrender of the old isolated subjectivity of the ‘I’ in order to find oneself within the unity of a new subject, which bursts the limits of the ‘I’, thus making possible contact with the ground of all reality.”

on Christ” in baptism must also be united with each other in this new subjectivity, such that all become “one [man] in Christ Jesus,”\textsuperscript{681} bearers of the promise made to the singular heir of Abraham.\textsuperscript{682}

Thus faith, together with its proper subjectivity, cannot be construed as the result of a private process of reflection or as the achievement of individual study.\textsuperscript{683} Its source is not in the private ego but in the “not-I” beyond oneself. As such, even as it calls for a personal appropriation on the part of each believer,\textsuperscript{684} it is always something that comes fundamentally from without, something that is received together with the community by whom it is borne through history\textsuperscript{685}. Similarly, the subjectivity of the Church is not something that properly belongs to her, but something that once again lies outside of herself in the person of her Head.\textsuperscript{686} Her collective subjectivity is a participation in the “I” of Christ, just as the subjectivity of each Christian is a participation in her “We,” such that in each case the participans is normed by the participatum.\textsuperscript{687}


\textsuperscript{682} Gal 3:26 cf., Ratzinger, \textit{Meaning of Christian Brotherhood}, 51-2: “only one man has the right to say ‘my Father’ to God, and that is Jesus Christ…All other men must say ‘our Father’, for the Father is God for us only so long as we are part of the community of his children. For ‘me’ he becomes a Father only through my being in the ‘we’ of his children … ‘Our’ assigns the Christological component.” cf. ibid., 55: “The belief that we have all become a single new man in Jesus Christ will always call us to let the separating particularity of our own egos, the self-assertion of human selfhood, melt into the community of the new man Jesus Christ.”

\textsuperscript{683} See Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 73: against the possibility of an self-achieved meaning, Ratzinger asserts that meaning must always be received from above. “Meaning that is self-made is in the last analysis no meaning. Meaning, that is, the ground on which our existence today can stand and live, cannot be made but only received.” cf. ibid., 92: “I did not come to believe through a private search for truth but through of process of reception…” See also Heim, \textit{Joseph Ratzinger}, 147-9, on the communal “we” nature of faith.

\textsuperscript{684} See Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 92: “the goal must be to make what is received more and more my own, by handing myself over to it as greater.”

\textsuperscript{685} This belongs to the very “structure of encounter.” cf. Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio}, Vol I, 69: “one cannot make the Church but only receive it… from the sacramental community of Christ’s body passing through history.”

\textsuperscript{686} See Ratzinger, \textit{Nature and Mission of Theology}, 54: “the Church is in no wise a separate subject endowed with its own subsistence. The new subject is much rather ‘Christ’ himself, and the Church is nothing but the space of this new unitary subject which is, therefore, much more than mere social interaction.” cf. Collins, \textit{Word Made Love}, 110: “The church can only be its true self insofar as it is the authentic place of encounter with the person of Christ.” This dynamic can be viewed as summed up in Mary, who is gifted with a center outside of herself.

\textsuperscript{687} We should note well, however, that this relationship is not wholly linear. It is not only that the individual is connected to Christ through the Church, but also that, at the same time, the Church is derived from the mutual communion of individuals. cf. Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{The Yes of Jesus Christ: Spiritual Exercises in Faith, Hope, and
Hence, “the faith community does not create itself…the Church is not self-made, she was created by God and she is continuously formed by Him.”

iv. Authority and Subjectivity

We can begin to see in this how Ratzinger, precisely through his consideration of subjectivity, grounds the authority of the church not as something external to the Christian subject but as something internal and constitutive. Here the tension between authority and subjectivity that ran through our exposition of Newman’s thought is finally resolved in full. The Church is not fundamentally a matter of formal structure and legal constraint, but of the inner constitution of each individual’s faith, of which it is an organic principle. Just as the human person can only live and know himself within the context of the linguistic community which precedes him and of which he is a part, so the Christian person can only live and believe within the “We” of the ecclesia, wherein the contours of revelation are disclosed through an entrance into its history. Indeed, it is within the Church that each man finds his “place in history.” But because this entrance

Love. (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 28: “Our relationship with God is first of all and at the same time also a relationship with our fellow men and women: it rest on a communion of human beings, and indeed the communication of relationship with God mediates the deepest possibility of human communication that goes beyond utility to reach the ground of the person…God does not reveal himself to the isolated ego and excludes individualistic isolation: being related to God is tied up with being related to our brothers and sisters, with communion with them.”


689 See Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 147: “Catholicity is not therefore only an external thing, but also an internal characteristic of personal faith.” cf. id., “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 62-4. Ratzinger describes Guardini’s “awakening of the Church in souls,” which he saw as reaching its fruition at the Second Vatican Council, as the realization that Church was “something inward” and “alive in us…encompassing us all from within,” through which “the Incarnation remains present.” It was not simply a “centrally governed institution” that “confronted one from the outside.” This realization allows dogma to be received “not as an external shackle, but as the living source.” (Milestones, 57) It also opens a path for ecumenism, which can now be viewed as a “deepening of the reality which is the Church” that is already present in all believers, albeit imperfectly understood. Thus the way forward for ecumenism need not imply an external break: “one cannot live ecumenism against one’s own Church, but only by trying to deepen it in relation to what is essential and central. This means that one must seek the center in one’s own Church, and this, after all, for all Christians and Churches is truly one.” (“What Unites and Divides Denominations?”, 8).

690 Ratzinger, “The Dogmatic and Ascetical Meaning of Christian Brotherhood” in Man Before God: Readings in Theology, 120-1: “Their destiny is so fully interwoven that the fate of the individual can be fulfilled only when the whole has reached its goal...[thus] the Church as such (as a whole) has a function in the course of history...The Christian, through his membership in the Church, receives his place in history...in the last analysis, there is but a single, indivisible history that encloses all.”
necessarily involves a transition from the closed “I” to the transcendent “Thou” within and through the communal “We,” it can never become the object of mere personal invention, anymore than the Church’s dogmatic teachings can be reduced to matters of “majority vote.” Faith belongs to me only insofar as I first belong to it: I believe only through the We believe that precedes me, in virtue of whose concrete witness I am enabled to enter into faith’s transcendence. The incarnational and historical logic of revelation is thereby perpetuated in the Church, insofar as the Word of revelation is intrinsically bound up with the concrete and sacramental witness of those who precede me in faith: “God wishes to approach man only through man…[His] dialogue with men operates only through men’s dialogue with each other.” Precisely in virtue of this structure,

691 See Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 88: “faith is located in the act of conversion…[it] is not a recitation of doctrines…in this process of turning about…the I and the We, the I and You interact.” cf. ibid., 90: “This dialogue refers for its part to a ‘We believe’ in which the ‘I’ of the ‘I believe’ is not absorbed but allotted its place…belief is not the result of lonely meditation…it is the result of a dialogue, the expression of a hearing, receiving, and answering that guides man through the exchanges of ‘I’ and ‘You’ to the ‘We’ of those who all believe in the same way…”

692 See Interview of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI by Fr. Jacques Servais, S.J., Rome, October 2015: “It is not an assembly of men who have some ideas in common and who decide to work for the spread of such ideas. Then everything would be based on its own decision and, in the final analysis, on the majority vote principle, which is, in the end it would be based on human opinion. A Church built in this way cannot be for me the guarantor of eternal life nor require decisions from me that make me suffer and are contrary to my desires.

693 See Ratzinger, Nature and Mission of Theology, 61: “the Church is not an authority which remains foreign to the scientific character of theology but is rather the ground of theology’s existence and the condition which makes it possible. The Church, moreover, is not an abstract principle but a living subject possessing a concrete content. This subject is by nature greater than any individual person, indeed, than any single generation. Faith is always participation in a totality and, precisely in this way, conducts the believer to a new breadth of freedom.” cf. Benedict XVI, “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Member of the International Theological Commission,” (2010): “theology always lives in a continuity and in a dialogue with the believers and theologians who came before us; since ecclesial communion is diachronic, so also is theology. The theologian never begins from zero, but considers as teachers the Fathers and theologians of the whole Christian tradition”

694 Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 94-95. cf. id., Called to Communion, 67-68: “the word is tied to witness, who guarantees it an unambiguous sense, which it does not possess as a mere word floating in isolation. But the witness is not an individual who stands independently on his own…He is not a witness as ‘flesh and blood’ but as one who is linked to the Pneuma, the Paraclete who authenticates the truth and opens up the memory and, in his turn, binds the witness to Christ.” cf. ibid., 120: “[the apostle’s position] carries forward the dialogical structure that pertains to the essence of revelation. Faith is not something we excogitate ourselves…[man] always becomes a Christian from outside: by means of a gift that can only come to him from another, through the ‘thou’ of Christ…Whenever this opposition, which expresses the fact that grace comes from outside us, disappears, the essential structure of Christianity is destroyed.” cf. id., The Yes of Jesus Christ, 27: “God’s speaking to us reaches us through men and women who have listened to God and come into contact with God; through men and women for whom God has become an actual experience and who as it were know him at first hand…through my trust I come to share in another’s knowledge…faith forms a network of mutual dependence that is at the same time a network of mutual solidarity”
which is essentially sacramental, faith is always dependent upon the received testimony from another. Thus, unlike philosophy wherein word follows from thought, “in faith the word takes precedence over the thought.”

Nevertheless, this external witness is not the destruction, but rather the ground and source of the Christian subjectivity of each believer—of his participation in the “I” of Christ—which accordingly finds its home within the communion of faith. The primacy of the “converse of the Son with his bride” in no way “excludes converse with the individual,” but rather “places the individual dialogue within the dialogue between the Son and his bride.” The local communion, in turn, is similarly always responsible beyond itself—in the public and universal nature of its Eucharistic profession—to the whole of the catholica that ontologically precedes and grounds it. As the “I” of Christ precedes the “We” of the Church, so the universal Church must precede each local communio in order to guarantee the latter’s authenticity. The particular “we” depends on the authoritative testimony that establishes it, and this testimony, embodied in the bishop, will only be valid to the extent that it is the faith of the apostles which is shared by all. Without the

---

695 See Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 68: “no one can make himself into the Church…the element of receiving belongs essentially to the Church, just as faith comes from hearing and is not the product of one’s own resolutions and reflections. For faith is an encounter with that which I cannot think up or bring about through my own achievements but which simply abs to encounter me. We call this structure of receiving and encountering ‘sacrament’.”

696 Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity. 91. cf. ibid., 92: “Because faith is not something thought up by me but something that comes to be me from outside, its word cannot be treated and exchanged as I please; it is always foreordained, always ahead of my thinking…the fore-given word takes precedence over the thought, so that it is not the thought that creates its own words but the given word that points the way to thinking that understands…”; cf. id., Revelation and Tradition, 28-31: Ratzinger notes the Protestant inversion, resulting from the rejection of tradition and the concrete witness of magisterial authority, wherein word becomes criterion of ministry, and no longer ministry the criterion of world. Word is no longer entrusted to the Church, but must rather be guarded from Church, and stands free over the Church. Yet it is precisely here that scripture is yielded up to the “caprice” of the critical scholar: “[the word is] posited as independent…delivering it up to the caprice of exegetes.”

697 Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 189.

698 See Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 67-9: However much “every Eucharistic community…is entirely church already,” nevertheless “the unity with one another of the communities celebrating the Eucharist is not an external addition to Eucharistic ecclesiology but its inner condition.”

699 See Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I, 70-1: “the primitive Church was not familiar with a self-sufficiency of the individual communities…the presbyters who
“ligature”\textsuperscript{700} of the bishop, the communion would splinter and harden into a mere private sectarianism.\textsuperscript{701} But if the bishop himself should become isolated from the \textit{cathedra}, then the local church that remains united to him would be deprived of its inner logic, the claim of its Eucharistic celebration marred by a deep contradiction.\textsuperscript{702} It is for this reason that the authority of the universal church emerges as an internal principle of the local communion wherein the “We” of faith achieves its most basic embodiment.\textsuperscript{703} Patriarchs, councils, and finally the Pope of Rome serve as the safeguards and guarantors of the integrity of each local Church, and by extension, of each Christian subject.\textsuperscript{704} Thus Ratzinger can assert that “the true sense of the teaching authority of the Pope consists in his being the advocate of the Christian memory,”\textsuperscript{705} which memory takes root in each Christian as he is incorporated into the Church. The complementarity suggested here between subjectivity serve them belong together; together they form a ‘council’ with the bishop. The communities are held in the greater unity of the Church as a whole through the bishop…the bishop is not the bishop alone but only in the Catholic community of those who were bishops before him, and will be bishops after him.”

\textsuperscript{700} Ratzinger, \textit{Called to Communion}, 88: “the bishop is the ligature of Catholicity…no community can simply give itself its own bishop…” [referring to the fact that every bishop in the ancient Church had to be ordained by at least 3 neighboring bishops].

\textsuperscript{701} See Ratzinger, \textit{Called to Communion}, 78: “One cannot benefit from the ‘blood shed for many’ by withdrawing to the ‘few’.”

\textsuperscript{702} See Ratzinger, \textit{Called to Communion}, 90: “This sort of ecclesiology, however, lacks the element of responsibility for the universal Church embodied in the apostle. Thus, the Episcopal office itself is foreshortened, with the result that even the local Church is no longer seen in her full intrinsic breadth.” cf. ibid., 81-2: “[it] inevitably destroys the public nature and the all-embracing reconciliatory character of the Church, both of which are represented in the Episcopal principle and result form the essence of the Eucharist. The Church becomes a group held together by her internal agreement, whereas her catholic dimension crumbles away…\textit{Communio} is catholic, or it simply does not exist at all.”

\textsuperscript{703} cf. Newman’s monarchial principle, which becomes embodied in the Pope.

\textsuperscript{704} See Ratzinger, \textit{Called to Communion}, 75-103. Ratzinger describes the process whereby “letters of communion” led eventually to the recognition amongst the Christian churches of certain “reference points” of communion—associated with the ministry of St. Peter—and ultimately to the primacy of Rome: “The warrant of these three sees lies in the Petrine principle, as does the basis of Rome’s apostolic responsibility to be the norm of unity. Consequently, both neighborly solicitude and living relation with Rome pertain to the catholicity of a bishop as way of giving and receiving in the great communion of the one Church.” (92) cf. “Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the church Understood as Communion.” 13: “The Primacy of the Bishop of Rome and the episcopal College are proper elements of the universal Church that are ‘not derived from the particularity of the Churches’, but are nevertheless \textit{interior} to each particular Church. Consequently ‘we must see the ministry of the Successor of Peter, not only as a ‘global’ service, reaching each particular Church from ‘outside’, as it were, but as belonging already to the essence of each particular Church from ‘within’.”

and authority is only inconceivable to modern man on account of the impoverishment of his
notions, which “do not allow for bridges between subject and object.” But, as we have seen,
Ratzinger’s understanding of subjectivity is far removed from any “liberal notions of autonomy,
which preclude transcendence of the subject,” and concerns rather that “much deeper sense that
nothing belongs less to me than I myself. My own ‘I’ is the site of the profoundest surpassing of
self and contact with him from whom I came and toward whom I am going.” Conscience
(\textit{synderesis}) constitutes “something like an original memory” implanted deep within the heart of
man as an “inner ontological tendency” towards the Creator who addresses him and calls him.
In this sense, the love of God as it is stipulated in the commandments cannot really be considered
as an imposition that crushes the freedom of the subject; rather it must be seen as the profoundest
affirmation and liberation of the subject—whose dignity is rooted in its orientation to truth—
recalling to it the deepest structures implanted in its origin. Indeed, the Church’s primary
mission in history can be viewed as the increase of freedom through the empowerment of

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Ratzinger, \textit{On Conscience}, 34.}
\footnote{Ratzinger, \textit{On Conscience}, 33.}
\footnote{Ratzinger, \textit{On Conscience}, 32.}
\footnote{See Ratzinger, \textit{On Conscience}, 34: “The love of God, which is concrete in the commandments, is not imposed on us from without…but has been implanted in us beforehand.”}
\end{footnotesize}
conscience, provided she retains her authority always in the “powerlessness” of conscience and does not confuse it with worldly power.

As the Christian is incorporated into the new subject of the Church, his freedom increases as he is endowed with a new supernatural conscience. He receives “the anamnesis of the new ‘we’”:

The original encounter with Jesus gave the disciples what all generations receive in their foundational encounter with Lord in baptism and the Eucharist, namely, the new anamnesis of faith, which unfolds, like the anamnesis of creation, in constant dialogue between within and without...

This new memory is something internal within each Christian, even as it requires assistance from without in order to come to full knowledge of itself amidst the contrary pressures of a fallen world forgetful of its being. The role of the Pope, then, is not to impose from without, but to affirm,

---

710 See Joseph Ratzinger, “Freedom and Liberation: The Anthropological Vision of the Instruction Libertatis Conscientia,” trans. Stephen Wentworth Arndt, in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol II, 58-69. Whereas modern liberalism seeks freedom through the rupture of relationships of obligation, “a true praxis of liberation must consist in education in the ability to commit oneself,” (58) insofar as “man is a relational being.” (60) The liberation of Exodus accordingly aims at establishing man in right relation with God and neighbor (62-3), not ultimately by force but by love: “freedom and the formation of community are ultimately not to be obtained through the use of force…but through a love that becomes sacrificial.” (63) “In its transformation through the figure of Jesus Christ, Sinai is imparted to all peoples…becomes an element of all history.” (64) Thus “a new people is taking shape that has a place among all peoples; it does not abolish them, but forms a force for unification and for liberation in them all.” (65) Thus the Church’s social teaching is a “historical program that comes from a fundamental understanding of human history.” (66) “No revolution can create a new man…but God can create him from within.” (67) “Only he who takes the measure of his action from within and who need obey no external constraint is free. Therefore, he is free who has become one with his essence, one with the truth itself. For he who is one with the truth no longer acts according to external necessities and constraints…the Catholic doctrine of freedom is not a petty moralism. It is led by a comprehensive vision of man; it seem man in a historical perspective, which, at the same time, transcends all history.” (69)

711 See Ratzinger, “Conscience in Time” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol II, 20-22. Against the temptation of a “false absolute of faith in which faith operates as an ideology of power instead of proclaiming the absolute character of the Creator in the absolute dignity of the powerless,” the Church must always remember that “perseverance in the powerlessness of conscience remains the fundamental condition and innermost core of all true control of power.” This is because “the power of conscience consists in suffering, in the power of the Crucified…it redeems only as the power of the Cross; its mystery lies in this powerlessness and it must remain powerless in this world in order to remain itself.”

712 Ratzinger, On Conscience, 35.

713 See Ratzinger, On Conscience, 34: “The anamnesis instilled in our being needs, one might say, assistance from without so that it can become aware of itself. But this ‘from without’ is not something set in opposition to anamnesis but is ordered to it. It has a maieutic function…brings to fruition what is proper to anamnesis, namely its interior openness to the truth.” cf. ibid., 37: “the guilt [of an uninformed conscience]…lies not in the present act, not in the present judgment of conscience, but in the neglect of my being that made me deaf to the internal promptings of truth.” i.e., by contrast, conscience is memory of being.
elucidate and actualize the interior authority proper to each Christian.\textsuperscript{714} The more one grows in the Spirit, in the exodus from self into the new man of Christ, and so into the communal subjectivity of the Church, the less one experiences the Church’s authority as an external constriction, and the more he knows it as the internal principle of his thinking and feeling.\textsuperscript{715} Hence, “John could say, You do not need such instruction; as anointed ones (baptized ones) you know everything.”\textsuperscript{716}

\textit{v. The Hermeneutic of Faith}

The Church has a maternal role in fostering this connatural knowledge within her children which far outstrips any mechanical or institutional function. It is a personal role, one which comes to light only when the “personal figure of Mary becomes transparent to the personal form of the Church herself.”\textsuperscript{717} Mary indeed provides the necessary correlate to the Christ’s revelation insofar as his filial existence can only be received and appropriated through her perfect response of faith: \textit{fiat}.\textsuperscript{718} His Word can resound in history only through the space opened up in her immaculate heart, a space which the Church in turn must perpetuate as the center and form of her personal existence if she is to be herself. Faith’s object cannot be separated from its subjective appropriation; it is not a fixed result of scientific objectivity that can be passed on as an accomplished formula requiring

\textsuperscript{714} See Ratzinger, \textit{On Conscience}, 35: “For this reason the toast to conscience indeed must precede the toast to the pope, because without conscience there would not be a papacy. All power that the papacy has is power of conscience.”

\textsuperscript{715} cf. Ratzinger, “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches During the Second Vatican Council” in \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I}, 103, on the “Catholic generosity, which stands in essential contradiction to ideological liberalism,” leading “beyond all external obedience to authority to a trust which has the source of its strength in the insight of a believing conscience.”


\textsuperscript{717} Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{Mary: the Church at the Source}, 27. cf. Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in \textit{Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I}, 7: “The Church is not a mechanical device, not merely an institution, nor one of the usual sociological magnitudes—it is a person. It is a woman. It is mother. It is alive. The Marian understanding of the Church is the most decisive antitheses to a merely organizational or bureaucratic concept of the Church...Only in being Marin do we become the Church. The Church was not made in its origin but born. It was born when the \textit{fiat} awoke in Mary’s soul. The deepest will of the Council is that the Church may awake in our souls. May shows us the way.”

\textsuperscript{718} Ratzinger, \textit{Daughter Zion}, 70. The filial existence of Jesus that lives entirely from and for the Father, is mirrored Mary’s faith, who “reserves no area of being, life, and will for herself as a private possession: instead, precisely in the total dispossession of self, in giving herself to God, she comes to the true possession of self. Grace as dispossession becomes response as appropriation.”
no further effort on the part of the recipient.719 It is only received through transformative decision, the decision of faith, which is always fundamentally Marian.720 Therefore, the Church endures only as Marian, only as the mother who shares her life by engendering it in her children. By participation in the Church’s personal life, every believer is thus given a Marian-ecclesial heart by which to believe and to remember.

This memory, illumined by the spirit, inculcated in liturgy, guided and guaranteed by the direction of magisterial authority, thus grows into a principle that allows the Christian, together with the Church, to read the shape of revelation and salvation history. This reading is “anchored in the whole life of the Church,” in her believing, praying and loving, through which “we hear in what is said that which is unsaid” so as to draw forth for today the ever unfolding import of the unchanging faith.721 There is a “sureness” to this memory as it “distinguishes from within between what is a genuine unfolding of its recollection and what is its destruction or falsification.”722 In the new space of the ecclesial “We” established by the Spirit,723 it is able through the Spirit’s

---

720 See Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 23-24, 40-41: “Here the observer speaks of the observed only through speaking of himself: the object becomes eloquent only in this indirect refraction.” (23) “The word of Jesus persists only as something heard and received by the Church.” (40) Therefore, revelation can be known only by entering into the tradition of those who have encountered the word beforehand and allowed it to transform their lives. For this reason also, God is named by those to whom he has come close in salvation history: He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses and Elijah, and ultimately the God of Mary, of Jesus himself. See Ratzinger, *Mary: the Church at its Source*, 63: “God shows himself in a history, in men through whom his own character can be seen. This is so true that he can be ‘named’ through them and indentified in them: the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob…We cannot try to bypass these human faces in order to get to God alone, in his ‘pure form’, as it were.” cf. ibid., 66: “God does not deal with abstractions. He is a person, and the Church is a person. The more that each one of us becomes a person, person in the sense of a fit habitation for God, daughter Zion, the more we become one, the more we are the Church, and the Church is herself.”
721 Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 186: “…anchored in the whole life of the Church; through it, we hear in what is said that which is unsaid. The whole spiritual experience of the Church, its believing, praying and loving intercourse with the Lord and his word, causes our understanding of the original truth to grow and in the today of faith extracts anew from the yesterday of its historical origin what was meant for all time and yet can be understood only in the changing ages and in the particular way of each.”
722 Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 35. Here Newman’s “Notes” for discerning authentic development are an especial help.
723 See Ratzinger, *Nature and Mission of Theology*, 55: “the Spirit effects a space of listening and remembering, a ‘we’, which in the Johannine writings define the Church as the locus of knowledge.”
suggestio\textsuperscript{724} to see the parts in light of the whole, to relate parts to whole and whole to parts,\textsuperscript{725} such that the gospel can continue to shine forth with an ever brighter intelligibility. “In remembering, they knew him, as the Gospel has it in a number of places.”\textsuperscript{726} This is not a process that is measurable by explicit formal logic.\textsuperscript{727} Crucially, it is only within this properly ecclesial subjectivity that the objectivity of the Truth can be disclosed: “Understanding can take place only within this ‘we’ constituted by participation in the origin.”\textsuperscript{728} There is a certain “communality” or “sympatheia” with the origin that is a necessary prerequisite to its appreciation.\textsuperscript{729} Because faith entails the personal taking-up of a stand on a new ground beyond oneself, there can be no true understanding of Christ apart from faith.\textsuperscript{730} Credo ut intelligam: to know him, it is necessary to follow him.\textsuperscript{731} For this reason, any attempt to reduce faith to a mere list of positive formulations that are in principle intelligible to anyone is bound to falsify faith’s essence:

Formulas live by the logic that supports them; but logic lives by the logos, the meaning, which does not reveal itself without the cooperation of life—it is bound to the ‘circle’ of communio that can be penetrated only by the union of thought and life.\textsuperscript{732}

\textsuperscript{724} See Ratzinger, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 181: “the guidance of the Paraclete promised to the disciples is not a ‘dictatio’ but ‘suggestio’, the remembering and understanding of the unspoken in what was once spoken, which reaches down to the depth of a process that cannot be measured by the terms ‘praedicatio oralis’, and the transmission of which cannot therefore be merely a process of the handing down of words.”

\textsuperscript{725} See Ratzinger, Nature and Mission of Theology, 55: [the spirit operates] “First of all, by bestowing remembrance, a remembrance in which the particular is joined to whole, which in turn endows the particular, which hitherto had not been understood, with its genuine meaning.”

\textsuperscript{726} Ratzinger, On Conscience, 35: “John is familiar with the anamnesis of the new ‘we’, which is granted to us in the incorporation into Christ (one body, that is, one ‘I’ with him). In remembering, they knew him, as the Gospel has it in a number of places.”

\textsuperscript{727} See Ratzinger, Theological Highlights of Vatican II, 148: in light of historical research “the deductions of scholastic theology seemed to be doubtful on many points.”

\textsuperscript{728} Ratzinger, Nature and Mission of Theology, 55.

\textsuperscript{729} International Theological Commission, “Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past”, Pope Speaks, 45 (2000), 224: “Bringing to light the communality between interpreter and the object of interpretation requires taking into account the questions that motivate the research and their effect on the answers that are found, the living context in which the work is undertaken, and the interpreting community whose language is spoken and to whom one intends to speak.” cf. id., Biblical Interpretation in Crisis, 23: “The faith of the church is that form of ‘sympatheia’ without which the Bible remains a closed book.”

\textsuperscript{730} See Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 69: “Faith is thereby defined as taking up a position, as taking a stand trustfully on the ground of the word of God.” cf. ibid., 77: “Understanding means seizing and grasping as meaning the meaning that man has received as ground.”

\textsuperscript{731} See Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith, 58: “In order to know Christ it is necessary to follow him.”

\textsuperscript{732} Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 26: “anyone who would construct Christianity from formulas—from the drawing board—is on the wrong track…Nothing living comes into existence in this way, least of all, of course,
This is also the reason why the liturgy, for Ratzinger, must be the primary locus of ecclesial anamnesis: it is here that we are permitted to enter into Christ’s prayer and into His living “I,” granting us that connaturality beyond words that enables us to read His revelation properly.  

Jesus cannot be known apart from a participation in his prayer. “Given that prayer is central to the person of Jesus, sharing in his prayer is the prerequisite for knowing and understanding Jesus.”

In fact, Jesus is identified with his prayer to his Father, such that his person becomes incomprehensible without an entrance into this life of prayer. No “pure science” that might seek to abstract itself from such subjective elements can therefore accomplish anything more than the reduction of Christ to an object in the past. Rather, a truly “scientific” knowledge of Jesus will only be possible to the one who seeks that sympathy with his person that comes in communion with his prayer, a communion which can only be found in his Church, for “communion with the prayer of Jesus includes communion with all his brethren.” This communion reaches its climax, as we have seen, in the Eucharistic exchange of persons, wherein “the prison of the ‘I’ is laid open”

the Church herself. She came into existence because someone lived and suffered his word; by reason of his death, his word is understood as word par excellence, as the meaning of all being, as logos...The Church’s creed has been developed, above all, from the existential context of the catechumenate...Formulas live by the logic that supports them; but logic lives by the logos, the meaning, which does not reveal itself without the cooperation of life—it is bound to the ‘circle’ of communio that can be penetrated only by the union of thought and life.”; cf., id., Introduction to Christianity, 100: “Christian belief is not an idea but life; it is, not mind existing for itself, but incarnation, mind in the body of history and its ‘We’. It is, not the mysticism of the self-identification of the mind with God, but obedience and service: going beyond oneself, freeing the self precisely through being taken into service by something not made or thought out by oneself, the liberation of being taken into service for the whole.” cf. ibid., 99: “Church is something more and something other than an external institutionalization and organization of ideas...Christianity is not a system of knowledge but a way...If Platonism provides an idea of truth, Christian belief offers truth as a way.”

---


734 Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 136.

735 See Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 137: “[Jesus] comes to be identified by the act of prayer...A real understanding of his person is possible only if one enters into this act of prayer...Where there is no relationship with God, there also remains incomprehensible a man whose very existence is relationship with God, with the Father.”

736 Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 135.

737 Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 138.
and I find the “center of myself is outside myself” in the unity of love that grants me access to Jesus’ person. 738 Love then becomes the “eye”739 that allows us to see Christ in the connaturality of the spirit that only exists in the Church. “Jesus and the Church…are inseparable.”740

Ratzinger does not hesitate to label this “communality” between subject and origin a “hermeneutic of faith,” which can grant exegetes, historians, theologians, and the experiencing Christian access to their desired object without thereby demanding any compromise in scientific rigor or philosophical honesty.741 Indeed, for Ratzinger, taking up one’s hermeneutic stand within the ecclesial tradition is simply part and parcel of being rational in the field of theology.742 Because the Scriptures are themselves documents of faith which belong to a communal tradition, and because no document can be understood in isolation from the spirit in which it was written, faith and its communal tradition become a necessary lens for the understanding of Scripture:743 “Faith

738 Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 145.
739 Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 138: “All the effective advances in theological knowledge have their origin in the eye of love, in the strength of its gaze.”
740 Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 142.
741 See Ratzinger, Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration. (New York: Doubleday, 2007), xix: “This Christological hermeneutic, which sees Jesus Christ as the key to the whole and learns from him how to understand the Bible as a unity, presupposes a prior act of faith.”; cf. Joseph Ratzinger, Jesus of Nazareth. Part II, Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), xv: “It must recognize that a properly developed faith-hermeneutic is appropriate to the text and can be combined with a historical hermeneutic, aware of its limits, so as to form a methodological whole.” cf. de Lubac, The Splendor of the Church. trans. Michael Mason. (New York, Sheed Ward, 1956), 149: de Lubac refers to a “Catholic ethos, lack of which neither knowledge of the scientific type nor orthodoxy itself can compensate for. Any man who does this will really understand, for example, the enthusiasm of Newman when, in his Anglican days he discovered the true Church in the ‘the Church of the Fathers’ and, through a sort of Platonic reminiscence (or rather the illumination of the Holy Spirit), recognized in it his spiritual mother.”
742 See Ratzinger, Journey to Easter, 142: “the tradition of the Church is that transcendental subject (!!) in which the memory of the past is present…Advance is not a coming to birth from something totally new, but a process in which the memory ‘enters’ within itself…This bond of religious knowledge…does not…eliminate the personal responsibility of reason…[It is rather] the hermeneutic basis for rational comprehension; it brings about a fusion between the one and other, and thus leads on to comprehension. This memory of the Church lives from the fact that it comes to be enriched and deepened by the experience of the love which is adoration, but also the fact that it always emerges purified when under reasoned criticism.” This does not imply any “cognitive collectivism.” Tradition is not “violating reason”, but is rather the “hermeneutic interval which the reason needs in order to be able to act.” cf. id., Biblical Interpretation in Crisis, 140: “I read the Bible in the context of the community of faith and the community of all the centuries of faith. Thus, I read the Bible with the church and with the faith of all times. And I read it reasonably.”
743 See Collins, Word Made Love, 48: “in order to be under the inspiration of the same Spirit it is necessary for the reader to encounter the Scriptures in communion with the whole Spirit-led church, to engage in this dialogue with God from the perspective of the collective ‘I’ of the Church…” cf. Ratzinger, Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism
is itself a hermeneutic, a space for understanding, which does not do dogmatic violence to the
Bible, but allows the possibility for the Bible to be itself.”

It is also a hermeneutic for reading the history of the Church in its gradual articulation of
faith’s import. Ratzinger will even speak of a “hermeneutics of dogma” that must govern our
reading of past ecclesial affirmations in light of the ongoing philosophical and theological
developments that follow from the Church’s reflection on revelation. This would apply to
articulations regarding, for instance, the nature of the resurrected body, the mode of Christ’s
Eucharistic presence, the relationship between body and soul, the beatific vision of the
saints, the status of those outside the Church’s sacramental bounds, the definition of the
person, and the mechanisms of salvation. As revelation drives philosophical developments

__________________________

in the Jordan to the Transfiguration, xx: “the author does not speak as a private, self-contained subject. He speaks in
a living community, that is to say, in a living historical movement not created by him, nor even by the collective, but
which is led forward by a greater power that is at work.”

744 Joseph Ratzinger, Biblical Interpretation in Crisis, 2.
745 See Ratzinger, Eschatology, 177.
746 See Ratzinger, Eschatology, 168-81. At first the Church had to assert a crass physicalism in order counter an
immortalism. Later, however, these assertions were nuanced in accordance with the dialectic of scripture
between flesh and spirit, with the help Aristotelian concepts as received and critically adjusted by Thomas Aquinas.
747 See Ratzinger, Eschatology, 178. In the Eucharistic controversies of the early middle ages, the Church was “obliged
to adopt a naturalism in order to remain realistic.” Later, “with the help of Aristotle, however, a non-sensualist realism
could be formulated and in this way a philosophical counterpart to the pneumatic realism of the Bible could be found.”
748 See Ratzinger, Eschatology, 146-50. The biblical data required an anthropology which it took 1300 years to
articulate in Thomas’ creative synthesis of Plato and Aristotle. This synthesis, moreover, raises questions that demand
yet further development. See ibid., 181: The consequences of Thomas’ theory are “no longer conceivable to us: the
simple restituation of Thomas is not the way we seek. The synthesis which Thomas formulated with such brilliance
in the conditions of his century must be re-created in the present, in such a way that the authentic concerns of the great
doctor are preserved. Thomas does not offer a recipe which can just be copied out time and again…nevertheless, his
central idea remains as a signpost for us to follow.”
749 See Ratzinger, Eschatology, 136-40, 150. Initially, the Jewish doctrine of an intermediate place of sleep after death
was employed to articulate the Christian belief regarding the state of the souls of the blessed. This, however, was
eventually seen to be inadequate. “What had been meaningful before necessarily became dated and archaistic.”
of the “profound evolution of dogma” regarding the fate of the unbaptized: “God cannot let go to perdition all the
unbaptized and that even a purely natural happiness for them does not represent a real answer to the question of human
existence…in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council that conviction was finally abandoned.”
752 See interview of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI by Fr. Jacques Servais, S.J., Rome, October 2015: “The
conceptuality of St. Anselm has now become for us incomprehensible. It is our job to try again to understand the truth
that lies behind this mode of expression.”
only gradually towards more and more adequate articulations, the Church is often forced to make pronouncements with the inadequate notions available to her at the time, pronouncements which must later be adjusted in light of further developments in language, albeit without fundamental contradiction. It is then the role of the hermeneutics of faith, operating in obedience to hierarchical judgment, to determine the proper import of these past pronouncements in light of the full course of the history of tradition.

vi. The Redemption of Reason

In making these affirmations, Ratzinger is not naïve to the dangers inherent in the hermeneutical turn of the twentieth century, nor to the implications involved in employing its language in the arena of faith. He is keenly aware of the relativistic postmodern temptations—latent in the self-awareness of its own subjective-historical conditioning—to despair of truth and so lose sight of the fundamental orientation of the human mind and heart.753 These have arisen, in part, from abuses which allowed truth to be “discredited in history” insofar as it has been “offered from a position of domination and made an excuse for force and oppression.”754 In this Ratzinger sees a kinship between the crisis of our age and that of Socrates: as the criterion of truth fades thanks to its lost credibility, man becomes the measure of all things; but as such he is no longer able to secure a meaning for himself in the midst of the ever more rapidly changing world; being is eclipsed by time, the bonds of society fray, and man slips into a hopeless nihilism.755

753 See the discussion of moral relativity and the lack of a universal frame of reference (i.e., hermeneutics) in Ratzinger, On Conscience, 25-30.
754 See Ratzinger, “Jesus Christ Today” in Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol II, 98: “Truth has been discredited in history because it has been offered from a position of domination and made an excuse for force and oppression. Plato had already seen the danger that comes when one sees truth as a possession and thus as power for domination.”
755 See Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 15-17, 85. “Is there, in the course of historical time, a recognizable identity of man with himself? Is there a human ‘nature’? Is there a truth that remains true in every historical time because it is true? The question of hermeneutics is, in the last analysis, the ontological one, the question of the oneness of truth in the multiplicity of its historical manifestations.” (17)
Ratzinger’s response in the face of this crisis, however, is not simply to identify philosophical errors so as to reassert more forcefully a classical realism. Indeed, he does not offer a philosophical solution at all. This is because he sees in the philosophical fault-lines that typify our contemporary crisis the expression of something more basic and existential within man. If the tensions between reason and tradition, history and truth, *technē* and *theoria* are but expressions of the basic philosophical tension between being and time—the one and the many—this tension in turn has its roots not so much in an intellectual error as in a deeper, spiritual condition: namely, man’s alienation from his Origin, from the Father who as transcendent *memoria* embraces all time within the unity of His absolute being.⁷⁵⁶ Granted such a depraved isolation, man cannot forge the unity of being on his own. He cannot give meaning to himself. However well aware his reason may be of the necessity of such a unity, it cannot secure this by its own resources: lacking its ultimate ground, it will either assert unity at the expense of the particular (Parmenides), or preserve the particulars at the expense of unity (Heraclitus). Thus, as Newman saw, reason without faith tends to despair of its object.⁷⁵⁷ Man’s subjectivity stands in need of redemption.

Thus, as confident as Ratzinger is in reason’s capacity to come to the truth, he is even more strident in his affirmation that it can only accomplish this goal through the aid of faith, which liberates it from its always too-narrow perspectives.⁷⁵⁸ It is only in Jesus Christ that man’s access

---

⁷⁵⁶ See Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23: “In his philosophy of memory, St. Augustine...recognized memory as the mediator between being and time; in view of this one can readily see what it means when he interprets the Father as *memoria*, as ‘memory.’ God is memory per se, that is, all-embracing being, in whom, however, being is embraced as time.”

⁷⁵⁷ See Newman, *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 11: “he has begun that everlasting round of seeking and never finding: at length, after various trials, he gives up the search altogether, and decides that nothing can be known, and there is no such thing as truth...”

⁷⁵⁸ See Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Theology*, 4-5, 34. cf. Ratzinger, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. Vol V, 120: “there is, and must be, a human reason in faith; yet conversely, every human reason is conditioned by a historical standpoint so that reason pure and simple does not exist.” cf. id., “Truth and Freedom,” *Communio XXIII*: 1, 31: “There is no great philosophy which does not draw life from listening to and accepting religious tradition. Wherever this relation is cut off, philosophical thought withers and becomes a mere conceptual game.” cf. Cardinal Ratzinger’s address to the Communion and Liberation movement at Rimini in August 2002, where he recalls the medieval adage that reason “has a wax-nose” in that it “can be pointed in any direction, if
to the divine *memoria* is restored; only in His “I” that man can come to share in the vision of the Father that alone is adequate to mediate the tensions between being and time, reason and tradition; only in His *Logos* that man receives the meaning, the word, the person, the love by which to make sense of existence and to perceive the unity of history. The Church, through whose communal subjectivity this “I” of Christ is communicated through time and space, is then the hope of history:

If there really is such a thing as this ‘I’ of the credo, called forth and made possible by the Trinitarian God, then the hermeneutic question is thereby basically answered. For in that case this transtemporal subject, the *communio Ecclesiae*, is the mediator between being and time…Christian faith, by its very nature, includes the act of remembering; in this way, it brings about the unity of history and the unity of man before God, or rather: it can bring about the unity of history because God has given it memory.

---

759 See Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 98: “Neither revolution nor traditionalism…Jesus wants to lead us…to know the Father from the perspective of tradition and to understand tradition from the perspective of the Father.” cf. ibid., 99: “The Christian sees in Jesus a point of access to the center of tradition, to that place where tradition is, in very fact, a breakthrough to what was in the beginning; where it does not range itself against reason but reveals the ground on which it rests. In other words, he sees himself protected not only against false tradition but also against a false freedom from tradition, for he reads tradition as Jesus does. And that means, in truth, that he shares in Jesus’ relationship to the Father, that he interprets tradition in conversation with God, the Father of Jesus Christ.”

760 See Collins, *Word Made Love*, 82: “The understanding of the *Logos*, by a process of historical and theological appropriation in the Christian tradition, has gone through various stages of meaning: from *ratio* to *verbum* and then to the appropriation of *verbum* that is communicated as *prosôpon* (person), the primary characterization of which is that of *filius*.” cf. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 189: “By its application to Jesus of Nazareth, the concept of *logos* acquires a new dimension…The concept *logos*, which to the Greeks meant ‘meaning’ (*ratio*), changes here really into ‘word’ (*verbum*). He who is here is Word; he is consequently ‘spoken’ and, hence, the pure relation between the speaker and the spoken to.” cf. ibid., 26: “*Logos* signifies reason, meaning, or even ‘word’—a meaning, therefore, that is Word, that is relationship, that is creative. The God who is *logos* guarantees the intelligibility of the world, the intelligibility of our existence, the aptitude of reason to know God and the reasonableness of God…The world comes from reason, and this reason is a Person, is Love—this is what biblical faith tells us about God.”

761 The apparent danger of fideism here can be countered by noting that Ratzinger fully acknowledges that human reason is equipped with immanent structures rendering it capable of coming to truth. However, this structural capacity depends upon a analogous participation in the divine *Logos*, which participation revelation shows to be concretely ordered to the *Logos* incarnate. Thus philosophy can arrive at truth only insofar as it is “on the way” to Christ and His Church; should it turn away from Christ in a sinful isolation, its capacity for truth is frustrated. The contemporary philosophical crisis is accordingly the mark of a post-Christian age.

762 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23. cf., ibid., 100: “Tradition, we said, always presumes a bearer of tradition…a community…the bearer of concrete memory…the Church…The Church’s role as bearer of tradition rests on the oneness of the historical context and the communal character of the basic experiences that constitute the tradition. This bearer is, consequently, the *sine qua non* of the possibility of a genuine participation in the *traditio* of Jesus, which, without it, would be, not a historical and history-making reality, but only a private memory.”
In the concrete communion of Jesus with the Father, which is rendered present through the authoritative memoria of the Church,\textsuperscript{763} man receives the singular perspective by which to overcome the unhealthy dichotomy between revolutionary rationalism and fideistic traditionalism—he receives “access to the center…to the place where tradition is, in very fact, a breakthrough to what was in the beginning; where it does not range itself against reason but reveals the ground on which it rests.”\textsuperscript{764} In this sense, the hermeneutic of faith is the transcendent resolution of all hermeneutics, insofar it offers the perspective of the Logos from which all things can be (progressively) unified. This is a process which takes time, which is indeed never completed in history, and the Church, which is never simply identical with Christ, accordingly stands ever open to reform and continual conversion.\textsuperscript{765} For this reason, it is vital that theologians take as holistic a view of the tradition as possible so as to be able to assess the present in terms of the full sweep of history, rather than adopting a legalistic formalism that assumes the present to be the

\textsuperscript{763} See Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 100: “The Church is tradition, the concrete situs of the traditio of Jesus.” cf. ibid., 101: “Salvation comes, not from the destruction of tradition or the archaeological neutralization of tradition, but only when the Church, the bearer of tradition, penetrates to its true center, to the life at the heart of tradition, to that community with God, the Father of Jesus Christ, that is revealed only through faith and prayer. Only when this occurs can there be that true progress that leads to the goal of history: to the God-man who is humanity’s humanization.”

\textsuperscript{764} Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 99.

\textsuperscript{765} See Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I*, 74: “the Church is not identical to Christ but stands opposite him. It is the Church of sinners which needs purification and renewal again and again: it must become the Church again and again. The notion of reform thereby became a decisive element of the concept of the people of God.” Thus “the recall of the Church from Babylon” is perpetual, “she is summoned ever anew” and her historical journey is always “still underway.” cf. id., “The Dogmatic and Ascetical Meaning of Christian Brotherhood” in *Man Before God: Readings in Theology*, 117-18: The Church is “a mandate pressing toward realization,” since “to be a Christian’ can consist only in the constant process of ‘becoming a Christian.’” cf. id., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 266-8: in matters of theological and spiritual knowledge “the model of progress breaks down because the essentials have always to be found anew, and progress is conceivable fundamentally only within collective orders, which do not reach down into what is specific to a person…The ‘house’ of theology is not a building that has been erected once and for all, it stands only because theologizing continues to go on as a living activity, and so the foundation is also something that is always actively founding…” cf. id., *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, 10: “frequently…after a great breakthrough, generations of descendants may come who reduce what was once a courageous new beginning to an academic commonplace.” All of this against a linear and progressive model of tradition which would remove all need for reform.
final. 766 This indeed was Ratzinger’s principal critique of the neoscholastic schemas at the Second Vatican Council. 767 Nevertheless, even as the process remains always incomplete, the Church presses on in confidence, knowing the resolution she aims at has already been given in principle from her beginning, in the Lord revealed to the apostles, who is coming again. 768

Ratzinger thus overcomes the hermeneutic crisis not by rejecting hermeneutics, but by positing a definitive hermeneutic, and in doing so also champions truth precisely by proclaiming the redemption of subjectivity. His confidence in this program is witnessed by the characteristic mode of his argumentation: he does not typically begin by isolating and critiquing the errors of his opponents, but seeks first to enter into the heart of their concerns in order thereby to unfold the inner logic of truth which must lead eventually to the Gospel perspective. He is convinced along

766 See Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 171, on the “contrast between historical thinking and formally juridical thinking.” cf. id., “Cardinal Frings’ Speeches During the Second Vatican Council” in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I*, 89, on Cardinal Frings’ desire for a “catholicity without shortcuts” which “shunned that positivism based on the magisterium” in favor of a theology that breathed from the “whole of tradition.” cf. ibid., 95: “He again opposed the whole breadth of the faith tradition to a theology whose memory seemed to reach back only to the First Vatican Council…All this was at that moment ‘progressive’: it was the same progressivity which characterized theologians like de Lubac, Danielou, Bouyer, and von Balthasar. Whoever grasps their intentions correctly will also understand why precisely these men set themselves most against a post-conciliarism which replaces theology’s previous foreshortening of memory with a new form of amnesia, and takes it up as modern.”

767 See Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 147-9: “the problem of the historical dimension in theology”, introduced by the “so-called Modernist crisis”, occasioned “an enormous temptations for the faith…Pius X took drastic measures…but this did not solve the problems. The schema of 1962 simply reiterated the theology of prohibitions in a very elaborate way…this would have resulted not in the rescue of faith but in dooming it to sterility…confining it in an ivory tower where it would have gradually withered away…would suffocate the faith from within by cutting off its air supply.” cf. ibid., 171-2: “On the one hand we find a mentality that looks at the whole spectrum of the Christian tradition and the wide scope of possibilities open to the Church. On the other hand there is a mentality which is purely formal in approach and takes the current legal status of the Church as the only standard for its considerations. It therefore regards any change beyond the limits as an extremely dangerous step. The conservatism of this view is based on its aloofness from history and so it basically suffers from a lack of tradition—i.e., of openness to the totality of Christian history. It is important that we see this because it gives us an insight into the inner pattern of the opposing alignments of thought in the Council, often mistakenly described as an opposition between progressives and conservatives. It would be more correct to speak of a contrast between historical thinking and formally juridical thinking. The ‘progressives’ (at least the large majority of them) were in fact concerned with ‘tradition,’ with a new awareness of both the breadth and depth of what had been handed down in Christian tradition. This was where they found the norms for renewal which permitted them to be fearless and broad in their outlook. It was on outlook which came form the intrinsic catholicity of the Church.”

768 See Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio. Vol I*, 71: “the Church is…something we pass on as unfinished, which will only be fulfilled at the coming of the Lord.” cf. ibid., 74: “it will become itself only when the ways of time have been traveled and end in God’s hand.” cf. id., *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 76: “Its decisive future and its transformation are still ahead. It must therefore always be open to what comes and always ready to shed fixed formulations.”
with Newman that there are finally only two consistent positions—Catholic Christianity and atheism—to which all others must resolve if they are to avoid incoherence:

There is but one alternative: the alternative between the absolute dominion of technical reason, which would presuppose the absurdity of being, and belief in creative reason, which, as the tradition on which reason rests, also gives reason its meaning.769

For this reason, Ratzinger cannot imagine a *preambula fidei* that would attempt to prescind from faith.770 For him, every rational appeal is already a call to conversion into the new space of faith’s hermeneutic, and this is why Ratzinger’s arguments tend always to have something evangelical about them: he is attempting to reveal the inconsistencies in his opponent’s positions so as to edge them toward conversion to the position of faith. He is confident that it is only in the Catholic Truth that the genuine concerns of any human heart can find their true validation.

It is in this sense that historical subjectivity and authority emerge as correlative and mutually enabling co-principles in Ratzinger’s thought. On the one hand, the human subject finds its true orientation and dignity in the revelation of Jesus Christ, and so must transcend itself into communion with Christ and the ecclesial “We” in order find itself; hence its fulfillment will depend upon submission to the authority of the Church, in which Christ is known. But, on the other hand, this authority must itself depend upon the authority of revelation, which is only received and appropriated *via* the collective subjectivity of the body of believers, who, guided by the Spirit, continue to read salvation history according the central figure of Christ. Thus there can be no

---

769 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 99. Alternatively, we could put it that the only two ultimately consistent are Heaven and Hell…Ratzinger does not believe in limbo. See Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 401: “…a teaching that seems to me rather unenlightened…” cf. Collins, *Word Made Love*, 18: “Ratzinger makes a case to the world beyond the church for the intelligibility of all creation—human existence in particular—in light of the Word being spoken by God that is the basis for all reality. In so doing he provides a challenge to a postmodern tendency toward relativism…the case he makes is based not on abstraction and rationalistic argumentation but rather on the narrative of salvation history…Logos comes to be known as person, as love itself.”

770 See Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 136: “It is my view that the neoscholastic rationalism that was trying to reconstruct the *preambula fidei*, the approach to faith, with pure rational certainty, by means of rational argument that was strictly independent of faith, has failed; and it cannot be otherwise for any such attempts to do that kind of thing.”
question of an opposition between these poles. The path toward greater stability in faith lies not in a return to a propositionalism that would abstract from history and subjectivity, but rather in a more radical centering of these realities—in an ecclesial hermeneutic of faith—on the person of Jesus Christ, Who redeems both history and subjectivity.

B. History and Truth

It is hoped that the profound connections that link the visions of Newman and Ratzinger have at this point become sufficiently clear: how Newman lays the foundations for Ratzinger’s accomplishment, and how Ratzinger carries Newman’s project forward to brings it to further completion. This essay began with a consideration of modernity, of the subjectivism and historicism to which modernity is prone, and of the threat that these characteristics of our era pose to the life of faith. Many have responded to this threat by eschewing any serious consideration of subjectivity and history, countering modernity rather with an unbending insistence on faith’s objectivity and utter stability throughout history. Neither Newman nor Ratzinger, however, adopted this approach. They did not flee consideration of the subject and its history but rather pursued it with an ever greater insistence. They delved into the human subject and discovered at its personal depths the point of transcendence unto a personal origin that can serve as a platform for shared truth and shared ethical commitment, a transcendence which is fulfilled in the personal encounter with Jesus Christ. At the same time, they delved into history and discovered in Christ and in the memory of the Church the all-embracing hermeneutic that gives unity to history and enables the arrival at truth. This pretty well encapsulates Newman’s journey into Catholicism: the unity of history that his faith demanded was discovered only when he adopted the standpoint of the Church, whose illative memory gathers the fragments into harmony and springs to grasp the
whole beyond the collection of parts. Truth then emerges in history, where the personal Christ continues to unveil himself to persons in and through the historical life of His Church.

In this way, both men overcome the crisis of modernity from within. They do not ask that men leave their subjectivity and historicity behind as a prerequisite to faith, as certain versions of the *preambula fidei* might suggest in their insistence upon abstract apodictic demonstrations and their pretensions to universal validity regardless of subjective condition and historical standpoint. Rather a certain entrance into subjectivity and a certain historical standpoint are presented as the conditions of faith. When Ratzinger was confronted with the assertion that the Church’s creedal language must be transhistorical, implying the need for a pre-established *philosophia perennis* to adequately ground faith, he responded with the avowal that all language is historical, that a historical approach is therefore vital to faith, and that Newman’s “seven notes” remain the best guide available to the Church for the discrimination of development and corruption. To see Christ as the revelation of the Father, it is necessary to enter into the memory of the Church, where Christ is known as the center and fulfillment of history and where he becomes truly present, and to discover there the definitive resolution and interpretation of one’s own personal and historical existence: *only in the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.*

If, on the other hand, faith is understood to be grounded in the “pure objectivity” of rational “proofs” of preambles and signs that establish the authority of the Church, to whose decisions I subsequently submit irrespective of their material content or subjective resonance, it is difficult to see how faith can be anything other than notional, and how it can necessarily entail anything like a conversion of heart.

---

771 Personal recollections of Dr. Don Briel from a colloquium with Cardinal Ratzinger during a meeting with the departments of Theology and Philosophy at the University of St. Thomas, Saint Paul, MN, U.S.A., February, 28 1984. Communicated in an e-mail on April, 30 2017.

772 *Gaudium et Spes* 22.
In the latter case, notional articulations will assume an absolute status in the life of faith, and will accordingly resist any fluctuation aside from logical deduction, whereas the accounts of Newman and Ratzinger allow for flexibility, growth and occasional reformulation in the Church’s doctrinal tradition, even as there remains an ultimate underlying stability in the content of the revealed impression and a continuity in the Church’s affirmations. The discernment of this continuity, however, is not left to the logical analysis of formulas but to the hermeneutic of faith, operating on an implicit level in the connaturality established in Christian hearts by the original impression of faith’s object. It is because this impression is shared by all that it issues in a common confession. The reason I submit to the Church’s formulations, then, is not because my faith is not subjective and personal, but because it entails a subjectivity that always takes me beyond myself. I belong to a larger whole, and this enables me to see and discern the whole.

It is this, in the end, that overcomes modern skepticism: a more profound subjectivity, and not a reactionary objectivism. As the history of modernity shows us, the quest for “sheer” objectivity actually tends paradoxically toward an ever more radical subjectivism, insofar as it forces man to look for the grounds of epistemic certitude within his own immanent structures. Thereby, however, he is cut off from what is most profound in him. For, as Ratzinger and Newman each affirm in their own way, the deepest places in man are those that refer us outside of and beyond ourselves, which open us out onto communal existence and transcendent truth. By returning us to this heart, and to its fulfillment in the ecclesial encounter with Christ, they are able to show us the meaning of our subjective and historical existence. Such is the profound accomplishment of these two great figures, which links them across the century that separates their lives. The truth appears in history, and history is its avenue, because the Truth is Christ, who comes to us through the Church.
Conclusion:

We are now at a point to hazard some summarizing conclusions of our study, final lessons that Newman and Ratzinger offer to the Church of our age. First, and most important, is the affirmation that revelation is one, “it is not a thing in parts,” and that it comes to us in a personal mode, as a Person to be received by persons. Therefore it cannot be simply identified with any list, no matter how extensive, of credenda to be embraced by the “intellect only,” or of propositions admitting of cognitive understanding without the heart’s participation. Accordingly, to Wahlberg’s insistence that revelation cannot be conveyed independently of propositions, we must add that it also cannot be conveyed independently of personal manifestation. No proposition, or system of propositions, can begin to grasp the personal God—si comprehendus non est Deus. Unless our impressions admit of a symbolic transcendence that outstrips the capacity of words to embrace, we will be incapable of receiving a revelation of God’s very self. Instead we will be limited to hearing an impersonal report from third parties. But the New Testament seems to aim at something more than this. Newman’s romantic symbology and Ratzinger’s personalism both aim at

---

773 See Wahlberg, Revelation as Testimony, 94-5. Wahlberg insists that propositions are necessary for revelation: “It is not possible, however, to infer from the occurrence of such events and nonverbal religious experiences that the spiritual beings is [God]…there can be no coherent justification of belief in God if God has only revealed himself manifestationally.” But he does not consider that a similar critique could be leveled against a revelation that was merely propositional, or that perhaps each form needs the other.

774 cf. Ratzinger, Milestones, 127: “Revelation…is always greater than what can be contained in human words, greater even than the words of Scripture…Scripture is the essential witness of revelation, but revelation is something alive, something greater and more: proper to it is the fact that it arrives and is perceived.” cf. Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 336: “That view does not depend on such propositions: it does not consist in them; they are but specimens and indications of it…portions or aspects of that previous impression.”

775 The doctrine of analogy seems to admit this very thing: to be applied to God words must be stretched beyond their native capacities.

776 cf. Coulson, Religion and Imagination, 15: “If we fail, therefore, to concede a middle ground between hard fact and mere fantasy [i.e., poetic, imaginative intelligence], we deny the possibility of a religious faith which is sacramental, because we deny transcendence to the incidents and situations of common life…religion will become de-mythologized into notions.”

777 e.g., John 14:23; 17:3.
accounting for this transcendental capacity in our impressions, in order to articulate how we are able to receive the Word made flesh in a properly incarnate and sacramental manner.

As this Word is personal, it must be received in a personal way, which is to say that it must be received primarily by the heart, as articulated by Newman.\textsuperscript{778} \textit{Cor ad cor loquitur}. A vital faith cannot be held by the “intellect only” but must live in the whole person, which implies that faith cannot long survive the isolation of the dogmatic, spiritual and scriptural discourses from one another. Moreover, since the human heart lives in history with all of the cultural and temporal limitations that this implies, and since what it implicitly holds can never be simply identified with any given explicit articulation, its articulations can and must change over history, albeit always within an overarching continuity. Thus it is possible to embrace Loisy’s fundamental concern—namely, that past articulations can become archaic and can actually obscure faith’s essence when detached from their center—without falling into Loisy’s error—that past dogmatic assertions can be simply left behind and contradicted. Faith can survive the passing of the biblical cosmology, for instance, and would insist upon it only at the peril of distorting rather than conveying its integral idea. Similarly, the untimely introduction of certain partial formulations of the past regarding the doctrines of predestination or \textit{extra ecclesiam nulla salus} can inhibit rather than promote access to the person that lies at revelation’s core.\textsuperscript{779} The hermeneutic of faith is needed to guide this discernment.

\textsuperscript{778} See Bouyer, \textit{Newman’s Vision of Faith}, 202-3: “the heart here being not just the seat of emotions but that \textit{apex mentis} where moral conscience and intellectual consciousness are one, the ultimate source of our free decision to be or not to be what we were meant and made for.”

\textsuperscript{779} See Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 170: “an intellectual development may be in one sense natural, and yet untrue to its original.” cf. ibid., 181: “A development, to be faithful, must retain both the doctrine and the principle with which it started. Doctrine without its correspondent principle remains barren, if not lifeless, of which the Greek Church seems an instance; or it forms those hollow professions which are familiarly called “shams,” as a zeal for an established Church and its creed on merely conservative or temporal motives. Such, too, was the Roman Constitution between the reigns of Augustus and Diocletian.”
This need not imply any denigration of dogma or of its role in the life of faith. Doctrinal articulations can indeed strike so much at the heart of revelation that they become vital to the transmission and preservation of the whole. It is indeed the final judgment of both Newman and Ratzinger that such formulations are constitutive elements of faith’s impression from the very beginning: the Christological confessions of the apostles are already the origin of the dogmatic tradition. But these live within a context,\(^780\) and this is what certain theologies in the Church have tended to underappreciate. Neoscholasticism, in its fight against modernism, sought to safeguard the objectivity and immutability of the faith by excising all subjectivity from its makeup. The object of faith then became more or less equated with the abstract body of doctrine definitively proposed by the Church, whose authority was discerned through the rational demonstration of certain supernatural signs. But the result here was that faith, detached from the context of real encounter, became entirely notional, and real only for the mystical few. There was then no way of bridging the fateful divides in language between dogmatic, spiritual and scriptural theology. Nor was there any way of meeting the quintessentially modern desire for authenticity, which instead discovered in the language of faith yet another occasion of existential alienation. Faith, then, whose notions had become frozen and impervious to the influence of new and changing apprehensions, appeared as an ideology and thereby lost its credibility and enduring vivacity.\(^781\)

\(^780\) “Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea.” (Newman, *Oxford University Sermons*, 331-2)
\(^781\) For his part, Garrigou-Lagrange saw the same problem as Ratzinger, and conceived of his mission largely in terms of reestablishing the basic relation of the mind to being and truth. But he understood this primarily as an intellectual malady and only secondarily a spiritual one. Thus he sought to heal the disease through a reaffirmation of the basic Aristotelio-Thomistic notions. To his credit, he attempted to root these notions in the more primal intuitions of *Le Sens Commun*, but in this he placed the priority decidedly upon the former rather than upon the latter. The controlling influence was thus reversed in his system, and the conceptualizations were frozen and normalized: the conceptual aspects now interpret, govern and control the real impressions, and not vice versa. Hence they become impervious to the influence of new and changing apprehensions that might demand an adjustment, refinement, or in some instances, a profound reform of notions.
From the perspective of Newman and Ratzinger, this is an entirely inadequate situation for theology. Notions, to really be known, must always flow from and return to the real, to the person. They must be subordinated to the primary impressions that truly govern our thought, and, when necessary, adjusted on their account. Otherwise theology will find itself devolving into an abstract mind game: coherent, perhaps, but far from compelling. It is crucial therefore, if we want the Christian truth to be truly known, that our aspectual explications of that truth employ notions coherent with the real apprehensions of our faith, and indeed also with the legitimate apprehensions of our age. The conversio ad phantasmata is thus a perpetual prerogative in theology and philosophy alike. We cannot simply ignore the emergence of new aspects that have reshaped our apprehensions of reality. Every new aspect demands a recalibration and adjustment of all other aspects so as to properly comport to the “real” source.

Hence the need for a certain flexibility in the Church’s theological tradition, and this not primarily for the sake of accommodation to the age but rather for the sake of preserving the faith itself. Part of fidelity to an idea means allowing its hidden principles to unfold in sometimes surprising ways, ways that call for ever newer integrations. Similarly, fidelity to the past often

---

782 Provided such apprehensions do not themselves flow from the rejection of faith or conscience, as, for instance, modern apprehensions of sexual desire might, there is no need to fear such adjustments to the modern imagination: the apprehensions attendant upon modern cosmology, geology and evolutionary biology provide us with important examples of how theology must adjust itself in light of contemporary discovery in order to remain true to its mission. Nor should we limit ourselves to examples from the scientific realm. Literature and art can also be occasions of important new apprehensions to which theology must attend. After Dostoyevsky, certain things can no longer (or at least should not any longer) be written in theology.

783 This, I believe, is the ultimate sense according to which we should interpret Henri Bouillard’s controversial words in Conversion et grâce chez S. Thomas d'Aquin: “Since spirit evolves, an unchanging truth can only maintain itself by virtue of a simultaneous and co-relative evolution of all ideas, each proportionate to the other. A theology which is not current will be a false theology.” (Quoted disparagingly in Garrigou-Lagrange’s “La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?”) Compare Newman’s words: “It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” (Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 40)


785 cf. Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 303: “Faith, while it is so stable, is necessarily a principle of mental growth also, in an especial way…and though since Christ came no new revelation has been given, yet much even in the latter days has been added in the way of explaining and applying what was given once for all. As the world around varies, so varies also, not the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but the outward shape and colour which they
demands that we bring its light to bear upon new situations, thereby simultaneously bringing present light to bear upon past affirmations. All of which is to say that sometimes new articulations are called for precisely in order to preserve and remain faithful to the tradition, provided only that these new articulations truly integrate within themselves, and never jettison, the concerns and achievements of the past. Thus, for example, the change in import of the term “hypostasis” witnessed between Nicaea and Chalcedon does not so much contradict as refine the insight of Nicaea.\(^{786}\) Similarly, the change in our understanding of what usury entails during the development of capitalist economics does not so much contradict as refine the insights of the magisterium.\(^{787}\) Or, to take an example from one of Garrigou-Lagrange’s principal targets, the proposal that we complement or reformulate Trent’s definition of grace in light of the discoveries of modern physics need not imply any contradiction of Trent so much as a refinement that preserves its central insight.\(^{788}\) This is certainly a risky venture, bound at times to end in failure, but it is necessary nevertheless.\(^{789}\) Ratzinger stresses that we adopt in order to de-Hellenize;\(^{790}\) we engage the saeculum in order to prevent secularization, because failure to do so would leave men’s thought unconverted and unable to receive the gospel without distorting it; the inherent risk of this procedure is why we have a Magisterium.\(^{791}\) The alternative option of a merely conservative

\(^{786}\) The first Council of Nicaea anathematizes “those who say” the Son is “from another hypostasis.” cf. DH 126.


\(^{788}\) This is not to say that Bouillard’s specific suggestion is necessarily prudent or feasible; only that it is not \textit{a priori} impossible.

\(^{789}\) cf. Newman, Oxford University Sermons, 327: “The difficulty, then, and hazard of developing doctrines implicitly received, must be fully allowed; and this is often made a ground for inferring that they have no proper developments at all.”

\(^{790}\) See, for example, his discussion of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul in relation to its Greek and scriptural sources in Ratzinger, Eschatology, 104-161.

\(^{791}\) i.e., only because the universality of faith’s claim must necessarily confront the universality of reason’s questioning (and so address reason according to its terms) does the Church’s theology admit of such variability that a monarchical principle becomes necessary for its preservation.
traditionalism is, conversely, far more risky; it risks rendering the faith opaque, inauthentic, and unintelligible to all but an esoteric few: the “knowing” remnant hanging on to the wisdom of a past age.

No absolute relativism in faith’s notional articulation need be suggested here. It is not a question of unprincipled and chaotic change, but of change according to an inherent logos, as the flux of a mathematical curve is ultimately governed by a constant derivative. The change in such instances is actually more conservative than progressive: the apparent material flux flows from a deeper identity in principle.\textsuperscript{792} The challenge is that, unlike the formulas of calculus, there is no exclusively rational and explicit means by which to identify the terms of the principle that governs Christian development. There is no “objective” third platform by which to ensure the accuracy of our re-articulations, no clear rule by which to test whether it is time to press the demands of logic or to rest in aporia, no definite criteria by which to determine the legitimacy of apparent challenges from secular discoveries.\textsuperscript{793} Rather what is required is a patient historical hermeneutic, governed by a shared ethico-theoretical “imagination”\textsuperscript{794} which flows from the encounter that “gives life a new horizon.” Christianity is essentially historical: the content of its encounter is gradually worked out in the Church’s contentious march through the centuries. The principle governing this process

\textsuperscript{792} Hence there is such a thing a “conservative” heresy, when necessary development is resisted in the name of loyalty to outmoded notions. cf. Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, 181. In this sense, “forgetting” can occasionally play a positive role in preserving the Church’s memory within a fundamental continuity, just human memory often operates selectively for the sake of the whole. See Joseph Mueller, “Forgetting as a Principle of Continuity in Tradition,” 751-81.

\textsuperscript{793} Here it is significant to observe that Newman ultimately decided to name his principles for differentiating true from false developments “Notes” rather than “Criteria,” though he sometimes also uses the word “tests.”

\textsuperscript{794} We might label this shared ethico-theoretical imagination an “aesthetic.” Indeed, Balthasar relates his own project of theological aesthetics to Newman’s illation. See Han Urs von Balthasar, Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol. II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 130-36. cf. Dulles, Models of Revelation, 162.
is no other logos than the Logos in person, Jesus Christ, who as such is the ultimate canon of the Church’s faith.\footnote{cf. Newman, \textit{Oxford University Sermons}, 334: “Though the Christian mind reasons out a series of dogmatic statements, one from another, this it has ever done, and always must do, not from those statements taken in themselves, as logical propositions, but as being itself enlightened and (as if) inhabited by that sacred impression which is prior to them, which acts as a regulating principle, ever present, upon the reasoning, and without which no one has any warrant to reason at all.”}

The objections of the neoscholastics to this schema correspond to their inability to recognize the “imagination” as a genuine intellectual faculty. To Garrigou-Lagrange and those of his school, the introduction of subjectivity inherent in this proposal necessarily implies relativism and hence modernism.\footnote{cf. Beaumont, “The Reception of Newman in France at the Time of the Modernist Crisis,” in \textit{Receptions of Newman}, 176: “Ultimately, in fact, both the ‘modernists’ and their neo-scholastic opponents had more in common with each other than with Newman…[i.e., both were intellectualist]…Neither possessed the patristic culture of the complexity and balance of Newman’s thought.”} If faith cannot be exclusively measured by objective and immutable doctrines, to what else do we have to appeal beside private experience, which is inherently variable and unstable? But matters appear quite differently to Ratzinger, for whom the principal moment of faith’s transmission occurs in the liturgy, wherein the Christian is endowed with a new “\textit{memoria}” that functions as a “supernatural conscience” within him.\footnote{Ratzinger, \textit{On Conscience}, 35.} From this it should be clear that the “encounter” of which he speaks can in no way be reduced to mere private experience. Rather he refers to something held in common, something emerging through the “action of mind upon mind,” to the “We” of faith and the collective imagination which, guaranteed by the Holy Spirit, can indeed norm all private judgments. The ground of the Church’s dogmatic authority stems from its claim to represent this communal conscience.\footnote{Ratzinger, \textit{On Conscience}, 36.}

Faith then, while not based on vision or experience, does provide an experience and a vision of its own, which is essential to its proper understanding. As St. Thomas says, “by the \textit{light of faith} which God bestows on him, a man assents to matters of faith and not to those which are against
faith.”799 To use Newmanian terms, its assent coincides with a certain illative imagination, a personal apprehension, which enables it to perceive the divine authority and so make its confession.800 From the beginning, this confession is dogmatic in nature—“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”—“My Lord and My God!”—yet its dogmatic form is unintelligible apart from the encounter which illumines it.801 Conversely, the encounter is itself always normed by its dogmatic content.802 Thus, there can be no question of reducing faith either to private experience or to public dogma. It depends rather on a more nuanced conception, one in which confession (dogma) is intimately united with encounter (liturgy), such that these are understood to mutually interpenetrate and condition one another.803 One aspect cannot be properly understood without the other. Dogma abstracted from encounter ends in unintelligible notionalism. Encounter abstracted from dogma ends in a modern subjectivism. But the two go together: the encounter is determined by the confession, and the confession is realized in the encounter.804 Theology, then, must always work before the One whom it confesses. In other words, faith can only be understood in the context of Eucharist.805

799 ST II-II, q. 2, a. 3, ad. 2.
800 See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 360.
801 cf. Dulles, Models of Revelation, 144: “Our concepts are molded by a real existential relationship that cannot be conceptually thematized without the help of symbols given in revelation.”
802 Avery Dulles offers a nice articulation of the dynamic here through his discussion of the relationship between the symbolic and the doctrinal aspects of revelation. See Dulles, Models of Revelation, 82: [citing Louis Dupre] “the original Jesus-experience could not convey any revelation unless it were accompanied by a primary interpretation that enjoyed equal status with the experience itself.” cf. ibid., 161: “The symbolic approach does not require a wedge to be driven between symbol and doctrine.” cf. ibid., 144: “Because of the cognitive content implicit in the orignative symbols, revelatory symbolism is able not only to ‘give rise to thought’ but also to shape the thought it arouses…the influence travels both directions. Doctrine enriches the meaning of symbols.” cf. ibid., 153: “Dogma…can give stability and added power to the symbolism of primary religious discourse. The primacy of symbol does not justify any symbolic reductionism.”
803 The real and the notional are never to be separated, but must be taken as a unity.
804 In this we are seeking to articulate a “third way” between modernist subjectivism and anti-modernist intellectualism that consciously approaches the project of von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics. cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, Love Alone is Credible, 59-60.
805 cf. Ratzinger, Milestones, 57: “I came to see the liturgy as being its [theology’s] living element, without which it would necessarily shrivel up.”
Faith only lives in this tradition.\textsuperscript{806} It grows in a culture founded upon a primal encounter—a real impression—apart from which it cannot properly be grasped.\textsuperscript{807} Its objectivity, then, is only apprehensible within the collective subjectivity of the Church, which is most fully operative in the liturgy. From this it follows that any merely doctrinal stability will of itself be insufficient to guarantee the preservation of the faith. Fidelity to the normative articulations of the past is undoubtedly necessary to that preservation, but such fidelity will ring hollow if it is isolated from the heart of the real encounter. What is required rather is the sympathy of a living cultural tradition, which alone can enter into the confessions of the past in such a way as to effectively apply them in the present circumstance.\textsuperscript{808} Short of this condition, we land inevitably back in the above-mentioned pitfalls of fideism and rationalism,\textsuperscript{809} with faith’s notions and reason’s notions vying for dominance. The two will be forever incompatible unless both are mediated by living tradition.\textsuperscript{810} But, as Alasdair MacIntyre has admirably shown,\textsuperscript{811} the idea that we can know

\textsuperscript{806} cf. Ratzinger, \textit{Milestones}, 127: “The Church is a necessary aspect of revelation…‘tradition’ is precisely that part of revelation that goes above and beyond Scripture and cannot be comprehended within a code of formulas.”


\textsuperscript{808} cf. Dulles, \textit{Models of Revelation}, 223: “authentic tradition must of course be established by sound criteria, but the criteria cannot be rightly used by those who do not live within the tradition.”

\textsuperscript{809} See supra, 117: “To falsely absolutize the notional aspects of theology in such situations would be to risk obscuring their transparency to the center, such that the center’s fundamental outlines become hidden from view in a twin temptation to fideism and rationalism: fideism insofar as stagnated theological language might force us to bracket our understanding of faith from our natural and experiential knowledge, rendering faith’s object unrelatable and hence unencounterable; rationalism insofar as a strict adherence to ultimately inadequate notions might force us to deny the mysteries of faith when these notions are paradoxically outstripped.”

\textsuperscript{810} If the conclusions faith and reason are seen to be static and complete, then any tension between the two will be insufferable, and one will have to give way to the other in confrontation (in which case both parties suffer). But if the two are set in motion within a living historical tradition whose roots penetrate to a deeper level than explicit articulations, then tensions become sufferable, as all things are yet on their way to full resolution, a resolution on which faith does not depend. cf. Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, 186: “A mere formula either does not expand or is shattered in expanding. A living idea becomes many, yet remains one.”

anything apart from the context of tradition is, like “the fact,” but another example of modern naïveté. It flows from the dubious Cartesian attempt to ground reason upon itself.

Newman explodes that ill-fated project from within by his appeal to the real impression upon the imagination as a genuinely intellectual apprehension which takes priority over the notional aspects of ratiocination. In this he paves the way for later thinkers who, like Martin Buber, will seek to ground reason in pre-conceptual apprehensions, and for Joseph Ratzinger, who will seek to re-center all of Christian Theology upon the encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. This

---

812 As we have said, this does not deny the human capacity for truth. As Newman teaches, man, even as he recognizes the fallibility and conditioning of his sensibilities, can still and must necessarily give his assent to truths qua true. Such assents are after all the condition for recognizing our errors in the first place. To be conditioned and limited by a perspective, therefore, does not and cannot entail the relativization of the moral values which I continue to apprehend and assert as true. For I have no basis on which to critique any value except on that of the values which I still possess. As MacIntyre puts it, the impossibility of thinking outside of a tradition does not invalidate human thinking, for we cannot pretend to judge it externally from some supposedly neutral platform. Thus, contra Long, there is no need for a “pure” reason that leaves history behind. Long wonders aloud how Ratzinger’s assertions in Truth and Tolerance—that all reasoning is historically conditioned and that all projects of a “purely” rational preambula fidei are accordingly ill-fated—can be reconciled with his later papal affirmations in the Regensburg lecture that philosophical reason is capable of arriving at metaphysical truths that can serve as bases for dialogue. (See Long, Natura Pura, 212-22.) To overcome the apparent tension, Long offers the solution that Ratzinger’s opinion on a matter so fundamental to his theological vision had simply changed in the few years separating the later pontifical speech from the “early” work of Truth and Tolerance (the book actually appears quite late in Ratzinger’s career arc). In fact, Ratzinger is able to affirm both a) that reason can arrive at a common ground of metaphysical truth, and b) that reason is historically conditioned and needs to be open to faith in order to fulfill its task, because he assumes a broader vision of reason than Long, who can only envision reason in its explicit forms. Naturally, if reason is reduced to explicit apodictic proof, then things will either be demonstrable or they will not. But if reason is understood to live in the interplay between the implicit and the explicit dimensions within the culturally and historically shaped imagination that governs its judgments, then “valid” demonstrations can fail to deliver real knowledge, and real apprehension can obtain without the benefit of demonstration. In this case, explicit reason must live in connection with the existential and historical light of the imagination in order to secure real knowledge. Since the Christian faith is the ultimate fulfillment of this “light,” any “reason” that would explicitly cut itself off from its influence will necessarily atrophy. Such is the modern situation as exemplified by Kant: (explicit) reason seeks its grounds within itself rather than above itself, and thereby cuts itself off from being. Benedict’s point at Regensburg is that such a “reason” is incompatible with Christianity, just as it is an inadequate ground for intercultural dialogue. But a reason that is open beyond itself to what it cannot explicitly grasp, even if it is yet “on its way” to embracing the revealed Logos, is compatible both with dialogue and with faith. “For philosophy...listening to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular, is a source of knowledge, and to ignore it would be an unacceptable restriction of our listening and responding.” There is no contradiction in Ratzinger’s vision here. He understands reason to grow in history through historical perception, such that it is always “on the way,” and never finished, never identical with the Logos. Because this “pilgrim” status is inherent to philosophical reason, its need for the light of faith in no way threatens its integrity. Moreover, since faith is similarly “on the way” toward full articulation and relies on something deeper than articulation for its life, it can tolerate philosophical questions and uncertainties that might otherwise shake its stability.

813 cf. Newman, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, 51: “It is certain that man is not sufficient for his own happiness, that he is not himself, is not at home with himself, without the presence within him of the grace of Him who, know it, has offered that grace to all freely.”
Newmanian insight is, I would suggest, the key to understanding the difference that defines Ratzinger’s approach to the modern crisis vis-à-vis that of Garrigou-Lagrange. Whereas Garrigou-Lagrange identifies an intellectual malady and so proposes ontological notions, Ratzinger indentifies a spiritual malady and so re-proposes the person in light of whom those notions can again become intelligible. The real apprehension is the norm that values and grounds all notional aspects. This, finally, is what justifies the efforts of the ressourcement, whose brighter lights were concerned above all to tie everything back to the primal Source from whom all else flows. Far from relativism, the goal of this movement was to preserve the authentic role of truth by rediscovering truth’s full dimensionality in Christ.

In the end, it is Jesus who is the Truth that saves us. He is the light that shines in the darkness of our fallen minds, and scatters the shadows of ignorance and error, doubt and uncertainty that so mark our lives as human beings, endowing us with the capacity to transcend the painful limitations of our time and place even as we remain in historical flesh. He is the meaning of history, the central axis in whom the story of each individual life finds its purpose and completion, in whom our diverse and partial perceptions coalesce and all the vectors combine to form the drama of existence. We find our shared humanity in communion with him. Above all then, he is the meaning of life, the meaning of persons, who unveils our own impenetrable mystery to us as he leads us to the reconciliation of all fragments in the eternal memoria that is our origin and goal:

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”
Bibliography:


___________. "La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?" *Angelicum* 23 (July-December, 1946), 126-45.


