Gerard Magill

Religious Morality in John Henry Newman

Hermeneutics of the Imagination

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To my wife Anne
for sweetness and light and love

Preface and Acknowledgements

For many years I studied John Henry Newman and wrote fairly extensively on his works. In subsequent years, my scholarship in religious morality turned to other areas. The beatification of Cardinal Newman in 2010 inspired me to return to his corpus to write a book on his religious morality. No other scholar has undertaken this task, though there is extensive writing on his view of conscience that constitutes just one component of his approach to religious morality. I hope that my analysis presents a new terrain for exploration in Newman studies. Because the book is published in e-book format as well as print format, there is no index: the e-book format makes the entire work searchable.

I am indebted to many scholars whose insights enabled this book to be written. In particular, my perspective on the complex thought of Newman is indebted to three contemporary scholars: M. J. Ferreira at the University of Virginia in the United States, I. Ker at the University of Oxford in England, and T. Merrigan at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. To the extent that I reflect their insights accurately, it is because of their lucidity on complex issues; if I misrepresent their work or any others', it is because of my own limitations.

In the process of writing this book as a new contribution, a variety of concepts have been incorporated and developed from my previous publications, as follows (also listed in the bibliography):

Pittsburgh, PA, USA — Gerard Magill

Magill, G. 1991a. Imaginative moral discernment: Newman on the tension between reason and religion. *The Heythrop Journal* 32(4): 493–510.

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Magill, G. 1992a. Newman on liberal education and moral pluralism. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45: 45–64.

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Magill, G. 1992c. Moral imagination in theological method and church tradition: John Henry Newman. *Theological Studies* 53: 451–475.
Magill, G. 1992d. Imaginative discernment. In *John Henry Newman*, ed. M.E. Allsopp and R.E. Burke, 241–255. New York: Garland.
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Magill, G. 2011a. To live is to change: John Henry Newman on imagination and certitude. *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religions, and Culture* 46(2): 109–125.

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Abbreviations and References

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Abstract The book explores religious morality in Newman's writings through the lens of his hermeneutics of the imagination that he developed to justify religious belief. His well-known justification of certitude focused upon the natural capacity for belief as a foundation for religious belief. A similar approach is adopted to examine his approach to religious morality. By religious morality is meant the religious significance that he attributed to the natural perception of morality. The analysis discusses the natural capacity for morality in his works, and the focus upon religious morality specifically connects that natural process with the religious significance that can accrue in terms of God, theology, and Church tradition. This confluence of natural morality with religious meaning becomes explicit in his discussion of conscience. However, conscience was only one of several components of religious morality in his writings. This book adopts a much broader perspective. To pursue the discussion in a systematic manner the analysis considers several foundations of religious morality, three theoretical foundations and three practical foundations.

> "Moral truth is gained by patient study, by calm reflection, silently as the dew falls …" John Henry Newman to his mother, March 13, 1829 (*LD*, II: 131).

Various aspects of religious morality appear throughout the many works that John Henry Newman wrote during his long life (1801–1890). Yet this topic did not receive the type of sustained attention that many other issues elicited. At first glance, that seems odd at least from the perspective of religious discourse in the twenty-first century where debates about morality are widespread. However, his interests reflected nineteenth century Britain whose increasingly secular society in the industrial revolution presented many challenges to the legitimacy of religious belief upon which he focused. By religious morality is meant the religious significance that he attributed to the natural perception of "moral truth." One of the lasting achievements of his works has been his justification of religious belief. That approach for the most part focuses upon the natural capacity for belief in his explanation of informal inference and the real assent of certitude. A similar approach is adopted to examine his approach to religious morality. For the most part the analysis deals with the natural capacity for morality, both in terms of moral law and practical judgment. However, the focus upon religious morality specifically connects that natural process with the

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religious significance that can accrue in terms of God, theology, and Church tradition. This confluence of natural morality with religious meaning becomes explicit in his discussion of conscience. However, conscience was only one of several components of religious morality in his writings. This book adopts a much broader perspective. It could be fascinating to compile his varying remarks on religious morality, some illustrative of one controversy, some tangential to another quarrel, and others critical for a variety of contentious disputes. Such a compilation likely would result in frustration insofar as his observations would lack coherence without providing a framework to interpret them meaningfully. This study seeks to provide such a systematic account of religious morality in his writings through the lens of his hermeneutics that he developed to justify religious belief.

Seeking to systematize the work of a non-systematic writer can present significant difficulties. He never developed a general account of his thought that could be traced through the variety of issues he discussed, often as a controversialist, frequently as a pastor, and many times as a scholar and educator. As a result, it is quite a challenge to explain a major topic in his works in a manner that systematically addresses the multiple strands and shifting positions in his writings. Commentators urge caution about how to read his works, as suggested by the following examples.

One caution about how to study Newman is noted in an astute remark by Ian Ker in his renowned biography. He observes in the opening paragraph of the Preface: "The biographer of Newman who wishes to do justice to his thought and art as well as his life is faced by not so much a shortage as a surfeit of materials, with the result that he or she may well feel overwhelmed by the agonizing difficulty of selecting and distilling."[1] In 1969, Edward J. Sillem made a similar observation at the start of his edited collection of Newman's philosophical writings: "Most people who settle down to a careful reading of the works of John Henry Newman begin to feel sooner or later as though they were in the presence of a very powerful personality who lives within his writings, almost as if there were so many animate parts of his bodily frame. They find that Newman has an incomparable power, a kind of rare natural charisma, of gradually bringing to life in the minds of other people a way of thinking, the nature and merits of which they may find considerable difficulty in assessing. This way of thinking does not repose on an abstract system of logic…. This way of thinking is more personal."[2]

Because of Newman's non-systematic way of writing and the complexity of his works, the theologian Cardinal Avery Dulles warned about the danger of quoting isolated sentences to make points to support particular arguments: "Newman cannot be studied through excerpts, but only by a grasp of his thinking in its full range."[3] Just before his death, Dulles more fully explained his caution: "To profit from Newman's wisdom one should not be content to quote passages from one or another of his works, since he is more a controversialist than a systematician, and since his own thought went through a series of developments, isolated passages do not do

[1] Ian Ker (1988), vii.

[2] Sillem (1960–1970), I, 1.

[3] Dulles (2002), 113.

justice (to) the full range of his thought. … For those who have the patience to take account of the full corpus of his writing, he is a teacher almost without peer."[4]

Likewise, the theologian Terrence Merrigan highlights the complexity of Newman's thought by focusing upon his personal style of argument that tended to hold opposites in tension. In his 1991 book Merrigan astutely remarked: "The key to Newman's complexity is his ability to hold in tensile unity apparently opposite tendencies and concerns."[5] Over a decade later, Merrigan reiterated the importance of Newman's efforts to balance contrasting perspectives: "Indeed, much of Newman's greatness and his significance for today consist precisely in his ability to maintain a healthy balance between apparently contradictory impulses and tendencies. In short, Newman can serve as a model for contemporary theologians whose task is to exercise their intellects in the service of faith, while remaining aware that the object of their reflections ultimately resists intellection."[6]

In light of Newman's highly personal style and given the enormous complexity of his thought, the question naturally arises about how to undertake a systematic study of religious morality in his writings. The theologian John T. Ford offers a valuable insight about how such a study might be engaged: "Newman, of course, cannot be expected to provide ready-made answers to today's questions; … Newman's writings provide a framework of meaning and a method for contemporary theological investigation."[7]

This insight helps to clarify the systematic approach that is adopted in this book. As "a framework of meaning and a method for … investigation" the analysis uses Newman's hermeneutics of the imagination (hence the sub-title of the book) as a lens to explore religious morality in his thought. Though he never used the phrase, it is adopted to combine his general hermeneutics (that he developed to justify religious belief) with his focus on the imagination in that process. From the outset it can be helpful to note that for Newman there is a crucial interaction between what he referred to as "real ratiocination and present imagination" (*GA*, 36), though the imagination should always be under the control of reason. That enticing interaction is captured in the phrase "hermeneutics of the imagination" and is explored throughout the book.

To pursue the discussion in a systematic manner the analysis considers several foundations of religious morality, three theoretical foundations and three practical foundations. The first theoretical foundation is his commitment to truth and holiness that enabled him to address recurring concerns with doctrine and salvation. To do so he relied on reason (to deal with truth and its connection with doctrine) and conscience (to deal with holiness and its connection with salvation). The second theoretical foundation is his religious epistemology of reason and belief that can be construed as his hermeneutics. This interpretative process focuses upon informal inference as a subjective endeavor to justify the assent of certitude in matters of

[4] Dulles (2009), 185; Dulles (2005), 18–19.

[5] Merrigan (1991), 7.

[6] Merrigan (2005), 611.

[7] Ford (1982), 287.

belief and morality – showing that there is no subject-free objectivity in these practical matters. The third theoretical foundation is his hermeneutics of the imagination. Here he aligned his general hermeneutics on reason and belief with the role of the imagination both to justify the imaginative assent of certitude and to inspire accompanying moral activity. When applied to theology, his hermeneutics of the imagination becomes his theological hermeneutics in which the concrete process of informal inference and certitude is attentive to historical consciousness.

These three theoretical foundations are integrated with three practical foundations of religious morality. The first practical foundation of religious morality is the moral law, implementing the abstract and concrete processes of reason in his hermeneutics of the imagination. The second practical foundation of religious morality is moral conscience that has two functions. The moral sense represents the rationality of conscience, being its autonomous characteristic that engages reason to determine when moral judgments can attain certitude. This is the primary function of conscience, reflecting his hermeneutics of the imagination. The sense of duty represents the responsibility of conscience before God, being its theonomous characteristic that engages the voice of God. Reflecting his theological hermeneutics, this function provides a religious interpretation for the moral sense (dealing with truth) and confers religious meaning to moral character (dealing with holiness). The third practical foundation of religious morality is Church tradition that creates a dynamic interaction between the faithful, theologians, and bishops. His theological hermeneutics can clarify how the faithful and theologians have a crucial role using the concrete process of informal inference and certitude to be attuned to historical consciousness. Also, the authority of the bishops must be respected, but there are the dangers of their over-reach, as exemplified in his consternation over the declaration of Papal Infallibility – this provides a fascinating case study of creating effective strategies to negotiate conflicts with bishops.

By considering his hermeneutics of the imagination in general and his theological hermeneutics in particular, religious morality becomes alive throughout his major works. The discussion highlights the interpretative process of informal inference and the imaginative assent of certitude in a manner that can elicit profound religious meaning without diminishing the rational enterprise involved. This description of method summarizes his investigation of religious belief – the contribution of the book is to apply the same method to study religious morality in his thought. Given his unsystematic way of writing, there is some overlap in the analysis insofar as related concepts are explored from different perspectives. The argument develops in a cumulative manner, akin to his use of converging probabilities.

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Chapter 2
Truth and Holiness

Abstract Newman's commitment to truth and holiness constitutes a bedrock foundation for his understanding of religious morality. He was a vigorous controversialist who engaged disputes as they arose throughout his life to advance his ideas and defend religious belief. From his many conflicted endeavors there emerged two substantive concerns that guided his religious quest from the beginning. His conversion in 1845 brought these concerns to the surface: his concern with doctrine led him away from Anglicanism to Catholicism as the champion of orthodoxy; and his concern with his own salvation led him to a sense of urgency to convert. However, he did not resort to faith to deal with these. Rather, he relied on reason to address matters of truth and on conscience to address matters of holiness. His deliberative process towards conversion illustrates his use of the principle of economy that clarified how truth and holiness progress over time. He expressed this progression in his own life as a constant battle against religious liberalism that he perceived to be a form of rationalism. Yet his opposition to liberalism did not prevent him from supporting a new movement of Liberal Catholics that defended a robust role for the faithful as well as for theologians in the Church. His commitment to truth and holiness that inspired his view of the faithful and theology became a leitmotif for his approach to religious morality.

John Henry Newman is widely recognized as being one of the most influential figures in Victorian England. His writings have inspired a very large body of secondary literature on his thought,[1] including contributing to a religious revival in English literature.[2] One of the topics often discussed in his major works is conscience. Yet surprisingly very little has been written on his general approach to religious morality that includes but is much broader than his discussion of conscience. This chapter begins that broader exploration by discussing his commitment to truth and holiness as a bedrock foundation of religious morality.

High hopes and deep disappointment accompanied Newman throughout his life. He developed a prestigious reputation as a promising young vicar and reputable preacher at Oxford University.[3] However, his reputation was challenged by a series

[1] Earnest and Tracy (1984); Blehl (1978).

[2] Ker (2003).

[3] Ward (1948).

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of events: his contentious *Tracts* as a leader of the Oxford Movement, his fretful consternation with Anglicanism, and his legendary conversion to Catholicism. His conversion sparked significant anticipation in the Catholic Church, yet disagreements emerged with the Irish bishops over his leadership of the Catholic University in Dublin and with the English bishops over his essay on consulting the faithful.[4] He eventually settled at the Birmingham Oratory in 1859 (moving to Edgbaston in 1850) and he navigated an astute path of leadership in the Catholic Church, for which he was duly rewarded when elevated to being a Cardinal at the end of his life. Because of his commitment to truth and holiness, reflecting his doctrinal orthodoxy and personal piety, Pope Benedict XVI beatified him in 2010.[5]

With a life that spanned a highly contentious nineteenth century, and having a temperament that tended to engage in disputes, he developed the reputation of being a formidable controversialist.[6] Late in life he appeared to relish his flair for controversy.[7] In a private letter to Emily Bowles, dated May 1863, he wrote: "The only reason why I do not *enjoy* the happiness of being out of conflict is, because I feel to myself I could do much in it" (*LD*, XX, 445). His letters provide a treasure of insights into all aspects of his life, not least the fascinating correspondence with his circle of female friends including family, converts, writers, nuns and many other ladies of his time.[8] Controversy accompanied him as a Catholic even over substantive doctrinal matters. For example, during the debates on Papal Infallibility, he resisted the pending definition, explaining to Sir John Simeon on March 24, 1870: "I am but a convert, a controversialist, a private priest" (*LD*, XXV, 66).

The many debates that he engaged so adroitly were accompanied by recurring anxieties, inspiring his genius and exhausting his energies. From his many conflicted endeavors there emerged two substantive concerns that guided his religious quest from the beginning. These concerns enunciated his most basic principles that provided the basis for his approach to religious belief: the concern with doctrine being an articulation of his dogmatic principle; and the concern with salvation being an articulation of his sacramental principle. By concern is meant his recurring perplexity that led him to deeper insights about the issues identified.

These combined concerns provided the seeds that would foster his growth towards conversion as a commitment to truth and holiness, truth reflecting his concern with doctrine and holiness reflecting his concern with salvation. In turn, his conversion enlightened his commitment to truth and holiness and the related concerns with doctrine and salvation in the development of his religious epistemology. Late in his life he provided an inspired metaphor for his commitment to truth and holiness – "clear heads and holy hearts." In his 1877 Preface to his *Via Media* he contrasted the "religion of the uneducated classes" with the "critical judgments of

[4] Barr (2003); Walgrave (1985).

[5] Mockler (2010), 169–188; Morgan (2007); Jennings (2005).

[6] Jaki (1999), 1–18.

[7] McIntosh (2014); Ker (1988), 66.

[8] Sugg (1983, 1996, 2001); Tristram (1933).

clear heads and holy hearts" that characterize "formal decrees of Councils and statements of theologians" (*VM*, I, lxxv).[9]

The most pivotal event in Newman's life was his conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism in 1845.[10] Its implications as a model for religious commitment and conversion have resonated ever since.[11] It is well known that he experienced a series of conversions in his life: his initial moral conversion in 1816 as a teenager to personal evangelical faith; the cognitive conversion in his late twenties from evangelical religion, while at Oxford,[12] to the Anglo-Catholic form of Christianity that would lead to the Tractarian Movement (contributing a volume of sermons to the Tractarian series, *Plain Sermons*)[13]; then, his mid-life ecclesial conversion in October 1845 from Anglicanism to Catholicism.[14] His sermons as an Anglican shed fascinating light on the many issues that he addressed during the long period preceding his conversion.[15]

Discussions on the psychological reasons for his conversion to Rome can be historically intriguing.[16] To a reader today the seriousness with which he pursued his heart may appear old fashioned. Yet the relevance of his conversion continues to provide guidance for many.[17] Leaving Anglicanism for Catholicism today might appear more as a denominational shift than as a profoundly personal religious conversion. Yet, nineteenth century England was ridden with bigotry and religious-minded people were highly attuned to the historical animosity between Anglicanism and Catholicism. Converting to Catholicism involved a cultural stigma that was not to be under-estimated.

There is no wonder that his experience has been used to explain different theological understandings of conversion.[18] As he advanced towards Rome his concerns with doctrine and salvation influenced each other. At first glance, having a concern with doctrine is to be expected for such a circumstance. But the concern with his personal salvation is intriguing.[19] As he wrestled with the doctrinal orthodoxy of Anglicanism he gradually came to believe that his soul was at risk if he did not convert to Catholicism. This sense permeates his *Letters and Diaries* throughout his life – though in the final few years of his life, though mentally and intellectually active, his eyesight deteriorated and his physical writing skills diminished, leading him to dictate correspondence.[20] His entire life can be construed as a personal

[9] Merrigan (1991).

[10] Jaki (2004); Avis (2001); Blehl (2001a); Ker (1997); Blehl and Connolly (1964).

[11] Sidenvall (2005); Atkin and Tallett (2004); Clark and Kaiser (2003); Ker (2003).

[12] Reynolds (1975).

[13] Murray and Blehl (1991); Poston (2005).

[14] Conn (2010).

[15] Murray and Blehl (1991, 1993); McGrath and Murray (2010); McGrath (2011).

[16] Briel (1998).

[17] Dulles (2002); Connolly (2005); Ford (2009).

[18] Marlett (1997); Conn (1986); Morrison (1992); Rambo (1993); Schwanke (2011).

[19] Chilcott-Monk (2010), ix.

[20] Martin (1982), 138.

pilgrimage for truth reflecting a life of holiness,[21] a lifelong quest that was poetically expressed at his death. He was buried in the same grave as Ambrose St. John at Rednal.[22] On his memorial tablet these evocative words appear, inspired by Athanasius: *Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem* (out of the shadows and images into the truth).[23] To grasp the relation between truth and holiness, and their connection with doctrine and salvation, it can be productive to trace these combined concerns both in the early seeds of his conversion and in his deliberate growth towards conversion.

2.1 Seeds of Conversion

The significance of Newman's concerns emerged from a context of anxieties that absorbed his attention in the years preceding his conversion. Not surprisingly, the causes of his conversion are the source of continued debate today. Scholars do not agree whether he first became dismayed with Anglicanism or was first attracted to Catholicism.[24] Some argue that he simply yielded to the evidence that accumulated while writing his essay on the development of doctrine, being persuaded against Anglicanism and deciding to convert.[25] Others argue that he really first decided that Roman Catholicism was true and then sought plausible evidence for his discernment.[26] Furthermore, there is robust disagreement about the reliability of his own account of his conversion. For example, some biographers interpret his conversion based on his subsequent remarks to present an understanding of events that was apologetic, defending his own perspective.[27] From this perspective, his *Apologia* appears as a record of his thinking.[28] Others interpret his conversion by offering a critique of his own account, based on other historical documentation of the day, to suggest a more critical historical view.[29] Obviously, there were many pressures that influenced his conversion, mentioned in the recently published *Letters and Diaries* for the Anglican years that immediately preceded his conversion. Whatever inspired his conversion the *Apologia* transformed him into a religious, literary, and cultural icon in his day and subsequently.[30] This analysis considers his conversion to

[21] Velocci (2000, 2006); Ker (1977); Merrigan and Ker (2008).

[22] Cornwall (2010), 220.

[23] Tolhurst (2008), 166; Cummings (2007), 54, 169; Forte (2004), 83–87; Chadwick (2001); Dessain (1966); Bouyer (1986), 201–205; Chadwick (1983), 78.

[24] Merrigan (1986).

[25] Walgrave (1960), 37.

[26] Lash (1975), 10–11.

[27] Ker (1990a).

[28] Trevor (1963); Trevor (1962), 307.

[29] Turner (2002, 2008).

[30] Turner (2008), 36–37.

enlighten the combined concerns with doctrine and salvation that emerged. Typically external pressures can be distinguished from his internal concerns.[31]

2.1.1 External Pressures

Two external events upset Newman intensely in the years prior to his conversion. The first event followed the demise of his celebrated theory of the *via media* between Anglicanism and Catholicism. He acknowledged that his view had never in fact been practiced in history: "the Via Media, viewed as an integral system, has never had existence except on paper" (*VM*, I 16). He also recognized that his suggestion failed: "the theory of the *Via Media* was absolutely pulverized" (*Apo*, 111). He then became embroiled with the Anglican bishops who rejected his argument in *Tract 90*, published in February 1841. He had been one of the leaders of the Tractarian Movement since the 1830s,[32] also known as the Oxford Movement.[33] This movement focused upon the principles of Church tradition and authority as well as of apostolic succession.[34] In the tract he presented a Catholic interpretation of the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles, arguing that the Articles could be read in a Catholic sense consistent with the Catholic Council of Trent. Here he was exploring institutional ecclesiology as a basis for bringing both Churches together.[35] Although he must have understood the shocking nature of his rhetoric, that did not diminish his humiliation upon its rejection. This rejection helped to undermine his confidence in Anglicanism.[36]

The source of the controversy was straightforward. Previously, the Articles had been interpreted commonly as being in opposition to Catholicism. His approach contested that long tradition, appearing like squaring the circle.[37] The Anglican bishops were furious. As a result, they forced him to end the Tracts: he agreed to suspend (which effectively ended) the Tracts but he was not obliged to withdraw his claims. Ever the controversialist, he did not discontinue the distribution of *Tract 90*. In a letter to John Lilley dated November 23, 1842 he remarked sharply: "You are quite right in supposing that I am continuing Tract 90 in circulation, but you are under a mistake in supposing that I ever withdrew it…. Nor did the Bishop of Oxford require the withdrawal of me; … What he asked, and what I at once promised, was the *discontinuance of the Series* called the Tracts for the Times; and Number 90 has in fact closed it" (*LD*, IX, 156).

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[31] Ffinch (1991), 116–120; Nichols (1990), 21; Zeno (1987), 93–100.

[32] Nockles (1994, 2007); Skinner (2004); Faught (2003); Turner (2002); Rowell (1983).

[33] Vaiss (1996); O'Connell (1969); Chadwick (1960); Faber (1954).

[34] Gilley (2009), 3.

[35] Ker (1993b), 7.

[36] Nicholls and Kerr (1991), 2.

[37] Gilley (1990), 198; Gilley and Shiels (1994), 298.

Newman's personal offense at this rejection did not dissipate. He remarked pointedly in a letter of April 1842 to his own Bishop of Oxford, Richard Bagot, with whom he retained cordial relations: "I not only stopped the series of Tracts, on which I was engaged, but I withdrew from all public discussion of Church matters of the day, or what may be called ecclesiastical politics" (*LD*, VIII, 504). Over a year later in October 1843, he remarked sharply to Henry Edward Manning: "I could not stand against such an unanimous expression of opinion from the Bishops, … If ever there was a case in which an individual has been put aside, and virtually put away, by a community, mine is one" (*LD*, IX, 573).[38] The misery of rejection pushed him to the very edge of leaving the Anglican Church, observing poignantly in 1864: "The Bishops one after the other began to charge against me…. I wish to keep quiet; but if the Bishops speak, I will speak too. If the view were silenced I could not remain in the Church" (*Apo*, 130–131).

Another event alarmed him, just after the assault on *Tract 90* in summer 1841: the dispute over the Archbishop of Canterbury appointing the Jerusalem Bishopric. Newman negatively connected the controversy over the Jerusalem Bishopric with the censure of his *Tract 90*.[39] The circumstance was complicated. The British Parliament had authorized in Jerusalem the establishment of a bishopric alternating between the Anglicans and Lutherans. However, the Lutherans disagreed with central Anglican dogmas, including the apostolic succession of bishops. Newman protested vigorously but unsuccessfully, referring to "My Protest … against the Jerusalem Bishopric" (*Apo*, 142). Just as the Anglican bishops reprimanded him for drawing too close to Catholicism in *Tract 90*, in turn he perceived the bishops as drawing too close to some protestant (non-Anglican) bodies in Jerusalem. Those non-Anglican protestant groups in Europe had placed themselves under an Anglican bishop without renouncing what Newman perceived as their protestant errors. Later, in 1864, he remarked with exasperation that the affair "finally shattered my faith in the Anglican Church" (*Apo*, 133). He explained further: "As for the project of a Jerusalem Bishopric, … It brought me on to the beginning of the end" (*Apo*, 136). He was on the precipice of leaving the Anglican Church. However, he did not convert for another 4 years. Over this period his internal concerns over doctrine and salvation increased dramatically.

2.1.2 Doctrine and Salvation

Newman's concern with doctrine revolved around his doubt about Anglicanism. He recalled the summer of 1839 as the occasion of his doubt appearing while studying the history of the Monophysites. His religious doubt surfaced about the doctrinal truth of Anglicanism as the legitimate heir to patristic orthodoxy: "It was during this course of reading that for the first time a doubt came upon me of the tenableness of

[38] Miller (2008); Newsome (1993, 1966).

[39] Turner (2002), 395, 555.

Anglicanism…. by the end of August I was seriously alarmed" (*Apo*, 108). He compared the experience to seeing the shadow of Christendom in the fifth century upon the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. He perceived the heresies in the early Church "like a spirit rising from the troubled waters of the old world" (*Apo*, 109), seeing in the Anglican Church "the principles and proceedings of heretics then" (*Apo*, 109). He began to recognize the Church of Rome, both in the early Church and in his own time, as the champion of orthodoxy. This conflicted awareness was accompanied by a legacy of loss and sorrow.[40] Over subsequent years, he continued to struggle with this disconcerting reality, recognizing that he could not dismiss it:

> I had seen the shadow of a hand upon a wall…. He who had seen a ghost, cannot be as if he had never seen it. The heavens had opened and closed again. The thought for the moment had been, 'The Church of Rome will be found right after all'; and then it had vanished. My old convictions remained as before (*Apo*, 111).

One might expect that such doubt might be resolved by recourse to faith. Surprisingly, he opted for a different strategy. He turned to reason. This is evident in his subsequent recollection: to resolve his doubt he "determined to be guided … by my reason" (*Apo*, 112). This remark discloses a characteristic mind-set that had a substantive impact on the development of his religious epistemology in which he celebrated the place of reason in religious belief. He had no hesitation in tipping his hat to reason to address his concern with religious doctrine.

Newman's concern with his own salvation had captivated him for several decades. His sermons, his first being in June 1824, were replete with references to salvation, holiness and grace.[41] His life was dedicated in large part to understanding and explaining religious belief as a profoundly personal matter of personal salvation before God. This personal focus was at the heart of his spirituality, as illustrated famously in his motto as a cardinal, adopting a saying of Francis de Sales, *cor ad cor loquitur* (heart speaks to heart).[42] He emphasized this association of the heart with spirituality as being indispensable for religious conversion[43]: "when men change their religious opinions really and truly, it is not merely their opinions that they change, but their hearts" (*PS*, viii: 225). He drew upon a rich tradition of spiritual theology in nineteenth century Victorian England, both in the Church of England (Evangelical and High Church) as well as in the Catholic Church.[44] Between Newman and his contemporaries there were many reciprocal influences.[45] In particular, he developed his spiritual vision in a manner that enabled his call to holiness to foster his roles as preacher, priest, and spiritual writer.[46] Perhaps more than any other genre of his writing, his sermons provided the insight that formed

[40] Schmidt (1984).

[41] Robinson (2009); Tolhurst (2000).

[42] Wright (2003); Ker (1993a), 110–111.

[43] Dessain (1980), 33; Dessain (1968, 1977); Murray (1980); Bouyer (1958).

[44] Chadwick (1966, 1978); Coulson et al. (1965).

[45] Short (2011); Reardon (1995).

[46] Cunningham (2004), 17–25; Blehl (1994), x; Elwood (1979).

and reflected his developing spirituality.[47] His focus on spirituality throughout his writings provides far-reaching guidance for what it means to be a religious believer, specifically being a Christian today.[48]

His first conversion experience was evangelical and it occurred when he was only 15 years old, in 1816.[49] He experienced the radical nature of the "reality of conversion" (*AW*, 172).[50] He recalled in 1864 that "a great change of thought took place in me" as the cause of the "beginning of divine faith" that arose from his "inward conversion" (*Apo*, 17). In 1870 he remarked that it was such change "which so often takes place in what is called religious conversion" (*GA*, 80).[51] The experience lasted over a period of 5 months from the conclusion of the summer term in early August to the conclusion of the Fall term in mid-December ("the autumn of 1816"), and then extended vividly over several years "till the age of twenty-one" (*Apo*, 17). As an impressionable teenager he had a vivid intuition of standing personally before God's scrutiny.[52] Much of that experience can be attributed to his upbringing in biblical Protestantism, what he referred to in 1864 as "Bible-Christianity" (*Apo*, 219), or what he described in 1870 as "Bible Religion" that consisted "not in rites or creeds, but mainly in having the Bible read in Church, in the family, and in private" (*GA*, 56). At this time of youthful sensitivity he had "no formed religious convictions" (*Apo*, 15). Yet, he experienced an "inward conversion" that convinced him he "was elected to eternal glory" – this lead to an awareness of self before God that he described as "… making me rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator; – … I considered myself predestined to salvation" (*Apo*, 18).[53]

This evangelical experience brought into high profile a deep awareness of his soul and his future salvation, a sensitivity that would become increasingly influential in his writings.[54] In his sermon on "The Individuality of the Soul" in the eight volume series of the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (six volumes appearing between 1834 and 1842), this alertness is clearly manifest: "Nothing is more difficult than to realize that every man has a distinct soul, … as if there were no one else in the whole world but he" (*PS*, iv, 80–83).[55] This was an extraordinary awareness of self and soul,[56] reflecting his broader evangelical experience at Oxford University.[57] The Calvinistic influence of Rev. Walter Mayers of Pembroke College in Oxford (1790–1828) was especially significant. Newman described Mayers as being the "human

[47] Ford (2004, 2012).

[48] Connolly and Hughes (2014); Ker (1990b).

[49] Merrigan (1985).

[50] Ker (1993b), 4; Tristram (1957).

[51] Ferreira (1993).

[52] Walgrave (1960), 22–25.

[53] Graef (1967).

[54] Zeno (1987), 253–292.

[55] Kelly (1994); Udini (1981); Svaglic (1967).

[56] Nicholls and Kerr (1991), 195–196.

[57] Lefebvre and Mason (2007a).

means of this beginning of divine faith in me" (*Apo*, 17). He also described another evangelical, Thomas Scott of Aston Sandford (1747–1821), as being "the writer who made a deeper impression on my mind than any other, and to whom (humanly speaking) I almost owe my soul" (*Apo*, 18). Nurtured by this evangelical faith, he opted for celibacy in the same year: "there can be no mistake about the fact; viz. that it would be the will of God that I should lead a single life" (*Apo*, 20). This conversion in 1816 was indicative of a personality in pursuit of perfection.[58] Later, a similar conviction inspired him to select ordination rather than a secular career in law. Even though he subsequently rejected this evangelical form of Christianity, it had a lasting influence on him.[59]

This experience indicates that Newman developed a keen sense of a divine calling. His budding vocation was to undergo a significant transformation during an illness that nearly killed him when visiting Europe in 1833.[60] It occurred when he was in Sicily, as part of his extended vacation in Italy including a 5-week trip to Rome that inspired deep theological reflection.[61] This occurred before the commencement of the Oxford Movement. Prior to the onset of illness, his trip afforded him much time to foster his awareness of a calling from God: "Especially when I was left to myself, the thought came upon me that deliverance is wrought, not by the many but by the few, … I began to think that I had a mission" (*Apo*, 42–43).[62]

After arriving in Sicily he fell so ill for nearly 3 weeks that his assistant thought he might die. After recovering, on his way to Palermo in late May the emotional stress of the presentiment of his calling caused him "to sob violently," declaring, "I have a work to do in England" (*Apo*, 43). On his journey home by sea, he was becalmed for a week in the Straits of Boniface in the Mediterranean on the way to Marseilles.[63] During that delay on June 16, 1833 his sense of divine calling moved him to write one of his famous literary achievements, "The Pillar of the Cloud," a poem that would inspire subsequent generations, especially its opening phrase, "Lead Kindly Light" (*Verses*, 152).[64] The metaphor of divine light had consoled him during the preceding illness. He had assured his assistant: "I shall not die for I have not sinned against light" (*Apo*, 43; see, *LD*, IV, 8). The metaphor of light indicated his recognition of divine providence in the mission he had discerned: "I seem to see, and I saw, a strange providence in it" (*AW*, 121).[65] This metaphor also resonated with him when pondering about religious belief, as can be seen as early as 1835 in *Tract 73*, "On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Revealed Religion," where he wrote: "Religious Truth is neither light nor darkness, but both together: it

[58] Burke (1994), 35–36.

[59] McClymond (2009).

[60] Walgrave (2004); Ward (2004a): 5–15.

[61] Ford (2007).

[62] Charcosset (2006).

[63] Tillman, 2006); Velez (2006).

[64] Massey (2007); Ward (2004a, b); Davies (2001).

[65] Strange (2008), 109–122; Strange (1990), 151, 157; Merrigan (1990); Frappell (1989), 477–479.

is like the dim view of a country seen in the twilight, with forms half extracted from the darkness" (*Ess*, I: 41–42).[66]

When Newman later reflected on his conversion in his *Apologia*, he acknowledged his profound anxiety about his soul: "My own soul was my first concern, … I wished to go to my Lord by myself, and in my own way, or rather His way" (*Apo*, 198). In a letter to John Keble in November 21, 1844 his deep stress about dying before conversion is evident: "My sole ascertainable reason for moving is a feeling of indefinite *risk* to my soul in staying … I don't think I *could* die in our communion" (*LD*, X, 427). The thought of dying before conversion haunted him, as he voiced to his sister Jemima in March 15, 1845: "I cannot at all make out *why* I should determine on moving except as thinking I should offend God by not doing so…. Suppose I were suddenly dying … I think I should directly send for a Priest…. Ought I to live where I could not bear to die?" (*LD*, X, 595–596). His overwhelming concern with salvation had brought him to the cusp of conversion, an experience that required the integration of his reason (dealing with his concern with doctrine) and his conscience (dealing with his concern with salvation).

2.1.3 Reason and Conscience

In March 1843 Newman retired from practice as an Anglican vicar, entering lay communion to struggle with his decision to leave Anglicanism altogether. Just as he turned to reason to resolve his concern with doubt, to resolve his concern with salvation he relied upon conscience. His confidence in conscience, as the personal capacity to effectively address the matters pertaining to his soul, is evident in his correspondence at the time. In a letter to Mrs. Froude in November 1844 he wrote: "I am conscious of no motive but that of obeying an urgent imperative call of duty" (*LD*, X, 399).[67] In a letter on January 8, 1845 to Miss Maria Rosina Giberne, a family friend and participant in the Oxford Movement,[68] he again indicated his concern with salvation in terms of conscience (the call of duty):

> This I am sure of, that nothing but a simple, direct call of duty is a warrant for any one leaving our Church; … The simple question is, Can *I* (it is personal, not whether another, but can *I*) be saved in the English Church? am *I* in safety, were I to die tonight? Is it a mortal sin in *me*, not joining another communion? (*Apo*, 208)

Just a few lines later he explained this call of duty as a function of conscience. In this important passage he contrasted the role of conscience with the role of reason that he relied upon to address his concern with doctrine.

> My own convictions are as strong as I suppose they can become: only it is so difficult to know whether it is a call of *reason* or of conscience. I cannot make it out, if I am impelled

[66] Velez (2012), xvii–xviii.

[67] Harper (1933).

[68] Athié (2005).

> by what seems *clear*, or by a sense of *duty*. You can understand how painful this doubt is (*Apo*, 208).

He perceived his soul as related to a sense of duty in conscience. Also, the passage highlights the role of reason, guiding him by what is rationally clear. He assigned a role for reason and conscience in resolving his doubt in the sense that reason engaged his concern with doctrine and conscience addressed his concern with salvation. This role of conscience in monitoring matters of the soul before God was a continuing solace for him.[69] For example, as early as 1830 he wrote in a University Sermon delivered at Oxford[70]: "Conscience is the essential principle and sanction of Religion in the mind. Conscience implies a relation between the soul and a something exterior, and that, moreover, superior to itself" (*US*, 18). In old age he adopted the same insight for his religious epistemology in 1870: "conscience is a connecting principle between the creature and his Creator" (*GA*, 117). To comprehend the mounting influence of these concerns in his path to conversion, his concerns with doctrine and salvation need to be understood in connection with his dogmatic principle and sacramental principle.

2.2 Growth to Conversion

The complex journey of his conversion required time, requiring patience and tenacity. As early as 1832 he remarked on the need for individuals to seek religious truth at their own pace: "the strong hour of Truth, which, though unheard and unseen by men as a body, approaches each one of that body in his own turn, though at a different time" (*US*, 94). He was acutely aware of the slow pace of his own progress when writing to his sister Jemima in a letter on February 11, 1845: "change of opinion is, commonly speaking, the work of a long time" (*LD*, X, 549).[71] In this process, he increasingly recognized that his concerns with doctrine and salvation were closely connected. Without resolving his concern about doctrine, his concern about his salvation may not have arisen so urgently. Without settling his concern about his salvation, his conversion to Catholicism may not have occurred so dramatically. But it was only when he clearly grasped the integration of these concerns that he recognized the inevitability of his conversion. In a letter to Henry Edward Manning on November 16, 1844, a year before his conversion, this integration is apparent. He explained "that our Church is in schism and that my salvation depends on my joining the Church of Rome" (*LD*, X, 412).

[69] Attard (2008), xix–xxi, 183–188, 219–221.

[70] MacKinnon and Holmes (1970).

[71] Svaglic (1967), 581.

2.2.1 Dogmatic and Sacramental Principles

This connection between doctrine and salvation provided a foundation for his belief system as an articulation of his dogmatic principle and sacramental principle. He remarked in 1864: "I had no longer a distinctive plea for Anglicanism, unless I would be a Monophysite. I had, most painfully, to fall back upon my three original points of belief, … – the principle of dogma, the sacramental system, and anti-Romanism. Of these three, the first two were better secured in Rome than in the Anglican Church" (*Apo*, 113).

His dedication to doctrinal truth constituted an articulation of his dogmatic principle in which he articulated his fundamental belief that Christianity was a religion of doctrines based on revelation.[72] He explained his stance in this manner: "From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion… What I held in 1816, I held in 1833, and I hold in 1864. Please God, I shall hold it to the end" (*Apo*, 54). He added a few pages later: "I am now as clear in my acceptance of the principle of dogma, as I was in 1833 and 1816" (*Apo*, 57). The dogmatic principle was at the core of his study of doctrinal development that he was writing in the months preceding his conversion in 1845: "The principle of *dogma*, that is, supernatural truths irrevocably committed to human language, imperfect because it is human, but definitive and necessary because given from above" (*Dev*, 325). The sacramental principle encapsulated two complementary concepts: the mystery of God's grace working through the limitations of human reality; and the gradual dispensing of divine providence in the human condition. The sacramental principle acknowledges God's grace as permeating our world and also recognizes doctrines as gradually unveiling God's providence.[73]

The sacramental principle sheds light on his concern with salvation during his conversion process. First, the sacramental principle celebrates God's transcendence in our world[74]: "… the Sacramental system; that is, the doctrine that material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen" (*Apo*, 29). Referring to the teachings of early Christianity, he explained: "These were based on the mystical or sacramental principle, and spoke of the various Economies or Dispensations of the Eternal… the exterior world, physical and historical, was but the manifestation to our senses of realities greater than itself" (*Apo*, 36).[75] Second, the sacramental principle acknowledges the measured dispensing of providence that allowed for "the anticipation of further and deeper disclosures" (*Apo*, 37).[76] This second aspect has become known as his principle of economy, being central for his understanding of the progressive unfolding of truth in doctrinal development,[77] and

[72] Norris (2010); Norris (2004); Norris (1996); Norris (1977), 136–164.

[73] Whalen (1994), 205–225.

[74] Selby (1975), 3–12.

[75] Zeno (1987), 270–271; Zeno (1957), 60–61.

[76] Selby (1975), 22–43, 48.

[77] Wainright (2004), 146–156; Norris (1977), 176–195; Sillem (1969–1970) II, 107–109.

supporting the role of analogy in his writings. In this regard, he acknowledged his indebtedness to Joseph Butler's *Analogy* and to Joseph Milner's argument from Analogy (*Apo*, 33).[78]

2.2.2 Principle of Economy

Newman's conversion process represented an application or realization of the principle of the economy in his life. The following passage presents the principle of economy, also known as the principle of reserve,[79] as a perspective about the staged (economic) development of religious doctrine. Naturally, the text has to be read within the restricted perspective of Christian dominance in nineteenth century Victorian England:

> In the fullness of time both Judaism and Paganism had come to nought; the outward framework, which concealed yet suggested the Living Truth, had never been intended to last, … The process of change had been slow; it had been done not rashly, but by rule and measure, … first one disclosure and then another, till the whole evangelical doctrine was brought into full manifestation. And thus room was made for the anticipation of further and deeper disclosures, of truths still under the veil of the letter, and in their season to be revealed…. Mysteries are but the expressions in human language of truths to which the human mind is unequal. (*Apo*, 36–37)

This passage relates his sacramental principle with his dogmatic principle insofar as deeper disclosures of religious truth increasingly reveal God's providence. The passage sets up a rationale for his conversion process as an example of the principle of economy. A few pages later in the *Apologia*, he explained: "I am but giving a history of my opinions, and … that I have come by them through intelligible processes of thought" that he compared with the "doctrine indeed of the Economy" (*Apo*, 39).

Also, the pastoral sensitivity that he demonstrated to not harming the Anglican faithful is a good illustration of the principle of economy. For example, after the debacle of *Tract 90*, he explained to his friend H. A. Woodgate on November 8, 1841 that he did not want to unsettle his friends further than had occurred by the bishops' action: "These charges of the Bishops are *very* serious things. I do not expect anything at this time among any friends of mine, but the charges are *unsettling* men's minds, and I fear laying the seeds of something deplorable in time to come" (*LD*, VIII, 322). Just 1 month later, in a letter to Samuel Rickards on December 1, 1841 he reiterated concern for his parishioners: "looking on my position here, I seemed to be a sort of schismatist or demagogue supporting a party against the religious authorities of the place. I have uniformly kept my parishioners before my mind – and wished to act *for them*" (*LD*, VIII, 359). Such was his anxiety for the Anglican faithful that he considered forgoing preaching, as suggested in a letter to

[78] Johnson (2001).

[79] Selby (1975), 4.

his friend R. I. Wilberforce on January 26, 1842: "My present purpose is from sheer despondency lest I should be doing harm, to give over, at least for the present, preaching at St. Mary's" (*LD*, VIII, 441). As he progressed towards Catholicism he was dismayed at what his conversion would concede to his opponents: "The most oppressive thought, in the whole process of my change of opinion, was the clear anticipation, verified by the event, that it would issue in the triumph of Liberalism" (*Apo*, 184). He painfully made the same point in a personal letter to his sister Jemima Mozley on March 15, 1845: "I am fulfilling all their worst wishes and giving them their most coveted triumph – I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided" (*LD*, X, 595).

Despite efforts to avoid unsettling the Anglican faithful, he was compelled to balance that pastoral sensitivity of reserve with his developing concern over his own salvation. He explained to Mrs. Froude on November 12, 1844: "The unsettling of so many peaceable, innocent minds is a most overpowering thought, and at this moment my heart literally aches and has for some days. I am conscious of no motive but that of obeying an urgent imperative call of duty" (*LD*, X, 399). In a letter to Edward Coleridge on the same day, he identified this dreadful tension that his principle of economy was causing, a tension between his progressive discernment to convert and his pastoral reserve to avoid unsettling others in the Anglican Church: "The pain I feel at the distress I am causing others, at the great unsettlement of mind I am causing, and the ties I am rending, is keener than I can say…. such acts, … seem likely to be urged on me as imperative to my salvation – but none can know the dismal thing it is to me to trouble and unsettle and wound so many quiet, kind, and happy minds" (*LD*, X, 399). Finally, on March 30, 1845 he recognized that his pastoral sensitivity to prepare the faithful could not avoid unsettling many: "this waiting subserves the purpose of preparing men's minds. I dread shocking, unsettling people. Anyhow, I can't avoid giving incalculable pain" (*Apo*, 208). On October 9 1845 Father Dominic Barber, an Italian Passionist priest, received Newman into the Catholic Church.

When considering the pastoral impact of Newman's conversion, it should be noted that his pastoral concern for the Anglican faithful was as important for the Church of England as his religious conversion was for the Catholic Church.[80] His reference to the principle of economy in the *Apologia* provides an intelligible account of his conversion process, both in terms of his gradual discernment to convert and in terms of his pastoral reserve to avoid unsettling the Anglican faithful. These pastoral characteristics of the principle of economy were part of his sacramental principle that celebrated the progressive unfolding of truth.

His combined concerns with doctrine and salvation were articulations of those basic religious principles. The principle of dogma enlightened his concern with the doctrinal truth of Anglicanism, and the sacramental principle clarified his concern about salvation in converting. One might expect Newman to rely upon strength of faith to resolve his dogmatic principle's concern with doctrine and his sacramental

[80] Chadwick (1990a); D'Arcy (1990).

principle's concern with salvation. Surprisingly, he decided to rely upon reason and conscience to resolve these concerns. He found his inspiration for doing so in the writings of the early Church.

2.2.3 *Patristic Influence*

With hindsight Newman interpreted his road to conversion as being enlightened by the writings of the early Christian Church.[81] The extensive patristic influence can be traced back to his youth. The influence can be calibrated specifically in terms of helping him to resolve his combined concerns with doctrine and salvation. He first encountered the Fathers in 1816, the year of his conversion to Evangelicalism, by reading Joseph Milner's *Church History*.[82] He was attracted especially to Augustine and Ambrose, whose writings "produced a deep impression" (*Apo*, 19) when he read Milner's work. As he became disenchanted with liberalism as an Oxford tutor in the late 1820s, he explained his captivation with patristic writings: "as I moved out of the shadows of that liberalism which had hung over my course, my early devotion towards the Fathers returned" (*Apo*, 35). During the long summer holiday of 1829 he undertook a systematic study of their writings, "beginning with St. Ignatius and St. Justin" (*Apo*, 35), becoming utterly absorbed by Iranaeus and Cyprian (*LD*, II, 150).[83] As a result, he believed that the Fathers had protected him from some of the Protestant the heresies of his day – the "precipices of Luther and Calvin" (*AW*, 83). More importantly, he was convinced that he owed his conversion in 1845 to the influence of the early Church Fathers: "The Fathers made me a Catholic" (*Diff*, II: 24; see, *AW*, 83).

After Newman had been forced to resign his Oxford tutorship in 1830, he found more time to read the Fathers, which had a significant influence on shaping the beginnings of the Oxford Movement (*AW*, 96). During these years, in the early thirties, he prepared his first book, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833) in which he indicated his preference for the Eastern Church, especially the Alexandrian Fathers. Perhaps more than any others, the Alexandrian Fathers fascinated him, including Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, and Augustine (*Ari*, 48–49).[84] In them he discovered a liveliness of thought that surpassed what he knew of scholastic theology:

> If the Fathers are not cold, and the Schoolmen are, this is because the former write in their own persons, and the latter as logicians or disputants. St. Athanasius or St. Augustine has a life, which a system of theology has not (*Jfc*, 31).[85]

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[81] Magill (1992b).

[82] Ker (1988), 5.

[83] Dragas (1981).

[84] Ferguson (2003); Dessain (1976), 85; Sillem (1969–1970), I, 181.

[85] Murray and Blehl (1993), 133–218.

This passage anticipates a topic that would help to craft his religious epistemology: his distrust of shallow forms of reasoning, such as logic or disputation, when dealing with matters of religion. However, such criticism did not mean rejecting any role for reason in religious discourse, of which there is a remarkable variety in his works.[86] He relied on reason to address his concerns with doctrine and salvation. This characteristic association between reason, doctrine, and salvation is evident in a very important passage in which he acknowledged the indebtedness of his conversion to the Patristic Fathers, and especially to St. Ambrose (*Diff*, II, 24):

> And then I felt altogether the force of the maxim of St. Ambrose, 'Non in dialecticâ complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum'; - I had a great dislike of paper logic. For myself, it was not logic that carried me on; … It is the concrete being that reasons; pass a number of years and I find myself in a new place; how? the whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it. All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I did. (*Apo*, 155–156)

This passage accords a prominent role for reason to address doctrine and salvation. If salvation ("complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum") depended upon resolving his doubt about Anglicanism that constituted his concern with doctrine, he could not rely upon shallow logic ("Non in dialecticâ …"). From the Patristic Fathers he had learned about holistic reasoning ("the concrete being that reasons … the whole man moves …") in contrast to deductive or logical reasoning ("paper logic…"). The importance of this passage struck him in 1833 when he provided his own translation: "Non in dialecticâ complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum (it is not by logic that it pleased God to bring about the salvation of his people)" (*Ari*, 29).

He was not trying to state the obvious – that logic is not the means to salvation. Rather he was conveying a complicated insight: we require reasoning (but not logic) to deal with the doctrinal concerns upon which our salvation really depends, as related aspects of divine revelation.[87] Long after his death, Newman's understanding of divine revelation had a significant influence on Vatican II.[88] The above quotation reappeared in his *Apologia* in 1864 to shed light on his conversion. The purpose seems to have been to enlighten his maturing insight on religious epistemology by clarifying the role of reason in religious belief, such as inspired his own conversion. This purpose seems to be confirmed when he later used the text from St. Ambrose in 1870 for the title page of the *Grammar*, the work in which he presented his most developed account of religious epistemology: "Non in dialecticâ complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum." This intellectual insight was an emblem of his complex epistemology.[89]

In 1846, just after his conversion, he visited Milan, the See of Ambrose, explaining that he had been "under the shadow of St. Ambrose whose name for 30 years, a long time, I have so revered and loved," (*LD*, XI: 256). It is no wonder that he used

[86] Powell (1975, 1977).

[87] Griffiths (1990), 90–91.

[88] Blehl (2001b); McGrath (1997), 17.

[89] Tracy (1981), 86.

words of Ambrose, "Non in dialecticâ …", not only to crystallize his conversion experience in the *Apologia* in 1864, but also to emblemize his religious epistemology in the *Grammar* in 1870. This famous text of Ambrose, "Non in dialecticâ …", also came to epitomize his lifelong opposition to religious liberalism.

2.3 Hostility to Religious Liberalism

In Newman's writings as an Anglican he presented many different views of religious liberalism,[90] just as there were many other views of liberalism across Europe.[91] Since 1833 he had been the unofficial leader of the Oxford Movement, along with Keble and Pusey,[92] publishing the *Tracts of the Times* to counter the increasing influence of what they construed as religious liberalism in the Anglican Church.[93] Looking back in 1864 to his conversion two decades prior, he explained that the Tracts were intended to oppose "the principles of Liberalism" (*Apo*, 49).[94] He identified 18 theses that he attributed to it in his note in the *Apologia*. He prefaced them by saying: "I proceed to explain what I meant as a Protestant by Liberalism" (*Apo*, Note A, 254). In his work on doctrinal development in the years preceding his conversion, he presented a list of propositions that he identifies with "the principle of philosophies and heresies" (*Dev*, 358) that he aligned with liberalism. Finally, in his *Biglietto* speech as a new cardinal in 1879, his strategy and struggle with liberalism was prominent: "For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of Liberalism in religion."[95]

His hostility to liberalism as a form of relativism became a disputed topic for his commentators.[96] For example, there has been considerable discussion about the influence of the demise of the Oxford Movement in 1841 or the conversion of Newman in 1845 upon religious liberalism in the Church of England.[97] There is robust debate about what Newman meant by religious liberalism. It appears that he was somewhat of a moderate conservative with regard to liberalism in political theory.[98] Some consider the main issue was to distinguish liberalism from his understanding of Christianity.[99] Others contend that there was no single form of religious

[90] Boekraad (1955), 100–101.

[91] Goldstein and Bouyer (1988).

[92] Jaki (2003).

[93] Parker and Pahls (2009); Pereiro (2008); Lefebvre and Mason (2007b), 239–225.

[94] Chadwick (1990b); Cameron (1980).

[95] Norris (1987); Davies (1978); Ward (1912), II, 459–462; Neville (1905), 63–64.

[96] Biemer and Holmes (1984), 19; Busckler (1980), 261.

[97] Nockles (1994), 270–306; Hinchliff (1992), 31–49, 50–72; Thomas (1991), 43; Pattison (1991), 216; Chadwick (1960), 58–61; Church (1891), 333–352.

[98] Kelly (2012); Norman (1990), 153–173; Chadwick (1983), 72.

[99] Hinchliff (1992), 32–36; Yearley (1975).

liberalism in the nineteenth century with which his view can be associated.[100] Also, it has been argued that his critique of liberalism can be found hardly anywhere else except in his own works.[101] Yet, despite these varying perspectives, a coherent explanation of his view of liberalism can be traced from his combined concerns with doctrine and salvation.

2.3.1 Liberalism as Rationalism

Newman's opposition to liberalism can be traced to his opposition to rationalism. His approach had more to do with a fundamental attitude relating to a social and cultural phenomenon in his day than with any particular party or movement related with an ecclesiastical or theological problem.[102] His concern with liberalism emerged early in his career.[103] His most detailed exposition of his opposition to liberalism appears in his extended note on liberalism in his *Apologia*.[104] His analysis identifies a reform that started a few years before he arrived at Oxford in the early 1820s. The reform constituted what he described as "the rudiments of the Liberal party" (*Apo*, Note A, 255), giving rise to the Noetic school at Oxford.[105]

Newman was appointed as a Fellow at Oriel College in 1822. Not surprisingly, he was enticed as a young tutor in the Noetic school at Oriel by the lure of this liberal reform under the skillful influence of Oxford's master Aristotelian, Richard Whateley (1787-1863).[106] But he was unwilling to develop this interest if it meant compromising his dogmatic principle that Christianity was a religion of doctrines: "Even when I was under Dr. Whateley's influence, I had no temptation to be less zealous for the great dogmas of the faith" (*Apo*, 54–55). However, he did not dally in that circle: "I was beginning to prefer intellectual excellence to moral; I was drifting in the direction of the Liberalism of the day. I was rudely awakened from my dream at the end of 1827 by two great blows - illness and bereavement" (*Apo*, 26).

In November 1827, during the time of examinations at Oxford, Newman suffered a nervous collapse due to the illness that he mentioned in the *Apologia*. In January 1828 Mary, his beloved younger sister, suddenly became seriously ill and died on the following day, a profoundly personal experience that remained with him for his entire life.[107] These rude awakenings seemed to cause him pause. With time for quiet reflection he became disenchanted with Whateley's rationalism. In turn, he

[100] Kenny (1974), 125, 144.

[101] Pattison (1991), 215.

[102] Merrigan (2005), 607–608.

[103] Conn (2007); Walgrave (1960), 148–163.

[104] Svaglic (1967), 5.

[105] Svaglic (1967), 580.

[106] Culler (1955), 58.

[107] Ker (1988), 30.

was inspired to return to the patristic writings: "as I moved out of the shadows of that liberalism which had hung over my course, my early devotion towards the Fathers returned" (*Apo*, 35). However, he kept a sharp eye on the encroachment of liberalism, so much so that by the time he wrote his *Apologia* over 40 years later he remarked (somewhat defensively it appears) that "the bulk of the educated classes through the country (were) liberal" (*Apo*, Note A, 256).

Wilfred Ward, Newman's first biographer, argued that by opposition to liberalism Newman meant rejecting a view of equality in religion that had no room for revealed truth.[108] One of his correspondents, Richard Armstrong, addressed this explanation of liberalism when corresponding with Newman. Armstrong argued that liberals were those whose religious convictions bear tolerance for the convictions of others (*LD*, XXXI, 197–198). In this sense, perhaps Newman perceived liberalism as an attempt to make religion more relevant and meaningful in Victorian times.[109] The difficulty with this stance is that he did not identify liberalism as a distinct type of religion, although he did refer to it rhetorically as "the Religion of Reason" (*Idea*, 195). His response to Armstrong in a letter dated March 23, 1887 provides one of the clearest indications about what he meant by his opposition to liberalism: "Liberalism is the development of rationalism" (*LD*, XXXI, 198). Ward's explanation of liberalism as a standoff between reason and revelation has merit in light of Newman's response to Armstrong: "What I have written about Rationalism requires to be expanded … I would contrast it with *faith*. Faith cometh by hearing, by the *Word of God*. Rationalists are those who are content with conclusions to which they have been brought by reason" (*LD*, XXXI, 197–198). In this letter he made a fascinating association between liberalism and what he described as "reason and the moral sense":

> Liberalism is the *development* of Rationalism. It views faith as a mere *natural* gift, the like and consequence of reason and the moral sense; and by reason and the moral sense he estimates it and measures its objects … This is Liberalism (*LD*, XXXI, 198).

His reference to the moral sense here was to the rationalism of Lord Shaftesbury (1671–1713) that will be explored later. The critical point is Newman's association of liberalism with rationalism. That is why many commentators have argued that he intended to oppose liberal rationalism, such as had influenced him so much as a young scholar when at Oxford with Whateley.[110] Also, Newman criticized liberal Anglicans like the historians Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) and Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868) for accommodating religion with rationalism,[111] attributing the roots of this sort of rationalism in religion to the enlightenment philosophy of John Locke (1632–1704).

Newman argued that religious belief would be undermined by justifying various degrees of assent to propositions only in proportion to the available evidence. With

[108] Ward (1912), II, 460; Ward (1893), 193.

[109] Hinchliff (1992), 33–34; Yearley (1978), 94, 127.

[110] Norris (1977), 101–103; Holmes (1975); Walgrave (1960), 34.

[111] Boekraad (1955), 71–73, 79; Mozely (1891), I, 256.

Locke in mind he wrote in 1867: "Liberalism consists in looking at all conclusions … as strong only in proportion to the strength of their premisses (vid. Locke)" (*Phil.N*, II, 170). Moreover, he rejected the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) that he identified with liberal rationalism.[112] Just as Newman aligned liberalism with rationalism he also opposed its reductive influence on revealed doctrine. He understood liberal rationalists as "those who are content with conclusions to which they have been brought by reason." As he approached his conversion in 1845, his antagonism towards liberalism appears to have become focused around the dangers of rationalism in his combined concerns with doctrine and salvation.

2.3.2 Doctrine and Salvation

The connection between liberalism and religious doctrine is apparent in his association of liberalism with anti-dogmatism. He perceived the anti-dogmatism of liberalism as identical with rationalism.[113] The way that he explained the "Anti-dogmatic Principle" in 1864 (*Apo*, Note A, 254) is very similar to the way he explained liberalism in his letter to Armstrong in 1887, mentioned previously:

> Now by Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, … Liberalism then is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word. (*Apo*, Note A, 255–256)

Newman's opposition to liberalism highlighted his fundamental concern about doctrine. By saying that, "Liberalism … is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines" he was stating what he would later clarify for Armstrong in 1887: "Liberalism is the *development* of Rationalism." This association between liberalism and rationalism in religion is a recurring them in his writings. For example, his 1871 essay on "The Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Revealed Religion" was first published as *Tract 73* in 1835. In that essay he explained: "To rationalize in matters of Revelation is to make our reason the standard and measure of the doctrines revealed" (*Ess*, I, 31). It is necessary to recognize here that by liberalism he meant the rationalist challenge to revealed doctrines. In other words, seeing rationalism as a threat to doctrine is at the core of his hostility to liberalism. This threat accounts for his famous remark: "rationalism is the great evil of the day" (*Apo*, 127). He deplored liberalism's "deep, plausible scepticism, … as being the development of human reason" (*Apo*, 234) and as constituting what he described in his *Idea of a University* as a form of "godless intellectualism" (*Idea*, 196).

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[112] Wood et al. (2010); Loesberg (1986); de Achaval and Holmes (1976), 39–50, 57–59.

[113] Sillem (1969–1970), I, 60–62, 71, 77; Walgrave (1960), 30.

As Newman approached his conversion in 1845 his perception of liberalism as a rationalist assault on doctrine became more evident, causing him to refer to it as an anti-dogmatic principle.[114] However, to understand what he meant by his opposition to liberalism, it would be mistaken to highlight only his concern with doctrine. His accompanying concern with salvation in his conversion process shed light on the danger that he perceived liberalism as posing for personal salvation. When discussing his conversion in 1845, he made a very important observation. He deplored the "spiritual evils" that arise when liberalism tries "to place reason before faith, or knowledge before devotion" (*Apo*, Note A, 256). He typically associated devotion with holiness and personal salvation, as is evident in a letter he wrote to W. G. Ward in 1860 about seminary training: "The more a man is educated, whether in theology or secular science, the *holier* he needs to be if he would be *saved* … that *devotion* and self rule are worth all the intellectual cultivation in the world" (*LD*, XIX, 417, emphasis added).

The sanctity of Richard Hurrell Froude (1803–1836) had a significant influence upon Newman's outlook as he distanced himself from the Noetics and their liberalism at Oxford.[115] For Newman, devotion, sanctity, and salvation were ingredients of his view of personal religion that were under assault by liberal rationalism. Two satirical passages highlight his skepticism about it being able to foster virtue, holiness or religion. In 1841, when he was embroiled in the odd controversy over the Tamworth Reading Room, he tried to align the emerging trend of reading rooms with rationalism: "If virtue be a mastery over the mind, if its end be action, if its perfection be inward order, harmony, peace, we must seek it in graver and *holier* places than in Libraries and Reading-rooms" (*DA*, 254–297, at 268).[116]

Here Newman was arguing against the social and moral views of Peter Brougham (1778–1868) and Sir Robert Peel (1788–1850). In these remarks Newman tried (somewhat oddly for readers today) to connect rationalism with reading rooms. However, if his satirical association between libraries and rationalism can be conceded, his substantive point is worthwhile, that rationality alone is insufficient to yield virtue, piety, or belief. Much later, in 1870, he made his point again: "It is very well as a matter of liberal curiosity and of philosophy to analyze our modes of thought: but let this come second, … But if we commence with scientific knowledge and argumentative proof, or lay any great stress upon it as the basis of personal Christianity, or attempt to make man moral and religious by libraries and museums, let us in consistency take chemists for our cooks, and mineralogists for our masons" (*GA*, 95–96; *DA*, 295–296).[117]

Newman's concern with liberal rationalism was twofold. Just as placing "reason before faith" alludes to the danger that rationalism poses for doctrine, similarly placing "knowledge before devotion" alludes to the danger that rationalism poses

[114] Newman (1994); Thomas (1991), 43, 109; Newman (1986), 30–32.

[115] Gilley (1990), 58–60; Davies and Flanagan (1978), 16.

[116] Beaumont (2010), 7; Wieland (1985).

[117] Ker (1988), 66; Ker (1990a), 163; Gilley (1990), 196.

for salvation. The compromise of doctrine and salvation constitutes what he described as "the spiritual evils signified in what is called the 'pride of reason,'" that is, liberal rationalism (*Apo*, Note A, 255). This combined role of doctrine and salvation in his opposition to liberalism is very prominent in his essay on the development of doctrine that led to his conversion in 1845. In the section on "The Assimilating Power of Dogmatic Truth" (that is, on doctrine), he wrote:

> That there is a truth then; … that our choice is an awful giving forth of lots on which salvation or rejection is inscribed; … – this is the dogmatic principle, which has strength (*Dev*, 357).

In other words, Newman's opposition to liberalism was because of its rationalist assault on doctrine and salvation. It is mistaken to reduce his critique to the so-called anti-dogmatic principle as a form of doctrinal totalitarianism, as if he assigned no role to reason in religious discourse.[118] Rather, his rejection of the anti-dogmatic principle of liberalism included a central role for reason in religious discourse regarding both doctrine and salvation. This connection with doctrine and salvation can be traced in an intimate remark to John Keble on June 8, 1844 on his dismay and how his conversion would be a triumph for others: "what quite pierces me, the disturbance of mind which a change on my part would cause to so many – … the temptation to which many would be exposed to *scepticism*, indifference, and even *infidelity*" (*LD*, X, 262, emphasis added).[119] That is, liberalism was as much a threat to doctrine (through "scepticism") as to salvation (through "infidelity"). In contrast, "the fidelity of the laity, and the effectiveness of that fidelity" (*Cons*, 86) enables "the body of the laity" to remain "faithful to its baptism" (*Cons*, 76), with obvious implications for salvation.

His combined concerns with doctrine and salvation clarify what he meant by liberalism as a rationalist assault upon both. This explanation clarifies that Newman's opposition to liberalism should not be construed as an argument about conservatism.[120] In contrast, he developed an affinity with a movement that was far from conservative in Victorian England, the liberal Catholics.

2.3.3 Affinity with Liberal Catholics

Newman's affinity with liberal Catholics arose within the context of an authoritarian movement in Catholicism that sought to privilege the authority of the Pope at the risk of displacing other legitimate authorities in the Church. This affinity with liberal Catholicism has led to associating Newman with the subsequent Roman

[118] Pattison (1991), 209–213.

[119] Ker (1988), 286.

[120] Misner (1985), 4.

Catholic modernist movement.[121] This connection has occurred for a variety of reasons such as his acknowledgement of the role of history in his work on doctrinal development,[122] or because of the similarity of language between his writings and modernism.[123] It came as no surprise that by inquiring into a role for the faithful in the Church he aroused suspicion among the forces of Ultramontanism in England.

In 1859, he anonymously published an essay in the *Rambler*, just after becoming its editor, though he had considered the idea as an Anglican when writing about the Vincentian canon in the *Lectures of the Prophetical Office*.[124] The essay had the controversial title, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine." His argument was very challenging to conservative Catholic England at the time, especially to those with Ultramontanist leanings. His 1871 amendment of his 1859 essay highlighted his basic argument: "the *fidelium sensus* and *consensus* is a branch of evidence which it is natural or necessary for the Church to regard and consult, before she proceeds to any definition" (*Cons*, 55). He used several terms interchangeably, including: "the sense of the faithful" (*Cons*, 56), "communis fidelium sensus" or "consensus fidelium" (*Cons*, 77), and "*sensus fidelium*" (*Cons*, 102).[125] This argument is a more developed enunciation of an insight from St. Augustine that had influenced his conversion to Catholicism: "Securus judicat orbis terrarum" (*Apo*, 110), translated as, "the Christian commonwealth judges without misgiving" (*LD*, XXIV, 355). Newman celebrated this insight in his *Apologia*:

> 'Securus judicat orbis terrarum.' … What a light was hereby thrown upon every controversy in the Church! … the deliberate judgment, in which the whole Church at length rests and acquiesces, is an infallible prescription…. For a mere sentence, the words of St. Augustine, struck me with a power which I never had felt from any words before…. 'Securus judicat orbis terrarum!' (*Apo*, 110).[126]

The importance of this insight from Augustine is evident in a letter from Newman to Canon Walker of St. Edmund's College in 1867: "For myself I think the securus judicat orbis terrarum, is the real rule and interpretation of the words of the Church" (*LD*, XXIII, 254; see, *LD*, XXV, 284).[127] The connection with Augustine makes the drama of the argument all the more evident: the purpose of consulting the faithful is for the Church to elicit consent "before she proceeds to any definition." The ferocity of reaction by Church authorities seems to have reflected a perceived threat. In a letter to William Maskell on February 12, 1871 Newman emphasized the importance of this insight regarding the controversy over the doctrine of infallibility in the Council of Vatican I:

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[121] Talar (2007); Loughlin (2004), 25–52; Daly (1980, 1985, 2002); Jenkins (1990); Loome (1979); Barmann (1972).

[122] Lash (1973), 83–140; Reardon (1966), 272.

[123] Flanagan (1946), 138.

[124] Crowley (1992a), 111, 126.

[125] Ker (2002); Crowley (1992b).

[126] Newsome (1966), 115–116.

[127] Penaskovic (1983); Stern (1977): 171–188.

> The rationale or theory which is to be held with reference to what has been done at Rome, will come out distinctly, – We cannot force things. The Council cannot force things – the voice of the Schola Theologorum, of the whole Church diffusive, will in time make itself heard, and Catholic instincts and ideas will assimilate and harmonize into the credenda of Christendom, and the living tradition of the faithful, what at present many would impose upon us, and many are startled at, as a momentous addition to the faith (*LD*, XXV, 284).

His essay on the faithful appeared in the *Rambler* that had been started in 1848 by John Moore Capes who was an Anglican convert. In general, the journal was a publication of educated lay converts that encouraged lay action. In particular, it was the mouthpiece of the liberal Catholics, especially under the leadership of Richard Simpson (1820–1876), editor from 1857 until 1859, and Sir John Acton (1834–1902) who had studied under the liberal theologian Döllinger (1799–1890) in Germany.[128] Newman was anxious about the political liberalism that was sweeping Europe,[129] and he did not appear to be interested in supporting the liberal cause of social democratic reform. Nonetheless, he had become highly attuned to the increasing tension between liberty of conscience and church authority (*Apo*, 254).[130] Because of the debate over personal liberty and church authority Simpson had resigned as editor of the *Rambler* in 1859. Newman succeeded Simpson as editor hoping to be an intermediary between the Ultramontanists and the liberal Catholics, at least in the sense of providing guidance for liberal Catholics.[131]

Although Newman did not publicly announce his becoming editor of the *Rambler*, he was determined to preserve its continuity.[132] Interestingly, he saw his work at the *Rambler* along similar lines as his previous work as rector of the Catholic University in Ireland from the perspective of educating the laity. In a fascinating memorandum in his *Letters and Diaries* dated May 22, 1859 he noted: "I said that the Holy Father had united England and Ireland in one University, that I never would have gone there, except to do substantially the same work which I proposed in the Rambler" (*LD*, XIX, 141). It was in this memorandum that he noted his well-known witticism with regard to his correspondence with a bishop: "The Bishop who called today … said something like, 'Who are the Laity?' I answered that the Church would look foolish without them." On a more serious note, he described succinctly his educational goals in his University discourses and his *Rambler* experience in an address in 1851 to his fellow Oratorians. He adopted the metaphor of enlargement of mind that was so representative of his years as University rector in Dublin:

> I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity … I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other, what are the bases and principles of Catholicism (*Prepos*, 390).[133]

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[128] Hill (2000), 27–29; Biemer (1989), 109–110; MacDougall (1962).

[129] Kenny (1974), 128, 130–131.

[130] Nicholls (1991), 194–213; Ward (1893), 195.

[131] Miller (2007); Gilley (1990), 307.

[132] Altholz (1962), 99.

[133] Ford (2006), 3–5.

Unfortunately for Newman, it was all too easy for the Ultramontanists to associate his argument on the faithful with the historicist approach of liberal Catholics who opposed authoritarianism in the church and its isolation from society.[134] His anonymous (albeit controversial) essay forced him to resign after being editor for only two issues of the journal. As had occurred in the controversy with the Anglican bishops over *Tract 90* in 1841, he faced a fierce backlash from the Catholic bishops. His essay in 1859 suggested an active role for the laity in collaboration with the bishops, an argument that had been at the heart of his explanation of the development of doctrine.[135] He certainly acknowledged being associated with liberal Catholics when talking later of his "solidarity with the Rambler" (*LD*, XX, 5). He dealt with the crisis in 1859 as he done in 1841, by removing himself from the public debate: "The cause of my not writing from 1859 to 1864 was my failure with the *Rambler*. I thought I had got into a scrap and it became me to be silent" (*AW*, 272).

Nearly 15 years after his conversion to Catholicism, his continuing concerns with doctrine and salvation that had influenced his conversion to Catholicism shed light on his essay in 1859. He argued that the faithful should be consulted precisely because of their potential contribution in matters of doctrine and salvation (which he alludes to by reference to devotion and worship):

> In most cases when a definition is contemplated, the laity will have a testimony to give; but if ever there be an instance when they ought to be consulted, it is in the case of doctrines which bear directly upon devotional sentiments…. The faithful people have ever a special function in regard to those doctrinal truths which relate to the Objects of worship (*Cons*, 104).

His concerns in this passage occur prominently elsewhere in his essay. For example, he cited a doctrinal treatise by the Bishop of Birmingham to bolster his argument to make a clear link between doctrine (teaching) and salvation (devotion and God's grace):

> The more devout the faithful grew, the more devoted they showed themselves towards this mystery. And it is the devout who have the surest instinct in discerning the mysteries of which the Holy Spirit breathes the grace through the Church, and who, with as sure a tact, reject what is alien from her teaching (*Cons*, 72).

Just a few lines later, his famous summary of what he meant by the consent of the faithful seems to be constructed around his continuing concerns with doctrine and salvation. The 1st and 5th items address his concern with doctrine (with the language of "dogma" and "error") and the 3rd and 4th items address his concern with salvation (with the language of "Holy Ghost" and "prayers").

> I will set down the various ways in which theologians put before us the bearing of the Consent of the faithful upon the manifestations of the tradition of the Church. Its *consensus* is to be regarded: 1. as a testimony to the fact of the apostolical dogma; 2. as a sort of instinct, or phronema, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ; 3. as a direction of

[134] Misner (1991), 40–55; Misner (1985).

[135] Penaskovic (2007), 163–172; Frost (1979).

> the Holy Ghost; 4. as an answer to its prayers; 5. as a jealousy of error, which it at once feels as a scandal (*Cons*, 73).

It is interesting to notice that his description of "*consensus*" is constructed around his concerns with doctrine and salvation. The passage introduces a crucial role for "phronema" (the 2nd item), connecting it with doctrine and salvation as essential to the process of consulting the faithful. The word "phronema" as a communal sense in this passage appears akin to Newman's use of *phronesis* or Illative Sense.[136] In the *Grammar* Newman explained the inferential process of the Illative Sense by recalling Aristotle's *phronesis*: "It is … with the controlling principle in inferences that I am comparing *phronesis*" (*GA*, 356). In his 1859 essay, his allusion to "phronema" appears to have anticipated his more refined religious epistemology on the Illative Sense of the *Grammar* in 1870. This connection suggests a communal sense of awareness or consciousness among the faithful. In the 1859 essay he used the words from Möhler's *Symbolique* to refer to the 2nd characteristic of "*consensus*" as, "cette conscience de l'Eglise" (*Cons*, 73; See, *Cons*, 33–34; *Diff*, II, 313).[137]

The contribution of reason and conscience is as apparent in his 1859 essay as it was for his conversion in 1845 to resolve his concerns with doctrine and salvation. The importance of their contribution is evident in his support for liberal education in the context of moral pluralism when writing his *Idea of a University*[138]: "Liberal Education is … the process of enlightenment or enlargement of mind" (*Idea*, 130) which involves both "the cultivation of the intellect" (*Idea*, 126) and "the voice of conscience" (*Idea*, 183). This integrative relation between reason and conscience as the resources to address concerns with doctrine and salvation caused him to develop an affinity for liberal Catholics in his day. This reciprocity led to his conversion in 1845, focused his opposition to liberal rationalism as a Catholic, inspired his view of liberal education, and energized his argument on consulting the faithful. This reciprocity became the hallmark of his personal liberalism that informed his religious epistemology, as discussed in the next chapter.[139]

2.4 Conclusion

Newman's concerns with doctrine and salvation were resolved by his reliance upon reason and conscience that in turn fostered his commitment to truth and holiness. These concerns were articulations of his dogmatic principle and his sacramental principle; they invigorated him as an Anglican minister in the 1820s and 1830s; they

[136] Coulson (1961), 23.

[137] de Berranger (1990): 833–842.

[138] Magill (1992a).

[139] Sillem (1969–1970), I, 70–78, 86, 119.

steered his conversion process to Catholicism in the 1840s; and they guided his hostility to liberalism and his affinity with liberal Catholics in the 1850s. All of this was confirmed in his *Apologia* in the early 1860s. The impetus of these concerns to rely upon reason and conscience enabled him to develop an approach to religious epistemology that would justify certitude in matters of belief and morality. The role that he assigned to *phronema* (connecting reason and conscience) in his essay in 1859 provided a conceptual bridge between his practical experience of certitude when converting in 1845 and his theoretical explanation of certitude when publishing the *Grammar* in 1870.

His commitment to truth and holiness constitutes a bedrock foundation of religious morality in his thought. However, he never developed a systematic account of religious morality. Although his commentators typically focus upon his view of conscience to delve into aspects of moral discourse in his writings, a much broader perspective needs to be pursued to understand religious morality in his thought. His commitment to truth and holiness highlights his reliance upon reason and conscience to resolve his concerns with doctrine and salvation. By doing so he established a necessary connection between the realm of doctrine (in religious belief and morality) and the realm of salvation as a foundational context for understanding religious morality in his writings. Another major foundation of religious morality can be found in his religious epistemology that explains the connection between reason and belief.

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Chapter 3
Reason and Belief

Abstract Newman's religious epistemology provides a theoretical foundation of religious morality in his writings. His religious epistemology uses the concrete reasoning of informal inference in an interpretative process that justifies assent in matters of belief and morality. This interpretative process can be construed as his hermeneutics. The mental faculty in this process is called the Illative Sense. Informal inference is a concrete mode of reasoning that recognizes when there is a convergence of probabilities (or sufficient reasoning) to justify a conclusion. When this occurs the conclusion can be held as true in its own right in the assent of certitude – the conclusion that arises conditionally from the inferences can be held unconditionally in certitude. The subtlety here is that the subjective process of informal inference is used to justify the assertion of an objective truth in the assent of certitude: there is no subject-free objectivity in matters of religious belief and morality. The convergence of probabilities that constitutes sufficient reasoning represents a moral demonstration to justify moral certitude – this differs from practical certainty where a conclusion is merely reliable to act upon. Many analogies are used to illustrate this complex theory, such as comparing converging probabilities to the strands of a cable that make it sufficiently strong to bear weight (as inference can be sufficient to justify a conclusion). In this process, judgments in religious morality can be held as objectively true in the assent certitude.

Newman's fostered his commitment to truth and holiness by relying on reason and conscience to resolve his ongoing concerns with doctrine and salvation. That commitment constitutes a bedrock foundation of religious morality in his thought. Another foundation of religious morality is his religious epistemology using the concrete reasoning of informal inference to justify assent in religious belief. This interpretative process can be construed as his hermeneutics that he developed from early in his career and explored most fully in his *Grammar of Assent* in 1870. He explained the cogency that exists between reason and belief to counter an increasing separation of them in nineteenth century England: they can be consistent with each other.[1] He started writing extensively on the relation between reason and belief in

[1] Titus (2007, 2008).

G. Magill, *Religious Morality in John Henry Newman*,
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his *University Sermons* at Oxford in the 1830s.[2] By constructing his analysis in the *Grammar* around the distinction between inference and assent, he made an original contribution to the centuries old debate on the legitimacy of religious belief. He focused upon the concrete process of reasoning that justifies belief, though he avoided describing the work as a theological or philosophical treatise.[3] The genre of his explorations in his earlier Oxford sermons reflected the ad hoc nature of the topics that he addressed. His early sermons were not intended to present a coherent system of thought. Nonetheless, he later tried to provide a more systematic account, using the traditional language of scholastic theology, when he prepared (but did not publish) a preface for the French translation of his *University Sermons*. The Preface was published posthumously in 1937.[4]

Scholars typically turn to the *Grammar* to explore his understanding of informal inference and the assent of certitude. He intentionally titled his work *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent* to convey that he did not seek to provide a comprehensive theory: "My object … has been, not to form a theory which may account for … inference and assent, but to ascertain what is the matter of facts as regards them" (*GA*, 343). Nonetheless, a coherent account of his epistemology does emerge from the *Grammar*. Two purposes can be identified, as described in a remark by Edward Caswall, an Oratorian and confrère in Birmingham,[5] about a conversation with Newman: "Object of the book twofold. In the first part shows that you can believe what you cannot understand. In the second part that you can believe what you cannot absolutely prove" (*Phil. N*, II, 153).[6] At the core of his argument lies the Illative Sense, the mental capacity that facilitates the intellectual process of religious belief.

3.1 Illative Sense

Newman coined the term Illative Sense to refer to a personal form of holistic reasoning that connects inference and assent in religious belief.[7] His earlier *University Sermons* contained much of the later theory of the Illative Sense but there was no specific name for it in his early career.[8] Although the Illative Sense was not original, his achievement with the concept lies in his phenomenological description of its nature and its role in the theory of knowledge.[9] The purpose of the Illative Sense is

[2] Earnest and Tracey (2006), xiii.

[3] O'Connell (1985), 338.

[4] Tristram (1937), 241, 246.

[5] De Flon (2005).

[6] Sands (2006); Ker (1985), xi.

[7] Biemer (2000); Tolksdorf (2000); Magill (1992, 1994b); Evans (1979).

[8] Sillem (1969–1979), II, 29.

[9] Ekeh (2008); Richardson (2007), 158–159; Newman (1974).

to ascertain when the reasoning of informal inference may justify belief through the assent of certitude, contributing to the debate on the ethics of belief[10]:

> Thus the Illative Sense, that is, the reasoning faculty, … has its function in the beginning, middle, and end of all verbal discussion and inquiry, and in every step of the process. It is a rule to itself, and appeals to no judgment beyond its own; and attends upon the whole course of thought from antecedents to consequents, with a minute diligence and unwearied presence, which is impossible to a cumbrous apparatus of verbal reasoning (*GA*, 361–362).

To interpret what he meant by this dense description there needs to be an explanation of the relation between inference and assent.

3.1.1 Inference and Assent

A basic description of Newman's terminology is needed at the outset of an analysis of his epistemology. First, assent involves the apprehension of a proposition, "the mental assertion of an intelligible proposition" (*GA*, 188). This proposition can be held either in a notional or in a real manner. A notion involves an abstraction, "the abstraction which forms our representative notion of what it is" (*GA*, 372). In contrast, in real assent the mind "is directed towards things" (*GA*, 75). The distinction between notional and real assent introduces the distinction that is explored later between the intellect (with which notional assent is aligned) and the imagination (with which real assent is aligned):

> In its notional assents as well as in its inferences, the mind contemplates its own creations instead of things; in real, it is directed towards things, represented by the impressions which they have left on the imagination (*GA*, 75).

Second, assent can be either simple or complex. By simple assent he meant "that mode of Assent which is exercised … unconsciously" (*GA*, 189). In simple assent a proposition is held without much deliberation, in a process that is described as "unconscious reasoning" (*US*, 259): "that mode of assent which is exercised unconsciously, I may call simple assent" (*GA*, 189). In contrast, complex or reflex assent is "made consciously and deliberately" (*GA*, 189). Here, there is a more deliberative undertaking: "such assents as must be made consciously and deliberately, … I shall call complex or reflex assents" (*GA*, 189).

Third, assent is different from inference insofar as they hold a proposition on its own or in relation to relevant data. The basic distinction is that assent is unconditional whereas inference is conditional: "Assent is in its nature absolute and unconditional, … the act of inference, … is conditional" (*GA*, 157). This distinction is pivotal for his epistemology. The basic point is that the distinction refers to the way the proposition in each is affirmed as true. That is, "assent and inference are each of them the acceptance of a proposition" (*GA*, 172), but "inference, … holds propositions conditionally, and Assent, … unconditionally accepts them" (*GA*, 189). Truth

[10] Aquino (2004); Ker (1988), 648; Ferreira (1983c); Ferreira (1980), 23; Walgrave (1960), 235.

can be affirmed in either way: "Inference is the conditional acceptance of a proposition, Assent is the unconditional" (*GA*, 259). When we assent we affirm, for example, that Britain is an island; whereas with inference we affirm that Britain is an island because it is surrounded by the ocean. One is not truer than the other; rather, each affirms truth in different ways.

With inference a proposition is justified as a conclusion that is based upon relevant data. With regard to assent, a proposition is made as being true in itself.[11] The basic purpose of the *Grammar* was to explain how holding a proposition as true based on the data of informal inference can justify its acceptance in its own right as an assent of certitude:

> I shall now proceed; that is, to the consideration, first, of the act of assent to a proposition, which act is unconditional; next, of the act of inference, which goes before the assent and is conditional; and, thirdly, of the solution of the apparent inconsistency which is involved in holding that an unconditional acceptance of a proposition can be the result of its conditional verification (*GA*, 158).

Fourth, inference and assent function together in an integrative manner to justify certitude. With informal inference the relevant data fits together to justify a conclusion when there are sufficient reasons, even if demonstrative or logical arguments are lacking. With the assent of certitude the conclusion is affirmed on its own. The role of informal inference expresses the need for sufficient reasons, "reasons sufficient for a proof" (*GA*, 360). The role of assent is to affirm a proposition on its own: "Certitude is an assent, deliberate, unconditional, and conscious to a proposition as true" (*TP*, I, 127).

Fifth, the use of inference to justify the assent of certitude is described as being the function of the Illative Sense. The Illative Sense includes both the conditional reasoning of informal inference and unconditional assent: "Judgment then in all concrete matter is the architectonic faculty; and what may be called the Illative Sense, or right judgment in ratiocination, is one branch of it" (*GA*, 342). He contrasted this faculty of concrete reasoning with the abstract reasoning that is associated with logic or arithmetic; the Illative Sense deals with the "ratiocinative or illative faculty, not a mere operation as in the rules of arithmetic" (*GA*, 330). Making a similar point elsewhere, he referred to "the action of our illative judgment" (*GA*, Textual Appendix, 342).

In a letter to Charles Meynell on November 17, 1869 he considered the Illative Sense as "a grand word for a common thing" (*LD*, XXIV, 375). Also, in a long letter in April 1879 to his agnostic friend William Froude he explained that the Illative Sense was not unusual, being "common sense, good judgment, phronesis" (*LD*, XXIX, 119). He appears to have used the word "sense" to highlight its personal nature, as occurs in his description of conscience as a moral sense and a sense of duty, as will be discussed later.[12] It seems plausible that he was influenced by the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid (1710–1796) whose philosophy of common

[11] Ker (1988), 645, 648.

[12] Ker (1988), 648; Walgrave (1960), 351–352.

sense entailed a practical judgment within the general context of the debate on skepticism and reasonable doubt.[13] Other sources of the term Illative Sense can be traced to John Locke's use of "illation" and Richard Whateley's "illative conjunctions." However, it is also feasible that Newman's mastery of Latin led him etymologically to the adjective "illative" from "inferre" (to conclude).[14] Whatever the genesis of the Illative Sense, he used this idiosyncratic term to describe this process of using informal inference to justify religious belief through the assent of certitude.[15] This concrete process was inductive in character.

3.1.2 Inductive Process

Newman described the process of informal inference as a "mental process in concrete reasoning" (*GA*, 322). The inductive character of this process is reflected in its instinctive, intuitive, and inductive nature.

First, he described the instinctive nature of the process when contrasting it with the more discursive characteristic of formal reasoning: "We grasp the full tale of premisses and conclusion, *per modum unius*, – by a sort of instinctive perception of the legitimate conclusion in and through the premisses, but not by a formal juxtaposition of propositions" (*GA*, 301–302). Here he emphasized the "instinctive perception" that is involved.

Second, he understood informal inference that grasps the inferences and conclusion *per modum unius* as an intuitive process, explaining that we "see the truth all of a heap, by one act" as "a kind of intuition" (*Phil. N*, II, 75). Understanding informal inference as a kind of intuition emphasizes its integrative process without implying a series of separate mental acts.[16] The instinctive and intuitive nature of informal inference as an integrative process is obvious in a letter written in 1869, just before publishing his *Grammar*: "By instinct I mean a realization of a *particular*; by intuition, of a *general* fact – in both cases without *assignable* or *recognizable* media of realization" (*LD*, XXIV, 309). In this passage he associates instinct with intuition, using each term effectively interchangeably.[17]

Third, these instinctive and intuitive characteristics of the process of informal inference (which relies on converging probabilities) reinforce its inductive characteristic. In a theological paper written in 1853 he described the "complex argument consisting of accumulating and converging probabilities" as a "process of induction" contrasting it with the formal reasoning of logic: "I do not think the induction is a necessary proof or demonstration" (*TP*, I, 19). Also, in the Textual

[13] Griffin (2008); Phillips (2004), 12–16; Ferreira (1987), 174; Holyer (1985); Sillem (1969–1970), I, 102.

[14] Pailin (1969), 144; Zeno (1957), 13.

[15] Miller (2006).

[16] Ker (1985), xxxi; Sillem (1969–1970), I, 102; II, 75; Walgrave (1960), 109.

[17] Merrigan (1991), 45; Casey (1984), 103–132.

Appendix to the *Grammar* in 1870 he alluded to this process of informal inference as "the principle or form of an induction" (*GA*, 323), and "the instrument of induction" (*GA*, Textual Appendix, 340). He appears to use the term of induction fairly loosely, as was evident in a letter that he wrote to Froude in April 1879: "There is a faculty of the mind which I think I have called the inductive sense, … which decides for us, beyond any technical rules, when, how, etc. to pass from inference to assent" (*LD*, XXIX, 115). In this inductive process the connection between informal inference and the assent of certitude occurs through sufficient reasoning.

3.2 Sufficient Reasoning

To enlighten what Newman meant by this inductive process of sufficient reasoning it can be helpful to consider a perspective suggested by Bernard Lonergan who praised him for his emphasis upon historical and existential reality. Lonergan wrote: "I had become something of an existentialist from my study of Newman's *A Grammar of Assent*."[18] They were both skeptical about the role of logical discourse in verifying or justifying concrete conclusions. Referring to informal reasoning, Lonergan argued against the view that judging is only a matter of comparing concepts because such a process of verification only yields analytic propositions that do not deal with experience. Rather, he claimed that verification is a matter "of finding data that fits in with a hypothesis."[19] Also, in a previous work, Lonergan emphasized that in such a process of verification, meaning is ascertained as a function of different contexts in a holistic perspective.[20] Newman made a strikingly similar observation about the process of informal inference: "When the conclusion is assumed as a hypothesis it throws light on a multitude of collateral facts, accounting for them, and uniting them together in one whole" (*GA*, 323).

For Newman there is sufficient reasoning when the surrounding facts and the conclusion are accounted for and fit into a meaningful whole. He explained that when there are "a number of independent probable arguments, sufficient, when united, for a reasonable conclusion" the mind justifies that conclusion "by a mental comprehension of the whole case, and a discernment of its upshot" (*GA*, 291). The Illative Sense "is a capacity sufficient for the occasion, deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances" (*GA*, 355). It is worth noting that the idea of probable arguments converging together arose early in his writings, being mentioned in an Oxford University Sermon in July 1826 where he talked of "accumulated probabilities" (*US*, 15). In this interpretative process sufficient reasoning links antecedent inferences with the conclusion, con-

[18] Lonergan (1974), 276.

[19] Lonergan (1974), 273.

[20] Lonergan (1974), 141–142; Lonergan (1967), 120.

necting the inferences with the assent of certitude. This understanding of sufficient reasoning requires a clarification of the conditional character of informal inference.

3.2.1 Conditional Inference

One aspect of sufficient reasoning involves an accumulation of converging probabilities in the concrete process of informal inference. These related but distinct functions need closer scrutiny. To begin, sufficient reasoning occurs when the process of informal inference recognizes an accumulation of converging probabilities. This is tantamount to a proof, but obviously not in a logical or discursive sense:

> This is what is meant by a proposition being 'as good as proved', a conclusion as undeniable 'as if it were proved', and by the reasons for it 'amounting to a proof', for a proof is the limit of converging probabilities (*GA*, 321).

One aspect of sufficient reasoning is recognizing the convergence of probabilities that provide a "sufficient" basis for a conclusion to elicit certitude:

> I prefer to rely on that of an *accumulation* of various probabilities; … that from probabilities, we may construct legitimate proof, sufficient for certitude (*GA*, 411).

This use of converging probabilities in the *Grammar* is a development of his earlier concept of antecedent probabilities. He did not intend to draw a contrast between probability and certainty; rather he wanted to contrast probability with demonstration.[21] In a letter written just after his conversion when traveling in Italy in 1846, he wrote: "I use probable as opposed to demonstrative, not to certainty" (*LD*, XI, 293). His point was that an accumulation of facts, each of which is not demonstrative of a conclusion, can converge (as an accumulation of various probabilities) to justify a conclusion with certainty. He insisted that the process of informal inference, described as "implicit reason" (*US*, 259; *US*, 263) involved a method. When discussing this "method of concrete inference" (*GA*, 293), he explained that "such a process of reasoning is more or less implicit, and without the direct and full advertence of the mind exercising it" (*GA*, 292). He added, "there is a method in it, though it be implicit" (*GA*, 331).

The implicit method refers to informal inference recognizing converging probabilities as the necessary conditions for assent, even though they do not logically prove the conclusion: "For, though acts of assent require previous acts of inference, they require them, not as adequate causes, but as sine qua non conditions" (*GA*, 41). As indicated in a theological paper in 1868, inference "does not compel" the act of assent: "An act of Inference, explicit or implicit, ordinarily precedes, but does not compel, an act of Assent" (*TP*, I, 135). This stance contrasts with an opposing view, pervasive in his day, that requires a proportion between assent and evidence. He

[21] Ferreira (1987), 179–180; Ferreira (1983a); Bastable (1961).

described the position he opposed in this manner: when "evidence is addressed to the Reason, (it) compels the Reason to assent" (*US*, 191–192). This was the stance, for example, of empiricists like John Locke and William Paley who relied on evidence to justify conclusions in religious belief.[22]

Newman emphasized the importance of implicit reason in an Oxford University Sermon preached in 1840, entitled, "Explicit and Implicit Reason."[23] Here he sketched the outlines of the distinction between formal and informal reason that was so important for his analysis 30 years later in the *Grammar*. He distinguished between what he called "the original process of reasoning" and "the process of investigating our reasonings" (*US*, 258). He referred to the former as reasoning, which he called implicit reason, and to the latter as arguing, which he called explicit reason:

> We may denote, then, these two exercises of the mind as reasoning and arguing, or as conscious and unconscious reasoning, or as Implicit Reason and Explicit Reason (*US*, 259).

In this sermon he adopted the term "implicit reason" to convey two distinct but related points. On the one hand, he used the term to refer to "the original process of reasoning" that occurs in what he later described in the *Grammar* as simple assent, such as when "men gain a certain impression … from what comes before them" (*US*, 263). The task of explicit reason is to investigate these impressions. On the other hand, he used the term in a manner that anticipates his description of informal inference in the *Grammar* to justify a proposition or conclusion that can elicit the reflex assent of certitude. He conveyed this point by explaining how we can justify a belief or conviction:

> conviction for the most part follows, … upon a number of very minute circumstances together, which the mind is quite unable to count up and methodize in an argumentative form … This, indeed, is meant by what is called moral proof, in opposition to legal (*US*, 274).

This description of "implicit reason" anticipates his subsequent explanation of informal inference. This conditional character of informal inference in the process of sufficient reasoning is used to justify the unconditional character of assent, each being constituent functions of the Illative Sense.

3.2.2 Unconditional Assent

Sufficient reasoning justifies unconditional assent. Newman's point here was that the mind progresses from inference to assent in religious belief. His argument focused on this point:

[22] Dulles (2002), 37–38; Wainright (1995), 80–83; Fey (1976); Naulty (1973); Van Leeuwen (1970), 121–142.

[23] Lash (1970).

> the particular mode in which the mind progresses in concrete matter, viz. from merely probable antecedents to the sufficient proof of a fact or truth, and after the proof, to an act of certitude about it (*GA*, 329).

This text reflects the twofold role of sufficient reasoning: recognizing the convergence of probabilities that justify an assent of certitude. The sufficiency of proof arises insofar as converging probabilities are established, after which assent can be given legitimately. The text is consistent with his remarks in an 1879 correspondence that explained the conclusion as being apprehended in a "gradual process" by sifting the evidence in a manner that converges as sufficient proof (*LD*, XXIX, 116). The phrase "after the proof" should not be construed as necessarily intending a temporal progression.[24] He used this phrase to distinguish between inference in the converging probabilities and the assent of certitude. After all, he also explained that assent can occur "sometimes after much deliberation" and sometimes "by a clear and rapid act of the intellect" – but "always, however, by an unwritten summing-up" (*GA*, 291–292). By "an unwritten summing-up" he alludes to his implicit method of sufficient reasoning that connects assent with inference. This integrative process is rational. He insisted that the assent of certitude is a result of "reasoning rightly" (*GA*, 340) insofar as it occurs at the "bidding of reason" (*GA*, 345), constituting "a reasonable conclusion" (*GA*, 291) based upon "sufficient proof" (*GA*, 329). By sufficiency he meant recognizing "the limits of converging probabilities and the reasons sufficient for a proof" (*GA*, 360), that is, "sufficient for certitude" (*LD*, XXI, 146).

Certitude is a perception of truth that requires reason: "Certitude, … is the perception of a truth" (*GA*, 197). Certitude deals with "a judgment of our reason" (*GA*, 128). In an unpublished work, the *Proof of Theism* (1859), he emphasized the perception as being a reason-based judgment: "Thus terms come from propositions, and the ultimate idea before the human mind is a proposition, <judgement> not an object of simple apprehension" (*Phil. N*, II, 73).[25] His corpus provides extensive evidence that the rationality of the intellect connects inference and assent in an integrative manner. Some commentators suggest that he diminished the importance of the intellect in reaching certitude[26]; but that is a mistaken claim. This emphasis upon reasonable judgment means that although inference and assent are distinct, they are not separated from each other.

3.3 Newman's Hermeneutics

The use of the Illative Sense to ascertain when there is sufficient reasoning to justify certitude can be described as Newman's hermeneutics – doing so highlights the interpretative process of informal inference that justifies assent. The previous

[24] Ferreira (1980), 72.

[25] Sillem (1969–1970), II, 3; Boekraad and Tristram (1961), 103–125.

[26] Weatherby (1975), 55, 60–61.

sections explained the components of his hermeneutics, first exploring the concrete process of the Illative Sense that integrates informal inference and real assent, and second examining the meaning of sufficient reasoning. Recognizing that his argument was complex, he tried to clarify matters by providing helpful analogies. The following analogies are explored to shed light on his hermeneutics.

3.3.1 Analogies

A well known analogy is that of a polygon inscribed in a circle, recalling Newton's *Principia*.

> We know that a regular polygon, inscribed in a circle, its sides being continually diminished, tends to become that circle, as its limit; but it vanishes before it has coincided with the circle, so that its tendency to be the circle, though ever nearer fulfillment, never in fact gets beyond a tendency. In like manner, the conclusion in a real or concrete question is foreseen and predicted rather than actually attained; foreseen in the number and direction of accumulated premisses, which all converge to it, and as the result of their combination, approach it more nearly than any assignable difference, yet do not touch it logically (though only not touching it,) on account of the nature of the subject-matter, and the delicate and implicit character of at least part of the reasonings on which it depends (*GA*, 320–321).

For Newman "the real is the particular" (*GA*, 140). In the above passage he acknowledged the distinction between the inferences and assent insofar as the premisses "do not touch" the conclusion in a logical manner. Nonetheless, the accumulation approaches the conclusion so closely that the inferences effectively grow into it in the sense of "only not touching it."[27] By using this analogy he sought to explain that there is no gap between the inferences and the assent. The conclusion is justified because of recognizing the "tendency" of the inferences and the conclusion to become united, even though they remain logically distinct. The role of reason in this process is to reliably anticipate the conclusion in and through the "accumulated premisses" in the sense that they converge together to touch the conclusion for all practical purposes, that is, "more nearly than any assignable difference." This explanation is similar to a description that he provided in 1839 of reason which "advances and decides upon antecedent probabilities, that is, on grounds which do not reach as far as to touch precisely the desired conclusion, though they tend towards it, and may come very near it" (*US*, 223–224). So closely linked are the premisses and conclusion that they effectively coalesce in the sense that nothing else would reasonably fit, no other result would be plausible. He also used the analogy of dovetailing to make the same point, that the conclusion meaningfully accounts for the cumulative inferences[28]:

> We see a proposition to be true, when we can make it dovetail so closely into our existing knowledge, and when nothing else but it will so dovetail, that is, when we have proofs of it;

[27] Lash (1979), 17–18.

[28] Norris (1977), 74.

> for a proof is a necessary inference from facts, such that it just fits the proposition that they are said to prove (*TP*, I, 18–19).

He used yet another analogy to make his point. He referred to "a geometrical staircase" to illustrate this process. In a paper written in 1861 the informal nature of proof that enables the inferences to support the conclusion, he explained: "Each part depends on each other and the weight is thrown about on supports in a hundred directions. This illustrates the *nature* of proof" (*Phil. N*, II, 133).

These analogies shed light on his hermeneutics in the sense of clarifying the relation between informal inference and the assent of certitude. The conclusion is justified when it can account for and give meaning to the converging inferences. This concrete process is essentially an interpretative undertaking, being at the core of his hermeneutics. The conclusion "is proved interpretativè" (*GA*, 323) because "when the conclusion is assumed as a hypothesis it throws light on a multitude of collateral facts, accounting for them, and uniting them together in one whole." (*GA*, 323).

This interpretative process anticipated similar insights of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). For Wittgenstein the epistemic force of certainty arises from facts that rest on the truth of the matter in question, so that it would be irrational to discard this truth as certain.[29] This process can be understood as a critical threshold for certainty just as the boiling point of water is a critical threshold when water changes to steam.[30]

The "question of sufficiency" (*GA*, 316) characterizes the process of informal inference. He specifically includes the word "sufficient" when recognizing "a number of independent probable arguments, sufficient, when united, for a reasonable conclusion" (*GA*, 291). This approach does not exclude further evidence or arguments: when there is sufficient reasoning the conclusion is amply justified, even if further evidence later accrues. Once again, he used a helpful analogy to make this point. When a judge in court argues that "convergence and combination" of inferential probabilities reach a reliable conclusion, the proof "might have been ten times stronger than it was, but it was still a proof for all that, and sufficient for its conclusion" (*GA*, 327). Adopting a similar analogy, that of witnesses, he wrote to his friend William Froude on April 29, 1879: "A hundred and one eye witnesses adds strength to the inference drawn from the evidence of a hundred, but not to the assent which that evidence creates" (*LD*, XXIX, 115). He used this analogy again in the *Grammar* to make a similar point about interpreting through convergence in a holistic manner:

> we often hear of the exploits of some great lawyer, judge or advocate, who is able in perplexed cases, when common minds see nothing but a hopeless heap of facts, foreign or contrary to each other, to detect the principle which rightly interprets the riddle, and, to the admiration of all hearers, converts a chaos into an orderly and luminous whole (*GA*, 372).

[29] McCarthy (1982), 114.

[30] Ferreira (1980), 59, 68; Ferreira (1987), 188–189.

Perhaps it is in his famous analogy of the cable that the argument of sufficiency is the clearest. In a letter written on July 6, 1864 to John Walker (1800–1873), a Catholic priest and one of his major correspondents, he adopted an argument that developed the analogical reasoning of Bishop Butler (though they drew different conclusions about the relation between a conclusion and its preceding inferences).[31]

> The best illustration of what I hold is that of a *cable* which is made up of a number of separate threads, each feeble, yet together as sufficient as an iron rod. An iron rod represents mathematical or strict demonstration; a cable represents moral demonstration, which is an assemblage of probabilities separately insufficient for certainty, but, when put together, irrefragable. A man who said 'I cannot trust a cable, I must have an iron bar,' would, *in certain given cases*, be irrational and unreasonable: – so too is a man who says I must have a rigid demonstration, not moral demonstration, of religious truth…. For myself, I never that I recollect, took this ground of 'the *more* probable,' but of a certitude which lay in an assemblage and accumulation of probabilities, which *rationally demanded* to be considered sufficient for certitude (*LD*, XXI, 146).

By comparing the iron rod with the combined strands of a cable, he was contrasting the logical demonstration of abstract reasoning reaching certitude in concrete matters. Though formal inference can provide demonstration in the abstract matters of logic, he insisted on the following when writing to Froude in 1879: "concrete matter does not admit of demonstration… the laws of the human mind … command and force it to accept as true and to assent to propositions which are not logically demonstrated" (*LD*, XXIX, 113–114). In this letter he recalled an important remark that he had made in 1870 when writing the *Grammar*: "There are many truths in concrete matter, which no one can demonstrate, yet everyone unconditionally accepts" (*GA*, 160).

This insight had a significant impact on Bernard Lonergan in the twentieth century who acknowledged the influence of Newman. Lonergan argued that when we make probable judgments our insights are virtually proved (echoing Newman's language) when there are no further pertinent questions.[32] Lonergan also explained that when true judgments arise from converging probabilities, such judgments are virtually unconditioned in the sense that they can be affirmed absolutely. To clarify his point, he explained that probabilities can approach true judgment as a limit, yet logically remain short of that limit, just as Newman had conveyed in his analogy of the polygon.[33] The distinction between inference and assent does not mean there is an epistemological gap between them that needs to be bridged by the will.[34] Nonetheless, the will can have a role to play in this interpretative process of his hermeneutics.

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[31] Butler (1961).

[32] Lonergan (1992), 315; Lonergan (1974), 273.

[33] Lonergan (1992), 299–300; Lonergan (1974), 273, 299.

[34] Ker (1988), 648; Ker (1985), lxvi; Ferreira (1980), 23; Walgrave (1960), 235.

3.3.2 *Role of the Will*

Newman's vocabulary indicates there is an obligation to affirm a conclusion as true, using words like "duty" and "responsibility" that raise a *prima facie* association with the will. To give an example, the following passage might suggest that he tried to combine both reason (as perception) and the will (as duty) in justifying assent:

> We have arrived at these conclusions … by the action of our own minds, by our own individual perception of the truth in question, under a sense of duty to those conclusions and with an intellectual conscientiousness (*GA*, 318).

However, the preceding discussion indicates that he associated the "duty to those conclusions" with reason, being "made under a sense of duty and the guidance of the judgment" (*TP*, I, 121). He did not associate the duty with the will.[35] This association of duty with reason is emphasized by the words "with an intellectual conscientiousness." The alignment of duty with reason is most evident in this claim: "certitude … is an active recognition of propositions as true, such as is the duty of each individual himself to exercise at the bidding of reason" (*GA*, 345).

To give another example, his use of words like "ought" and "responsibility" can suggest an affinity with the will. But his point again was to highlight the rational constraint of the inferences: "this is a conclusion of which he can be certain, and ought to be certain, he will be incurring a grave responsibility, if he does not accept it as certain, and act upon the certainty of it … This I conceive to be the real method of reasoning in concrete matters" (*GA*, 291–292).

Moreover, he adopted the vocabulary of freedom that also can be associated with the will. In an earlier theological paper written in 1865 he explained: "certitude is … a free act (to speak generally), just as the acts of conscience are free and depend upon our will" (*TP*, I, 121). Once again, upon closer scrutiny it is clear that he used the concept of freedom to emphasize that the conclusion is not compelled but requires the active recognition of the individual: "assent is an act of the mind, … It is a free act, a personal act for which the doer is responsible" (*GA*, 232). That is, assent is free insofar as it is not compelled, though there is a duty or responsibility (based on the persuasiveness of reason) to affirm the conclusion.

This process did not require a leap of the will to bridge the inferences and the assent.[36] These passages emphasize that Newman intended the argument of converging probabilities in the process of informal inference as a rational endeavor, as illustrated by the analogy of the polygon.[37] In this regard, his rational approach can

[35] Merrigan (1991), 247.

[36] Dupré (2002), 148; Newman (1986), 173; Pojman (1986), 86; Fey (1976), 105, 114, 120 Pailin (1969), 103, 168–170, 177.

[37] Maddox (2007), 77, 86; Lash (1979), 17–18.

be compared constructively to the approach of Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), even though the two scholars did not engage each other's corpus.[38]

Nonetheless, Newman acknowledged a role for the will that follows after reason's intellectual judgment. In a letter to William Froude written in 1879 he confirmed that the will follows reason, and not vice versa: "I hold most distinctly that … the will itself ever follows … intellectual judgment" (*LD*, XXIX 119). In a passage written in 1853 Newman suggests that a prospective role for the will deals with its capacity to hinder or stifle certitude.[39]

> The will cannot absolutely create it, for it is the natural and direct result of conviction, but the will can hinder that direct result taking place…. The will then, though it cannot create <force> certainty, can stifle it (*TP*, I, 14–15).

In another passage he suggested that the will might assist certitude by removing obstacles. In a letter to William Froude in 1879 he clarified how the will can resist or enable certitude: "it must be recollected, that, since nothing concrete admits of demonstration, and there is always a residuum of imperfection in the proof, it is always also possible, perhaps even plausible to resist a conclusion"; he continues to explain that there can be cases "in which excited, timid, narrow, feeble, or oversensitive minds" encounter a single difficulty that prevents them from making an assent; in such cases he identifies a role for the will: they should "put this difficulty aside by a vigorous act of the will" (*LD*, XXIX, 119).

In other words, he recognized that although the will does not justify assent it can create an obstruction ("resist a conclusion") or remove an obstacle ("put this difficulty aside") in the process of assent. The will is not needed to bridge informal inference and assent. His hermeneutics relied upon concrete reasoning in the process of informal inference and assent to justify objective truth.

3.4 Objective Truth

The Illative Sense integrates informal inference and assent to justify certitude as an objective truth. "Certitude, as I have said, is the perception of a truth … by certitude about a thing is to be understood the knowledge of its truth" (*GA*, 197). The integration of informal inference and assent means that, as explained previously, "an unconditional acceptance of a proposition can be the result of its conditional verification" (*GA*, 158). This means that an objective truth can be justified by a subjective mode of reasoning. Yet, he repudiated subjectivism as a hallmark of evangelicalism and of liberalism or secular rationalism.[40]

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[38] Ferreira (2001, 2009); Ondrako (2006), 154–159; Jost (1995); Ferreira (1991), 150–151; Coulson (1981), 49, 69, 71.

[39] Ferreira (1980), 53–56, 70–75.

[40] Conn (2007).

3.4.1 Subjective Process

The relation between objective truth and its subjective perception is captured by the distinction between certitude and certainty: "certitude is a mental state; certainty is a quality of propositions" (*GA*, 344). In an earlier passage in the *Grammar* he explored this distinction in detail, which he described in this way.

> This I conceive to be the real method of reasoning in concrete matters; and it has these characteristics: – First, it does not supersede the logical form of inference, but is one and the same with it; only it is no longer an abstraction, but carried out into the realities of life, … Next, … such a process of reasoning is more or less implicit, … And thirdly, in this investigation of the method of concrete inference, we have not advanced one step towards depriving inference of its conditional character; for it is still … dependent on premisses…. It follows that what to one intellect is a proof is not so to another, and that the certainty of a proposition does properly consist in the certitude of the mind which contemplates it. And this of course may be said without prejudice to the objective truth or falsehood of propositions, … because not all men discriminate them in the same way (*GA*, 292–393).

Several points need to be highlighted.[41] First, informal inference is distinct from logical reasoning. Second, the implicit process of informal inference constitutes what has been discussed as being sufficient reasoning. Third, its conclusion remains conditional upon the preceding inferences. Fourth, the conditional conclusion of informal inference justifies the assent of certitude whereby the conclusion is held unconditionally as an objective truth. He explained that the subjective process to reach objective truth, integrating informal inference and assent, belongs to the Illative Sense – "this power of judging and concluding, when in its perfection, I call the Illative Sense" (*GA*, 353):

> the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matter is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty, the perfection or virtue of which I have called the Illative Sense (*GA*, 345).

The problem is that individuals will vary in deciding when the conditional conclusion warrants being held unconditionally, that is, when the propositional certainty is affirmed as an objective truth. Because the "proof" that warrants this transition can vary among individuals, Newman connected the "certainty of a proposition" with the subjective "certitude of the mind" – yet also asserts that objective truth is not compromised in this process. He wanted to emphasize that there is no subject-free objectivity in his hermeneutics:

> Thus in concrete reasonings … We judge for ourselves … and our criterion of truth is not so much the manipulation of propositions, as the intellectual and moral character of the person maintaining them, and the ultimate silent effect of his arguments or conclusions upon our minds (*GA*, 302).

This point was clear in his mind from his early career as an Anglican Vicar. In a letter to a fellow Vicar, Simeon Lloyd Pope, he wrote on August 15, 1830: "Practical matters cannot be defended by argument … they are determined by the ethos of the

[41] Ferreira (1980), 62–65.

agent … who … adopts his measures … on the dictates of an internal unproduceable sense" (*LD*, II, 264). Here surfaces the intellectual ethos that characterized his epistemology.[42] When he developed this insight in 1870 he described it in this way:

> there is a certain ethical character, … a mode of viewing the question and of arguing, which is formally and normally, naturally and divinely, the *organum investigandi* given is for gaining religious truth (*GA*, 499).

This emphasis upon the subjective process of informal reasoning is equivalent to his earlier description of implicit reason in his University Sermons. In a sermon preached in 1839 he explained that "Faith is a moral principle" in the sense that it depends on "moral temperament" (*US*, 191). Also, in a sermon preached in 1840 he emphasized the "personal endowments" that are involved in this process, which by analogy he compared to "the ascent of a skilful mountaineer up a literal crag" – the mind has a versatility that "makes progress not unlike the 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, – not by rule, but by an inward faculty" (*US*, 257). This subjective process entails "an intellectual act, and it takes its character from the moral state of the agent" (*US*, 249–250). His emphasis upon personal disposition was to emphasize the role of the subject in the process of reaching certitude and not merely to respond narrowly to the rationalist challenge, as suggested by some scholars.[43] Furthermore, his approach is broadly consistent with theories today on philosophical psychology that explore character and virtue.[44]

Two conclusions can be made about these passages that connect propositional certainties and personal certitude involving the character of the person maintaining them. On the one hand, he emphasized that he did not base his justification of concrete truth on the discursive reason of formal inference. That is, he rejected "the manipulation of propositions" as a criterion of truth because formal inference was "only concerned with the correlation of propositions" (*TP*, I, 135). On the other hand, he emphasized the importance of subjective perception ("the intellectual and moral character of the person") in the process of recognizing and affirming concrete truth. He made a similar point a few pages later: "truth there is, and attainable it is, but … its rays stream upon us through the medium of our moral as well as our intellectual being" (*GA*, 311). In another passage he contrasted these modes of reasoning. He explained there can be a "variety of interpretations" that explains how "men differ so widely from each other in religious and moral perceptions"; but such variety "does not prove that there is no objective truth, because not all men are in possession of it" (*GA*, 375).

For Newman objective truth in matters of certitude is dependent upon a subjective process. He argued strenuously that the subjective process of assent does not prejudice the perception of objective truth. Justifying the assent of certitude requires

[42] Magill (1993b).

[43] Newman (1979), 144, 149.

[44] Titus (2009a, b).

the proposition to be objectively true: "let the proposition to which the assent is given be as absolutely true as the reflex act pronounces it to be, that is, objectively true as well as subjectively" (*GA*, 195–196). His interest in justifying objective truth through the subjective process of informal inference clarifies the need for both abstract and concrete reasoning in his hermeneutics.

3.4.2 Concrete and Abstract Reasoning

Newman accorded a role both for concrete reasoning and abstract reasoning with regard to the perception of objective truth. His understanding of concrete reasoning can be summarized in this way: the unconditional affirmation of a proposition that characterizes the objective truth of certitude means that the conclusion is held independently from the preceding inferences.

This independence typifies the unconditional nature of certitude that constitutes its objective truth: "so is assent also independent of our acts of inference" (*GA*, 169). Likewise, he clearly understood the conditional nature of informal inference to refer to the dependence of the conclusion: "Inference, being conditional. … does not hold a proposition for its own sake, but as dependent upon others, and those others it entertains for the sake of the conclusion" (*GA*, 264). In a theological paper in 1865 he again alluded to the independence of assent by distinguishing it from the means that led to it, explaining that certitude is an affirmation of a proposition "apart from the means by which I gained it" (*TP*, I, 126). The independent or unconditional nature of assent is based upon the proposition being objectively true, having an objective existence beyond its subjective affirmation in assent. In a theological paper written in 1865, a few years before publishing the *Grammar*, he explained:

> Next, what is an act of certitude? it is an assent to a proposition as true; by an assent to a proposition as true, I mean the assertion of my intellect, that what it is contemplating subjectively, has an existence outside of me (*TP*, I, 127).

This basic concept of certitude being objectively true in the sense of existing independently of the subject appeared early in Newman's career. In an essay written in 1835 the concept arose with regard to truth in reference to religion:

> By Objective Truth is meant the Religious System considered *as existing in itself*, external to this or that particular mind: To believe in Objective Truth is … to come before and bow before the import of such propositions, as if we were contemplating what is real and independent of human judgment" (*Ess*, I, 34).

For Newman objective truth is tantamount to the proposition existing independently of it being perceived: the conclusion is unconditionally true as if resting in itself.[45] His distinction between conditional and unconditional constitutes the distinction between dependence and independence from the inferences.[46] Nonetheless,

[45] Ferreira (1985), 173–174.

[46] Ferreira (1985), 167, 173.

the perception of the truth is not independent of human judgment ("as if we were contemplating what is real and independent").[47] As indicated above, there is no subject-free objectivity in concrete matters of certitude.

Bernard Lonergan made a similar point acknowledging his indebtedness to Newman's thought.[48] For Lonergan objectivity involves what is independent of the concrete subject but is not reached without the subject's involvement. He explains that it is illusory to pursue objectivity apart from the subject's mental dynamism because of the inseparable connection between subject and object. In human acts of knowing the subject and object are inextricably connected. This is the main point that had such an influence on Lonergan: objective reality must be perceived in relation to the subject.[49] He respected Newman's hermeneutics noting that any systematic account of meaning relies upon a shift from abstract or notional perception to experiential judgments, such as in real assent.[50] Lonergan adopted a stance similar to Newman's hermeneutics when explaining that a concrete conclusion can arise in an objective manner from an interpretation of accumulated data: "its ground is the objective configuration of the moment as interpreted through the accumulated insights of experienced judgment."[51] That is, Lonergan insisted that objectivity requires discernment by a concrete subject: "objectivity is reached through the self-transcendence of the concrete existing subject."[52]

However, Newman also recognized the role of abstract reasoning with regard to the perception of objective truth. He acknowledged that objective truth is normally associated with its demonstrability through abstract reasoning. He explained: "Truth certainly, as such, rests upon grounds intrinsically and objectively and abstractedly demonstrative" (*GA*, 410). It is mistaken to argue that he disparaged what is notional or abstract as argued by some commentators.[53] He accorded to abstract reasoning, or formal inference, the role of analytically verifying and communicating the certitude arising from informal inference.[54]

Abstract reason has a secondary role insofar as the discursive process of formal inference cannot replace the flexibility of informal inference to justify assent: "inference, considered in the sense of verbal argumentation" is not "the adequate basis of assent" (*GA*, 287). In his letter to William Froude on April 29, 1878, he emphasized this point: "Nothing surely have I insisted on more earnestly in my Essay on Assent, than on the necessity of thoroughly subjecting abstract propositions

[47] Ferreira (1980), 63–64.

[48] Lonergan (1972), 338.

[49] Melchin (1987), 6; Boekraad (1972), 189; Sillem (1969–1970), I, 8; Boekraad (1955), 128–129.

[50] Gallagher (2004); Egan (1996); Miller (1992); Hammond (1989); Worgul (1977); Coulson (1975); Lonergan (1972), 169, 261, 316.

[51] Lonergan (1967), 5.

[52] Lonergan (1972), 217, 338.

[53] Newman (1986), 175; D'Arcy (1931), 114.

[54] Merrigan (1991), 117, 122, 179.

to concrete" (*LD*, XXIX, 116). In other words, formal inference has a secondary role because "inference comes short of proof in concrete matters" (*GA*, 269).

Nonetheless, the demonstrative function of formal inference can provide abstract confirmation that a particular conclusion is objectively true. Formal inference can ascertain the truthfulness of a proposition in an objective and abstract manner. It is this abstract function to verify and communicate objective truth that Newman appreciated. From early in his career he extolled discursive reason as having a "critical" function to "test and verify" (*US*, 183) propositions, including those reached by informal inference. He explained that the discursive reasoning of formal inference is "an analysis" that sets out "to compare, discriminate, judge, and decide" (*US*, 207), or "to analyze, verify, methodize, and exhibit" (*US*, 263), in a "process of analyzing and describing … which takes place upon reflection" (*US*, 256). In an Oxford University Sermon that he preached in 1840, he explained that formal inference, or explicit reason, occurs "when the mind reflects upon itself, … and attempts to analyze" (*US*, 257) in a process that engenders "science" or "proof" or "system" (*US*, 259).

Explicit reason is used "to analyze, verify, methodize, and exhibit" (*US*, 263). He noted that such an abstract process tends to be "critical, not creative" in the sense that it "will not be able to build up" (*US*, 276), hinting at the constructive role he assigns to the implicit reason of informal inference. In a theological paper written in 1863 he explained that by the discursive reason of formal inference we "employ our logical powers" to give the proposition affirmed by certitude a "consistent shape" and thereby attribute to it "objective reality" (*TP*, I, 95).[55] The critical function of formal inference is to support or verify the conclusion as being objectively true. Moreover, formal inference helps to communicate the conclusion as true by using the shared language of logic and discursive reasoning. By articulating the conclusion in a "consistent shape" formal inference provides what Newman described as an "objective shape" to justify it with others:

> Reasoning by rule and in words is too natural to us…. Our inquiries spontaneously fall into scientific sequence, and we think in logic, as we talk in prose, without aiming at doing so. However sure we are of the accuracy of our instinctive conclusions, we as instinctively put them into words, as far as we can; as preferring, if possible, to have them in an objective shape which we can fall back upon, – first for our own satisfaction, then for justification with others. Such a tangible defense of what we hold, inadequate as it necessarily is, considered as an analysis of our ratiocination in its length and breadth, nevertheless is in such sense associated with our holdings, and so fortifies and illustrates them, that it acts as a vivid apprehension acts, giving them luminousness and force. Thus inference becomes a sort of symbol of assent, and even bears upon action (*GA*, 286).

This passage indicates both functions of formal inference. First, formal inference articulates the conclusion in a consistent or objective shape that we can fall back upon "for our own satisfaction" – to support or verify that the conclusion of informal inference can be shown to be abstractly true. Second, formal inference articulates the conclusion in a consistent or objective shape that we can fall back upon

[55] Terril (2004), 62–89.

"for justification with others" – to communicate with others that the conclusion is objectively true in a manner they can comprehend through discursive reasoning. That is, formal inference puts the conclusion of informal inference into the "scientific" form of "logic" using analytical reasoning ("as an analysis of our ratiocination in its length and breadth") to present "an objective shape" and a "tangible defense" that can abstractly verify the proposition for ourselves and for others.

In other words, formal inference checks the logical coherence between informal inference and other verifiable or demonstrable data. The "instinctive conclusions" that are perceived subjectively by informal inference can be put into "objective shape" by formal inference, thereby coalescing subjective and objective ways of affirming truth. His point here is to distinguish the subjective perception of informal inference from the objective articulation of formal inference, while indicating that they function in an integrative manner in his hermeneutics. A year after writing the *Grammar*, in the 1871 preface to the *University Sermons*, he reiterated the secondary role of formal inference. He explained that discursive reason can provide retrospective and analytical support for the implicit acts of informal inference:

> Reasoning, thus retrospectively employed in analyzing itself, results in a specific science or art, called logic, which is a sort of bringing out to advantage the implicit acts on which it has proceeded (*US*, xii).

Rhetoric was very important for Newman.[56] This passage provides a basis for an important argument by John Coulson who surprisingly makes no reference to the passage. Coulson suggests that Newman used the discursive reason of formal inference to understand in retrospect what informal inference does in a forward fashion. He cites Newman's polygon expanding into the circle as an example of this retrospective analysis to explain in the discursive manner of formal inference the concrete process of informal inference.[57] In this observation, Coulson astutely noticed Newman's interest in both the subjective process of informal inference (that functions in a forward fashion) and the objective process of formal inference (that functions in a retrospective manner).

These forward and retrospective aspects of informal inference are best understood as epistemological distinctions rather than as chronological attributes insofar as they can occur virtually simultaneously. In sum, the abstract reasoning of formal inference is crucial for Newman's hermeneutics,[58] even though the concrete reasoning of informal inference has precedence when discussing certitude.[59] This integrative role of concrete and abstract reasoning, especially with regard to the meaning of objective truth, helps to clarify what he meant by excluding doubt from the process.

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[56] Britt (1992).

[57] Coulson (1981), 45, 54, 62, 71.

[58] O'Donoghue (1978), 141–142; O'Donoghue (1975), 245; O'Donoghue (1973); O'Donoghue (1970), 21.

[59] Ker (1985), lxvi; Ker (1977b), 67–68.

3.4.3 Exclusion of Doubt

In general, Newman sought to exclude doubt from his understanding of certitude. When discussing his own conversion, he famously remarked: "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt, as I understand the subject; difficulty and doubt are incommensurate" (*Apo*, 214). He talked of "unreserved assent" (*GA*, 170) to convey its unconditional and independent nature, aligning it with the exclusion of doubt: "if assent is the acceptance of truth, … and no one can hold conditionally what by the same act he holds to be true, here too is reason for saying that assent is an adhesion without reserve or doubt to the proposition to which it is given" (*GA*, 172). The abstract reasoning of formal inference excludes doubt because the conclusion follows logically or demonstrably from the inferences, such as occurs in notional assent: "In demonstrative matters assent excludes the presence of doubt" (*GA*, 173).

Yet he also argued that the unconditional nature of real assent means that doubt is excluded: "assent certainly is always unconditional; … an undoubting and unhesitating act of the mind" (*GA*, 172–173). By indicating that the real assent of certitude excludes doubt he was not mistaking the justification of assent by informal inference with that of formal inference. Formal inference excludes doubt because its conclusion is logically proven. But with informal inference and real assent the conclusion is only virtually proven in the sense that it "cannot be otherwise":

> We are considered to feel, rather than to see, its cogency; and we decide, not that the conclusion must be, but that it cannot be otherwise. We say, that we do not see our way to doubt it, that it is impossible to doubt, that we are bound to believe it, that we should be idiots, if we did not believe (*GA*, 317).

This phrase anticipates his explanation of the conclusion being "as good as proved" a few pages later: "a man would be irrational who did not take it to be virtually proved" (*GA*, 323). This means there should be no practical reason to doubt the conclusion, even if doubt is theoretically or logically possible because of the distinction between the inferences and the conclusion. A few pages later he provided the helpful illustration of a judge instructing a jury to clarify what he meant by excluding doubt. The "kind of evidence necessary for a verdict of guilty" (*GA*, 325) is equivalent to "what evidence was sufficient for the proof, for the certitude of that fact" (*GA*, 326) of the jury's decision. If the jury "had any doubt, that is, reasonable doubt" (*GA*, 325) it would not convict. By clarifying that by "doubt" he meant "reasonable doubt" it becomes clear that the doubt excluded by assent in only reasonable doubt.

Here the example of the jury can be recalled to shed light on his explanation of inference and assent. He explained that "a proved or certain conclusion, that is, a conclusion of the truth of the allegation against the prisoner" can be made "judging reasonably" based upon "probable reasons viewed in their convergence and combination" (*GA*, 327). He explained more fully, connecting certitude with the analogy of dovetailing used elsewhere:

> And whereas the certitude is viewed by the judge as following converging probabilities, which constitute a real, though only a reasonable, not an argumentative, proof, so it will be observed in this particular instance, that, in illustration of the general doctrine which I have

> laid down, the process is one … of various details accumulating and of deductions fitting into each other … tending to a proof, which of course might have been ten times stronger than it was, but was still a proof for all that, and sufficient for its conclusion (*GA*, 327).

He emphasized that because an argument might be strengthened with other inferences does not comprise its sufficiency for certitude. In a letter to William Froude on April 29, 1879 he explained: "A hundred and one eye witnesses adds strength to the inference drawn from the evidence of a hundred, but not to the assent which that evidence creates" (*LD*, XXIX, 115). Herein lies his point about the proof being beyond reasonable doubt: although other inferences could be acquired from a theoretical or logical perspective, that possibility does not comprise the proof being sufficient for the conclusion. The lack of reasonable doubt (in the sense that practical doubt would be unreasonable given the inferences) means that there is no concrete reason to doubt the conclusion.[60] Another way to explain that certitude constitutes an objective truth, perceived through the subjective process of informal inference and assent, and in a manner that excludes reasonable doubt, is to appreciate that certitude relies upon what Newman referred to as moral demonstration.

3.5 Moral Demonstration

To understand what he meant by moral demonstration, a brief summary of his contrast between formal and informal inference can be helpful. Although he gave an important role to formal inference in his analysis of certitude, it was nonetheless secondary. He recognized the weakness of formal or logical inference: "consistency is not always the guarantee of truth" (*GA*, 323). He noted in a theological paper in 1863, referring to truth resulting from the consistency of formal inference: "the truth is consistent, … but the consistent need not be truth" (*TP*, I, 114). Earlier, in a sermon preached in 1840, he explained that when using explicit reason (formal inference) "the analysis … does not make the conclusion correct" (*US*, 259). In contrast, he relied on informal inference as the primary mode of reasoning when justifying or proving certitude: "Logic then does not really prove; … for genuine proof in concrete matter we require an *organon* more delicate, versatile, and elastic than verbal argumentation" (*GA*, 271).

3.5.1 Moral Certitude

This "*organon*" referred to his "*organum investigandi*" (*GA*, 499) whose sufficient reasoning engages what can be construed as moral demonstration:

> This certitude and this evidence are often called moral; a word which I avoid, as having a very vague meaning; but using it here for once, I observe that moral evidence and moral

[60] Ferreira (1987), 172, 174, 181, 189–197; Ferreira (1985), 172; Ferriera (1983b); Brunton (1968); Boekraad and Tristram (1961), 177.

> certitude are all that we can attain, … in the case of ethical and spiritual subjects, such as religion (*GA*, 318).

His approach to certitude can be astutely summarized by recalling the core insight of his hermeneutics, the "conclusion … is as good as proved, and a man would be irrational who did not take it to be virtually proved … it is proved interpretativè" (*GA*, 323). His point is to move from probabilistic reasoning to propositional certainty in the sense that informal inference provides legitimate proof for the assent of certitude. This is what he meant by his analogy of the cable as moral demonstration, referred to previously: "a cable represents moral demonstration, which is an assemblage of probabilities separately insufficient for certainty, but, when put together, irrefragable" (*LD*, XXI, 146). By using the phrase "moral demonstration" he did not mean practical certainty,[61] as being safe to act upon. In a letter to Richard Holt Hutton on April 27, 1870, he emphasized: "I mean to assert that probable arguments may lead to a conclusion which is not only safe to act upon, but is to be embraced to be true" (*LD*, XXV, 114).

3.5.2 Practical Certainty

There is a danger that needs to be avoided here. A potential source of confusion about his use of the word "moral" arises from his comparison of informal inference with Aristotle's *phronesis*. His reference to *phronesis* was intended to clarify not the assent of certitude but the role of informal inference whose conclusion is conditional upon the inferences: "It is not with assent, but with the controlling principle in inferences that I am comparing *phronesis*" (*GA*, 356; see, *Phil. N*, I, 163; *TP*, II, 120–21).

The Aristotelian scholar Richard Whateley influenced Newman as a young scholar during his early years at Oxford. Indeed, Newman acknowledged Aristotle as his intellectual master in morality (*GA*, 354, 430; *Idea*, 109–111).[62] Although scholars dispute the extent of Aristotle's influence on his epistemology,[63] he was not a straightforward Aristotelian, as suggested by some.[64] However, he agreed with Aristotle's focus upon what is practical, especially upon the practical certainty that is typically sufficient for moral action:

> As regards moral duty, the subject is fully considered in the well-known ethical treatises of Aristotle. He calls the faculty that guides the mind in matters of conduct, by the name of *phronesis*, or judgment. This is the directing, controlling, and determining principles in such matters, personal and social. What it is to be virtuous, … what is right and wrong in a particular case, … Such is Aristotle's doctrine and it is undoubtedly true (*GA*, 353–354).

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[61] Ferreira (1980), 49.

[62] Ross (1975); Hardie (1980); Verbeke (1978), 180–184, 189–190; Aristotle (1975).

[63] Casey (1984), 206–207, 233; Verbeke (1978), 191; Sillem (1969–1970), I, 151–163.

[64] William (1960), 247–256, 307–316.

However, Newman clarified how his approach differed from Aristotle's. He was concerned that Aristotle did not display the interest in objective truth in concrete matters that was so important for Newman's religious epistemology:

> Though Aristotle, in his Nichomachean Ethics, speaks of *phronesis* … as being concerned generally with contingent matter (vi.4), or what I have called the concrete, … he does not treat of it in that work in its general relation to truth and the affirmation of truth, but only as it bears upon 'ta prakta' (*GA*, 354, note 1).

In a letter to William Froude in April 1879 he explained the difference in their use of *phronesis*: the province of Aristotle's *phronesis* was virtue and not the inquiry into assent regarding concrete truth ('inquisitio veri') that Newman focused upon. This distinction enabled Newman to distinguish himself not only from Aristotle, but also from other giants in his day like John Locke and Bishop Butler who based conclusions as matters of practical certainty upon the varying strengths of the preceding inferences[65]:

> There is a faculty in the mind which I think I have called the inductive sense, which, when properly cultivated and used, answers to Aristotle's *phronesis* [practical wisdom], its province being, not virtue, but the 'inquisitio veri,' which decides for us, beyond any technical rules, when, how, etc. to pass from inference to assent, and when and under what circumstances etc. etc. not (*LD*, XXIX, 115).

An earlier remark in the same letter clarified that he sought to clarify the assent of certitude, in contrast to Aristotle's practical certainty: "it is a law of thought <the human intellect> to accept with an inward assent as absolutely true, what is not yet demonstrated" (*LD*, XXIX, 115). He emphasized that he was interested in examining "a certainty of the truth of things, which they are unable to demonstrate, a certainty not merely practical but really speculative" (*TP*, I, 129). In contrast, he explained that for Aristotle, practical wisdom tends to focus upon what is contingent and variable and thereby aims at the individual becoming good or virtuous through action. He distanced himself not only from Aristotle but also from Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham (1692–1752) on this matter: for Newman certainty in concrete matters contrasted with the practical certainty that justified a conclusion as being safe to act upon rather than as being objectively true. In a letter to Robert Ornsby on March 8, 1861 he discussed his reservations with the writings of Butler:

> it does seem as if the practical effect of his work was to make faith a mere *practical certainty* – i.e. a taking certain statements of doctrine, not as true, but as safest to act upon (*LD*, XIX, 480).

Newman was influenced by the writings of Butler, especially his famous *Fifteen Sermons* preached at the Rolls Chapel (1726) – the first three sermons discussing ethical virtue – and *The Analogy* (1736). However, he described his difference from Butler's approach in a long note in the *Grammar* (*GA*, 496–497). Butler used probability to guide moral actions (*Phil. N*, I, 176); but Newman went beyond Butler by

[65] Ward (1912), II, 589.

using probability to affirm truth in concrete matters, justifying certitude and not merely practical certainty:

> my aim is of a practical character, such as that of Butler in his *Analogy*, with this difference, that he treats of probability, doubt, expedience, and duty, whereas in these pages, without excluding, far from it, the question of duty, I would confine myself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth (*GA*, 344).

This stance reflected his opposition to the enlightenment philosophy of John Locke who claimed that assent must be in proportion to the available evidence (*GA*, 160). He disagreed with Locke that varying degrees of evidence justify different degrees of assent, yielding merely a practical or moral certainty, but never the objective truth that Newman wanted to justify: "'Moral evidence', he says, 'may produce a variety of degrees of assents, from suspicion to moral certainty'" (*GA*, 174). In contrast, Newman argued that the unconditional nature of assent did not admit of degrees. He emphasized this point in his letter to William Froude in April 1879: "I maintain that an act of inference is distinct from an act of assent, and that the strength does not vary with the strength of the inference" (*LD*, XXIX, 115). As he had argued earlier, "assent must be preceded by inferential acts, … but it does not follow from this, that it … must always vary in strength, as the reasons vary" (*GA*, 172). His opposition to these views of practical certainty (Aristotle, Butler, Locke) indicate that by using the word "moral" he did not intend to qualify the certainty of the conclusion.[66] He was interested in moral certainty as being objectively true. His use of the phrase "moral demonstration" refers to the subjective process of justifying the objective truth of certitude.[67]

3.5.3 Normativity

Newman intended this understanding of moral demonstration in a normative manner. That is, he presented a normative account of informal inference and assent based on a descriptive account of empirical reality. His empirical approach is evident in many passages. He noted that he was "only contemplating the mind as it moves in fact" (*GA*, 64). Also, by explaining that "we must take the constitution of the human mind as we find it" (*GA*, 216), he argued that "it is enough for the proof of the value and authority of any function which I possess to be able to pronounce that it is natural" (*GA*, 347). Moreover, he acknowledged that his method "of interrogating human nature" was based upon "the testimony of the psychological facts" (*GA*, 164). Furthermore, the title of his landmark work, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar*, hints at including descriptive and prescriptive accounts: descriptive grammar typically explains how language is actually used; and prescriptive

[66] Jost (1989), 232–233.

[67] Sillem (1969–1970), II, 133.

grammar typically presents rules that language should follow. Although some commentators interpret his work merely in terms of in psychological analysis,[68] a plausible argument can be made that he presented a normative epistemology based on empirical judgments.[69] He used a descriptive psychology of judgment as the empirical basis to justify what can be described as a normative account of interpretation and persuasion in his hermeneutics,[70] a normative justification of assent,[71] or a normative account of certitude.[72]

3.6 Conclusion

Newman's normative account of belief makes a sophisticated contribution to religious epistemology. He interprets complex data via the subjective process of informal inference to justify the objective assent of certitude. This approach presents a robust foundation of religious morality that enlightens perspectives in moral discourse today insofar as descriptive accounts of the human situation can provide a window onto the normative for morality.[73] The integration of the objective and subjective components of his epistemology of certitude reflect his commitment to truth and holiness that was discussed in the previous chapter: to discern truth in certitude requires the moral and intellectual character of the individual that both reflects and forms virtue and holiness. His hermeneutics connected the personal reasoning of the individual not only with moral and intellectual character (hence, with virtue and holiness) but also with objective truth. This approach resonates with discussions today that explore virtue ethics, focusing on the responsibility of the acting subject using reason to discern concrete truth.[74] The relevance of his hermeneutics as a foundation of religious morality is discussed further when examining his understanding of moral law and conscience in subsequent chapters. His confidence in the concrete process of reasoning for the subjective discernment of objective truths celebrated an important role for the imagination. The inclusion of the imagination with the reasoning process of the intellect in his explanation of inference and assent can be construed as the hermeneutics of the imagination.

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[68] Casey (1984), 152–198; Bastable (1955), 66.

[69] Ferreira (1980), 70.

[70] Jost (1989), 22, 26.

[71] Pailin (1969),187.

[72] Boekraad (1984), 245; Walgrave (1960), 62, 81.

[73] Cahill (1985), 10, 145; Hallett (1983), 45, 72.

[74] Rhonheimer (2000, 2011a, b); Jensen (2010); Long (2007); Pilsner (2006); Flannery (2001).

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Chapter 4
Hermeneutics of the Imagination

Abstract The interpretative process in Newman's religious epistemology (construed as his hermeneutics) relies upon the imagination not only for the assent of certitude but also for actions that arise from it. This integration of the imagination with his hermeneutics is described as his hermeneutics of the imagination, providing another foundation of religious morality in his works. The imagination is the mental capacity to focus converging inferences upon the assent of certitude. This means that the imagination (working with reason) involves a interpretative function (helping to interpret when there is a convergence of inferences) and an assertive function (facilitating the assent of certitude) – hence it is called an imaginative assent. The interpretative function is connected with the creativity of the imagination. The assertive function of the imagination reflects the intensity of its images that tend to inspire action. This connection between certitude and action constitutes his moral rhetoric in the sense that imaginative assent can stimulate behavior. When applied to theology, his hermeneutics of the imagination can be referred to as his theological hermeneutics. Here he combined the processes of abstract and concrete reasoning in notional and real (imaginative) assent to ensure that theology is especially attentive to historical consciousness – illustrated in his arguments on the via media, the development of doctrine, and the principle of economy. This hermeneutical process provides another theoretical foundation of religious morality, connecting historical consciousness with the need for accompanying moral action.

Two foundations of religious morality in Newman's work have been explored: his commitment to truth and holiness; and his religious epistemology whose interpretative process connects reason and belief, construed as his hermeneutics. This chapter connects his hermeneutics with the imagination, described as his hermeneutics of the imagination, as another foundation of religious morality in his writings. He integrated his commitment to truth and holiness into his religious epistemology. In doing so he clarified how meaning can vary both with regard to the objective perception of truth and the subjective conviction of belief that shapes holiness. There is a difference in meaning that arises from abstract or from concrete processes of reasoning, such as occurs in formal or informal inference. There is a difference in meaning between holding a proposition or conclusion in a conditional manner as dependent upon preceding inferences or in an unconditional manner as independent of them, such as in assent. The previous chapter discussed the integrative nature of

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informal inference and assent in the concrete reasoning process that justifies certitude. This chapter focuses on the integration between the intellect and the imagination in this concrete process that constitutes his hermeneutics of the imagination, though he never used this phrase. The clearest statement about this approach appeared in a short passage in 1870:

> … a religious imagination … has a living hold on truths … is able to pronounce by anticipation, what it takes a long argument to prove …. interprets what it sees around it … (*GA*, 117).

This passage identifies three components of his theory of knowledge that enlighten his hermeneutics of the imagination. There is a dynamic or forward-reaching aspect ("pronounce by anticipation"), a holistic element ("interprets what it sees around it"), and a subjective or personal endeavor ("has a living hold"). These can be traced through a variety of his writings. In one of his University Sermons in 1841 he discussed his view of the enlargement of mind that became characteristic of his appreciation for liberal education:

> 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 (*US*, 287).

For Newman liberal education involved what can be described as an integrative habit of mind,[1] including the role of moral values and religious formation within a pluralistic context.[2] His approach continues to have significance for University education today.[3] The enlargement of mind that he associated with liberal education involves a dynamic aspect ("the movement onwards"), a holistic element ("what we know and what we have been acquiring, the whole mass of our knowledge"), and a subjective endeavor ("that moral centre"). It is intriguing that in the above two passages the former deals with the concrete process of reasoning and the latter deals with the abstract process of reasoning. A brief consideration of each helps to clarify his hermeneutics of the imagination that provides a foundation of religious morality in his thought.

4.1 Theory of Knowledge

His theory of knowledge takes shape clearly in his philosophy of liberal education, though he did not provide a systematic explanation of it.[4] However, he identified its basic characteristics in his Dublin University discourses in the 1850s with an earlier explanation presented in an Oxford University sermon that he preached in 1841. He emphasized the difference between sound education and merely gathering

[1] Aquino (2012).

[2] Rupert (2006); Magill (1992a); Bastable (1987); Davies (1980).

[3] Arthur and Nicholls (2007); Flanagan (2006b); Rothblatt (1997).

[4] Kelly (2012), 164–185.

information: "the end of a Liberal Education is not mere knowledge" (*Idea*, 130). He was concerned about an educational process that permits a student to be "almost passive in the acquisition of knowledge" (*Idea*, 128), that is, when there is merely a "passive reception into the mind of a number of ideas" (*Idea*, 134).[5] He had made a similar point previously in the 1841 University sermon by comparing students who merely "load their minds" with those who "enlarge them" (*US*, 289). In contrast, he depicted liberal education as the "cultivation of the intellect" or as "an enlargement or illumination" (*Idea*, 126). He described this "process of enlightenment or enlargement of mind" (*Idea*, 130) in a manner that clarified the components of his theory of knowledge.

4.1.1 Components of Knowledge

In the *Idea* he explained the process of sound education in relation to the abstract process of formal inference that he aligned with objective truth:

> The enlargement consists, not merely in the passive reception into the mind of a number of ideas hitherto unknown to it, but in the mind's energetic and simultaneous action upon and towards and among those new ideas, which are rushing upon it. It is the action of a formative power, reducing to order and meaning the matter of our acquirements; it is a making the objects of our knowledge subjectively our own, or, to use a familiar word, it is a digestion of what we receive … (*Idea*, 134).

This passage depicts formal inference by identifying the components of knowledge. The enlargement of mind involves a dynamic aspect ("energetic and simultaneous action"), a holistic element ("reducing to order and meaning"), and a subjective endeavor ("making the objects of our knowledge subjectively our own"). A few lines later he further explained two of the components. First, he explained this dynamic component in the learning process: "It is not the mere addition to our knowledge that is the illumination; but the locomotion, the movement onwards, of that mental centre" (*Idea*, 134). Second, he underscored the holistic element: "There is no enlargement unless there be a comparison of ideas one with another, as they come before the mind, and a systematizing of them" (*Idea*, 134).

Similar observations are made in the Oxford Sermons where he elucidated the role of formal inference. His sermon in 1841 on wisdom (or the enlargement of mind) indicated that "some analytical process, some sort of systematizing, some insight into the mutual relation of things, is essential to that enlargement of mind" (*US*, 290). Such systematizing involves "deducing by this abstract process" (*US*, 290). He further clarified that "those abstract exercises of Reason which may best be described by the name of systematizing" involve a process that includes "comparing, adjusting, connecting, explaining facts and doctrines ascertained"

[5] Wright (1999), 239–246.

(*US*, 294). Also, his earlier sermon in 1840 on the difference between implicit and explicit reason (explicit reason being formal inference) indicated that using explicit reason in this manner is a process whereby individuals "reason upon their reasonings" (*US*, 256) or whereby we engage in "investigating our reasonings" (*US*, 258).

These texts indicate that Newman adopted the three components of his theory of knowledge to explain formal inference. The enlargement of mind in liberal education uses formal inference to clarify "what the words of a proposition mean" (*GA*, 119). This type of inference involves abstract notions: "the notional is the generic and systematic" (*GA*, 140). That is, abstract analysis characterizes liberal education: "the nature and duty of the intellect … is ever active, inquisitive, penetrating; … it compares, contrasts, and forms them into a science" (*GA*, 147). This accounts for his terms of "philosophy, philosophical knowledge, enlargement of mind, or illumination" (*Idea*, 125).

Discursive reasoning is what is understood as wisdom or philosophy that is at the heart of the *Idea*[6]: "Wisdom being that orderly and mature development of thought, which … goes by the name of science and philosophy" (*US*, 279). He used different terms synonymously: "Philosophy, Wisdom, or Enlargement of mind" (*US*, 286). He did not mean the specific discipline of philosophy here. Rather he referred to the habit of mind that relates different aspects of knowledge to each other.[7] This abstract form of discursive reasoning constitutes what he meant by "explicit reason" (*US*, 259) whose function is "to analyze, verify, methodize, and exhibit" (*US*, 262). The process requires the active engagement of the individual "to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it" (*Idea*, 126) – highlighting the dynamic component of this holistic and subjective process. The three component of abstract reason appear clearly in another passage on liberal education:

> It is the power of referring every thing to its true place in the universal system, – It makes every thing lead to every thing else; … every where pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them their one definite meaning…. so in the mind of a philosopher, the elements of the physical and moral world, … are all viewed, not in themselves, but as relative terms, suggesting a multitude of correlatives, and gradually, by successive combinations, converging one and all to their true centre (*US*, 291).

Here, the enlargement of mind elicits coherence through mutuality or accumulation in an abstract process of reasoning. To confirm that his description pertains to formal inference, he explained a few pages later that, "In the foregoing observations, I have in fact been showing, …. Those abstract exercises of Reason which may best be described by the name of systematizing" (*US*, 294). This abstract process of reasoning is what he meant by the concept of hypothesis in his study of doctrinal development.

[6] Barton (1999), 155–168; Gilley (1999).

[7] Friday (2007), 48.

4.1.2 Role of Hypothesis

In his 1845 book on doctrinal development he explained that his "Essay is directed towards a solution to the difficulty … It is undoubtedly an hypothesis to account for a difficulty" (*Dev*, 29–30). He discussed development as explicit or systematic reasoning. In a sermon in 1843 he talked of "development, in explicit form, of what was already latent within it" (*US*, 321). In that sermon he summarized the abstract process in this manner: "This process is its development, and results in a series, or rather a body of dogmatic statements…[that] become a system or creed in the Reason" (*US*, 329).

Similarly, in his 1845 work on doctrinal development he emphasized the systematic nature of this abstract process by adopting the concept of hypothesis.[8] He indicated that "this process … by which the aspects of an idea are brought into consistency and form" is called "its development, being the germination or maturation of some truth or apparent truth on a large mental field" (*Dev*, 38). His use of "hypothesis" involved an abstract process of reasoning to create a rational "system" by accumulating relevant data. He described the abstract process of doctrinal development in this way:

> a multitude of ideas, and aspects of ideas, connected and harmonious with one another, … thrown into series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, … as they accumulate … (*Dev*, 55).

Doctrinal development, then, elicits coherence in an abstract process of reasoning. The concept of hypothesis in his work on doctrinal development, both in his 1843 sermon and in his 1845 book, anticipated the abstract process that characterized the enlargement of mind in liberal education in the University discourses in the 1850s. Surprisingly, he also used the concept of hypothesis to convey the concrete process that occurs in the *Grammar*'s account of informal inference in 1870. Just as the concept of hypothesis adopted the abstract process of formal inference in doctrinal development and liberal education, similarly the concept adopted the concrete process of informal inference in the process of justifying assent. In an enlightening passage in the *Grammar* he applied the concept of hypothesis. Under the section of "Informal Inference," which he described "the mental process in concrete reasoning" as a "form of an induction" (*GA*, 322–323), he summarized informal inference in this way:

> The conclusion, which is its scope, is, … virtually proved; … it *is* proved *interpretative*; … when the conclusion is assumed as a hypothesis, it throws light upon a multitude of collateral facts, accounting for them, and uniting them in one whole (*GA*, 323).

In this passage he clearly referred to his basic hermeneutics that combined informal inference and assent. A few passages preceding his use of the concept of hypothesis, he explained the concrete process that he was discussing.

[8] McCarren (2009), 120–122.

> the conclusion in a real or concrete question is … foreseen in the number and direction of accumulated premisses, which all converge to it, and as the result of their combination, approach it more nearly than any assignable difference, … This is what is meant by a proposition being 'as good as proved', … for a proof is the limit of converging probabilities (*GA*, 321).

His use of hypothesis to describe both the abstract process of formal inference and the concrete process of informal inference reflects the components of his theory of knowledge in each. First, in the abstract reasoning of liberal education there is the dynamic aspect "to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it" (*Idea*, 126). Similarly, this dynamic aspect is present in the concrete process of informal inference in religious belief: an individual is "able to pronounce by anticipation" (*GA*, 117) in the sense that a conclusion is "foreseen and predicted" (*GA*, 321). Second, in the abstract reasoning of liberal education there is a holistic element, "a comparison of ideas one with another, as they come before the mind, and a systematizing of them" (*Idea*, 134). Similarly, this holistic element is present in the concrete process of informal inference in religious belief: "the number and direction of accumulated premisses, which all converge" (*GA*, 321). Third, in the abstract reasoning of liberal education the personal or subjective endeavor engages an individual's "moral centre" (*US*, 287) or "mental centre" (*Idea*, 134) to make "the objects of our knowledge subjectively our own" (*Idea*, 134). Similarly, this subjective endeavor is present in the concrete process of informal inference in religious belief that he described in this way: "a living *organon* … a personal gift, and not a mere method or calculus" (*GA*, 316).[9]

His use of the concept of hypothesis helps to clarify that the components of his theory of knowledge are included both in the abstract process of formal inference and in the concrete process of informal inference. The concept of hypothesis expresses the components of his theory of knowledge whether dealing with abstract process of formal reason in liberal education or the concrete process of informal reason in religious belief.[10] However, he wanted to actualize this knowledge in a concrete and real manner,[11] and especially to connect it with action. In this regard, his hermeneutics of the imagination was indispensable for his moral rhetoric.

4.2 Moral Rhetoric

The phrase "moral rhetoric" is used to identify the connection between the certitude of belief and action, though he did not use this phrase. Just as the concept of hypothesis characterizes his theory of knowledge from a theoretical perspective, his approach to moral rhetoric characterizes his theory of knowledge from a practical perspective. His focus on moral rhetoric was intended to inspire action, following

[9] Evans (1979a).

[10] Tillman (1988), 604.

[11] Dessain (1974); Dessain (1957).

several steps. First, the imagination has interpretative and assertive roles aligned with the process of informal inference and assent. Second, those roles can be connected with the imagination's capacity for creativity and intensity. Finally, the combination of the interpretative role of informal inference (connected with the creativity of the imagination) and the assertive role of real assent (connected with the intensity of the imagination) can enlighten the meaning of moral rhetoric that connects belief with action.[12]

4.2.1 Interpretative and Assertive Roles

The imagination has an interpretative role and an assertive role. It is important to note that the interpretative role of the imagination includes formal inference as well as informal inference. With regard to the abstract reasoning of formal inference in liberal education (both in his University Sermons and his discourses on the University), the role of the imagination is prominent. In a sermon in 1841 the imagination is associated with the components of his theory of knowledge in this way:

> it communicates the image of the whole body to every separate member, till the whole becomes in the imagination like a spirit, every where pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them their one true meaning … suggesting a multitude of correlatives, and gradually, by successive combinations, converging one and all to their true centre (*US*, 291).

The same points can be found in a later version of the passage that appears in his Dublin discourse:

> That only is true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole … Possessed of this real illumination, the mind … would communicate the image of the whole to every separate portion, till that whole becomes in imagination like a spirit, every where pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them one definite meaning … and as gradually by successive combinations converging, one and all, to the true centre (*Idea*, 137).

These passages illustrate how the abstract meaning that is elicited by the process of formal inference is grasped in a practical way through the imagination. Just a few paragraphs later, again describing his understanding of formal inference in liberal education, his analogy of reconnoitering a landscape suggests a role for the imagination:

> I say, then, if we would improve the intellect, first of all, we must ascend; … Hence you hear of practiced travelers, when they first come into a place, mounting some high hill or church tower, by way of reconnoitering its neighbourhood (*Idea*, 139–140).

It is fascinating to see the same analogy recurring subsequently in the *Grammar*. There he again used the analogy of reconnoitering the landscape as a function of formal inference. He noted that the "deductions" of abstract reasoning "are

[12] Magill (1991a, 1992b, c, 2011a).

analogous to the knowledge which we at length attain of the details of a landscape, … and have mastered the perspective of the whole" (*GA*, 315). Again he turned to the imagination to actualize this knowledge: "the trained imagination sees in them the representations of things" (*GA*, 315). However, immediately, in the next paragraph, he relied on the imagination to enlighten the process of informal inference that justifies assent:

> real ratiocination and present imagination which gives them [the "methodical processes of inference"] a sense beyond their letter, and which, while acting through them, reaches conclusions beyond and above them. Such a living organon is a personal gift, and not a mere method or calculus (*GA*, 316, parenthetical reference added from the same paragraph).

The imagination is used to actualize knowledge, whether dealing with formal inference or informal inference. Just as he used the concept of hypothesis to characterize the components of his theory of knowledge in both forms of reasoning, he relied on the imagination to actualize these different forms of knowledge. This is important for understanding his approaches to moral law and moral conscience, as explored in subsequent chapters. However, it is important to emphasize that he understood the imagination in conjunction with reason when discussing informal inference and assent. In particular, he described the integration of informal inference and assent by using an intriguing phrase, "real ratiocination and present imagination":

> … it seems clear, that methodical processes of inference, useful as they are, as far as 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 personal gift, and not a mere method or calculus (*GA*, 316).

The phrase "real ratiocination and present imagination" is accompanied by a singular and not a plural verb ("gives"). By doing so he conveyed the integrative nature of ratiocination and imagination in the interpretative process of informal inference to justify the conclusion that warrants assent. The point is to grasp matters that are "real and recondite" (*GA*, 316) – suggesting not only the concrete nature of what elicits assent, but also the difficulty in perceiving it. The point of this integration is not to suggest a reasoning capacity for the imagination. After all, he was clear that "the imagination and affections should always be under the control of reason" (*GA*, 121). Rather, the integration of "real ratiocination and present imagination" is intended to highlight that informal inference and the assent of certitude constitute one complex action:

> Such minds it [Christianity] addresses both through the intellect and through the imagination; creating a certitude of its truth by arguments too various for direct enumeration, too personal and deep for words, too powerful and concurrent for refutation … and elicits one complex act both of inference and of assent (*GA*, 492).

In this famous passage there is "one complex act" of inference and assent that occurs "through the intellect and through the imagination." This recalls his earlier remark on the integration of "real ratiocination and present imagination." The point here is not that informal inference is a constraint of the imagination, or that the

imagination undertakes tasks that are similar to informal inference, as suggested by some.[13] Rather, the imagination actualizes the knowledge that results from the interpretative process of informal inference, establishing what can be described as concrete meaning.[14]

This concrete and actualizing process of knowledge that integrates the intellect and the imagination constitutes as his hermeneutics of the imagination. He emphasized this integrative approach that combines reason and imagination in a theological paper written in 1857: "Reason in the imagination holds views at once per modum unius" (*TP*, I, 46). Again recalling his analogy of reconnoitering a landscape, he explained that "analogous to such an exercise of sight" is "the trained imagination" that facilitates a perception of "the depth of meaning" (*GA*, 316). However, this perception and actualizing of knowledge involves not just the interpretative role of informal inference but also the assertive role of assent.

A closer look at this assertive role of assent highlights the contribution of the imagination. The imagination generates through its images what is real or concrete for an act of assent. He used many different words to allude to the particular, including a "thing" or "reality" (*GA*, 98), and an "image of a reality" or "fact" (*GA*, 119). The imagination brings home the reality of an object to the individual.[15] Once more, his metaphor of reconnoitering indicates a role for the imagination: "analogous to such an exercise of the sight … the trained imagination sees … the representation of things" (*GA*, 315). However, he understood the creation of images to facilitate real assent as an intellectual endeavor. In the context of contrasting notional and real assent he explained: "Real assent is … in itself an intellectual act, of which the object is presented to it by the imagination" (*GA*, 89).

The assertive role of the imagination in real assent is to unconditionally uphold the conclusion independently of its justifying inferences. That is why real assent and imaginative assent are used interchangeably.[16] In a theological paper written in 1865 the role of the imagination to actualize knowledge in certitude is unambiguous:

> Certitude then does not come under the reasoning faculty; but under the imagination. When I make an act of certitude … I am contemplating a fact in itself, as presented to me by my imagination, and apart from the means by which I gained it (*TP*, I, 126).

By indicating that "certitude … does not come under the reasoning faculty" he was not denying that informal inference was a reasonable process. Rather, he was highlighting the difference between informal inference and the assent of certitude that affirms the conclusion independently ("apart from the means"). His point was that certitude comes "under the imagination" insofar as assent requires the experiential images of the imagination to affirm the conclusion as real and concrete. In this manner the imagination actualizes knowledge. This does not mean that the

[13] Holyer (1986), 402, 412.

[14] Merrigan (1991), 220; Jost (1989), 111, 155; Hammond (1988a); Hammond (1988b), 24–25, 28.

[15] Merrigan and Ker (2002), 39–47.

[16] Walgrave (1987).

imagination is the driving power of the Illative Sense, as argued by some,[17] or that the imagination appraises informal inferences, as suggested by others.[18] The imagination is not a judicial power that creates assent.[19] Rather, the imagination actualizes knowledge in a concrete manner that supports and intensifies assent. This occurs by invoking emotions and affective capacities that engender a sense of reality about what is believed.

This assertive role of assent is necessarily connected with the interpretative role of informal inference. When the imagination provides the experiential images to affirm a conclusion as real and concrete, the assent needs to be reasonably authenticated through informal inference. In the second part of the *Grammar* he emphasized this point to explain how we can believe what we reasonably justify but not discursively prove.[20] On this matter, in 1851 he notes the role of the imagination in actualizing knowledge:

> We can believe what we can imagine, yet cannot conceive. What is called *explaining* … is really bringing it out fully to the imagination (*Phil.N*, II, 153).

The point here is that what is credible in assent is what becomes real to the imagination.[21] The imagination provides the appropriate image for real assent. This is what he meant by "assent through the imagination" (*TP*, I, 134) in a theological paper written in 1868 and by "an assent to an imagination" (*GA*, 214). The close connection between these images and an individual's experience and memory needs to be explained.

Newman was an empiricist who considered what is practical or concrete as a reliable source of knowledge: "Real apprehension, is, as I have said, in the first instance an experience or information about the concrete" (*GA*, 23). The imagination enables us to recall concrete experiences. In the *Grammar* he made a similar connection between memory and imagination: "Memory consists in a present imagination of things that are past" (*GA*, 23). Moreover, in creating these images or memories the imagination connects with practical experience to facilitate real assent. He explains that "we cannot image" when "we have no experiences in our memory" – so experience and imagination work together to support real assent: "what *is* in some degree a matter of experience, what *is* presented for the imagination, … to repose upon with a real assent" (*GA*, 130).

The imagination entails an intellectual component insofar as what is real is connected with memory and experience[22]: "our experience is not so much of external things, but of our own minds" (*Phil.N*, II, 22). He noted in 1863 that the "imagination is the habit or the act of making images" (*Phil.N*, II, 152). More specifically, the imagination creates images that reflect the vividness of concrete experience and

[17] Prickett (1976), 194.

[18] Holyer (1986), 407.

[19] Merrigan (1991), 187–189, 220–221.

[20] Sillem (1969–1970), II, 153.

[21] Coulson (1981a), 45, 53–60, 62, 78.

[22] Ferreira (1988), 53–57.

corresponding emotions.[23] This connection between creating images related to experience as an intellectual endeavor is evident again in a theological paper written in 1868. He spoke of a "large sense of the word 'image' or experience" as "a sensation which is the representation of our mental state of that past time" (*TP*, I, 137–138). This connection between images and experience helps to explain why it is difficult to grasp the mystery of the Trinity (as distinct from each person of the divinity). He explained that we do not have the requisite experiences and memory to create an image of the Trinity:

> I do not put forward the mystery as the direct object of real or religious apprehension; nor again, the complex doctrine (when it is viewed, *per modum unius*, as one whole), in which the mystery lies…. The question is whether a real assent to the mystery, as such, is possible; and I say it is not possible, because, though we can image the separate propositions, we cannot image them together. We cannot, because the mystery transcends all our experience; we have no experiences in our memory which we can put together, compare, contrast, unite, and thereby transmute into an image of the Ineffable Verity (*GA*, 129–130).

The imagination establishes images based on experience and emotion to combine its interpretative and assertive roles, enabling the concrete reasoning process of informal inference to reach the assent of certitude. In this sense, Newman's hermeneutics of the imagination can actualize knowledge by providing creativity and intensity that accompany its interpretative and assertive roles.

4.2.2 Creativity and Intensity

The creativity and intensity of the imagination relate with each other, but have distinct purposes. To begin, the creative capacity of the imagination reflects its unifying power in the interpretative role that connects informal inference with assent. This synthesizing function calls upon personal experience to interpret multiple data into an orderly whole.[24] He illustrated this creative process when discussing his view of doctrinal development: "This process is its development, and results in a series, or rather a body of dogmatic statements, till what was at first an impression on the Imagination has become a system or creed in the Reason" (*US*, 329). This capacity to hold complex data in a holistic manner reflected a tendency in nineteenth-century England to ascribe to the imagination a unifying power, common in the Romantic spirit of his age. However, he sought to avoid the extremes of rationalism as well as romanticism.[25] In general, because of his focus upon epistemology he tended not to foster the more literary approach of the imagination that was common among the Romantic writers.[26] Nonetheless, he recognized the distinctive influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) on his thought.

[23] Merrigan (1991), 65–77.

[24] Merrigan (1991), 73–81.

[25] Gosley (1996); Ker (1988), 262.

[26] Buckler (1980), 5, 261.

Coleridge died early in Newman's life, a year after he published his first major work on the *Arians* in 1833. He was introduced to the works of Coleridge by his friend Thomas D. Acland in 1835, as noted in a diary entry: "During this Spring, from Christmas down, Acland lending me some of Coleridge's works, I have *for the first time* read parts of them – and am surprised how much I thought mine, is to be found there" (*LD*, V, 53). Newman eschewed metaphysics,[27] so he did not share Coleridge's metaphysical temperament.[28] However, both of them had a common interest in the role of conscience in knowing God,[29] reflecting their different appreciation of self-awareness. They shared a striking interest in the primacy of the moral order and the inseparable relation between morality and religion.[30]

They had a keen interest in the imagination. Each relied upon experience through memory to recall the past in present images. This propensity can lead to fancy that they each recognized, but it would be mistaken to reduce their views to this ancillary element of the imagination, as suggested by some.[31] Coleridge emphasized the creative ability of the imagination as it relates to perception, providing a mediating role that unifies disparate information.[32] In this sense the creative ability of the imagination enhances the capacity of perception,[33] described by Coleridge in this way: "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; … to unify."[34] For Coleridge the imagination's creative capacity can change our mental focus by enlarging and reordering our perception of reality, providing a new unity to our understanding and knowledge.[35] This is similar to Newman's approach,[36] especially the capacity of the imagination to unify information.[37] Newman embraced this unifying power in the interpretative role of the imagination and its accompanying capacity for creativity. This creative power of the imagination continued to attract attention long after Newman's time.[38]

For Newman the creativity of the imagination is distinct from its intensity which is connected with its assertive role, upholding assent independently of the inferences. To grasp the significance of the intensity of the imagination, it can be helpful to refer to a passage in his *Theological Papers* written in 1868 under the general topic, "On apprehension and assent through the imagination" (*TP*, I, 134). This

[27] Norris (1977), 24–25; Weatherby (1975), 44.

[28] Barth (1977), 141–142; Happel (1983), 327, 356.

[29] Barth (1989).

[30] Rule (2004), 24–25, 29, 34, 39, 153–154.

[31] Vargrish (1970), 48–49.

[32] Happel (1987), 503–504; Happel (1983), 4; Happel (1980).

[33] Coulson (1981a), 7, 10; Prickett (1976).

[34] Shawcross (1949), 202; White (1972), 30.

[35] Happel (1983), 355; Happel (1980), 159.

[36] Barth (1977); Coulson (1970), 254–255.

[37] Gosley (1996), 6; Merrigan (1991), 79.

[38] Robinson (2006); Carr (1996); Johnson (1987, 1993); Thiel (1991); McIntyre (1987); Mackey (1986a, b); Murdoch (1986); Warnock (1986); Lovibond (1983); Cottom (1985); Gardner (1982); Kaufman (1981); Tracy (1981); Abelson et al. (1977); Warnock (1976).

passage appears under a section on papers in preparation for the *Grammar* between 1865 and 1869. The relevant part of text appears as number 6 within a longer passage that contextualizes the intensity of the imagination:

> 4. … an act of Assent cannot be made without a given subject-matter nor without some direct intelligent apprehension of the proposition to which assent is given.
> 5. The apprehension, which is thus a condition of Assent to a proposition, is of two kinds, apprehension of its meaning and of its object; the former of these is mainly an act of pure intellect, the latter an act of experience, present or past and in memory in aid of experience; and according, and so far as, the apprehension is of the former or the latter kind, so is the assent languid or energetic.
> 6. If the faculty of imagination may be taken to stand, not for an inventive power, but for the power, which attends on memory, of recalling to the mind and making present the absent, then, while the former kind of apprehension by the pure intellect may be fitly called notional, the latter may be called by way of contrast imaginative.
> 7. According as the apprehension is notional or imaginative, so may the assent be called one or the other, the notional assent being languid, and the imaginative energetic. At the same time, though there are two kinds of apprehension, there are not two kinds of assent; but in both cases it is one and the same assent in its nature given to different subject matters, in one case to notions, in the other to imaginations. (*TP*, I, 135)

These remarks occur within a discussion of certitude. The passage explains that certitude involves both notional and real apprehensions in a single act of assent. Two distinct apprehensions, real and notional, are integrated in a single assent in certitude.[39] First, certitude involves a reflex assent to a notional proposition: "Certitude … is the perception of a truth with the perception that it is a truth, or the consciousness of knowing" (*GA*, 197). In the analysis in which the above passage appears he reiterated this understanding of certitude as a complex assent to a notional proposition: "certitude being an assent to a thing as true" (*TP*, I, 120). Second, certitude involves not only the intellect in holding a notional assent but also the imagination in grasping the object, which is the focus of the above passage. For Newman certitude entails an act of the imagination that apprehends the "object" of the proposition in real assent. The imagination intensifies real apprehension by connecting images, memory, and experience. A few pages later in the same entry of 1865, he distinguished between a proposition's meaning and its object in a manner that highlighted this connection. He contrasted apprehending "an idea" through "the intellect" (alluding to "meaning") with apprehension that is based on "experience" in which "memory gives an image" (alluding to "object") – the latter presents "objects to the mind by means of images" and "experience … remains on the memory by a certain impression or semblance, which I called an image, though the word properly belongs to the sense of sight" (*TP*, I, 136–137).

This alignment of the imagination with memory's images intensifies its grasp of an object so that assent is "energetic." He provided an example when explaining the imagination's grasp of individual acts of goodness or badness: "Even one act of cruelty, ingratitude, generosity, or justice reveals to us at once *intensivè* the immutable distinction between those qualities and their contraries" (*GA*, 65). Though the imagination does not create assent it can intensify it, actualizing knowledge through

[39] Tillman (2001), xxvii.

a sense of reality about what elicits the assent.[40] He explained: "I am … speaking of …the normal constitution of our minds, and of the natural and rightful effect of acts of the imagination upon us, and this is, not to create assent, but to intensify it" (*GA*, 82).

The imagination's capacities for creativity and for intensity are deployed to support the concrete reasoning process that connects informal inference and assent in certitude. There is no opposition between these capacities.[41] The combination of the interpretative role of informal inference (connected with the creativity of the imagination) and the assertive role of real assent (connected with the intensity of the imagination) can enlighten his approach to moral rhetoric that connects belief with action. The outcome of this process – justifying a belief through informal inference and asserted in assent – is an imaginative impulse that typically inspires action. Here Newman's hermeneutics of the imagination was crucial for his moral rhetoric.

4.2.3 Imagination and Action

For Newman the real assent of certitude is directed towards action.[42] His argument reiterates the difference between abstract and concrete reasoning. This difference between real and notional apprehension distinguishes between "an arm-chair nod of agreement and the decision to go and do something about it."[43] Yet, it would be mistaken to construe formal inference as having no connection with action. The logical reasoning of formal inference can inspire action when its discursive conclusions are so compelling that they are tantamount to the vivid grasp of real assent. At the end of his discussion of formal inference, he remarked: "Thus inference becomes a sort of symbol of assent, and even bears upon action" (*GA*, 287). However, formal inference typically has little impact upon concrete action because it deals with abstractions: "acts of Notional Assent and of Inference do not affect our conduct, and acts of Belief, that is, of Real Assent, do (not necessarily, but do) affect it" (*GA*, 90).

To explain this difference between notional and real assent two observations need to be made: formal inference tends not to generate action because of its abstract nature; in contrast the concrete character of real assent typically inspires action. The abstraction of science or discursive reason is unable to motivate action because of its reliance upon logical deductions. This inadequacy is clear in the following passage, referring to remarks in his earlier work on "Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects." The passage highlights the imagination's tendency towards action:

> Science gives us the grounds or premisses from which religious truths are to be inferred; but it does not set about inferring them, much less does it reach the inference – that is not its province.… This is why science has so little of a religious tendency; deductions have no

[40] Merrigan (1991), 57–61, 178, 187.

[41] Merrigan (1991), 49–57.

[42] Norris (2009), 76–77.

[43] Merrigan (1991), 176; Coulson (1972), 2.

> power of persuasion. The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, … Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion (*GA*, 92–93).

A few pages earlier he made a similar point, emphasizing the relation between real assent and action: "man is *not* a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, and acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise … Life is for action. If we insist on proofs for everything, we shall never come to action" (*GA*, 94–95). In these passages, Newman shifts from the constraints of abstract reasoning to the imagination's capacity for action. He did not separate reason and imagination. Rather, he explained that abstract reason does not have the reach of certitude. The phrase "through the imagination" acknowledges how the imagination is connected with action. He does not argue that the imagination itself leads to action. Rather, his focus is upon the influence that the imagination has on affections: "the imagination … leads to practice indirectly by the action of its object upon the affections" (*GA*, 83). He elucidated upon the influence of the imagination in this way:

> Strictly speaking, it is not the imagination that causes action; but hope and fear, likes and dislikes, appetite, passion, affection, the stirrings of selfishness and self-love. What imagination does for us is to find a means of stimulating those motive powers; and it does so by providing a supply of objects strong enough to stimulate them (*GA*, 82).

He expanded on this explanation a few pages later to emphasize that the propensity towards action is based upon the imagination's capacity to stimulate the powers of the mind. This power of stimulation recalls the imagination's intensity:

> … though Real Assent is not intrinsically operative, it accidentally and indirectly affects practice. It is in itself an intellectual act, of which the object is presented to it by the imagination; and … the imagination has the means, which pure intellect has not, of stimulating those powers of the mind from which action proceeds (*GA*, 89).

Bernard Lonergan developed this connection a century later when he explained how what is concrete provokes action.[44] For Newman, because the imagination deals with what is experiential, it is the vividness of its images that has a propensity for action: "assent to a real proposition is assent to an imagination, and an imagination, as supplying objects to our emotional and moral nature, is adapted to be a principle of action" (*GA*, 214). He used images to make prior experiences meaningfully accessible for the mind.[45] More specifically, he used the metaphor of living to express the importance of action. He was especially attuned to the type of knowledge that does not affect the heart in the sense of energizing activity. In a famous passage he drew this basic contrast with remarkable acumen when dealing with the controversy over the Tamworth Reading Room:

> Knowledge of premises, and inferences upon them, – this is not to *live*. It is very well a matter of liberal curiosity and of philosophy to analyze our modes of thought: but let this come second, … But if we commence with … argumentative proof, … or attempt to make

[44] Coulson (1973); Lonergan (1972), 251.

[45] Merrigan (1991), 48–49.

> man moral or religious by libraries and museums, let us in consistency take chemists for our cooks, and mineralogists for our masons (*GA*, 95–96).

By illustration he explained the iniquity of the slave trade as one of the "great truths" accepted by society. But it was held merely as a notional abstraction (rather than by a real or imaginative assent), thereby having little impact upon practice. The notional acceptance of this truth did not "affect the imagination of men as to make their acknowledgment of that iniquitousness operative" (*GA* 77). In another example, that of dueling, real assent was required to replace a notional perception to stop the immoral practice: "The governing classes were roused from their dreamy acquiescence in an abstract truth, and recognized the duty of giving it practical expression" (*GA*, 78). Insofar as the imagination causes these sorts of moral activities to occur, it is not surprising that character formation results. Real assent "leads the way to actions of every kind, to the establishment of principles, and the formation of character, and is thus again intimately connected with what is individual and personal" (*GA*, 90–91).

His reliance upon the imagination to generate concrete action reflected his ongoing commitment to truth and holiness. The process of real assent enabled him to weave together the concrete nature of truth and its impact upon character formation. Not surprisingly, his distinctive view of the imagination also influenced his approach to theology. His dynamic understanding of the imagination led him to change his method in theology from relying upon abstract reasoning to embrace concrete reasoning. In this sense his hermeneutics of the imagination generated what can be described as his theological hermeneutics.

4.3 Theological Hermeneutics

Newman was not a theologian, yet throughout his life he engaged, at times rather controversially, with substantive matters about theology.[46] His approach can be understood within the context of his lifelong commitment to truth and holiness, reflecting his combined concerns with doctrine and salvation. To address these continuing concerns he relied on reason and conscience that he explored in his religious epistemology which in turn shaped his theological method. He often described theology in terms of the abstract process of discursive reason that characterized formal inference. However, he also explored important theological issues by using the concrete reasoning of informal inference and assent. This combination of abstract and concrete reasoning in matters of religion can be construed as his theological hermeneutics. His approach is expressed in a fuller version of the

[46] Merrigan (2005), 611; Merrigan (1991), 131–168; Merrigan (1989), 261–262; Hammond (1988b); Ford (1985); Lash (1976).

passage that was used at the outset of the chapter to describe his hermeneutics of the imagination:

> It is otherwise with the theology of a religious imagination. It has a living hold on truths … It is able to pronounce by anticipation, what it takes a long argument to prove … It interprets what it sees around it … (*GA*, 117).

This passage mentions both the abstract and concrete processes of reasoning, which his theology engages. The phrase "what it takes a long argument to prove" refers to formal inference. The concrete process of informal inference and assent is manifest in two phrases: the remark "interprets what it sees around it" refers to the process of informal inference which is connected with the interpretative role of the imagination; and the remark "has a living hold on truths" refers to the real assent of certitude which is connected with the assertive role of the imagination. The combination of these phrases recalls his understanding of certitude as one complex act of inference and assent. That is, his "theology of a religious imagination" expresses both the interpretative and assertive roles of his hermeneutics of the imagination. This passage expresses an original approach to theology, implementing the tension that exists in his religious epistemology.[47] He did not adapt the typically scholastic approach to theology that was pervasive in his time, though some commentators prefer to interpret his thought as an expression of scholasticism.[48] To understand his theological hermeneutics both the abstract and concrete processes of reasoning need to be explored.

4.3.1 Abstract and Concrete Reasoning

A standard explanation of his approach to theology appears in his University discourses.[49] He presented a fascinating challenge to secular culture that continues today,[50] especially for the liberal arts.[51] This role for theology or religion in University education was indispensable for his Catholic University in Dublin.[52] However, the University did not fully accomplish his hopes for it,[53] in part because he was thrown among strangers,[54] and in part because of his difficult relations with the Catholic bishops.[55] He referred to the "science of theology" (*GA*, 147) to

[47] Merrigan (1991), 166, 247; Merrigan (2005), 618.

[48] Pattison (1991), 129, 158.

[49] Coulson (1964, 1981b).

[50] Crosby (2009); Madden (2004); Hittinger (1999).

[51] Mongrain (2007).

[52] Walgrave (1979); Ker (1975, 1976).

[53] McGrath (1951).

[54] McRedmont (1990).

[55] O'Connell (2004).

highlight its reliance on discursive reasoning. What he meant by science reflects his approach to liberal education: "All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind, forms one large system or complex fact" of which the mind attains "partial views or abstractions" that "are called sciences" (*Idea*, 45–46). He understood science to be an abstraction: "these views or sciences, as being abstractions, have far more to do with the relation of things than with things themselves" (*Idea*, 46). He summarized his view of science in this way:

> All knowledge forms one whole, … sciences are the results of that mental abstraction … being the logical record of this or that aspect of the whole subject-matter of knowledge. As they all belong to one and the same circle of objects, they are one and all connected together (*Idea*, 51).

He used the metaphor of a circle, described as "the circle of knowledge" (*Idea*, 67), to explain how sciences relate with each other.[56] The metaphor conveys the reciprocity among the sciences in the quest for knowledge.[57] This reciprocity and not the number of different sciences is what is characteristic of liberal education. His ideal of liberal education was generally independent of specific disciplines,[58] though he planned a school of law and a school of medicine with the latter lasting longer than any other unit in his original university.[59]

Perhaps the metaphor of playing chess can impart his educational insight better than the metaphor of the circle. Chess figures, like distinct disciplines, are numerically limited, yet their interaction facilitates virtually an infinite range of possible connections. Similarly, by relating aspects of knowledge in liberal education knowledge abounds. Just as playing chess is restricted, but not impossible, if a figure is missing, liberal education is diminished but not doomed if some of the sciences are missing. This view conveys what he meant by "a philosophical habit of mind" whereby the various sciences in the circle of knowledge relate to each other:

> the comprehension of the bearings of one science on another, belongs, I conceive, to a sort of science distinct from all of them, and in some sense a science of sciences, which is my own conception of what is meant by Philosophy, in the true sense of the word, and of a philosophical habit of mind, and which in these Discourses I shall call by that name (*Idea*, 51).

Within this broad sweep of liberal education he included theology in its circle of knowledge: "A University, I should lay down, by its very name, professes to teach universal knowledge: Theology is surely a branch of knowledge" (*Idea*, 19–20). Theology is one of the sciences with a rightful place in liberal education: "granting Theology is a real science, we cannot exclude it, and still call ourselves philosophers" (*Idea*, 53). He made a similar point in an earlier discourse: "Religious doctrine is knowledge, in as full a sense as Newton's doctrine in knowledge. University Teaching without Theology is unphilosophical" (*Idea*, 42).

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[56] Wulston (2005); Cameron (1978).

[57] Flanagan (2006a), 133.

[58] Culler (1955), 206.

[59] Pellegrino (2008), 25; Fleischacker (2007, 2009); Love (2007).

In these claims, he was not referring to theology from a denominational perspective. Rather, he referred to natural theology in the sense of discursive reason reflecting on the meaning of God in religious truth: "I have been insisting simply on Natural Theology." (*Idea*, 69). He repudiated the approach suggested by Sir Robert Peel, William Paley, and Lord Brougham that the study of natural sciences could lead to religion – this approach leads to pantheism or deism.[60] He further explained: "by Theology, I simply mean the Science of God, or the truths we know about God put into system; just as we have a science of the stars, and call it astronomy, or the crust of the earth, and call it geology" (*Idea*, 61). Here a distinctive aspect of natural theology becomes evident. He recognized the inductive character of all science, such as physics, in the sense of starting from empirical data and observations about nature: "what it starts from, what it falls back upon, is the phenomena which met the senses" (*Idea*, 432). In contrast, the starting point of theology is the author of nature: "Theology begins, as its name denotes, not with any sensible facts, phenomena, or results, not with nature at all, but with the Author of nature" (*Idea*, 434).

This distinctive aspect of theology led Newman to provide theology with greater prominence than other sciences. He tried "to claim a little more for Theology" (*Idea*, 53) by arguing that it is foundational for liberal education: "Religious Truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge. To blot it out is nothing short, if I may so speak, of unraveling the web of University Teaching" (*Idea*, 70). He feared that the loss of theology from the curriculum would compromise education itself: "… its omission from the list of recognized sciences is not only indefensible in itself, but prejudicial to all the rest" (*Idea*, 42). He insisted that the University curriculum "cannot exclude Theology without being untrue to its profession" (*Idea*, 98) – to do so would harm the circle of knowledge that characterizes liberal education: "Theology … cannot be omitted without great prejudice to the teaching of the rest" (*Idea*, 98). This special place for theology in liberal education is often neglected in the study of the *Idea*,[61] constituting what might be construed as a defense for Christian humanism.[62]

In making these claims for theology in liberal education he was referring to the abstract reasoning of formal inference: "deduction only is the instrument of theology" (*Idea*, 223). From his early writings as a young scholar at Oxford he explained that abstract reasoning had a critical role to compare and contrast notions. Abstract reasoning functions as a "test of reasoning" (*US*, 276) insofar as it is "the object of science to analyze, verify, methodize, and exhibit" including "the science of divinity" (*US*, 263). This stance continued throughout his later writings. For example, he explained that when a proposition is "held as a truth, by the theological intellect" the mind operates "through the exercise of abstraction and inference" (*GA*, 98–99). In this sense, the abstract reasoning of "theology with its notional propositions" (*GA*, 147) deals with doctrines in discursive reasoning about faith. Logical reasoning systematizes abstract notions about doctrine into a coherent system that becomes

[60] Fletcher (2008).

[61] Cere (1994), 10–15.

[62] Reidy (1992), 249.

the science of theology. The expanded version of a passage referred to earlier makes clear what he means by the science of theology:

> the nature and duty of the intellect … is ever active, inquisitive, penetrating; it examines doctrine and doctrine; it compares, contrasts, and forms them into a science; that science is theology. Now theological science, being thus the exercise of the intellect upon the credenda of revelation, is, … natural, excellent, and necessary (*GA*, 147).

To explain theology's use of abstract reason as a science he referred to the concept of hypothesis (discussed previously in relation to formal inference). This association conveys the limited scope of reasoning that is adopted:

> I have hitherto been engaged in showing that all the sciences come to us as one, that they all relate to one and the same integral subject-matter, that each separately is more or less an abstraction, wholly true as a hypothesis, but not wholly trustworthy in the concrete, conversant with relations more than with facts, with principles more than with agents (*Idea*, 59–60).

He clearly respected the role of conceptual reason in theology, though some scholars dispute this.[63] However, he also recognized the limitations of science that relies upon abstract reasoning. A basic limitation is that it does not advance his moral rhetoric to translate knowledge into action. The constraint that the formal inference of theology places upon concrete action is important both for faith and morality. After all, he emphasized that the "inquiry and argument" of the science of divinity "may be employed … in determining points of Faith and Morals" (*US*, 263). He was anxious that abstract reasoning ("method and form"), reflecting the use of hypothesis as formal inference, can hinder truth and practice in religion and in morality:

> Now 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 inaccuracy. Other and more familiar objections readily occur; such as … its fostering formality; its substituting a sort of religious philosophy and literature for worship and practice; its weakening the springs of action by inquiring into them; … its substituting, in matters of duty, positive rules which need explanation for an instinctive feeling which commands the mind; its leading the mind to mistake system for truth, and to suppose that an hypothesis is real because it is consistent (*US*, 266).

He was wary that in morality the science of divinity as abstract reasoning could focus merely on the coherence or system of on "positive rules" and weaken "the springs of action" in "matters of duty." Abstract reasoning is limiting because it merely provides "a common measure for all minds" in the sense that "a science certainly is, in its very nature, public property" (*US*, 271) – but that common measure can result in a tendency to "systematize in excess" (*US*, 275). In a similar passage he excoriated those who rely merely upon logic as being more interested in abstractions than concrete conclusions.

[63] Weatherby (1973), 47.

> Logic makes but a sorry rhetoric with the multitude; first shoot round corners, and you may despair of converting by a syllogism. Logicians are more set upon concluding rightly, than on right conclusions. They cannot see the end for the process (*GA*, 94).

He realized that theology's reliance on abstract reasoning was restrictive and indeed dangerous. However, as explained previously, the concept of hypothesis that was used to refer to abstract reasoning was also used to refer to concrete reasoning. Over time, his method in theology engaged the concept of hypothesis in both of its meanings. The concept of hypothesis that refers to the abstract reasoning of formal inference in the *Development of Doctrine* was subsequently used to identify the argument of informal inference in the *Grammar*. He tried to harmonize the classical method in theology that focused on deduction with a concrete method that is more attuned to historical consciousness and particular circumstances.[64] Both features contribute to sound religious faith.[65] This change constitutes a progression in theological method from a deductive to an inductive approach,[66] reflecting the dialectical relation between what is notional and real in his religious epistemology.[67] This tension between what is notional and real, what is deductive and inductive, stretches back to his writings as an Anglican.[68] A helpful summary of this progression is presented in a passage that summarizes his epistemology that he applied to theology:

> It is plain that formal logical sequence is not in fact the method by which we are enabled to become certain of what is concrete; and it is equally plain, from what has been already suggested what the real and necessary method is. It is the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be converted into syllogisms, too numerous and varied for such conversion, even were they convertible (*GA*, 288).

This progression does not mean that he jettisoned deductive reasoning. There was a shift from focusing virtually exclusively upon deduction to a more integrated approach, combining abstract and concrete reasoning. He recognized the contribution of abstract reasoning and assigned it a secondary function so that he could prioritize the concrete reasoning process that characterized certitude. This shift to concrete reasoning substantively changed his method, creating a visionary approach in theology,[69] being especially attentive to historical consciousness. It is the integration of these abstract and concrete processes that characterizes his theological hermeneutics. The paradigm shift to concrete reasoning led him to seek a new instrument for theology. His title reflected the Latin work in philosophy of Francis

[64] Norris (1977), xvi, 79–81, 128–129, 204.

[65] Lash (1971).

[66] Lash (1976), 323.

[67] Merrigan (1991), 142–148, 152–155, 166–167.

[68] Ford (2007), 62; Ford (2005), 60–76; Ford (1985).

[69] Moleski (2000).

Bacon in 1620 that investigated a new instrument of science focusing upon inductive reasoning.[70]

4.3.2 *New Instrument for Theology*

The inductive reasoning that Newman explored was the concrete process of informal inference and assent to justify certitude. The concrete process of reasoning that provided "moral proof" (*US*, 274) or "moral demonstration" (*LD*, XXI, 146) was the function of the Illative Sense in matters of religion. This constituted a new instrument, a "novum organon" for theology. As explained earlier, he described this novel approach in this manner: "real ratiocination and present imagination … Such a living organon is a personal gift" (*GA*, 316). Explaining this integrative capacity for informal inference and real assent regarding religious truth was the basic rationale for writing the *Grammar*:

> There is … a mode of viewing the question and of arguing, which is formally and normally, naturally and divinely, the organum investigandi given us for obtaining religious truth, … I will add, that a main reason for writing this Essay on Assent, to which I am adding these last words, was, as far as I could, to describe the organum investigandi which I thought the true one (*GA*, 499, Note II).

In a letter written in March 1870 to Robert William Dale, to whom he had sent a copy of the *Grammar*, Newman noted that his epistemological argument in the *Grammar* applied to theology. Specifically, Robert William Dale suggested that Newman's "methods of proof" contribute to a "Theological Novum Organum" – to which Newman made this reply ("novum organon" and "novum organum" being the same):

> You have said truly that we need a Novum Organon for theology – and I shall be truly glad if I shall be found to have made any suggestions which will aid the formation of such a calculus (*LD*, XXV, 56–57).

He emphasized the need for both the interpretative and assertive roles of inference and assent. The "organum investigandi" constituted the basic insight of his *Grammar*. Applying that insight to theology as a "Novum Organon for theology" was a very significant accomplishment that he acknowledged. Just as the "organum investigandi" of informal inference and real assent provided the fulcrum for his analysis in the *Grammar*, these interpretative and assertive roles of informal inference and real assent characterized his approach to theology.

This new method in theology mirrors the Illative Sense.[71] But this similarity is not implicit as suggested by some commentators.[72] The relation between his hermeneutics of the imagination and his theological method was explicit and deliberate. The preceding analysis has explained that the new instrument for theology created

[70] Bacon (1620).

[71] Hammond (1988b), 24–25, 28.

[72] Hammond (1988b), 23, 25.

by the Illative Sense combines "real ratiocination and present imagination" integrating informal inference and real assent. This concrete process that characterized his epistemology was applied to his theology. That is, his hermeneutics of the imagination in his theory of knowledge became his theological hermeneutics in matters of religion. The process functions in a concrete manner "both through the intellect and through the imagination" to elicit "one complex act both of inference and of assent" (*GA*, 492), as explained previously.

This nuanced approach that respects historical consciousness continues to make a significant contribution to the ongoing debate on method in theology. His insights anticipated the discussion today over how meaning and truth in theology emerge from the critical interpretation of concrete realities.[73] His shift from a deductive and formal view of theology to an inductive and experiential approach anticipated among subsequent scholars discourse on the integration of the knower and known,[74] and discourse on how symbols (such as in imaginative assent) extend beyond the reach of discursive inquiry.[75] He anticipated the significance of a communal context for theological discourse,[76] including the sense of the faithful, opinions of theologians or schools of theology, and the magisterial teachings of bishops, as will be explored further in a later chapter.

4.3.3 Notional and Real Assent

Newman used abstract and concrete reasoning, prioritizing the role of the Illative Sense to inspire his new instrument for theology. He recognized that notional and real assent function together in theology, providing distinct interpretations in a single act: "The notion and the reality assented-to are represented by one and the same proposition, but serve as distinct interpretations of it" (*GA*, 119). It is important to highlight that these different assents can occur simultaneously: "There are then two kinds of apprehension or interpretation to which propositions may be subjected, notional and real … in the same mind and at the same time, the same proposition may express both what is notional and what is real" (*GA*, 10–11). He illustrated this point by the example of a chemist who illustrates a physical reality to students by presenting it "as an individual thing before their eyes, and also as generalized by their minds into a law of nature" (*GA*, 11). Reflecting the contrast between notional and real assent, he distinguished between the theological intellect and the religious imagination:

> A dogma is a proposition; it stands for a notion or for a thing; and to believe it is to give the assent of the mind to it, as it stands for the one or for the other. To give a real assent to it is an act of religion; to give a notional, is a theological act. It is discerned, rested in, and appropriated as a reality, by the religious imagination; it is held as a truth, by the theological intellect (*GA*, 98).

[73] Tracy (1981), 29, 423.

[74] Lash (1975), 20–45.

[75] Ricoeur (1995), 4–5; Ricoeur (1967) 347–357.

[76] Park (2006); Thiel (1991), 206–207.

Notional assent pertains to the abstract, intellectual domain of theology and real assent deals with the concrete, imaginative domain of religion. There are "two modes of assent, the religious and theological" (*GA*, 98). A few lines later he applied this distinction to theology and religion: "there is a theological habit of mind, and a religious, each distinct from the other, religion using theology, and theology using religion" (*GA*, 99). However, his distinction between the "theological intellect" and the "religious imagination" can be confusing. His point is simply to contrast the abstract and concrete processes that generate notional and real assent, not to create a division between theology and religion – he emphasized that each uses the other.[77]

This distinction between the "theological intellect" ("theology") and the "religious imagination" ("religion") was a rhetorical device to emphasize the abstract and concrete processes of notional and real assent in belief about dogma. The distinction does mean that theology excludes the concrete process that justifies certitude. His "novum organon for theology" argues exactly for theology to engage this concrete process. This distinction between abstract and concrete assent reflected another distinction: the difference between languid or notional assent that is detached from action and the energetic nature of real assent that typically leads to action. Action was vital for Newman. Unless assent to dogma creates "an image living within us" it cannot inspire the sort of action that is needed. Referring again to dogma, he emphasized the importance of real assent and its connection with action (in this case devotion):

> Are they addressed to the pure intellect, or to the imagination? Do they interest our logical faculty, or excite our devotion? Why is it that personally we often find ourselves so ill-fitted … that in our case the dogma is far too much a theological notion, far too little an image living within us? … Religion has to do with the real, and the real is the particular; theology has to do with what is notional, and the notional is the generic and systematic (*GA*, 139–140).

The reciprocity between what is notional and real was evident from early in the *Grammar* when he explained different ways of holding a proposition. Notional apprehension expands knowledge and real apprehension inspires action: "Without the apprehension of notions, we should for ever pace round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations" (*GA*, 34). However, what is real does not repudiate a place for what is notional.[78] He respected the contribution of both notional and real assent. In matters of belief the abstract processes of notions need to be brought alive by engaging reality: "Theology may stand as a substantive science, though it be without the life of religion" (*GA*, 121). The abstractions of notional assent become alive by actions that arise from real assent: "the firmest hold of theological truths is gained by habits of personal religion" (*GA*, 117). Similarly, the "vivid apprehension" (*GA*, 118) of the imagination that typifies real assent needs to be tested by abstract processes of reasoning: "in religion the imagination … should always be under the control of

[77] Merrigan (1991), 253.

[78] Merrigan (1991), 178–179.

reason … religion cannot maintain its ground at all without theology … it is in this way that devotion falls back upon dogma" (*GA*, 121). The abstract processes of notional assent (which he rhetorically aligns with theology) and the concrete processes of real assent (which he rhetorically aligns with religion) balance each another:

> Theology, properly and directly, deals with notional apprehension; religion with imaginative … Here we have the solution of a common mistake of supposing that there is a contrariety and antagonism between a dogmatic creed and a vital religion (*GA*, 120).

While there is a justified role for the abstract process of notional assent, the priority must always be upon the concrete process of real assent that inspires action. That is why he insisted that, "real apprehension has the precedence, as being the scope and end and the test of the notional" (*GA*, 34). This stance set the stage for his critical insight that "the theology of a religious imagination … has a living hold on truths" (*GA*, 117).

In sum, notional assent and real assent are both necessary, but he prioritized the real assent of certitude. He clarified the interpretative and assertive roles of the imagination in the concrete process of informal inference and real assent that inspired action. By applying this analysis to theology he proposed a "novum organon" that presented a paradigm shift from abstract reasoning to concrete reasoning in order to engage historical consciousness. He integrated his theory of knowledge and his moral rhetoric as components of his hermeneutics of the imagination with the new instrument of theology, creating what has been described as his theological hermeneutics. The next section provides examples to elucidate the originality and significance of his approach.

4.4 Theological History

Newman's theological hermeneutics provides the interpretative key for understanding his approach to theological history, inspiring his interest in the development of religious tradition from the early Church onwards. His approach was highly attuned to tradition and practice.[79] He recognized that both Revelation and theology are necessary for Christian doctrine and practice.[80] His insights provide enlightening perspectives about the development of theology throughout history,[81] whereby reason and tradition worked constructively together,[82] especially to foster doctrinal development.[83] Several historical examples elucidate this in his writings: his

[79] Rule (2004), 40.

[80] Norris (2010); Norris (1996).

[81] Ker and Merrigan (2009); Misner (2003); Gauthier (1988); Holmes (1969, 1970, 1973a, b).

[82] Kerr (2004).

[83] Pereiro (2007).

argument for a via media between Anglicanism and Catholicism; his argument of doctrinal development; and his principle of economy.

4.4.1 Via Media

In 1837 Newman proposed a via media between Anglicanism and Catholicism. He sought a middle path between Protestantism (like Lutherans) and Catholicism based on the Council of Trent.[84] But he failed. His theory was contained in his *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church* delivered in 1836 in the university Church in Oxford. In old age he returned to the topic writing a new Preface in 1877. He made an "appeal to the imagination" to find "a possible road, lying between a mountain and a morass" (*VM*, I, xxi–xxii). This road was the illusory middle way between the perceived excesses of Protestantism and Catholicism. His quest anticipated what Paul Riceour later described as an approach to negotiate a disputed issue by gaining deeper insight into hitherto unforeseen possibilities. The process sought to let truth emerge in the space opened up for the conversation between the dialogue partners. For Riceour this approach entails a journey to selfhood that is possible because of the subject's willingness to perceive new ways of being through interaction with the texts in question.[85] Similarly, Newman's via media can be understood as negotiating an imaginative new truth as well as being a quest for selfhood in his religious pilgrimage. This twofold enterprise reflected his ongoing commitment to truth (seeking a new insight) and holiness (his religious pilgrimage).

In 1838 he presented his *Lectures on Justification*,[86] which became a classic of ecumenical theology.[87] They constituted the most robust theological treatise that he wrote,[88] and presented his most robust effort at deploying his via media.[89] Although the focus of the lectures was a repudiation of Luther,[90] he basically sought a return to primitive Christianity prior to the exaggerations of Protestantism or the corruptions of Romanism.[91] Despite the opposition of each side to his proposal, over time he had a very significant influence on this issue with both the Anglican and the Catholic Church.[92] Nonetheless, the theological dispute over justification remains unresolved today.[93]

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[84] Holtzen (2007).

[85] Ricoeur (1995), 1–2.

[86] Penaskovic (1982); Sheridan (1967).

[87] McGrath (2002); McKeating (1992), 125–129; Ker (1988), 157.

[88] Turner (2008), 13.

[89] Gilley (1990), 165.

[90] Jaki (2007); McGrath (1983).

[91] Sheridan (2009), 107; Sheridan (2001).

[92] Chadwick (1990a); D'Arcy (1990).

[93] Lane (2006); Lehmann and Pannenberg (1989); Ratzinger (1983).

In his 1877 Preface he tried to offer a more plausible explanation of his earlier theory that can be interpreted as an application of his theological hermeneutics. Naturally, the new preface is consistent for the most part with the previous work.[94] In a fascinating passage he explained the purpose of his original efforts in suggesting a via media:

> I mean, a suggestion of views more or less probable … to bring together into one separate matters which seem to be without meaning, … Such hypotheses are altogether legitimate, and often necessary; for representations may be true, which nevertheless are not or cannot be proved; and probabilities, when accumulated, tell, … such hypotheses appeal to the imagination more than to the reasoning faculty; and, …they do not admit, and on that account cannot demand, a logical refutation (*VM*, I, xx, xxi).

Here, the concept of "hypothesis" refers to the concrete process of informal inference. Several distinctions are needed. He explained that he intended the use of hypotheses "to bring together into one separate matters which seem to be without meaning" (*VM*, I, xx). To understand this it is important to note that he relied upon a "use of hypothesis, as a substitute for direct evidence and hard reasoning, in support of propositions which have to be maintained" (*VM*, I, xx). By "hard reasoning" he meant the abstract reasoning of formal inference or logic – this was insufficient for his purpose of supporting his proposition. Instead, he relied upon the concrete reasoning process of informal inference. His contrast with "hard reasoning" and his observation that the hypotheses "do not admit … a logical refutation" confirm that he was not proposing the abstract reasoning of formal inference. Rather, he described the process of concrete reasoning in this way: "When the conclusion is assumed as a hypothesis it throws light on a multitude of collateral facts, accounting for them, and uniting them together in one whole" (*GA*, 323).

This use of "hypothesis" in the concrete reasoning of informal inference contrasts with the abstract process of formal inference where hypothesis is used to elicit "due meaning" within "the perspective of the whole" (*GA*, 315). Again, the holistic perspective of informal inference is evident in his connection of hypothesis with cumulative probabilities – "probabilities, when accumulated" (*VM*, I, xxi). This concrete process refers to the interpretative role in his new instrument of theology. Moreover, its assertive role is suggested when he explained that "hypotheses appeal to the imagination more than to the reasoning faculty" (*VM*, I, xxi). His point here appears to be that holding the conclusion as a hypothesis is akin to making a real or imaginative assent, whereby the conclusion or proposition is asserted independently of the preceding inferences ("the reasoning faculty").

His inquiry in theological history relied upon the interpretative role of informal inference and the assertive role of real assent. Naturally, in 1836 he had not worked out a coherent approach to theology, far less his experiential approach that emerges in the 1877 Preface.[95] Some scholars acknowledge the novelty in the 1877 Preface, yet cannot reconcile theology's use of concrete reasoning with its subordinate or

[94] Weidner (1990), xxxviii, lviii.

[95] Kerr (2004); Weidner (1990), xxii.

notional status in earlier works.[96] The above analysis explains the plausibility of the 1877 Preface in terms of Newman's "novum organon" for theology construed as his "theology of a religious imagination" (*GA*, 117).

The discussion in his 1877 Preface was not the only time that he applied his theological hermeneutics. Because the Preface was written after the *Grammar*, his analysis reflects the sophisticated understanding that he had worked out in his religious epistemology. However, his focus on the real assent of certitude that characterized his method had been in formation from early in his career. A good example appears in his writings on the development of doctrine. A fascinating contrast can be drawn between his argument on the via media in the 1830s and his views on the development of doctrine in the 1840s. His argument in the 1830s for the via media indicates a view that he eventually let slide because of opposition by the Anglican authorities of his day. His argument dealt with a notional assent that did not lead him to action: his assent was not synchronized with moral rhetoric. He backed away. In contrast, his argument in 1845 on doctrinal development illustrates a personal and concrete conviction of real assent that led him to action. His real assent was synchronized with moral rhetoric. He acted upon his real assent, converting to Catholicism.

4.4.2 Development of Doctrine

Newman presented an original argument in the *Development of Doctrine*. His argument reflected upon the complexity of theological history,[97] and was not based on a prior philosophical or theological trend.[98] He contributed significantly to Catholic apologetics,[99] complementing his discussion of faith and reason in the *Oxford University Sermons* that made him a prominent apologist.[100] He did not suggest that all Church doctrine is in flux. Rather he argued that for the faith of the apostles to continue over the centuries it has to be articulated in new ways. His work was seminal in nineteenth century theology and established doctrinal development as a basic principle of unsurpassed significance in Catholic theology.[101] As a result, he significantly influenced not only Catholic theology,[102] including debates on the development of morality,[103] but also the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.[104]

[96] Dulles (1990b), 381–382.

[97] Jaki (2003); White (2009).

[98] Walgrave (1972), 293–294.

[99] Earnest and Tracy (1984), Jaki (2005), 283–312.

[100] Earnest and Tracy (2006), cxviii; Dulles (2002), ix, 150, 159.

[101] Dulles (2002), 74, 79; Misner (1976), 3.

[102] Nichols (1990); Lash (1975); Walgrave (1957, 1972); Chadwick (1957).

[103] Noonan (1993), 669–672.

[104] McCarren (2009), 118; Dulles (2002), 79; Pelikan (1969), 3, 13.

To understand his argument, it needs to be distinguished from two other positions held at the time. There were two standard arguments that doctrines do not change. The Gallican tradition, represented by Bossuet, held that Catholic doctrines do not change, being merely clarified in order to separate unchanging faith from heresies across the centuries. The Spanish tradition also claimed that Catholic doctrines do not change insofar as subsequent doctrines are merely deduced from prior beliefs and doctrines. In contrast Newman argued that Church doctrines in reality do change, establishing more than a mere clarification of or deduction from preceding doctrines.[105]

At the core of his essay on doctrinal development he combined the role of dogma, faith, and theology, each explored in further works including what was unpublished during his life.[106] These concepts included the following: first, "the principle of dogma" presenting "supernatural truths irrevocably committed to human language" being "imperfect … but definitive and necessary because given from above"; second, "the principle of faith … being the absolute acceptance of the divine Word with an internal assent"; and third, "the principle of theology" being the "inquiry, comparison and inference" that constitutes "science in religion" (*Dev*, 325).

Here he obviously adopted the abstract reasoning of formal inference and notional assent: the "principle of theology" draws attention to the connection that he drew between theology and abstract reasoning that was discussed previously in relation to the concept of hypothesis. Nonetheless, it is plausible to argue that his argument on doctrine also engaged him with the concrete reasoning of informal inference and real assent. After all, it seems unlikely that he would have converted to Catholicism as a result of an analysis simply based on the logical deductions of formal inference and notional assent. Rather, his argument on doctrine led to his conversion, suggesting the concrete reasoning of informal inference and real assent that connects with action. The narrative of his *Apologia* and the analysis of his *Grammar* make this clear, especially when describing the shift from notional to real assent: "This is the change which so often takes place in what is called religious conversion" (*GA*, 80). Furthermore, his vigorous concern with doctrine discussed previously reinforces the argument that it was real assent that led to his conversion. In this sense, his argument on doctrinal development can be interpreted from the perspective of his theological hermeneutics: his religious epistemology of certitude combined with his moral rhetoric to inspire his dramatic act of conversion.

This transition from abstract to concrete reasoning in his own conversion process around the topic of doctrine seems straightforward, even if his analysis of doctrinal development in 1845 associated theology with formal inference. However, closer scrutiny of his later texts suggests that he was conscious of the shift in method to using the concrete process of informal inference to address doctrinal development. A case can be made that his use of hypothesis in the *Development of Doctrine* can be interpreted not only with regard to formal inference but also as a function of informal inference.

[105] Powell (2009), 95–96; Chadwick (1957, 1975).

[106] de Achaval (1958), 593.

At the start of his work on doctrinal development he explained that his "Essay is directed towards a solution to the difficulty … It is undoubtedly an hypothesis to account for a difficulty" (*Dev*, 29–30). Here he presented the hypothesis as a "Theory of Doctrinal Development" that suggested "time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas" which he further explained in this way: "the highest and most wonderful truths … could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but … have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation" (*Dev*, 29–30). The concept of hypothesis here obviously uses abstract reasoning: "This process, … by which the aspects of an idea are brought into consistency and form, I call its development" (*Dev*, 38). Yet in a later passage, a concrete process can be traced when explaining the unfolding of doctrine in terms of convergence and image, thereby anticipating his later concepts of informal inference and imaginative assent.

> If Christianity is a fact, and impresses an idea of itself on our minds and is a subject-matter of exercises of the reason, that idea will in course of time expand into a multitude of ideas, and aspects of ideas, connected and harmonious with one another, … interpreting, correcting each other, and with more or less exactness approximating, as they accumulate, to a perfect image (*Dev*, 55).

Several points can be noted about this passage. First, the phrase "connected and harmonious with one another, … interpreting, … as they accumulate" suggests the interpretative role of informal inference. Second, the phrase "approximating … to a perfect image" suggests the assertive role of real assent. Third, he adopted the three constituent components of his theory of knowledge. In the subsequent paragraph to the above passage, he wrote:

> And the more claim an idea has to be considered living, the more various will be its aspects; … having aspects many and bearings many, mutually connected and growing one out of another, and all parts of a whole (*Dev*, 56).

In this passage, the three components of knowledge that led to his hermeneutics of the imagination can be identified. First, the personal or subjective endeavor is evident in the phrase, "an idea has to be considered living" – this is as much a communal activity as it is personal, so that a living idea must be assimilated "in the minds of individuals and of the community" (*Dev*, 37). He conveyed this personal or subjective dimension of an idea being "living" in an earlier remark: "When an idea … may be said to have life, … it is not merely received passively … but it becomes an active principle" (*Dev*, 36). Second, the dynamic or forward-reaching aspect entails "growing" that is akin to the "movement onwards" discussed in his *University Sermons* (*US*, 287). He further explained this dynamic component: "it grows when it incorporates, and its identity is found, not in isolation, but in continuity" (*Dev*, 39). Third, the holistic element highlights that growth and continuity result from being "mutually connected," akin to his "connected view" (*US*, 287) of "converging one and all to their one true centre" (*US*, 291). This also is similar to his use of the phrase "interpreting … as they accumulate" (*Dev*, 55). As has been explained previously, each of these components of knowledge pertain to informal

inference: "a proof is the limit of converging probabilities" (*GA*, 321) in the sense that "it is proved interpretativè" (*GA*, 323).

His argument for doctrinal development in 1845 appears as a function of the abstract reasoning of formal inference. But restricting his argument to abstract reasoning raises an obvious conundrum: how could the formal inference and notional assent over doctrinal development persuade him to convert? In contrast, the *Apologia* and the *Grammar* present his personal conversion and its justification in terms of informal inference and real assent. The conundrum can be resolved by applying his theological hermeneutics to combine abstract and concrete reasoning in a manner that enlightens his argument on doctrinal development.

Tracing his method in the via media led to quite a different result than in his work on doctrinal development. His conviction about doctrine generated conversion. Yet he opted to not pursue his conviction about the via media because of the Anglican bishops. In one case his theological hermeneutics and his moral rhetoric that connects belief with action were synchronized but in the other case they were not. An explanation for this rather significant difference can be found in his principle of economy.

4.4.3 Principle of Economy

For Newman the principle of economy fostered the development of doctrine in the tradition of Christianity. In 1833 he wrote his first book, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*,[107] that coincided with the beginning of the Oxford Movement upon which he had so much influence. Though designed originally as a history of the early Councils, in August 1831 he explained to his publisher, Hugh James Rose: "To understand it (the Nicene Confession), it must be prefaced by a sketch of the rise of the Arian heresy" (*LD*, II, 352). The book represented his discovery of the Church of Alexandria, understanding "that Antiquity was the true exponent of the doctrines of Christianity" (*Apo*, 35–36).[108] The Alexandrian Fathers shaped this core aspect of Newman's thought on theological history,[109] especially his integration of the theology of the Eastern Church with the tradition of Christianity in the west.[110]

He explained that the principle of economy exhorts the community "to be leading … to perfection, and to be recovering and purifying" (*Ari*, 84). This notion of developing perfection by recovering the tradition of theological history reflects a similar purpose in doctrinal development that interprets the Church today in light of the early Church. His study of the Arian heresy enabled him to explain that Church

[107] Jaki (2006).

[108] Gilley (1990), 88.

[109] Sillem (1969–1970), I, 181.

[110] Dessain (1976), 85.

history is necessarily an exercise of continuing theological discourse.[111] The principle of economy provides the language to discover new ways for interpreting tradition and doctrine.[112]

One of the most illuminating references in the *Arians* is to Clement of Alexandria. In Clement's writings Newman associated the principle of economy among Christians with "their desire to rouse the moral powers … their dread of loading or formalizing the mind" (*Ari*, 49). This remark expresses the contrast between informal inference ("rouse the moral powers") and formal inference ("formalizing the mind") that is central to his theological hermeneutics. This antagonism between abstract and concrete reasoning is at the heart of his analysis in the *Arians*. He presented the error of Arius (denying the divinity of Christ) as based upon a mistaken use of abstract reasoning in matters of faith: "His heresy, thus founded in a syllogism, spread itself by instruments of a kindred character" (*Ari*, 28). His polemical interests led him to draw an exaggerated parallel between Arianism and the religious rationalism among Protestant liberals in the nineteenth century (*Apo*, 130).[113] However, his basic insight remains valid: doctrine and its development in the early Church required a careful balance between history and doctrine, including balancing theological freedom and the authority of the bishops.[114]

In the *Apologia* he connected the principle of economy with the Alexandrian Church. He noted that its theological teachings were based on "the various Economies or Dispensations of the Eternal," explaining that the teaching of the Fathers "came like music to my ears" – "Antiquity was the true exponent of the doctrines of Christianity" (*Apo*, 36). He described the principle of economy ("the various Economies or Dispensations of the Eternal"), in this manner:

> In the fullness of time both Judaism and Paganism had come to nought; the outward framework, which concealed yet suggested the Living Truth, had never been intended to last, … The process of change had been slow; … thus room was made for the anticipation of further and deeper disclosures, … Her (Church) mysteries are but the expressions in human language of truths to which the human mind is unequal (*Apo*, 36–37).

In contrast to his earlier comment on the principle of economy as avoiding the "dread of loading or formalizing the mind" (*Ari*, 49) via abstract reasoning, the above passage in the *Apologia* can be construed as referring to the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. Several phrases suggest the constituent components of knowledge that are associated with his hermeneutics of the imagination. First, the personal or subjective endeavor is conveyed by the phrase, "the Living Truth." Second, the dynamic aspect is suggested by the phrase, "the process of change." Third, the accumulative element is intimated by the phrase "further and deeper disclosures." By interpreting these components of knowledge as referring to the concrete process of informal inference, the principle of economy can be viewed

[111] Williams (1990), 265–266.

[112] Williams (1990), 284–285.

[113] Thomas (1991), 165–167.

[114] Ker (1988), 49; Ker (1990).

as illustrating his theological hermeneutics. Another way of expressing this association in the above passage is that the principle of economy helps to interpret divine mysteries in Church tradition over time in theological history: "mysteries are but the expressions in human language of truths to which the human mind is unequal." The principle of economy describes the theological task of expressing sacred mystery in human language. This task requires interpretations that are attuned to historical consciousness, such as occurs in the process of concrete reasoning.

Other aspects of his corpus reinforce this interpretation of the principle of economy being attuned to historical consciousness. His approach to doctrine emphasizes that it must remain open to new historical insights.[115] This fits well with a comment that he made in a letter written in 1879. "Theology," he wrote, "makes progress by being always alive to its fundamental uncertainties" (*LD*, XXIX, 118). This sense of the fragility of doctrine that requires being historically sensitive recurs when he discussed theological language as engaging in "a sort of night battle" where we try to "understand each other's meaning" (*US*, 201).[116] The principle of economy provides an approach to doctrine that is historically attuned to recover tradition in a manner that fosters growth, including constructive discourse between orthodoxy, heresy, and atheism.[117] The principle of economy enables doctrinal texts to disclose new possibilities across generations, offering an expanded view of the world that celebrates historical consciousness.[118]

In a fascinating comment in the *Grammar*, he described the principle of economy as "a practical approximation." However, his explanation associated the principle with science as a form of abstract reasoning. Nonetheless, the passage can also connect the principle with concrete reasoning. Just as his concept of hypothesis was used to refer to abstract reasoning and concrete reasoning, similarly, the principle of economy can be associated with both types of reasoning. He explained the principle in this manner:

> Hence in science we sometimes use a definition or a formula, not as exact, but as being sufficient for our purpose, for working out certain conclusions, for a practical approximation, the error being small, till a certain point is reached. This is what in theological investigations I should call an economy (*GA*, 47).

The leading commentator on his principle of economy recognizes the principle as an exercise of concrete reasoning. Robin Selby insightfully argues that in theology the principle of economy, which Newman referred to as "reserve and caution" (*Apo*, 441), is equivalent to proof by convergence ("a practical approximation"). In this sense, the principle of economy and the argument of convergence provide the concrete means for certitude.[119] The principle of economy, like his method in

[115] Williams (1990), 284–285.

[116] Cameron (1962).

[117] Buckley (2008); Ferguson (2003); Thomas (1991); Dulles (1990a).

[118] Ricoeur (1995), 8–9; Ricoeur (1977), 26; Ricoeur (1976), 95.

[119] Selby (1975), 66.

theology, functions by combining the abstract reasoning of formal inference and the concrete process of informal inference and assent.

The historical consciousness of the principle of economy helps to explain why his convictions over the via media and over doctrinal development led to very different outcomes. The principle of economy clarifies that the "process of change" can be slow, requiring "further and deeper disclosures" insofar as sacred "mysteries are but the expressions in human language of truths to which the human mind is unequal" (*Apo*, 36–37). He appears to have realized his conviction about the via media required further elaboration or development and that his conviction about doctrinal development was sufficient to cause his conversion. The principle of economy caused him pause over the via media yet enabled his conviction over doctrine to inspire his conversion. This principle shows his nuanced approach to theology even at the time of the via media and his work on doctrinal development, providing an early glimpse into what would later be developed more fully as his theological hermeneutics.

4.5 Conclusion

In 1850 Monsignor George Talbot, the papal chamberlain to Pope Pius IX, encouraged Newman to use his services to inform the Pope of ecclesial needs in England. Newman's response was unambiguous: "our most crying want is the want of theology" (*LD*, XIV: 35). As he developed and deployed his theological hermeneutics over many decades he contributed in a remarkably original way to meeting this significant need. In particular, he sought to shift from an abstract process of reasoning that focused upon formal inference and notional assent in religious belief. This was necessary but secondary. Instead, he emphasized the concrete process of informal inference and real assent that had the vigor to foster action. A distinctive hallmark of his theological hermeneutics was its alignment with his moral rhetoric to connect certitude with action.

The three theoretical foundations of religious morality in his writings can be summarized in this way. The first foundation deals with his commitment to truth and holiness that provides a leitmotif weaving throughout his writings. This commitment provides a bedrock foundation that connects the realm of doctrine with the realm of salvation. The second foundation is his religious epistemology that explains the relation between reason and belief, and can be construed as his hermeneutics. The concrete process of informal inference and real assent in the Illative Sense seeks objective truth through subjective perception: there is no subject-free objectivity in concrete matters. The third foundation is his hermeneutics of the imagination that when applied to matters in theology constitutes his theological hermeneutics (illustrated in his arguments on the via media, the development of doctrine, and the principle of economy). In turn, these theoretical foundations clarify his view of moral law, moral conscience, and Church tradition as practical foundations of religious morality, each of which is explored in the subsequent chapters.

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Chapter 5
Moral Law

Abstract Moral law or moral doctrine is another foundation of religious morality in Newman's works. It implements the abstract and concrete processes of reason (reflected in notional and real assent) in his hermeneutics. His understanding of first principles shaped his approach to moral law, reflecting the stages in his theory of knowledge: intuitive apprehensions arise from particular experiences, abstractions from these experience lead to notional assents (such as first principles), and the application of these abstractions to concrete reality generates real assent. The abstraction of moral law characterizes its objective and absolute character. However, this does not mean that a moral law can be applied indiscriminately to reality. To apply moral law requires the concrete reasoning of informal inference and real assent of certitude. An example of the abstract and applied aspects of moral law appeared in his dispute with Charles Kingsley over lying during his conversion. While the moral law against lying is always true as an abstraction, when applied to concrete situations a cautious dispensation of truth (equivocation) may be justified. In turn, when abstract moral law is applied to reality, new experiences can arise that cause the law to be refined subsequently. The ongoing interpretation of moral law, through its application and subsequent refinement, requires a keen sensitivity to historical consciousness. Together, these aspects of moral law (its genesis, application, and refinement) provide a practical foundation of religious morality that applies the interpretative process in his hermeneutics of the imagination.

Newman's understanding of moral law or moral doctrine provides a practical foundation of religious morality, implementing the abstract and concrete processes of reason in his theological hermeneutics. His understanding of moral law elucidates his use of reason to address his lifelong commitment to truth regarding doctrine. There are three aspects of moral law that guide morality: its genesis, its application, and its ongoing refinement. To begin it can be helpful to situate the discussion of this topic within his explanation of first principles.

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5.1 First Principles

First principles involve a large concept that appeared in many of Newman's works.[1] The concept is important for his general theory of knowledge. Although he offered no systematic account, he explained it in various ways, for example, to clarify why some believe in God and others do not.[2] First principles are the propositions from which, "we start in reasoning on any given subject-matter" (*GA*, 60). They constitute a preferable starting point for knowledge instead of other options, for example, beginning with Descartes' methodic doubt that he rejected as constituting "universal doubt" (*GA*, 377).[3] This view is similar to what Bernard Lonergan argued a century later, that judgment about insight must rest on the previous acquisition of a large number of other, connected, and correct insights.[4] On the surface, Newman's resistance to the universal doubt of Descartes could lead to the impression that he used first principles to repudiate skepticism. However, he did not use first principles as unchallengeable propositions.[5] Rather, he suggested that they combine the abstract process and the concrete process of reasoning.

5.1.1 Experience and Abstraction

At the core of first principles lies the distinction between abstract and concrete reason, between what is notional and what is real. It can be helpful to recall the reciprocity between what is concrete and abstract in his theory of knowledge. He illustrated these three stages in his theory of knowledge by discussing morality. First, intuitive, instinctive, or inductive apprehensions arise from particular experiences of reality or facts. In this stage there are apprehensions of value that arise from concrete experience, such as the "experience" of an "act of cruelty, ingratitude, generosity, or justice" (*GA*, 65). Second, there are abstractions from these sense experiences in a manner that elicits notional assent. In this stage abstractions arise in an explicit manner from these instinctive or experiential apprehensions: "from such experience … we proceed to abstract and generalize" such as in the "abstract proposition, 'There is a right and a wrong', as representing an act of inference" – inferences that elicit notional assent. For example, "conscience … gives us a rule of right and wrong, … and a code of moral duties" (*GA*, 390). Third, there is an application of these abstractions to concrete conclusions or reality to elicit real assent. In this stage the abstract notion is applied to concrete reality such as in the assent of certitude. He specifically acknowledged that the grasp of concrete truth in this

[1] Rik (1995); Walgrave (1960), 116.

[2] Achten (1995), 27–179.

[3] Lonergan (1972), 223.

[4] Lonergan (1992), 285.

[5] Ferreira (1987), 151.

process includes morality: "in these pages, without excluding, far from it, the question of duty, I would confine myself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth" (*GA*, 344). He specifically included morality as being within the reach of certitude, claiming "a standard for certitude which holds good in all concrete matters," including "cases of practice and duty" (*GA*, 317).

Although first principles are notional they necessarily relate to reality as abstractions from concrete experience:

> first principles expressed in such propositions as 'There is a right and a wrong', a 'true and a false', 'a just and an unjust', a 'beautiful and a deformed'; they are abstractions to which we give a notional assent in consequence of our particular experiences of qualities in the concrete, to which we give a real assent…. These so-called first principles, I say, are really conclusions or abstractions from particular experiences; and an assent to their existence is not an assent to things or their images, but to notions, real assent being confined to the propositions directly embodying those experiences…. In themselves they are abstractions from facts, not elementary truths prior to reasoning (*GA*, 64–65).

First principles are grasped either as abstractions through notional assent ("abstractions to which we give a notional assent") or they can be grasped by real assent in an experiential or concrete manner ("real assent being confined to the propositions directly embodying those experiences"). He illustrated this distinction by explaining that moral law can be held by notional or real assent. Moral law can be affirmed as an objective truth insofar as it is an abstraction from concrete experiences:

> I am not of course dreaming of denying the objective existence of the Moral Law, nor our instinctive recognition of the immutable difference in the moral quality of acts, as elicited in us by one instance of them. Even one act of cruelty, ingratitude, generosity, or justice reveals to us at once *intensivè* the immutable distinction between those qualities and their contraries; … From such experience – an experience which is ever recurring – we proceed to abstract and to generalize; and thus the abstract proposition 'There is a right and a wrong', as representing an act of inference, is received by the mind with a notional, not a real assent (*GA*, 65).

Moral law is an abstraction from concrete experiences in a manner that justifies a notional assent. These moral laws as abstractions establish first principles to guide subsequent decisions – "by first principles I mean the propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject-matter" (*GA*, 60). Also, as moral law is implemented in action, the notional assent to it as an abstraction changes into a real assent that holds its objective truth in a concrete manner in a particular circumstance. That is, moral law can elicit real assent as the law is implemented in concrete experience. He explained this implementation of moral law as a first principle in this manner:

> However, in proportion as we obey the dictates which are its tokens, so are we led on more and more to view it in the association of those particulars, which are real, and virtually to change our notion of it into the image of that objective fact, which in each particular case it undeniably is (*GA*, 65).

In these passages he explained that first principles such as the moral law not only come from experience but also lead to experience; as they arise from experience

they constitute abstractions that elicit notional assent as objective truths; as they are applied to subsequent experiences they also elicit real assent as objective truths. The former typifies the abstract process of formal inference. The latter typifies the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. Of course, the implementation of moral law in real assent may occur by a simple assent that does not engage the abstract law and concrete circumstances in a critical or conscious manner. However, this implementation of law more typically occurs in a critical and deliberative manner that he associated with the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. A few paragraphs later he again turned to the moral law to illustrate the distinction between notional and real assent. In contrast to the abstractions of notional assent, in real assent the mind "is directed towards things, represented by the impressions which they have left on the imagination" (*GA*, 77). The slave-trade exemplifies this distinction:

> The iniquity, for instance, of the slave-trade ought to have been acknowledged by all men from the first; it was acknowledged by many, but it needed an organized agitation, with tracts and speeches innumerable, so to affect the imagination of men as to make their acknowledgement of that iniquitousness operative (*GA*, 77).

Likewise, dueling required a shift from notional to real assent: "The governing classes were roused from their dreamy acquiescence in an abstract truth, and recognized the duty of giving it practical expression" (*GA*, 78). A few pages later, he emphasized that the shift from notional to real assent is what occurs in religious conversion: "This is the change which so often takes place in what is called religious conversion" (*GA*, 80). This remark about conversion is very important because the rationale for writing the *Grammar* was to justify his own religious conversion based upon the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. He recognized that the shift from notional to real assent can be justified via informal inference. It is mistaken to associate first principles merely with simple assent, as an intuition and not a conclusion based on premises, as suggested by some commentators.[6] There is a basic distinction between simple and complex assent, the latter engaging the concrete process of informal inference. First principles can elicit real assent, either in simple assent or in the complex assent that characterized his conversion.

Two other characteristics of first principles should be noted, their type and number, and their so-called self-evident nature. He seems to have envisioned two types of first principles, those belonging to human nature and those peculiar to each individual. He explained that some are "from the nature of our being" and others "constitute the difference between man and man; they characterize him" (*Prepos*, 283–84; See, *Prepos*, 287, and *Diff*, II, 253). However, it can be difficult to distinguish between these types in a given situation because our personal history is influenced to a large extent by our environment (*Prepos*, 293).[7] These two types of first principles are explained in the *Grammar*: some principles "resolve themselves

[6] Casey (1984), 50, 142, 129, 225, 303; Svaglic (1960), xv.

[7] Norris (1996); Norris (1977), 122.

into the conditions of human nature" and other principles are peculiar to individuals, "traceable to the sentiments of the age, country, religion, social habits and ideas, of the particular inquirers or disputants" (*GA*, 270). That is, first principles are "hidden deep in our nature, or, it may be, in our personal peculiarities" (*GA*, 277) – either based in shared nature or connected with varied personalities. This distinction in type is made on the basis of being shared (reflecting the shared reality of nature) or on personal characteristics (reflecting the variety of individuals).[8]

Also, he equivocated about the number of first principles. In 1870 he stated that although they are numerous, "only a few of them (are) received universally" (*GA*, 60).[9] Yet in 1851 he envisaged "many of these First Principles … which are common to the great mass of mankind"; among the first principles of nature he included "the great truths of the moral law, the duties, for instance, of justice, truth, temperance", which have been "imprinted on the human mind by its maker" (*Prepos*, 287, See, *Prepos*, 292). He provided other examples of first principles from nature, such as: "that man is a social being; … that he may defend himself; … that he is responsible; … that he is frail and imperfect; … that reason must rule passion" (*Prepos*, 280–81). Some of Newman's commentators recognize only a limited number of first principles. These include: the existence of a moral sovereign testified by conscience, a divine revelation that distinguishes right from wrong, a God who acts sacramentally within the world, his renowned dogmatic principle, etc.[10] Certainly, there appears to be a variety of first principles. What is more important is not so much the specific type and number of first principles as their status as abstractions in his epistemology.

An ambiguous claim needs clarification, that first principles are "self-evident … because they are evident in no other way" (*GA*, 269). Here he used the term with the meaning he gave in 1851, that they are "held without proof as if self-evident" (*Prepos*, 279). Self-evident means being incapable of the discursive proof of abstract reasoning: "We are not able to prove by syllogism that there are any self-evident propositions at all; but supposing there are, (as of course I hold there are), still who can determine these by logic?" (*GA*, 270). How can first principles be abstractions yet also self-evident? Ferreira offers an insightful solution to this conundrum explaining the following. The grounds from which first principles are abstractions may not be obvious in a demonstrative manner. For example, acceptance of a first principle by a specific community constitutes a justification of these principles, even if there is no direct evidence. In this case, unless evidence can be shown against a first principle the justification remains plausible.[11] This explanation fits well with Newman's description of first principles as "pre-existing beliefs and views" which are recondite, "hidden deep" (*GA*, 269) within us; we "are unaware" of our first principles insofar as they are "hidden", "recondite", or "secret" (*Prepos*, 284, 287).

[8] McCarthy (1981), 68–69; Ferreira (1987), 151, 154.

[9] de Achaval and Holmes (1976), 68.

[10] Jost (1989), 111–112; Norris (1977), 122, 144.

[11] Ferreira (1987), 160–167.

Newman's stance on first principles, such as relates with moral law, anticipated a perspective developed a century later by the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre who argues that when truths discovered through experience are systematized, adherents of a tradition may assign a primary place to those truths and treat them as first principles. For MacIntyre these truths are not self-justifying epistemological first principles, rather they must vindicate themselves, even as evident truths, in the historical process of justification.[12] Similarly, Newman argued that first principles arise as abstractions from experience and in turn are applied to subsequent experience to be vindicated in real assent. This occurs especially in the process of informal inference that can justify the sort of religious conversion that he personally experienced. However, he also emphasized that a pivotal aspect of this shift from notional to real assent when dealing with matters like the moral law involves the individual's moral character.

5.1.2 Character and Assent

First principles are associated with intellectual and moral character in his explanation of informal inference and real assent: "there is a certain ethical character, one and the same, a system of first principles, sentiments and tastes, a mode of viewing the question and of arguing, which is formally and normally, naturally and divinely, the *organum investigandi* given us for gaining religious truth" (*GA*, 499 Note 11; see, *GA*, 302, 342, and *US*, 250). It is important to recall that he identified this "organon" as the instrument for "genuine proof in concrete matter" (*GA*, 271). In an earlier passage he broached the same association when he aligned (first) principles with character in the process of concrete reasoning: "Thus in concrete reasonings we are in great measure thrown back into that condition, from which logic proposed to rescue us. We judge for ourselves, by our own lights, and by our own principles; and our criterion of truth is not so much the manipulation of propositions, as the intellectual and moral character of the person maintaining them, and the ultimate silent effect of his arguments or conclusions upon our minds" (*GA*, 302; See, *US*, 80, 250). In a letter to Henry James Coleridge on February 5, 1871, 1 year after completing the *Grammar*, he reiterated this basic stance: "a right moral state of mind germinates or even generates good intellectual principles" (*LD*, XXV, 280). He associated first principles and character from early on. For example, in a letter to his brother Charles Robert Newman on April 14, 1825 he noted: "we survey moral and religious subjects through the glass of previous habits" (*LD*, I, 226). This association between first principles and personal character constitutes the foundation for his stance that judgments of faith are properly ethical: "faith, though an intellectual act, is ethical" (*Dev*, 327) in origin. That stance is shaped by beliefs and judgments of self and community (*GA*, 86).[13]

[12] MacIntyre (1988), 360; MacIntyre (1981, 1990).

[13] Lonergan (1972), 267.

The role of character is necessary for this reciprocal relation: first principles influence assent and assent influences first principles. Assent "leads the way to actions of every kind, to the establishment of principles, and the formation of character, and is thus again intimately connected with what is individual and personal" (*GA*, 90–91). A similar focus on subjectivity helped to shape the thought of Bernard Lonergan a century later. For example, a central feature of Lonergan's philosophy was that "common sense cannot develop without changing the subjective term in the object-to-subject relations that it knows."[14] In this reciprocity that Newman established between first principles and assent the connection is concrete experience. Of course, by experience he does not mean undifferentiated activity. Rather experience implies interpretation through previous history. Just as informal inference "is formed and matured by practice and experience" (*GA*, 354), so real assents necessarily "depend on personal experience" (*GA*, 83). He emphasized that we "depend on practice and experience more than on reasoning, and thus gain that mental insight into truth … directing ourselves by our own moral and intellectual judgment" (*GA*, 342). Concrete experience is indispensable for the relation that he establishes between first principles, character, and assent. The reciprocity between assent and first principles, each influencing the other, helps to clarify the meaning of moral law.

5.2 Meaning of Moral Law

The reciprocity between abstract and concrete processes described above undergirds first principles to enlighten the meaning of moral law from the perspectives of its genesis and its application. The genesis of moral law reflects the abstract process of formal inference from practical experience. The application of moral law engages particular circumstances in the process of informal inference and real assent. In each process, the intellectual and moral character of the individual is indispensable. At the heart of his respect for religious tradition was his "principle of dogma" (*Apo*, 54) in which he included "the great truths of the moral law, of natural religion, and of Apostolic faith" (*Apo*, 227). The meaning of the moral law can be understood by exploring its genesis and its application as a principle of dogma.

5.2.1 Genesis of Moral Law

Moral law is created through a process of abstraction from concrete experiences. This approach replicates his view of first principles reflecting the basic distinction between real and notional. Real propositions take precedence over notional

[14] Lonergan (1992), 181.

apprehension and assent. As explained previously, apprehension occurs when meaning is given to the terms of a proposition:

> Without the apprehension of notions, we should for ever pace round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations. However, real apprehension has the precedence, as being the scope and end and test of notional (*GA*, 34).

Moral law is a notional abstraction. It is from the recognition of value in reality that we infer moral laws. Abstractions from previous experience constitute the form of the "laws, general rules, guiding principles" of any "ethical system" (*GA*, 354). His approach is reminiscent of the explanation of Aquinas that we can apprehend something as specifically good, therefore to be pursued, from our innate inclinations to the good.[15] By instinct he meant the spontaneous perception through our senses without an argumentative middle term. For example, the conceptual apprehension of cruelty occurs via the specific mental impression that arises from a sensation of it. That is, we have direct knowledge of a given object through our senses (both mental and physical). In a letter to Charles Meynell on August 20, 1869, he explained:

> I have used the word 'perception' again and again; that perception comes to me *through* my senses – therefore I cannot call it *immediate*. If it were not for my senses, nothing would excite me to perceive – but as soon as I see the white paper, I perceive by instinct (as I call it) without *argumentative* media, *through* my senses, but not logically *by* my senses, that there is a *thing*, of which the white paper is the outward token (*LD*, XXIV, 314).

Our senses are the means of perception even though we are unaware of these means: for example, "images … upon the retina" are "the means of our perceiving something real beyond them" (*GA*, 63). In this theory of perception there is no gap between a sensation or idea and an external object.[16] Newman was an empiricist and he argued that it is from sense experience that we form our abstractions, including moral laws. However the abstraction of moral law cannot be reduced to instinctive experience alone. Moral laws also are abstractions from moral judgments: "Such is that *phronesis*, from which the science of morals forms its rules, and receives its complement" (*GA*, 355–356). He associated the genesis of moral laws with the concrete reason that is evident in the judgment of conscience. He recognized the traditional category of a rightly formed conscience under God's law whereby the natural law and principles of faith are respected. This approach is widely recognized today as characteristic of the Catholic tradition about morality.[17] For example, Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of this connection between the eternal and the natural, citing Aquinas: "This participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called natural law."[18] Newman recognized the natural law as the foundation for discourse on moral law:

> It is enough for the proof of the value and authority of any function which I possess, to be able to pronounce that it is natural. What I have to ascertain is the laws under which I live.

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[15] Copleston (1991), 230; Aquinas (1948), 1a, 11ae, 51, 1.

[16] Ferreira (1987), 169–170.

[17] Mahoney (1987), 184–193.

[18] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 43.

> My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature, whatever they are (*GA*, 347).

The relevance of natural law applies both to the genesis and the application of moral law: "we ought to be quite sure that, in a particular case which is before us, we have satisfactorily ascertained what the dictates of our moral nature are, and that we apply them rightly" (*GA*, 419). These dictates can be formal laws like "our natural perception of right and wrong" (*GA*, 419; 65) or material laws such as being "absolutely immoral … to have a community of wives" (*GA*, 419). However, what is shocking for readers today is he did not recognize slavery as a "natural perception" of wrong that is "absolutely immoral." In a letter to T. W. Allies on November 8, 1863 (ironically in the middle of the American civil war where slavery was so pivotal) he wrote at surprising length on slavery:

> I think slavery is in the same order of things as despotism … That which is intrinsically and per se evil, we cannot give way to for an hour. That which is only accidentally evil, we can meet according to what is expedient, giving different rules, according to the particular case. St. Paul would have got rid of despotism if he could. He could not, he left the desirable object to the slow working of Christian principles. So he would have got rid of slavery, if he could. He did not, because he could not, but had it been intrinsically evil, had it be *in se* a sin, he must have said to Philemon, liberate all your slaves at once…. True, to enslave is a horrible sin, yet comparative good may come out of sin in this sinful world…. American slavery admits of the introduction of more antagonistic good, than African despotism…. Slavery then is not evil in se, except in such sense as despotism is… (LD, XX, 554–555).

Several observations can be made about this extraordinary passage. First, it is astounding that he wrote his comments long after slavery had been abolished across the British empire – the Slavery Abolition Act occurred in 1833. Second, his remark about the "slow working of Christian principles" appears to reflect his principle of economy about the progressive unfolding of truth. In reality, it took until the late nineteenth century and beyond for the modern world to recognize the abhorrence of slavery. Newman also recognized that point ("to enslave is a horrible sin"), but seemed oblivious to viewing slavery as being intrinsically wrong. In fairness, two points can be made to explain his stance. On the one hand, the evangelical strain in his thought perhaps found it too difficult to take a position that was not consistent with that of St. Paul in Scripture. After all, biblical hermeneutics, especially in Catholicism, developed in a very sophisticated manner after Newman's time. On the other hand, official Catholic teaching seems to have taken another 100 years to condemn slavery, not occurring effectively until Vatican II.[19] Later, in 1993 Pope John Paul II referred to slavery as "intrinsically evil" in this sense: "there are objects of the human act which are by their nature incapable of being ordered to God, because they radically compromise the good of the person made in his image. These are the acts which, in the Church's moral tradition, have been termed intrinsically evil (*intrinsice malum*): they are such always and per se, on account of their object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances…. The Second Vatican Council… gives a number of such acts … slavery…"[20] So, the

[19] Pastoral Constitution (1966), number 27.

[20] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 80.

condemnation of slavery as an intrinsic evil "in the Church's moral tradition" did not occur until these twentieth century texts. Certainly, condemning slavery as an intrinsic evil stands in stark contrast to Newman's stance that slavery is "only accidentally evil." The third point that emerges from the above passage, and especially relevant to understanding of moral law, is that moral law is an abstraction from prior experiences. What needs to be emphasized is that prior experience needs to be sufficiently perspicacious to recognize evil. It would appear that Newman could not see that evil, despite the extensive campaign in Britain against slavery in his own time. In other words, there appears little justification to let Newman off the hook on this dreadful matter: he was simply blind to the intrinsic evil of slavery, even though he recognized it as a horrible sin.

Nonetheless, from a theoretical perspective his analysis of the genesis and application of moral law was astute. When he discussed the reciprocity between the concrete judgment of informal inference and the abstract process of formal inference in moral law he wanted to contrast "conscience truly so called" with "that miserable counterfeit" (*Diff*, II, 257) that he associated with relying upon formal inference alone. He contrasted conscience with the "intellectual counterfeit" (*Idea*, 202) that he had associated with the logical reasoning of "philosophical morality" (*Idea*, 204) in his renowned eighth Dublin university discourse on the gentleman. His approach to conscience focused upon the epistemological questions of "arriving at a right judgment" (*Diff*, II, 258) by contrasting the different processes of personal and abstract reason. It was the personal and concrete process of reasoning that "has its first origin in nature itself" (*GA*, 354).

However, the abstract process of formal inference has a role to play in moral law – the critique in his discourse on the gentleman was about relying merely upon this process. The abstract process of formal inference provides the authority for moral law as objectively true. The objective truth of the moral law pertains to the apprehension of divine law through an individual's personal conscience, including the process of abstraction from concrete experiences. On the one hand, conscience apprehends divine law as the objective foundation for human moral law. Referring to God's eternal law he wrote: "the Divine Law, then, is the rule of ethical truth, the standard of right and wrong, a sovereign, irreversible, absolute authority" (*Diff*, II, 246). Then he added this remark: "This law, as apprehended in the minds of individual men, is called 'conscience'" (*Diff*, II, 247). This realm of divine law, apprehended in conscience, constitutes the context for understanding what he meant by the objective existence of the Moral Law – ultimately, God's eternal law is the objective standard of truth.[21] On the other hand, the personal reason of conscience is the source for discerning truths that can be formulated via abstraction as moral laws. This realm of moral law, which is formulated as an abstraction in the process of formal inference, has "an objective shape which we can fall back upon, – first for our own satisfaction, then for our justification with others" (*GA*, 286). It is important to emphasize that here the objective status of moral law relates to its abstract formulation. The abstract meaning of moral law constitutes a specific type of truth: "truth

[21] Ker (1985), 341.

certainly, as such, rests upon grounds intrinsically and objectively and abstractedly demonstrative" (*GA*, 410). This reflects the role of abstract reasoning with regard to objective truth as discussed earlier.

He also recognized that moral law pertains in an absolute way: "The precepts of a religion certainly may be absolutely immoral" (*GA*, 419). This view needs to be understood as part of his theory of assent. His basic distinction between inference and assent indicated two legitimate but different modes of affirming a proposition. Inference affirms that a proposition is true because of specific reasons. Assent affirms that a proposition is true independently of justifying reasons: "Assent is in its nature absolute and unconditional, … the act of inference, … is conditional" (*GA*, 157). The abstract, notional nature of moral laws means that it tends to elicit a notional assent that unconditionally affirms the law as true. The objective existence of the moral law means that the law is true and warrants assent as a general abstraction, as a notion. He explained in 1831 that moral law has "intrinsic authority" (*US*, 71), but only as an abstraction. Moral law receives its objective character by abstracting from concrete reality. Due to its objective (abstract) truth, moral law can elicit an absolute, unconditional assent when they are affirmed as notions independently of their genesis.

Although moral law is objectively and absolutely true as an abstract proposition it cannot automatically be applied in every historical circumstance. He was adamant that "arguments about the abstract cannot handle and determine the concrete" (*GA*, 278). In a letter written to Robert Edmund Froude on March 30, 1870, the year when the *Grammar* was published, he reiterated the importance of this view: "no abstract definition can determine particular fact" (*LD*, XXV, 71). He argued that it is impossible to devise "some sufficient science of reasoning which may compel certitude in concrete conclusions" (*GA*, 350). This is simply the case because "general laws are not inviolable truths" (*GA*, 280) and "what is only general does not lead to a necessary conclusion" (*GA*, 279). Simply, "law is not a fact but a notion" (*GA*, 280). The abstract truths of moral laws are important not because they pertain in every circumstance but because they give us "our social code … the standards of thought and action" being the foundation of "our moral language" (*GA*, 54). Abstraction gives us a "breadth" of learning that characterizes "liberal knowledge" (*GA*, 54), the "gentleman's knowledge" (*GA*, 55) of morality.

However, moral law cannot be reduced to abstract meaning, as is evident in his repudiation of the reductive approach of the so-called gentleman's morality. In the eighth discourse of the *Idea of a University* he warned against relying on any morality based merely upon abstractions. He spurned those like Lord Shaftesbury who reduced morality to discursive reasoning alone. Such a reductive stance constitutes the "shallowness of philosophical Religion" (*Idea*, 202) which holds "a whole circle of theological truths … not otherwise than as a number of deductions" (*Idea*, 211). When we reduce the "apprehension of religious and moral truth" merely to abstractions we fall into what he referred to as "a philosopher's, a gentleman's religion" (*Idea*, 193). The danger facing those who reduce moral decision making to the deductive application of abstract moral law is that moral truth "may dwindle into a mere notion of their intellect" (*GA*, 116). Abstract moral law alone is an inadequate

intellectual foundation for moral life because it has no personal, concrete hold on truth: "in spite of a full apprehension and assent in the field of notions, we have no intellectual moorings … as regards personal conduct, social and political action, and religion" (*GA*, 88). Moral law (as an abstraction) can be objectively and absolutely true yet still remain detached from concrete, historical reality. Moral law needs to be applied in a concrete manner that considers the specific circumstances of historical reality:

> the rule of conduct for one man is not always the rule for another, though the rule is always one and the same in the abstract, and in its principle and scope. To learns his own duty in his own case, each individual must have recourse to his own rule (*GA*, 356).

While Newman upheld the legitimacy of objective moral law he also was attentive to the limitations of abstract moral law: "What is written is too vague, too negative for our need. It bids us avoid extremes; but it cannot ascertain for us, according to our personal need, the golden mean" (*GA*, 354). He argued that the abstraction of formal inference had to be connected with the concreteness of informal inference when applying the abstract to particular reality.[22] There is no dichotomy between these forms of inference. Although "logical inferences … cannot proceed without general and abstract propositions" (*GA*, 303), he acknowledged that these "two modes of thought" (formal and informal inference) "cannot really be inconsistent with each other" (*GA*, 34). Nonetheless, real assent requires to be justified by previous inferences, even if it cannot be demonstrably proven. To warrant real assent the inferential approach of converging arguments (as a concrete process) had precedence over demonstrative arguments (as an abstract process). As explained previously, these are two different modes of affirming truth. A proposition can be affirmed because of converging arguments, none of which constitute demonstrative proof. When justified by converging arguments the proposition can be affirmed in itself, as absolutely true. This sort of affirmation constitutes the unconditional nature of assent.[23]

When he gave absolute status to moral law he implied that moral law can elicit assent in two different but related ways: the assent is not only justified by prior judgments but also accepted as a proposition that is true in itself. Insofar as assent to moral law is an absolute acceptance of a proposition, the proposition has been abstracted from previous judgments in particular circumstances. It is indispensable that "acts of assent require previous acts of inference, … as *sine qua non* conditions" (*GA*, 41). Because moral laws are abstractions he perceived them as necessarily general: "All concrete laws are general" (*GA*, 255). This view is reminiscent of Aquinas' view about the secondary precepts of natural law: "valent ut in pluribus" (valid in most cases).[24] By the phrase "concrete laws" Newman meant specific prescriptions, for example, the prohibition of lying – he was not referring to the

[22] Jost (1989), 262; Casey (1984), 6.

[23] Ferreira (1980), 78–84.

[24] Aquinas (1948), I–II, q.94, a.4.

more formal type of moral law, for example, to pursue what is right and avoid what is wrong.

Concrete laws are general in the sense of being abstract. He described the significance of this abstract characteristic of moral law in this manner: "A man in his own person is guided by his own conscience: but in drawing out a system of rules he is obliged to go by logic; and follow the exact deduction of conclusion from conclusion, and must be sure that the whole system is coherent and one" (*Apo*, 247). As general abstractions, particular moral laws have no exhaustive claim on concrete truth. General or abstract laws operate in the arena of consistency and logic. But he warned against mistaking that for truth: "Consistency is not always the guarantee of truth" (*GA*, 323). In a theological paper written earlier in 1863 he was more explicit: "the truth is consistent … but the consistent need not be true," (*TP*, I, 114). With remarkable boldness he even included Papal edicts in faith and morals within his description of general laws. In 1874, just 5 years after writing the *Grammar*, he explained: "All the dogmas of Pope or of Council are but general, and so far, in consequence, admit of exceptions in their actual application" (*Diff*, II, 334). Of course, this remark intended no disloyalty to religious tradition far less to ecclesial authority.

In sum, Newman's view of the "objective shape" (*GA*, 286) of moral law entailed a view of precepts being true "absolutely" (*GA*, 419) in the sense of eliciting assent. The objective and the absolute character of moral law can elicit a notional assent. However, objective truth is affirmed not only in notional assent but also in the real assent of certitude. The shift from notional assent to the real assent of certitude changes the meaning of objective truth from the abstract realm to the concrete realm. The application of moral law to concrete circumstances can be understood as affirming objective truth in certitude.

5.2.2 Application of Moral Law

The concrete process of personal reason applies moral law, resulting in different outcomes. As mentioned above, "each individual must have recourse to his own rule… not to the dead letter of a treatise of a code" (*GA*, 356). Personal reasoning enables us to grasp the circumstances that shape a particular case in order to determine the appropriate action: "It is a capacity sufficient for the occasion, deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances" (*GA*, 355). This capacity has a reach far beyond the limited range of abstract deduction which focuses upon consistency: "this mental rule is not only minute and particular but has an elasticity, which, in its application to individual cases, is, as I have said, not studious to maintain the appearance of consistency" (*GA*, 355). Personal reason is "the living intellect" (*GA*, 354) as it applies abstract law to particular circumstances. He explained the dynamic nature of personal reasoning in this manner.

> It is to the living mind that we must look for the means of using correctly principles of whatever kind, … and of discerning what conclusion from these is necessary, suitable, or expedient (*GA*, 360–361).

He was unambiguous about the difference between an abstract principle and its application. In a theological paper in 1865 he explained: "The abstract principles of the Church are not necessarily equivalent to the concrete. Abstract principles are those which are in force, in themselves and scientifically; concrete those which are to be received and practiced on a given state of society as an oar looks crooked in the water" (*TP*, II, 101). He illustrated his point by an example in morality: "Consider usury – how different in the abstract command, and in the actual practice. Popes do not keep their abstract principles" (*TP*, II, 101). Here he referred to a view among scholars (e.g., Scavini) that Pope Benedict XIV who established "a dogmatic brief on Usury" may have in fact not followed his own principle: "Scavini says that Benedict himself practised usury, i.e., what *seems* like it at the very time of the Brief" (*TP*, II, 118). Newman's point here was simply to illustrate the difference between abstract law and its application: "some saving clause was inserted to the effect that all these doctrinal principles were suspended *when* a particular state allowed of usury by its laws – and then Benedict, as a temporal monarch, *did* allow it by his laws" (*TP*, II, 118).

He recognized that the application of abstract moral law needs flexibility in practice. Moral law should be applied to reality in this way: "Reasoning by rule should be completed by the living mind" (*GA*, 278). The "living mind" involves the Illative Sense, recalling his comparison of informal inference to Aristotle's *phronesis*: "Thus it is, and not by science, that he perfects the virtues of justice, self-command, magnanimity, generosity, gentleness, and all others. *Phronesis* is the regulating principle of every one of them" (*GA*, 356). The abstraction of law is insufficient to address the concrete decisions that need to be made in particular circumstances. In this sense, abstract moral laws constitute "convenient modes of expressing by anticipation a judgment about definite concrete things, as they come before us" – his point here is that "there is a high probability of this rule being true in the case of a particular person."[25] However, probability is the most that can be accomplished by using the formal inference of discursive reason when applying abstract law to concrete reality. Moral law also can be applied by informal inference as a concrete process of reasoning. He emphasized that certitude can be reached by "reasoning rightly" (*GA*, 340), by "right judgment in ratiocination" (*GA*, 342). To ascertain whether a moral law applies in a given case requires examining all the concrete circumstances because, "we cannot determine the character of particular actions, till we have the whole case before us" (*GA*, 419–20). Experience and practice, rather than the formal inference of deductive reasoning, are kernel to his view of applying moral law.[26]

[25] Ker (1985), 340.

[26] Duivesteijn (1967), 286.

It is mistaken, as argued by some commentators, to understand circumstance as being restricted to identifying the relevant question so that the appropriate law can be applied deductively.[27] That view tends to be based upon Newman using the definition of moral law in Aquinas that refers to the "truths which the Lawgiver has sown in our very nature" (*Diff*, II, 246–247, 253). The approach to moral law in Aquinas can be interpreted in different ways.[28] Newman argued that when abstract moral law is applied to particular reality by the concrete process of informal inference, real assent is reached. When this occurs a qualitative change results that he associates with the imagination, "the image of that objective fact" (*GA*, 65). Here notional assent to moral law as an abstraction changes into a real assent when applied to concrete reality. Yet the same proposition pertains in both types of assent, notional and real: "the notion and the reality assented-to are represented by one and the same proposition" (*GA*, 119). The shift from notional to real assent occurs as a function of his hermeneutics of the imagination that he associated with the Illative Sense: "the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matter is committed to the personal action of the … illative sense" (*GA*, 345).

However, there are two strands in his writings that challenge whether his argument for religious belief can also apply to concrete moral judgment. In one strand he appears to exclude certitude in concrete moral judgment, arguing that morality cannot extend beyond probability. Specifically, he addresses "the large domain of theology, metaphysics, and ethics, on which it is not allowed to us to advance beyond probabilities, or to attain to more than an opinion" (*GA*, 239–240). The context of his discourse here is that he discusses primary truths upon which "each of us forms his own judgments and directs his own course, according to the probabilities which they suggest to him" (*GA*, 239). But only probability emerges from the application of these primary truths in practical judgment. While we can justify certitude to primary truths, we can only reach probability in their application to concrete reality: "indefectible certitude in primary truths, manifold variations of opinion in their application and disposition" (*GA*, 240).

This strand in his writings can be explained fairly easily as dealing with the limitations of applying abstract notions to concrete reality by formal inference. Insofar as formal inference only yields probabilities, it is consistent for him to make the point with regard to applying abstract moral laws. The science of morality deals with abstractions and applies them discursively through the logical discourse of formal inference. Insofar as the discursive application of abstract propositions leads only to probability, real assent cannot be elicited. The response to this strand is also straightforward: certitude can be justified when applying abstract moral laws to concrete reality by the concrete process of informal inference. When this occurs, the imagination elicits certitude in the shift from notional to real assent.

Another strand in his writings presents a more serious challenge to the justification of certitude when applying abstract moral laws to concrete reality. He claimed that certitude is immutable. If moral law can be applied legitimately in different

[27] D'Arcy (1981); Finnis (1980), 371–410.

[28] Hughes (1986), 413; Hughes (1978).

ways to concrete reality, the resulting moral duties, insofar as they vary, cannot elicit certitude. Here he contrasted the law of truth and the law of duty, the former capable of certitude as immutable and the latter not: "In this respect of course the law of truth differs from the law of duty, that duties change, but truths never; … truth is ever one and the same, and the assent of certitude is immutable" (*GA*, 355). However, this variety of applications of abstract moral laws to concrete reality need not conflict with his underlying view of certitude. At the heart of his concern seems to be the apparent difficulty of eliciting certitude (as immutable) for moral duties that legitimately vary (according to circumstances) in the application of moral law. However, his concern can be resolved by noticing how he allows certitude to change in particular circumstances. His view of the immutability of certitude pertains to circumstances that do not change. When circumstances change, certitude also can change accordingly.

Ferreira's study of the meaning of certitude as immutable is enlightening, insightfully identifying an aspect of Newman's thought that accepts the mutability of certitude. In 1853 Newman acknowledged a role for the will in certitude, not in reaching certitude but in stifling it: "the will then, though it cannot create <force> certainty, can stifle it" (*TP*, I, 15).[29] Ferreira argues that the possibility of error in certitude is implied in Newman's account of reversing our trust in a friend. In 1860 Newman wrote: "As when a friend is accused, you do not let yourself doubt him *at all*, till he is found guilty" (*TP*, I, 91). This question of the mutability of certitude raises the possibility of doubt in Newman's religious epistemology. Ferreira explains that Newman allows the theoretical possibility of doubt without permitting reasonable doubt in practice: "an issue which can never come to pass in matter of fact, is nevertheless in theory a possible supposition" (*GA*, 181). Ferreira explains that the dubitability that is compatible with certitude is the "consciousness of the possibility of a reversal of my belief in the course of my researches" along with "the utter absence of all thought, or expectation, or fear of changing" (*GA*, 193). However, when we change certitude Ferreira argues that we do so as a whole and not in degrees for as assent is not gradually created by inferences, nor can assent be gradually weakened by them. Ferreira's analysis persuasively explains that Newman did not use immutability as a necessary criterion for certitude.[30] In the *Grammar* Newman explicitly mentions the possibility of reversing certitude: "It is possible then, without disloyalty to our convictions, to examine their grounds, even though in the event they are to fail under the examination, for we have no suspicion of this failure" (*GA*, 194).

He recognized that the reversal of certitude can pertain both to religious and moral issues: this "survey and revision" applies "to religion, or to social duty, or to politics, or to the conduct of life" (*GA*, 194). Of course, his conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism is a dramatic example of the reversal of certitude in his religious belief. He believed that "as a general rule, certitude does not fail" (*GA*, 221–222). So there is room in his thought to justify the reversal of certitude when

[29] Ferreira (1980), 53.

[30] Ferreira (1980), 93, 103–104, 125.

there is sufficient proof, as occurred in his conversion to becoming a Catholic. The possibility of reversing certitude arises from the concrete nature of truth in historical circumstances. In 1865 he wrote: "Certitude has truth for its object" (*TP*, I, 121); hence, we must be "intellectually true to the truth" (*GA*, 199). It was this principle of the "objectiveness of Truth" that led to his religious conversion as a Catholic, despite having to reverse his previous certitudes about the Anglican faith (*Apo*, 186).

The legitimacy of reversing certitude is relevant for understanding how moral judgment can justify certitude in varied ways in different circumstances. The legitimate reversal of certitude highlights the importance of concrete circumstances when informal inference justifies a new assent. The cause for the change is an interpretation of different circumstances. Similarly, the objective truth of abstract moral law can be applied in varying circumstances to elicit different certitudes. The example of marriage can be enlightening. The certitude that characterizes the decision of a couple to wed can change due to historical circumstances when a different certitude is elicited in a subsequent decision to divorce. In each circumstance, informal inference justifies the moral judgment that elicits certitude.

The point here is that different circumstances and decisions based on them do not necessarily exclude certitude. Of course, his explanation of certitude does not mean that it is always achieved in the concrete process of belief. Likewise, certitude cannot always be achieved in the concrete process of moral judgment. Nonetheless, just as certitude can be reached in matters of religious belief, this argument also applies to moral judgment. When that occurs, it is the concrete process of informal inference that legitimates the assent of certitude. This concrete process (informal inference and the assent of certitude) can be involved when abstract moral law is applied to concrete circumstances. Here, the abstract truth of the law that elicits notional assent shifts to the real assent of certitude. The moral law is justified as being true in particular circumstances. Objective moral truth is affirmed in both the notional and real assent of certitude.

An interesting example of the application of moral law as an abstract truth arose in Newman's public dispute over lying with Charles Kingsley in 1864. By illustrating how abstract law is applied concretely this dispute recalls his principle of economy and applies his theological hermeneutics, as discussed in the previous chapter.

5.3 Dispute over Lying

Kingsley had questioned Newman's integrity and honesty about remaining in the Anglican Church during his conversion process.[31] He accused Newman of disrespecting truth, writing first in January 1863, then 1 year later in private correspondence in January 1864, and finally in a pamphlet, "What, then, does Mr. Newman

[31] Chadwick (1978), 411–416.

mean?" published in March 1864. Within a matter of months, Newman responded in a series of pamphlets, originally printed independently and then published in one volume as his *Apologia* in 1864, to refute the charge. He composed his response in his *Apologia*, writing the work in great haste, with an 80-page part being written in 1 day.[32] Typically Anglicans were unwilling to disparage Newman for his conversion. They tended to ignore rumors of dishonesty such as having been a secret Catholic.[33] The *Apologia* was received as being exceptionally honest upon its publication.[34] Given the need for his response to Kingsley, the genre of the *Apologia* was apologetic being a religious and spiritual biography.[35] Newman's response was an example of how he perceived the application of moral law in a concrete situation, engaging two related arguments: the cautious dispensation of truth reflecting the principle of economy; and the need for a just cause to apply the general law differently in a concrete situation, reflecting the concrete reasoning of the Illative Sense.

5.3.1 Cautious Dispensation of Truth

The principle of economy can be construed as an application of Newman's theological hermeneutics in his response to Charles Kingsley. Newman used the principle to distinguish between who speaks and who listens in the process of communication.[36] In general, the principle of economy seeks what he described as an "accommodation to the feelings and prejudices of the hearer, in leading to the reception of a novel or unacceptable doctrine":

> those who are strangers to the tone of thought or principles of the speaker cannot at once be initiated into his system, and … they must begin with imperfect views; and therefore if he is to teach them at all, he must put before them large propositions, which he afterwards has to modify, or make assertions which are but parallel or analogous to the truth rather than coincident with it (*Ari*, 71–72).

Newman defended a scale of truth telling that led Kingsley to accuse him of the following: "the event seems to show that a calculation of results has been the actuating principle at bottom" (*Apo*, 361). Newman provided a nuanced response that applied his principle of economy. On the one hand, he rejected lying: "I scorn and detest lying, and quibbling, and double-tongued practice, and slyness, and cunning, and smoothness, and cant, and pretence" (*Apo*, 395). He accepted the premise in the moral tradition that "a lie is naturally or intrinsically evil" (*Apo*, 459). Despite this prohibition, he recognized that good people tell lies, even though it is wrong and sinful: "This view cannot for a moment be defended, but, I suppose, it is very

[32] Himmelfarb (2007a), 185.

[33] DeLaura (1990), 88.

[34] Ker (1991), 17.

[35] Newman (2006), 169.

[36] Griffiths (2008).

common" (*Apo*, 446). On the other hand, he acknowledged that in the moral tradition over centuries telling what appears to be a lie can be justified: "It is lawful to tell a lie to children or to madmen; because they, having no powers of judging, have no right to truth; but then the lie must be charitable and useful… If a lie be told, it must be such as is for their good" (*Apo*, 460). He applied his principle of economy ("cautious dispensation of truth"), which he considered as pertaining to doctrine as well as being a "rule of practice," when crafting a subtle response:

> I proceed to a brief sketch of what I held in 1833 upon the Economy, as a rule of practice…. The doctrine of the Economia, … had a large signification when applied to divine ordinances; it also had a definite application to the duties of Christians … in the ordinary intercourse with the world around them…. This cautious dispensation of the truth, after the manner of a discreet and vigilant steward, is denoted by the word 'economy'. It is a mode of acting which comes under the head of Prudence, one of the four Cardinal Virtues (*Apo*, 440–441).

Again, in 1859 in a theological paper, he referred to "partial truth" as an "economical" use of truth (*TP*, 160). However, justifying limited truth-telling via the principle of economy in some circumstances did not signify approval of expedient means to justify an end. Here he adopted a standard principle in Catholic morality that rejected the dishonorable moral approach whereby the means justify the end: "This is undeniable: to do evil that good may come, to consider the means, whatever they are, justify the end, to sacrifice truth to expedience, unscrupulousness, recklessness, are grave offenses. These are abuses of the Economy" (*Apo*, 441). His point was that truth as a general principle ("the rule of truth") may be implemented in different ways in practice, and that these differences require an application of the principle of Economy: "Truth is the same in itself and in substance, … but when we come to the question in detail, whether this or that act in particular is conformable to the rule of truth, … then sometimes there is a difference of opinion between individuals, sometimes between schools, and sometimes between religious communions" (*Apo*, 444).

By applying the principle of economy he presented an argument that would anticipate the concrete process of informal inference. He indicated that the principle pertains to the "rule of practice" and "duties" insofar as the "cautious dispensation of truth" leads to a "mode of acting which comes under the head of Prudence" (*Apo*, 440–441). In addition to using the principle of economy to defend a cautious dispensation of truth, he explained how the application of an abstract moral law can lead to different outcomes in concrete situations when there is a just cause (again requiring prudence).

5.3.2 Just Cause

His appeal to the argument of a just cause can be construed as constituting the concrete reasoning of the Illative Sense. A just cause is required to justify different applications of the "rule of truth." He referred to the works of the Catholic moral

theologian St. Alphonsus Liguori, citing his phrase "ex justâ causâ" (*Apo*, 445): "when a just cause is present, there is some kind of verbal misleading, which is not a sin" (*Apo*, 445). He provided examples of this use of the principle of economy with regard to restricted truth-telling:

> Another mode of verbal misleading, and the most direct, is actually saying the thing that is not; and it is defended on the principle that such words are not a lie, when there is a 'justa causa', as killing is not murder in the case of an executioner.
>
> Another ground of certain authors for saying that an untruth is not a lie when there is a just cause, is, that veracity is a kind of justice, and therefore, when we have no duty of justice to tell truth to another, it is no sin not to do so. Hence we may say the thing that is not, to children, to madmen, to men who ask impertinent questions, to those whom we hope to benefit by misleading.
>
> Another ground taken in defending certain untruths, ex justâ causâ, as if not lies, is that veracity is for the sake of society, and, if in no case we might lawfully mislead others, we should actually be doing society great harm.
>
> Another mode of verbal misleading is equivocation or a play upon words; and it is defended on the view that to lie is to use words in a sense which they will not bear. But an equivocator uses them in a received sense, though there is another received sense, and therefore, according to this definition, he does not lie (*Apo*, 445).

He reached the following conclusion: "I think the historical course of thought upon the matter has been this: it has been largely taught that, though all untruths are lies, yet that certain equivocations, when there is a just cause, are not untruths" (*Apo*, 446). His point was that equivocation is not necessarily a lie and can be justified when there is a just cause. The question, of course, is what constitutes "the 'just cause', which is the condition, sine quâ non" (*Apo*, 446). He associated just cause with special cases: "I think the best word for embracing all the cases which would come under the 'justa causa', is, not 'extreme', but 'special', and I say the same as regards St. Alfonso" (*Apo*, 447).

He explained "the measure of the just cause" (*Apo*, 447) by calling upon two general approaches in Catholic morality. On the one hand, he referred to the classical principle of double effect that originated with St. Thomas: "St. Alfonso, in another Treatise, quotes St. Thomas to the effect, that, if from one cause two immediate effects follow, and if the good effect of that cause is equal in value to the bad effect (bonus aequivalet malo), then nothing hinders that the good may be intended and the evil permitted" (*Apo*, 447; See, *Apo*, 575). This principle continues to be used extensively in Catholic moral theology.[37] On the other hand, he distinguished formal and material actions to justify material actions that have a legitimate moral "intention" – having "a sufficient object, or has a just cause":

> *To say the thing that is not*. Here I draw the reader's attention to the words *material* and *formal*. 'Thou shalt not kill'; *murder* is the *formal* transgression of this commandment, but *accidental homicide* is the material transgression. The matter of the act is the same in both cases; but in the *homicide*, there is nothing more than the act, whereas in *murder* there must be the intention, &c. which constitute the formal sin. So, again, an executioner commits the material act, but not that formal killing which is a breach of the commandment. So a man, who, simply to save himself from starving, takes a loaf which is not his own, commits only

[37] Magill (2011a).

> the material, not the formal act of stealing, that is, he does not commit a sin…. And in like manner, if to say the thing which is not be in special cases lawful, it may be called a *material lie*.
>
> The first mode then which has been suggested of meeting those special cases, in which to mislead by words has a sufficient object, or has a *just cause*, is by a material lie (*Apo*, 453).

Here he focused upon the distinction between the physical act and the moral intention or purpose. This sophisticated explanation constituted the primary form of justified equivocation. In this passage, his analysis appears to anticipate the role of informal inference as providing "reasons sufficient for a proof" (*GA*, 360). His point was to explain the meaning of "just cause" and to do so he uses the phrase "sufficient object." This suggests the process of reasoning upon all the relevant data, such as occurs with informal inference. This concrete process is evident in the example of Abraham planning to kill his son, where the physical action is distinguished from the formal intention: "In Abraham's sacrifice of his son, each particular act, his taking his knife, … and so on to his plunging it into Isaac's neck, are material acts neither good or bad in themselves" (*Phil.N*, II, 133).

There are many types of equivocation, including the following: "a play upon words" (*Apo*, 453); "evasion" (*Apo*, 453); and "silence" such as "not giving the whole truth in a court of law" (*Apo*, 454). He considered these as "modes of misleading others by the tongue, when there is a justa causa (supposing there can be such), – a material lie, that is an untruth that is not a lie, an equivocation, an evasion, and silence" (*Apo*, 454). In this sense, limited truth-telling with an appropriate intention, can be justified by the principle of economy:

> That rule, at least as I have explained and recommended it, in anything that I have written, did not go beyond (1) the concealing the truth when we could do so without deceit, (2) stating it only partially, and (3) representing it under the nearest form possible to a learner or inquirer, when he could not possibly understand it exactly…. As to the first, it is hardly an Economy, but comes under what is called the 'Disciplina Arcani'. The second and third economical modes Clement calls lying; meaning that a partial truth is in some sense a lie, as is also a representative truth. And this, I think, is about the long and short of the ground of the accusation which has been so violently urged against me, as being a patron of the Economy (*Apo*, 241–242).

This controversy provided an opportunity to see Newman's theological hermeneutics being applied in a very public matter. The basic question dealt with truth telling, and he understood the problem as distinctively theological and specifically dealing with morality. Interpreting the issue as theological is evident from the way he eventually submitted his argument to the Church and to the Schola Theologorum. Interpreting the issue as dealing with morality is evident from his distinction between material and formal action and the distinction between means and ends in the moral tradition of casuistry. He explained both of these perspectives in this manner:

> Casuistry is a noble science, but it is one to which I am led, neither by my abilities nor my turn of mind. … I am very unwilling to say a word here on the subject of Lying and Equivocation. But I consider myself bound to speak; and therefore, in this strait, I can do nothing better, even for my own relief, than submit myself and what I shall say to the

> judgment of the Church, and to the consent, so far as in this matter there can be a consent, of the Schola Theologorum (*Apo*, 452).

The argument justifying limited truth-telling was an application of his principle of economy and an example of the concrete reasoning of the Illative Sense. Each was used to apply abstract moral law to concrete circumstances, illustrating his theological hermeneutics. Of course, not every application of moral law to a concrete case can elicit a moral judgment that warrants certitude, just as every decision about religious belief may not be sufficient to justify certitude. Nonetheless, the purpose of his theological hermeneutics was to explain how informal inference is able to justify certitude in concrete matters, including morality, though not necessarily all of the time.

The above discussion of the genesis and application of moral law helps to understand how it develops through history. Regarding their genesis, moral laws arise as abstractions from concrete moral judgments that elicit certitude. Regarding their application, moral laws as abstract truths can be applied to concrete circumstances to elicit concrete truth via the process of informal inference and certitude. In turn, this reciprocity between abstract and concrete reasoning shed light on the ongoing refinement or development of moral law.

5.4 Refinement of Moral Law

Abstract moral law may be applied to circumstances similar to those from which the law was originally created as an abstraction. In that case the notional and real assent to the same proposition occurs. However, the abstract law may be applied in a different manner to new circumstances that justify a different moral judgment through informal inference and certitude. When that occurs, new moral judgments reflecting different circumstances can justify further abstraction that contributes to the ongoing refinement or development of moral law. Contemporary discourse on the development of moral precepts focuses upon the need for historical consciousness in the process of interpreting law within religious traditions. Newman's theological hermeneutics can shed light on these topics.

5.4.1 Historical Consciousness

Because of Newman's sensitivity to historical consciousness, it is no surprise to read his reprimand of those who rely upon logical or abstract reason in morality in a manner that is detached from personal experiences and concrete circumstances:

> And this again is the secret of the distrust and raillery with which moralists have been so commonly visited. They say and do not. Why? Because they are contemplating the fitness of things, and they live by the square, when they should be realizing their high maxims in

> the concrete…. I have no confidence, then, in philosophers who … sit at home, and reach forward to distances which astonish us; but they hit without grasping, and are sometimes as confident about shadows as realities (*GA*, 93).

The emphasis upon historical consciousness had a significant influence upon subsequent philosophy such as the thought of Bernard Lonergan. It is worth highlighting a few aspects of Lonergan's approach to moral law that reflect the nuances of Newman's thought. The distinction between notional and real seems to have inspired Lonergan's comparison between what he called "systematic unification and imaginative synthesis" – that comparison led Lonergan to insist that "imaginative synthesis goes beyond the abstract content of the laws" reflecting the "transition from the abstract logic of classicism to the concreteness of method." Lonergan explained in this manner: "H. G. Gadamer has contended that one really grasps the meaning of a text only when one brings its implications to bear upon contemporary living… I have no intention of disputing such views, for they seem to me straightforward applications of Newman's distinction between notional and real apprehension."[38] Newman's understanding of the judgment of the Illative Sense, shifting from abstraction to concreteness, draws a clear parallel with Gadamer's hermeneutics. Much of what Newman pursued in his hermeneutics of the imagination, integrating abstract and concrete reasoning, can be enunciated in terms of Gadamer's existential hermeneutics.[39]

Lonergan recognized the transition from abstractness to concreteness as a key element of Newman's *Grammar*.[40] Lonergan also recognized the contribution and the limitation of the formal inference of discursive reasoning: "reflective understanding can … ground rational judgment" as "judgments on the correctness of insights;" but he also realized the need to avoid elevating discursive reason "to the role of a complete and exclusive viewpoint" that may disregard concrete reality.[41] As with Newman, for Lonergan an excessive confidence in the formal inference of discursive reason can be problematic: "Deductivism is brushed aside, not because conclusions do not follow from premisses, but because the most basic precepts with all their conclusions fail to go to the root of the matter"[42] Lonergan applied this caution in particular to moral law: "The content of moral code is one thing, and the dynamic function that demands its observance is another."[43] Moreover, Lonergan had a nuanced view of what objectivity means, similar to the view of Newman, arguing that the real world is always "mediated by meaning" involving "the process of experiencing, understanding, and judging."[44] Like Newman, he steered "a sane course between the relativism of mere concreteness and the legalism of remote and

[38] Carr (1996); Lonergan (1992), 92; Lonergan (1972), 169, 338.

[39] Carr (1996), 137, 169.

[40] Lonergan (1992), 92; Lonergan (1972), 251, 338.

[41] Lonergan (1992), 310, 315, 231.

[42] Lonergan (1992), 604.

[43] Lonergan (1992), 600–601.

[44] Lonergan (1972), 238–239.

static generalities" – Newman's appeal to the living mind was at the root of Lonergan's view of subjectivity as the dynamic structure of rational historical consciousness in morality.[45]

Newman's emphasis upon historical consciousness sheds light on three substantive areas of discourse today in normative ethics. First, his explanation of the genesis of moral law presents it as an abstraction that can be affirmed as an absolute truth in notional assent. The abstraction is from previous experiences, so it represents an attentiveness to historical consciousness. The formulation of moral precepts or doctrines can be helpful insofar as these abstractions foster logical discourse about their meaning. That discourse of formal inference includes investigating the adequacy of the formulations as abstractions and ascertaining their coherence with other abstract laws that are accepted within a given community. For example, a common problem in moral discourses arises when moral laws as abstractions appear to clash with one another. Working out such conflict requires the nuances of formal inference. A common example of this sort of conflict on moral discourse is when the abstract moral law against mutilation conflicts with the moral law to save life requiring a diseased limb to be removed to achieve that goal. That sort of theoretical resolution of the conflict between norms generated the principle of double effect, with the result that the truth of the original laws can be legitimately upheld in further refined abstractions.[46] Newman acknowledged this important principle when responding to Kingsley's accusation of lying, relating the principle to Aquinas and St. Alphonsus of Ligouiri.

However, Newman insisted that his approach was very different from justifying any means to accomplish a good effect: "Let it not be for an instant supposed, that I allow of the maxim of doing evil that good may come" (*Apo*, 248). This sort of abstract moral discourse is important for the believing community insofar as it conveys the wisdom of prior moral judgments between communities, cultures, and generations, thereby fostering a living tradition in theological history. When discussing doctrinal development he described this sort of abstract discourse as involving the "methods of proof by which the development is continued from mind to mind and established in the faith of the community" (*Dev*, 190).

Second, Newman's explanation of the application of moral law includes the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. Historical consciousness is indispensable here insofar as it is attentive to particular circumstances requiring the active mind of the individual. Newman's stance anticipated the argument of the twentieth century theologian Karl Rahner that the concrete situation should not be perceived passively, merely as an occasion in which previous laws are implemented unquestioningly.[47] Newman identified the individual's personal conscience as the living mind that engages the concrete process of informal inference and real assent – this insight reflects his theological hermeneutics: "To a mind thus carefully formed upon the basis of its natural conscience, … the theology of a religious imagination…

[45] Lonergan (1992), 604.

[46] Knauer (1967).

[47] Rahner (1963), 221.

has a living hold on truths" (*GA*, 116–117). The subsequent sentence in this text highlights the shift from affirming abstract truths like moral laws in notional assent to applying or realizing those truths in real assent: "Thus conscience is a connecting principle between the creature and his Creator; and the firmest hold on theological truths is gained by habits of personal religion" (*GA*, 117). This shift from the abstract process of notional assent to the concrete process of real assent necessitates what he later described as "an active recognition of propositions as true" (*GA*, 344–345). Here, real assent is justified by informal reasoning upon converging probabilities: "I prefer to rely on … an accumulation of various probabilities" in order to "construct legitimate proof, sufficient for certitude" (*GA*, 411).

In this regard he made his own contribution to a long moral tradition, reaching back to Aquinas and Aristotle, in which the application of moral law requires an individual's conscience to justify and assent to moral truth in concrete circumstances. This attentiveness to historical consciousness is an indispensable characteristic for his theological hermeneutics. This stance is consistent with what the Catholic tradition means, described by Pope John Paul II as "the Church's firmness in defending the universal and unchanging moral norms."[48] Newman recognized the absolute and objective nature of moral law as abstractions that need to be applied to particular circumstances through the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. This interaction between abstract and concrete processes also means that the abstract laws can be refined.

Third, Newman's approach includes the ongoing refinement of moral norms without compromising their original objective truth claim. When an individual shifts from notional to real assent by applying moral law as an abstraction to concrete reality, there may be a new insight in the real assent that goes beyond the reach of the abstract moral law. This shift is not intended merely to be a deductive or syllogistic application of the law – that role pertains to the abstract function of formal inference. The concrete process of informal inference and real assent requires historical consciousness to particular circumstances in a manner that may lead to new perceptions. Those new insights that foster moral practice can in turn become an experiential basis from which subsequent abstractions may arise to refine the meaning of the original moral law. This ongoing refinement of moral law means that the formulations of moral laws are historically and linguistically conditioned. Here Newman's principle of economy in his theological hermeneutics can be enlightening insofar as the "process of change" can be slow, requiring "further and deeper disclosures" because "mysteries are but the expressions in human language of truths to which the human mind is unequal" (*Apo*, 37).

This explanation of the meaning of moral law (including its genesis, application and subsequent refinement) can shed light on the debate today about the interpretation of moral doctrine in the Catholic tradition. Newman's theological hermeneutics can provide an insightful approach to this controversial issue.

[48] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 96.

5.4.2 *Interpretation of Moral Doctrine*

The issue about interpreting doctrine was raised by the Catholic Church's International Theological Commission in its report, *On the Interpretation of Dogmas*, published in 1989. This document was prepared under the direction of Cardinal Walter Kasper, who was then a professor of theology at the University of Tübingen, and approved by a large majority during the commission's plenary session in October 1989, including Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who later became Pope Benedict XVI) as president of the commission.[49] In seeking an approach to "hermeneutics" that "inquires into the truth of reality itself,"[50] the Commission made a case for determining doctrinal truth in history,[51] defending the universal validity of dogmatic truth in historical and cultural expression.[52] Of course, doctrines of faith are different from principles of morality, but to understand truth as universal implies that a religiously grounded obedience is required for faith and for moral doctrine in varying degrees, as explained in Vatican II.[53]

The Commission acknowledged, as Newman did over a century previously, that the relation between doctrinal definition and its interpretation in history requires the contribution of the faithful. The Commission made two related points. On the one hand, the interpretation of doctrine supports and fosters the sensus fidelium: "The interpretation of dogma is a form of service to the *consensus fidelium*, … Dogmas and their interpretation should strengthen this 'consensus fidelium.'"[54] Pope John Paul II reiterated this point from the perspective of the responsibility of the bishops in an Encyclical letter: "The Church's Pastors, in communion with the Successor of Peter, are close to the faithful in this effort; they guide and accompany them by their authoritative teaching."[55] The purpose of this Encyclical was "to state the principles necessary for discerning what is contrary to 'sound doctrine'" – thereby enabling "the Church's magisterium … to carry out its task of discernment" dealing with the doctrinal competence on the part of the Church and her Magisterium with regard to particular moral norms.[56]

On the other hand, the faithful must have a role in the interpretation of doctrine: "contemporary interpretation of dogma … is encouraged, supported and guided by the working of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the hearts of individual Christians."[57] The Commission recognized that "(t)he Spirit awakens and nourishes

[49] International Theological Commission (1990).

[50] International Theological Commission (1990), C, 1: 3.

[51] International Theological Commission (1990), A, 1: 4.

[52] International Theological Commission (1990), A, II: 1.

[53] Luz (2003); International Theological Commission (1990), A, II: 3; Declaration on Religious Freedom (1966), number 14; Dogmatic Constitution (1966a), number 14.

[54] International Theological Commission (1990), C, II: 4.

[55] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 3.

[56] Pope John Paul II (1993), numbers 30, 37.

[57] International Theological Commission (1990), C, III: 2.

the sensus fidelium."[58] Pope John Paul II also recognized this role of the faithful in his Encyclical letter: "the universal body of the faithful who have received the anointing of the holy one cannot be mistaken in belief … it expresses the consensus of all in matters of faith and morals."[59] The theological historian Jaroslav Pelikan astutely expressed the importance of the faithful in Newman's work for the retrieval of Church tradition in this manner: "Tradition for Newman … did not trickle down from theologians, popes, and council to the people, but filtered up from the faithful."[60] A century preceding this discussion, Newman appreciated the role of the faithful and sought to explain it. His vision was to have a well-educated laity that would contribute to a robust sense of the faithful. He voiced the following remarkable hope:

> I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it (*Prepos*, 300).

His most substantive discussion of the *sensus fidelium* occurred in his essay *On Consulting the Faithful*, originally published in the liberally inclined Catholic journal the *Rambler* in July 1859. There has been much debate about what he meant by the faithful. Some commentators associate the faithful with the laity, whereas in fact he included religious and clergy within the category. He only distinguished the faithful from the bishops.[61] He argued that the faithful must be included in discerning the truth of doctrine in the "practical questions" about religion, including questions of morality. This inclusion of "practical questions" in the general process of consulting about doctrine is confirmed in a succinct account of his position:

> If even in the preparation of a dogmatic definition the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception, it is at least as natural to anticipate such an act … in great practical questions (*LD*, XIX, 129, note 2).

He stressed the following point at the start of his essay: "In the preparation of a dogmatic definition, the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception" (*Cons*, 53). He summarized the crux of his argument by relating the consensus of the faithful with the infallibility of the Church, 11 years before the doctrine of infallibility was declared by Pope Pius IX in 1870: "the body of the faithful is one of the witnesses to the fact of the tradition of revealed doctrine, and … their consensus through Christendom is the voice of the Infallible Church" (*Cons*, 63). Not surprisingly, his essay has been interpreted as a charter for the laity,[62] even though he considered more of a passive role for the laity in the consultation process. He later clarified his point about relating the consent of the faithful with the Church's infallibility, referring to arguments of others on the topic: "not

[58] International Theological Commission (1990), C, II: 1.

[59] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 109; Dogmatic Constitution (1966a), number 12.

[60] Pelikan (1984), 30.

[61] Ker (2009), 139–141.

[62] Gilley (2009), 20.

that I take them to mean strictly that infallibility is *in* the 'consensus fidelium,' but that that 'consensus' is an *indicium* or *instrumentum* to us of the judgment of that Church which *is* infallible" – the Latin words referring to an instrument (*Cons*, 67). He did not interpret his stance as opposing the authority of the bishops. His purpose was to include the faithful as a channel of tradition: "It follows that none of the channels of tradition may be treated with disrespect; granting at the same time fully, that the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition resides solely in the *Ecclesia docens*" – the teaching function of the bishops (*Cons*, 63).

Nonetheless, his argument specifically identified a time when the bishops fell short of their responsibility. This point is crucial for his argument: "the Nicene dogma was maintained during the greater part of the fourth century, (1) not by the unwavering firmness of the Holy See, Councils, or Bishops, but (2) by the 'consensus fidelium.' On the one hand, then, I say, that there was a temporary suspense of the functions of the 'Ecclesia docens'. The body of Bishops failed in their confession of the faith" (*Cons*, 77). However, in his 1871 edition of *On Consulting the Faithful*, a year following the declaration of infallibility by Pope Pius IX,[63] Newman voiced caution about his earlier remark on the authority of the bishops. He explained that by "temporary *suspense*" he meant "that there was no authoritative utterance of the Church's infallible voice in the matter of fact between the Nicene Council, AD. 325, and the Council of Constantinople, AD 381" (*Cons*, 115). Also, he added this explanation:

> In drawing out this comparison between the conduct of the Catholic Bishops and that of their flocks during the Arian troubles, I must not be understood as intending any conclusion inconsistent with the infallibility of the Ecclesia docens, (that is, the Church when teaching) and with the claim of the Pope and the Bishops to constitute the Church in that aspect…. While it is historically true, it is no sense doctrinally false, that a Pope, as a private doctor, and much more Bishops, when not teaching formally, may err, as we find they did err in the fourth century…. And yet they might, in spite of this error, be infallible in their ex cathedra decisions (*Cons*, 112–113).

His argument was that the faithful ought to be consulted when the Church defines doctrine. In particular, he highlighted the doctrines that relate to the practice of faith, such as worship or devotion: "In most cases when a definition is contemplated, the laity will have a testimony to give; but if ever there be an instance when they ought to be consulted, it is in the case of doctrines which bear directly upon devotional sentiments…. The faithful people have ever a special function in regard to those doctrinal truths which relate to the Objects of worship" (*Cons*, 104). His point was that the experiences of the faithful in devotion and worship provide a distinctive resource for insight in theological history. The historical consciousness that pertains to the practice of faith in devotion and worship also pertains to the moral practice of the faithful. Consulting their distinctive experiences in matters of moral doctrine would seem to be included in his essay *On Consulting the Faithful*. There is an interesting passage that could make the same point regarding moral

[63] Page (1994).

practice as it does regarding devotional practice. The point can be made by adding the word "virtuous" alongside the word "devout" to suggest that both moral practice and devotional practice might be included in his argument. To make this point, the word "virtuous" is added in parentheses – even though Newman did not use the word in this context:

> The more devout [virtuous] the faithful grew, the more devoted [virtuous] they showed themselves towards this mystery. And it is the devout [virtuous] who have the surest instinct in discerning the mysteries of which the Holy Spirit breathes the grace through the Church, and who, with as sure a tact, reject what is alien from her teaching (*Cons*, 72).

The inclusion of moral practice with devotional practice in Newman's argument appears all the more plausible insofar as he appears to have adopted the language of morality (*phronesis*) that he used in the *Grammar* to clarify the argument in his essay *On Consulting the Faithful*. He explained that "the Consent of the faithful" should be regarded "as a sort of instinct, or *phronema*, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ" (*Cons*, 73). It is plausible to suggest that the word *phronema* as a communal sense in 1859 might anticipate, as a communal counterpart, his use of *phronesis* (reflecting the judgment of the Illative Sense using the concrete reasoning process of informal inference) later in the *Grammar* in 1870, though the actual meaning of each word can be disputed. This connection suggests that *phronesis* and the *phronema* or communal sense of the Church adopt the same concrete reasoning process of informal inference.[64] Later, in his 1874 *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* that was written in response to William Gladstone's attack on the 1870 doctrine of Papal Infallibility in *Pastor Aeternus*, he again referred to this capacity of communal perception as "the ecclesiastical sense or *phronema*" (*Diff*, II, 313). The title of his letter was, "A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone's Recent Expostulation" originally published in 1875 (*Diff*, II, 171–378). The textual similarity of these works suggests that his argument in the essay *On Consulting the Faithful* anticipated the religious epistemology of his *Grammar*. That is, the argument about consulting relied on the concrete process of informal inference and real assent that he later associated with individual conscience. The formulation and development of doctrine in his essay *On Consulting the Faithful* seems to have adopted the approach that he more fully worked out later in the *Grammar*. It appears, that his argument about consulting implemented his theological hermeneutics by focusing upon inference and assent.

Although the International Theological Commission did not discuss Newman's essay *On Consulting the Faithful*, it examined his essay on the *Development of Christian Doctrine* to explain the process of interpreting doctrine.[65] It is worth noting that his 1859 essay *On Consulting the Faithful* provided a refinement of his 1845 essay on *Development*. The Commission's report described Newman's seven "principles or criteria" for development as a "criteriology for dogmatic

[64] Coulson (1961), 23, 33.

[65] International Theological Commission (1990), C, III: 1 and 5.

development."[66] However, that remark is not quite precise because Newman did not talk so much of principles or criteria as of tests and notes. His purpose in writing his essay on *Development* was to write an exploratory essay, not a systematic theology. In the revised 1878 edition he replaced the more definite word *Tests* used in the first 1845 edition with the more tentative word *Notes* to describe seven aspects of development.[67] Nonetheless, insofar as the Commission adopted his argument on *Development*, the theological hermeneutics that he applied to this argument can shed light on the Commission's report.

Newman defended a role for the abstract process of formal inference. Perhaps that is what the Commission meant by seeking a "criteriology for dogmatic development." His years as a Fellow at Oriel, especially under the influence of Richard Whateley who was Oxford's master logician, had taught him a deep respect for the abstractions of logic,[68] but only as secondary to the concrete process of reasoning. His theological hermeneutics, when applied to the argument on doctrinal development, prioritized the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. His view of doctrinal development avoided a deductive approach.[69] Even when he discussed his most discursive "Note" about development, which was called its "logical sequence," he cautioned his readers that he was not talking about the formal inference that characterizes the abstract reasoning of science: "I use "logical sequence" in contrast … to that principle of science, which has put into order and defended the developments after they have been made" (*Dev*, 383). The Theological Commission also recognized, as Newman had done, that interpreting doctrine should not consist in relying primarily upon logical deduction.[70]

Perhaps by seeking "criteriology for dogmatic development" the Commission was open to Newman's broader approach, shifting from the abstractions of logic to the concrete process that characterized his theological hermeneutics. His argument in his essay *On Consulting the Faithful*, as a refinement of his previous argument on *Development*, helps to clarify the process of interpreting doctrine. His main contribution is that the process of interpretation should not merely rely on the abstract process of formal inference. Rather, his argument about *Development* and about *Consulting* is that the concrete process of informal inference and real assent is indispensable. The interpretation of moral doctrine, then, requires this concrete process that is the hallmark of his theological hermeneutics.

A fascinating implication of this perspective is that the *Ecclesia docens*, when interpreting doctrine, needs to make the shift from the abstract process of formal inference to the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. After all, Newman's argument about consulting was simply to recognize the role of the faithful as one of the channels of tradition in the Church – he did not seek to undermine Church authority. He respected the ultimate authority of the bishops in matters of

[66] International Theological Commission (1990), C, III: 5.

[67] McCarren (2004); Ker (1989), xxi.

[68] Gilley (1990), 43–44; Ker (1988), 18–27.

[69] Morgan (1989), 241.

[70] International Theological Commission (1990), C, III: 2.

doctrine, regarding faith and morality: "the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition resides solely in the *Ecclesia docens*" (*Cons*, 63). This authority of the bishops was clearly reinforced a century later in Vatican II: "the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether in its written form or in that of Tradition, has been entrusted only to those charged with the Church's living Magisterium, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ."[71] The contribution of Newman is important. As part of the *phronema* of the Church in the process of interpreting doctrines, the responsibility for what Newman had described as "discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing" doctrine requires the concrete process of informal inference and real assent. By being attentive to historical consciousness this interpretative process is characteristic of his theological hermeneutics.

An example of the refinement or development of moral law might be the fairly recent development of moral law or doctrine in the Catholic Church regarding capital punishment. Pope John Paul II restricted when the execution of prisoners can be permitted, reflecting an increasing awareness among the faithful of the offense against human dignity and the common good. In an encyclical the Pope significantly constrained support of Church teaching for capital punishment: "the nature and extent of the punishment … ought not go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. Today however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent."[72] A similar teaching appears in the universal Catechism of the Catholic Church that was authorized Pope John Paul II: "the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against an unjust aggressor…. The cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically non-existent."[73]

The process of deepening the understanding and meaning of moral doctrines accrues to theologians as part of the faithful in partnership with the bishops of the Church. Pope John Paul II emphasized this need for partnership in his Encyclical letter: "While recognizing the possible limitation of the human arguments employed by the Magisterium, moral theologians are called to develop a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying its teachings to expound the validity and obligatory nature of the precepts it proposes."[74] By making this remark the Pope was emphasizing that theologians should be collaborative partners in communion with the Church. That partnership is based on their scholarly competence and requires respectful dialogue.[75] This contributes to the Church Magisterium as it pursues its responsibilities "not

[71] Dogmatic Constitution (1966b), number 8.

[72] Pope John Paul II (1995), number 56.

[73] Catechism (1977), number 2267.

[74] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 110.

[75] USCCB (2001), 1; Sullivan (1983), 189; O'Donovan (1982), 181.

only in the sphere of faith, but also, and inseparably so, in the sphere of morals."[76] By addressing the "possible limitations of … human arguments" and by seeking a "deeper understanding" of the underlying rationale for moral doctrines, Pope John Paul II recognized the pilgrim nature of the Church as discussed in Vatican II.[77] This recognition reiterated Newman's principle of economy, applying his theological hermeneutics.

5.5 Conclusion

Newman understood moral law in relation to the abstract and concrete processes of reasoning, reflected in notional and real assent. The abstraction of moral law characterizes its objective and absolute character. However, this does not mean that a moral law can be applied indiscriminately to reality. To apply moral law requires the concrete reasoning of informal inference and real assent of certitude. There are three related aspects of moral law: its genesis, its application, and its ongoing refinement. Together they provide a practical foundation of religious morality that applies the interpretative process in his hermeneutics of the imagination in general and his theological hermeneutics in particular. His view of moral law also clarifies the meaning of moral conscience, as discussed in the next chapter.

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[76] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 110; CDF (1990), number 6.

[77] Dulles (1982), 266; Dogmatic Constitution (1966a), number 8.

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Chapter 6
Moral Conscience

Abstract Just as moral law is a practical foundation of religious morality in Newman's thought, so is moral conscience. There is a tendency to interpret religious morality in his writings from the narrow perspective of conscience alone. However, his view of conscience needs to be interpreted more broadly in relation to his hermeneutics of the imagination. Conscience has two main functions: a moral sense (presenting a judgment of reason as a rule of right conduct) and a sense of duty (portraying a magisterial dictate as a sanction of right conduct). These functions can be explained by connecting the concepts of rationality and responsibility with the concepts of autonomy and theonomy. The moral sense represents the rationality of conscience, being its autonomous characteristic that engages both the abstract and concrete processes of reason – this is similar to but broader than the application of moral law. The moral sense determines when moral judgments attain certitude. This function reflects his hermeneutics of the imagination. The sense of duty represents the responsibility of conscience before God, being its theonomous characteristic that engages the magisterial dictate of a divine voice – but this does not entail an argument for the existence of God. The sense of duty introduces a theological dimension for conscience that provides a religious interpretation for the moral sense (dealing with truth) and confers religious meaning to moral character (dealing with holiness). This function reflects his theological hermeneutics. Often the sense of duty is viewed as the primary function of conscience, but the analysis explains that the moral sense has that role.

Newman's explanation of conscience provides another practical foundation of religious morality. There can be a tendency to explore religious morality in his writings from the perspective of conscience alone. However, to properly understand his approach to conscience requires interpreting it in relation to his hermeneutics of the imagination. By doing so conscience can be seen as including autonomous and theonomous components. He explained that conscience has a moral sense (being a judgment of reason as a rule of right conduct) and a sense of duty (being a magisterial dictate as a sanction of right conduct). This approach recalls his reliance upon reason and conscience to address his lifelong commitment to truth and to holiness. The moral sense can enlighten his commitment to truth, and the sense of duty can enlighten his commitment to holiness.

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His view of conscience reflects the historical circumstances of his time,[1] though his insights continue to be relevant for understanding conscience a century later.[2] The previous chapter discussed moral law by focusing upon the reciprocity between the abstract process of formal inference and the concrete process of informal inference and certitude. That reciprocity highlighted the significance of moral law being attuned to personal experience and historical consciousness. This chapter explains that the moral sense of conscience involves the same reciprocity.[3] The application of the moral law to historical circumstances using informal inference also constitutes the function of the moral sense. However, the moral sense has a broader role than merely applying abstract moral law to concrete reality – the moral sense engages all concrete decisions about morality in all circumstances, whether there is a relevant moral law or not. Furthermore, his analysis of conscience included both the moral sense and the sense of duty, the latter aligning conscience with God. Conscience is one reality with two distinct functions:

> Conscience has a legitimate place among our mental acts … it is a moral sense, and a sense of duty; a judgment of the reason and a magisterial dictate. Of course its act is indivisible; still it has these two aspects, distinct from each other, and admitting of a separate consideration…. Thus conscience has both a critical and a judicial office, …its testimony that there is a right and a wrong, and its sanction to that testimony conveyed in the feelings which attend on the right or wrong conduct. Here I have to speak of conscience … as supplying us, by means of its various acts, with the elements of morals, such as may be developed by the intellect into an ethical code, … (and) as the dictate of an authoritative monitor bearing upon the details of conduct as they come before us, … as a rule of right conduct, … as a sanction of right conduct (*GA*, 105–106).

The distinction between the moral sense and the sense of duty recalls a sermon he preached in 1830 as an Anglican where he discussed conscience as a source of morality and of religion:

> it is obvious that Conscience is the essential principle and sanction of Religion in the mind. Conscience implies a relation between soul and a something exterior, and that, moreover, superior to itself; …While Conscience is thus ever the sanction of Natural religion, it is, when improved, the rule of Morals also (*US*, 18–20).

The moral sense of conscience is presented as the reasoning that morality engages and the sense of duty as a religious imperative regarding God. This distinction is consistent with the Catholic tradition that describes conscience as a value judgment and an imperative.[4] Later, in his unpublished work the *Proof of Theism*, he again identified both aspects of conscience: "Here then there are two senses of the word conscience. It either stands for the act of moral judgment, or for the particular judgment formed. In the former case it is the foundation of religion, in the latter ethics" (*Phil. N*, II, 47). The "act of moral judgment" refers to the obligation involved in the sense of duty, and the "particular judgment formed" refers to the judgment of the

[1] Rule (2004).

[2] Boekraad (1981); Bak (1973).

[3] Walgrave (1986).

[4] Biemer and Goeppert (1980); Schüller (1986), 62.

moral sense. Edward J. Sillem notes that in the "Proof of Theism" Newman previously considered the idea of conscience pointing only to an impersonal deity, adding: "He soon abandoned these views in favour of his well-known line of argument that conscience itself, as a magisterial dictate and enforcing a moral sanction, implies the existence of a Personal God."[5]

There is a strand in Newman's writings suggesting that the sense of duty has priority over the moral sense. The argument in this chapter challenges that perception to explain that the moral sense constitutes the primary function of conscience. However, it should not be underestimated why there is a tendency to prioritize the sense of duty. He explained that it is the "primary and most authoritative aspect" insofar as "conscience is ever forcing on us by threats and by promises that we must follow the right and avoid the wrong" (*GA*, 106). Insofar as the sense of duty results from intuitive apprehensions in the initial stage of his theory of knowledge, its intuitions can be referred to as "primary." Insofar as these intuitions suggest the oversight of a supreme governor the sense of duty can be seen as the "most authoritative" function of conscience. His rationale was that the sense of duty elicits an image or recognition of God as the ground of religious belief.

> the phenomena of Conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with a picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive, and is the creative principle of religion, as the Moral Sense is the principle of ethics (*GA*, 110).

Conscience was seen as the creative principle of religion precisely because of its role in generating an image of God. Religious consciousness is a profoundly moral enterprise, one that requires sustained moral commitment.[6] By using the word "principle" with regard to the sense of duty and the moral sense he did not merely mean the abstract process that characterizes formal inference. This abstract process is certainly involved, but his explanation goes beyond formal inference to include informal inference. His discussion of conscience in this passage occurred when he presented his "theology of a religious imagination" as having "a living hold on truths" that is "able to pronounce by anticipation, what it takes a long argument to prove" (*GA*, 117) – this describes the concrete process of informal inference that justifies real assent, in this case "an imaginative or real assent to the doctrine that there is One God" (*GA*, 119). His use of the phrase "principle … of religion … of ethics" needs to be interpreted in light of his hermeneutics, especially because of the connection with moral rhetoric that connects belief with action: "the feeling of conscience – attendant on certain of our *actions* is twofold:– it is a moral sense, and a sense of duty" (*GA*, 105, emphasis added).

The two characteristic features of conscience can be explained by connecting the concepts of rationality and responsibility with the concepts of autonomy and theonomy. The moral sense represents the rationality of conscience, being its autonomous characteristic that engages the abstract and concrete processes of reason. This function of conscience reflects his hermeneutics of the imagination. The sense of

[5] Sillem (1969–1970), II, 31, note 2.

[6] Merrigan (2008), 17–18.

duty represents the responsibility of conscience before God, being its theonomous characteristic that engages the "magisterial dictate" of a "Supreme Governor" – this raises a theological dimension for conscience.[7] This function of conscience reflects his theological hermeneutics. The role of the imagination is crucial for his understanding of conscience.[8] The outcome of this explanation is that the moral sense has the primary role in conscience insofar as it uses informal inference to justify moral judgment or discernment, being attentive to historical consciousness. The role of the sense of duty is to provide religious meaning to the rational judgments of the moral sense. To understand this reciprocity, the analysis first explores the autonomous rationality of the moral sense.

6.1 Moral Sense and Rationality

Newman's understanding of the moral sense applied his general theory of knowledge, implementing his hermeneutics of the imagination. The moral sense is the autonomous function of conscience, combining the abstract and concrete processes of reason to justify certitude. The moral sense can be construed as an application of the Illative Sense in matters dealing with morality.[9] Understanding the moral sense in this manner recalls the previous discussion of the application of the moral law. While the moral sense is the mental capacity that applies moral law to circumstances using informal inference, the moral sense has a much broader role – to make concrete moral judgments in specific circumstances whether there is a relevant moral law or not.

6.1.1 Informal Inference

The discussion of the moral law in the previous chapter aligned its abstract and concrete processes of reasoning with the role of the Illative Sense in morality. The emphasis was especially on the concrete reasoning of informal inference that applied abstract law to historical circumstances. The primary function of the moral sense is to make practical moral judgments in concrete situations, including the application of any relevant moral law (though there often are circumstances when there is not a relevant law to be considered). The discussion of the moral sense includes but goes beyond the role of applying moral law through informal inference. To grasp how the moral sense uses informal inference to make concrete moral judgments, it is necessary to recall the role of the Illative Sense:

> the Illative Sense is employed on reasonings from primary facts, … it is the instrument of induction from particulars, and determines what are general laws, and … conclusions … Thus the Illative Sense has its exercise in the starting-points as well as in the final results of

[7] Crehan (1978).

[8] Coulson (1980).

[9] Artz (1980).

> thought…. Any investigation whatever, which we light upon, will suffice to show how impossible it is to apply the cumbrous apparatus of verbal reasoning to its continuous necessities, and how imperative it is to fall back upon that native good sense (that is, the action of our illative judgment upon our personal views of things) (*GA*, Textual Appendix, 340–342).

Several points should be noted. First, the integration of the three stages of his theory of knowledge is apparent (from experience, to abstraction, to concrete conclusions). Second, the reasoning process to reach the concrete conclusion does not rely upon the abstract process of formal inference ("the cumbrous apparatus of verbal reasoning") – rather he relied upon the concrete process of informal inference. Third, the outcome is to reach a conclusion by "illative judgment." His attention was upon justifying the assent of certitude through the concrete reasoning of informal inference.

The moral sense of conscience is the mental function for this combined process of abstract and concrete reasoning to justify certitude in matters of morality. Although he recognized a role for the abstract process of formal inference, it was necessarily a secondary function of reason. He was very wary of its limitations, especially in morality: "its fostering formality; its substituting a sort of religious philosophy and literature for worship and practice; its weakening the springs of action …; its substituting, in matters of duty, positive rules…; its leading the mind to mistake system for truth" (*US*, 266). The danger of abstract reason is its over reliance upon consistency in argument. In 1874 in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* he emphasized this concern when responding to Gladstone's accusation that English Catholics could not be loyal citizens after the declaration of papal infallibility 4 years earlier.[10] His caution dealt with the ethical theories of his day that relied on abstract reasoning, like utilitarianism that focused on the greatest utility and happiness or Romanticism that focused on the beautiful (*pulchrum*)[11]:

> The rule and measure of duty is not utility, not expedience, nor the happiness of the greatest number, nor State convenience, for fitness, order and the *pulchrum*. Conscience is not a long-sighted selfishness, nor a desire to be consistent with oneself, but a messenger from Him who, both in nature and grace, speaks to us behind a veil (*Diff*, II, 257).

The analysis at the end of this chapter will explain what he meant by this reference to "a messenger … in nature and grace" – at the moment it is sufficient to note that he opposed connecting the process of morality ("the rule and measure of duty") with abstract reasoning alone. As explained previously, he relied on concrete reasoning to seek moral proof in his theory of certitude:

> as regards … arguments *à posteriori*, conviction for the most part follows, … upon a number of very minute circumstances together, which in the mind is quite unable to count up and methodize in an argumentative form … This, indeed, is meant by what is called moral proof (*US*, 274).

[10] Short (2006); Ford (2005).

[11] Hughes (2009), 191; Yearley (1978), 94.

By suggesting that the moral sense of conscience can be interpreted as an application of the Illative Sense means that the moral sense integrates the abstract and the concrete processes of reason. It is the shift from what is abstract to what is concrete in morality that constitutes the most important function of the moral sense. This transition requires the flexibility of the concrete reasoning of informal inference.

To understand the role of informal inference requires recalling the stages in his theory of knowledge, which he explained in reference to conscience. In the first stage, instinctive or inductive apprehensions arise from particular experiences of reality or facts. There are apprehensions that arise from concrete experience, such as the "experience" of an "act of cruelty, ingratitude, generosity, or justice" (*GA*, 65). In a sermon preached in 1832 he described this instinctive function of conscience: "so alert is the instinctive power of an educated conscience, that by some secret faculty, and without any intelligible reasoning process, it seems to detect moral truth wherever it lies hid, and feels a conviction of its own accuracy" (*US*, 66). In the 1871 edition of his Oxford sermons he explained the meaning of the phrase "without any intelligible reasoning process" – it means "an implicit act of reasoning" (*US*, 66, note 4). This is the "instinctive" power of conscience.[12] The implicit or instinctive function of conscience here refers to the first stage in his theory of knowledge that deals with experiential apprehensions. The use of "instinctive" means that there is no middle term between experience and the mental impression. This type of instinctive knowledge, in its simple form, is a form of reasoning: "I call it instinctive, … because ordinarily, or at least often, it acts by a spontaneous impulse, … Such is ratiocination" (*GA*, 259–260).

In the second stage of his theory of knowledge abstractions arise in an explicit manner from these instinctive or experiential apprehensions: "from such experience … we proceed to abstract and generalize" such as in the "abstract proposition, 'There is a right and a wrong', as representing an act of inference" – inferences that elicit notional assent: "conscience … gives us a rule of right and wrong, … and a code of moral duties" (*GA*, 390). In the third stage the abstract notion is applied to concrete reality in real assent to justify certitude: "in these pages, without excluding, far from it, the question of duty, I would confine myself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth" (*GA*, 344). Two important points can be highlighted in this remark. On the one hand, insofar as he included "the practical question of duty," he included morality in his general argument about the Illative Sense. On the other hand, he adopts the concrete process of informal inference in the Illative Sense to justify certitude:

> Certitude… is an active recognition of propositions as true, … such a proof can never be furnished to us by the logic of words, … the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matter is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty, the perfection or virtue of which I have called the Illative Sense (*GA*, 344–345).

[12] McCarthy (1981); McCarthy (1977), 148.

The third stage in his theory of knowledge (moving from abstract to concrete) constitutes the primary function of the moral sense, relying on the individual's "own judgment" and "conscience" as explained in his 1874 *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*:

> I should decide according to the particular case, which is beyond all rule, and must be decided on its own merits. I should look to see what theologians could do for me, what the Bishops and clergy around me, what my confessor; what friends whom I revered: and if, after all, I could not take their view of the matter, then I must rule myself by my own judgment and my own conscience (*Diff*, II, 243–244).

Understanding the moral sense in terms of the concrete reasoning of informal inference is evident when he discussed Aristotle's *phronesis*[13]: "it is … with the controlling principle in inferences that I am comparing *phronesis*" (*GA*, 355). However, Newman used concrete reasoning to justify certitude.[14] His stance cannot merely be reduced to Aristotle's argument about practical certainty, as suggested by some.[15] Newman elaborated on this association in great detail, as follows:

> As regards moral duty, the subject is fully considered in the well-known ethical treatises of Aristotle. He calls the faculty which guides the mind in matters of conduct, by the name of *phronesis*, or judgment. This is the directing, controlling, and determining principle in such matters, personal and social…. What is written is too vague, … it cannot ascertain for us, according to our personal need, the golden mean. The authoritative oracle, which is to guide our path, …is seated in the mind of the individual, who is thus his own law, his own teacher, his own judge in those special cases of duty which are personal to him. It comes of an acquired habit, though it has its first origin in nature itself, and it is formed and matured by practice and experience; and it manifests itself, not in … any consistency of its teachings, but it is a capacity sufficient for the occasion, deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances (*GA*, 353–355).

For moral law to be applied to concrete reality there needs to be historical consciousness. Abstract moral laws ("laws, general rules, guiding principles") are insufficient insofar as "what is written is too vague" as notional abstractions, even though they have a legitimate function (such as ascertaining "consistency of its teachings"). What is needed is "a capacity sufficient for the occasion" that can address specific circumstances. Newman specifically connected that capacity for concrete reasoning both with the Illative Sense and with the moral sense:

> in no class of concrete reasonings, … is there any ultimate test of truth or error in our inferences besides the trustworthiness of the Illative Sense that gives them its sanction; just as there is no sufficient test of … gentleman-like conduct, other than … the moral sense … Our duty in each of these is to strengthen and perfect the special faculty which is its living rule, … And such also is our duty and our necessity, as regards the Illative Sense (*GA*, 359).

In other words, the moral sense can be interpreted as a function of the Illative Sense when applying abstract moral laws to concrete circumstances, specifically using the concrete reasoning of informal inference. However, the use of informal inference by the moral sense to make concrete moral judgments occurs even when

[13] Lindley (2010), 23; Hughes (2009), 197–200; Hughes (2004), 55–62; Hochschild (2003).

[14] Holmes (1979), 290.

[15] Nabe (1988), 35; Keane (1984), 26, 108–109.

there is no relevant moral law to be considered. He referred to this concrete process of informal inference as "the living mind" in contrast to the "cumbrous apparatus of verbal reasoning" which constitutes formal inference[16]:

> It is to the living mind that we must look for the means of using correctly principles of whatever kind, facts or doctrines, … and of discerning what conclusion from these is necessary, suitable, or expedient. … Thus the Illative Sense, that is, the reasoning faculty, … attends upon the whole course of thought from antecedents to consequents, with a minute diligence and unwearied presence, which is impossible to a cumbrous apparatus of verbal reasoning (*GA*, 360–362).

In other passages he connected the living mind of the Illative Sense with the concrete reasoning of informal inference. It is the "practiced and experienced mind" that can recognize "a proof is the limit of converging probabilities" (*GA*, 321). He explained, "the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matter is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty, the perfection or virtue of which I have called the Illative Sense" (*GA*, 345). To highlight the association between the Illative Sense and the moral sense, each using the concrete reasoning of informal inference, Newman turned to Aquinas. In his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, he adopted the definition of conscience used by Aquinas:

> I observe that conscience is not a judgment upon any speculative truth, any abstract doctrine, but bears immediately on conduct, on something to be done or not done. 'Conscience', says Thomas, 'is the practical judgment or dictate of reason by which we judge what *hic et nunc* is to be done as being good, or avoided as evil' (*Diff*, II, 256).[17]

This understanding of conscience as a practical judgment undertaken by reason represents the main function of the moral sense. While the moral sense includes the abstract reasoning of formal inference, it cannot be reduced to this deductive function as suggested by some.[18] Just as Newman respected formal inference but made it secondary to informal inference, he did the same with the moral sense. This contrast between the abstract and concrete reasoning of the moral sense is emphasized in his repudiation of the renowned moral sense theory of Lord Shaftesbury. Newman wanted no association with the narrow interpretation of the moral sense. He used Shaftesbury as a foil to oppose the reduction of the moral sense to the deductive, abstract reason of formal inference. He excoriated Shaftesbury for relying exclusively upon discursive reason because it reduced virtue to abstract intellectual knowledge. His point was to replace the view of moral sense that relied on abstract reason with a more practical approach to moral sense that relied primarily upon concrete reasoning. Shaftesbury's reliance upon abstract reason in morality led Newman to his derogatory portrait of a gentleman's religion in his University discourses.[19] Some commentators mistakenly use Shaftesbury's view of the moral

[16] Magill (1993).

[17] Aquinas (1948), 1ae, 11ae, Q. 19, art.5.

[18] Walgrave (1960), 353.

[19] Tillman (2008).

sense to enlighten Newman's stance,[20] such as by prioritizing feeling over rationality.[21] However, Newman's goal was to present a trenchant critique of these views of Shaftesbury.

Newman denounced the reliance on abstract reason as a form of "godless intellectualism" or "moral perfection" (*Idea*, 196). Later he made a similar condemnation of "Liberal religionists" who relied merely upon "the development of reason" understood in an abstract manner (*Apo*, 234). He argued that by relying upon logic alone we reduce moral judgment to consistency and we trust in an abstract moral code as sufficient. This approach results in "the substitution of a moral sense or taste for conscience" (*Idea*, 193). He had made a similar point earlier when he opposed reducing "Moral Law" to being merely a "scientifically-arranged code" (*US*, 71). He highlighted the limitations of such an approach that he also repudiated in his debate with Sir Robert Peel over the Tamworth reading Room controversy. He wrote:

> Liberal Education makes … the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life; … but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness, … Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then you may hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man (*Idea*, 120–121).

Making a similar point about the limitations of abstract reason, he made this often quoted remark: "But if we commence with scientific knowledge and argumentative proof, or lay any great stress upon it as the basis of personal Christianity, or attempt to make men moral and religious by libraries and museums, let us in consistency take chemists for our cooks, and minerologists for our masons" (*DA*, 295–296; *GA*, 95–96).

Newman's approach to the moral sense of conscience emphasized the concrete reasoning of informal inference. The focus of the moral sense upon informal inference clarifies what he meant by it being "a judgment of the reason" (*GA*, 105) as the "critical … office" of conscience, in contrast to the "judicial office" that he associated with the sense of duty (*GA*, 106). The word "critical" might be interpreted as referring to the abstract reasoning process that he attributed to theology where he associated "critical" with the "explicit" reasoning of formal inference: "since argumentative forms are mainly a test of reasoning, so far they will be but critical, not creative" (*US*, 276). However, his opposition to Shaftesbury made it clear that he did not seek to present the moral sense in such an abstract manner. Moral judgments are not logically derivable and cannot be reduced to the scientific process of discursive reason.[22] Rather, the "critical" nature of the moral sense is the judgment of conscience that uses informal inference to justify certitude as a concrete process of reasoning. This is what Newman meant by moral certitude.

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[20] Keane (1984), 26, 34, 109.

[21] Grave (1989), 34–37, 57.

[22] Hughes (2009), 192.

6.1.2 Moral Certitude

An important question that arises with regard to the justification of moral certitude is whether the moral sense requires the will. The Illative Sense uses the concrete reasoning of informal inference to justify the assent of certitude as an objective truth. In this sense certitude is justified by reason, even though the truth is asserted independently of the justifying inferences. Likewise, the moral sense uses informal inference as a process of reasoning to justify the objective truth of its practical judgments. He specifically used his discussion of the moral sense to illustrate what he meant by certitude. By doing so he confirmed that he included moral judgment or discernment within the realm of certitude and that the justifying process was based on reason. Referring to the moral sense he explained:

> It is the loud announcement of the principle of right in details of conduct, as the sense of certitude is the clear witness of what is true. Both certitude and conscience have a place in the normal condition of the mind (*GA*, 233–234).

He had elaborated on this connection earlier in his *Theological Papers* when preparing the *Grammar*. In a passage dated 1865 he explored "the consideration of the moral sense, …to illustrate the view of certitude" in this manner: "I observe then, certitude being an assent to a thing as true, as the moral sense is an assent to a thing as right" (*TP*, I, 120). He elaborated further: "there are two methods of enlightening and strengthening the mind in the exercise of its moral sense, the scientific and the personal; and there are <in like manner> two methods of making the mind equal to the exercise of its acts of certitude, and they are the same, the scientific and abstract, or the personal and concrete, the way of reason and the way of practice" (*TP*, I, 120). In a subsequent paragraph he elucidated on this distinction between abstract reasoning ("scientific generalizations" or "logical proof") and concrete reasoning ("practical and personal tact and skill"). He suggested that the personal reasoning of informal inference and assent in certitude can be enlightened by a similar process in the moral sense:

> As there is a personal conscience, which judges by a sort of instinct derived from moral practice, and reasons without scientific generalizations, so there is a personal certitude, which proceeds not by logical proof <demonstration>, but by practical and personal tact and skill (*TP*, I, 121).

As explained previously, when presenting the core argument in the *Grammar* about certitude, he used the phrase "moral evidence and moral certitude" to emphasize the concrete reasoning of informal inference. Specifically, when discussing informal inference as providing the "evidence, … sufficient for assent and certitude" (*GA*, 316), he explained:

> propositions … are to be found throughout the range of concrete matter, and that supralogical judgment, which is the warrant for our certitude about them, is … a standard for certitude which holds good in all concrete matters, not only in those cases of practice and duty, in which we are more familiar with it, but in questions of truth and falsehood generally, or in what are called 'speculative' questions, … This certitude and this evidence are often called moral; … I observe that moral evidence and moral certitude are all that we can attain, not only in the case of ethical and spiritual subjects (*GA*, 316–318).

There are two important points that need to be emphasized in this passage. First, he clarifies that the range of certitude includes all concrete matters. The argument that the moral sense involves certitude is clear insofar as "certitude … holds good in all concrete matters" including "cases of practice and duty." He reiterated this important observation 2 months after publishing the *Grammar*. In a letter to Richard Holt Hutton on April 27, 1870 he explained that by "moral evidence and moral certitude" he did not refer to practical certainty "in opposition to speculative" – rather, he intended "to assert that probable arguments may lead to a conclusion which is not only safe to act upon, but is to be embraced as true" (*LD*, XXV: 114). Moreover, on many occasions he specifically included morality within the range of certitude. In a theological paper written in 1885, discussing informal inference, he reminded his readers of his practical concern for morality: "I have no great remorse that for 50 years I have used my native tongue as a vehicle for religious and ethical discussions" (*TP*, I, 151). The connection between informal inference and certitude was the main argument in the *Grammar*, making it clear that both occur in all "concrete matters" including morality. "I have already said that the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matters is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty" (*GA*, 345).

Second, the process that justifies certitude is unambiguously the concrete reasoning of informal inference. This point helps to clarify that the moral sense, like certitude, functions as a process of concrete reasoning and not as a process of the will. As discussed earlier, when he was preparing his argument for the *Grammar* in 1865, he described certitude as "a free act … just as acts of conscience are free and depend upon our will" (*TP*, I, 121). This remark can give the impression that both conscience and certitude are functions of the will. But that was not his intent in making this comment. He did not suggest there was an epistemological gap between the informal inference and assent. Such a gap would need to be bridged by the will, as suggested by some commentators.[23] Rather, his intention was to justify that "certitude … is the perception of a truth" (*GA*, 197) as a rational act[24]:

> Certitude … is an active recognition of propositions as true, such as it is the duty of each individual himself to exercise at the bidding of reason (*GA*, 345).

By the phrase "it is the duty" he meant that an individual should follow (in the sense of there being a responsibility) the concrete reasoning of informal inference: an individual "will be incurring grave responsibility, if he does not accept it as certain, and act upon the certainty of it" (*GA*, 291). It is the rationality of inference, not the will, that justifies real assent and incurs this responsibility. In a theological paper prepared 2 years before the *Grammar* in 1868 he made this quite clear: "An act of Inference … ordinarily precedes, but does not compel, an act of Assent" (*TP*, I, 135). Certitude is a free act because it is not compelled by the inferences – not compelled in the way that logic of abstract conclusion compels a conclusion. Nonetheless, certitude must be justified by informal inference, that is, "by a sort of

[23] Pojman (1986), 86; Fey (1976) 105; Pailin (1969), 177.

[24] Ker (1985), lxvi, note 2; Ferreira (1980), 23; Lash (1979), 17–18.

instinctive perception of the legitimate conclusion in and through the premisses" (*GA*, 301–302). Certitude is justified when the mind perceives a convergence of arguments that are "sufficient, when united, for a reasonable conclusion" (*GA*, 291).

He described this justification through the concrete reasoning of informal inference as an accumulation of probabilities. He adopted this terminology from Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion* (1736). He was not referring to the Catholic tradition of moral probabilism that flourished from the mid sixteenth to the mid seventeenth centuries in Europe. The point of that tradition was to seek a probable conclusion when moral certainty could not be ascertained. Newman's point was different: to use converging probabilities to justify assent to an objective truth in certitude. Interestingly, there is a similarity between this argument for certitude from probability and a Catholic probabilist, Prosper Fagnanus, who distinguished between probable certitude and certitude arising from probabilities.[25] In a letter dated 1864, Newman mentioned that he knew of the Catholic tradition of probabilism: "I observe there are Catholic theologians of authority who go *further* in their estimate of the legitimate force of probability in creating certitude than I went, – maintaining that the *greater* probability is a sufficient, … ground of certainty" (*LD*, XXI, 146). However, that approach created a distance between probability and certainty. Newman argued that there was no distance. The contrast he drew was between the probable reasoning of informal inference and the demonstrative reasoning of formal inference (not between probability and certainty). Converging probabilities touch upon the conclusion that elicits certitude, so there is a rational connection between informal inference and assent. In a letter written on December 13, 1846 to W. G. Penny, he explained: "Here persons at first misunderstood me, and because I talked of 'probable arguments,' they thought I meant that we could not get beyond a probable conclusion in opposition to a moral certainty; – I hope they understand me better now. I use probable as opposed to demonstrative, not to certainty" (*LD*, XI, 293). In another letter, written on July 6, 1864 to J. Walker of Scarborough, he used his famous analogy of a cable to describe the rational connection ("rationally demanded") that he proposed between informal inference and the assent of certitude.

> The best illustration of what I hold is that of a *cable* which is made up of a number of separate threads, each feeble, yet together as sufficient as an iron rod. An iron rod represents mathematical or strict demonstration; a cable represents moral demonstration, which is an assemblage of probabilities, separately insufficient for certainty, but, when put together, irrefragable.… certitude … lay in an assemblage and accumulation of probabilities, which *rationally demanded* to be considered sufficient for certitude (*LD*, XXI, 146).

The pivotal phrase here is "rationally demanded" to emphasize that the connection between informal inference and assent occurs by reason. Being "rationally demanded" clarifies what he meant by "responsibility" to certainty that was discussed earlier. Furthermore, the rational constraint of the inferences led him to argue that the process should exclude doubt: "the conclusion … cannot be otherwise" in the sense that "we do not see our way to doubt it" (*GA*, 317). As explained

[25] Jonsen and Toulmin (1988), 174.

previously, this point only means that the inferential conclusion embraced in certitude excludes reasonable doubt even if speculative doubt is still possible theoretically.[26] In other words, the connection between informal inference and assent is based upon a process of concrete reasoning, and not a process of the will, that excludes reasonable doubt from certitude. These characteristics also apply to the moral sense that adopts the same process: the moral sense justifies a specific judgment through a rational process, not reliant upon the will, excluding reasonable doubt from certitude.

Furthermore, insofar as the moral sense represents the Illative Sense functioning in matters of morality, the assent of certitude that is reached in moral judgment or discernment occurs through the imagination. In the preface to the third edition of the *Via Media* (1877), he explained that "probabilities when accumulated … appeal to the imagination" (*VM*, I, xxi). The imagination is indispensable for the assent of certitude. Also, the imagination brings an intensity that inspires moral action. Here, his moral rhetoric is inextricably connected with the moral sense. The main function of the moral sense is to use the concrete reasoning of informal inference to justify an assent of certitude that inspires moral action. His example of the slave-trade provides an excellent illustration: the abstract reasoning of formal inference did not end this immoral practice. The concrete reasoning of the moral sense that elicits an assent of certitude was needed to inspire the appropriate moral action to end it.

The moral sense involves an historical consciousness that demands action. This explanation of the moral sense reflects his hermeneutics of the imagination that connects his epistemology with his moral rhetoric. Its interpretative and assertive functions, reflecting the role of the Illative Sense, shed light on the judgments of the moral sense. This point recalls his use of the concept of hypothesis that reflects the process of informal inference and certitude: "the conclusion, is proved interpretive; … because, when the conclusion is assumed as a hypothesis, it throws light upon a multitude of collateral facts, accounting for them uniting them together in one whole" (*GA*, 323). That "accounting" provides "moral proof" as sufficient reason for imaginative assent in certitude that in turn inspires action. In this manner, the moral sense constitutes the rationality of conscience. This represents its autonomous characteristic. In contrast, the sense of duty deals with the responsibility of conscience, specifically its responsibility to God. This represents the its theonomous characteristic that reflects his theological hermeneutics.

6.2 Sense of Duty and Responsibility

From the time of writing the *University Sermons* Newman understood the sense of duty as a sanction or "moral strain of teaching duty and enforcing obedience" in a process that "commands and threatens" (*US*, 34). This "magisterial dictate" (*GA*, 105) constitutes the "judicial office" of conscience providing a sanction for the

[26] Ferreira (1987), 189–197.

judgment of the moral sense: "Thus conscience has both a critical and a judicial office, its testimony that there is a right and a wrong, and its sanction to that testimony" (*GA*, 106). The sense of duty is not "a rule of right conduct, but … a sanction of right conduct … ever forcing on us by threats and by promises that we must follow the right and avoid the wrong" (*GA*, 106). The intensity or imaginative grasp of the sense of duty suggests a transcendent authority to which conscience is responsible:

> (the sense of duty) always involves the recognition of a living object, towards which it is directed … If, as is the case, we feel responsibility, are ashamed, are frightened, at transgressing the voice of conscience, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible, before whom we are ashamed, whose claims upon us we fear (*GA*, 109).

This passage presents the standard interpretation of the sense of duty for Newman insofar as "we feel responsibility" before God for our moral actions, leading to the perceived inviolability of conscience.[27] Emphasizing the role of reason in the moral sense of conscience does not mean that he simply secularized conscience.[28] He was highly attuned to the role of God in the sense of duty of conscience. Yet this interpretation is open to critique about an association between conscience and God. For example, it bears the burden that conscience can intimate God only to those who are already believers.[29] Or, if conscience in itself is legitimate and authoritative, it does not need a referent to an external, intelligent authority that can be construed as God.[30]

However, a more nuanced interpretation of the voice of God that Newman discussed is possible. Just as the moral sense characterizes the rationality of conscience, the sense of duty characterizes the responsibility of conscience ("we feel responsibility"). This explanation of the sense of duty pertains to the religious meaning of conscience as eliciting an intuitive apprehension of God. This approach suggests that conscience entails "One to whom we are responsible" (*GA*, 109) as a "Divine Sovereign and Judge" (*GA*, 105). His opposition to secular ethics theories of his day was not merely about their propensity to rely upon the abstract reasoning of formal inference, but also because they did not adequately address the relation between the imperative of conscience and God that he perceived to be indispensable. Here the responsibility of conscience as an imperative pertains to an external sanction of God, understood as the voice of God, that elicits religious meaning in assent.

Walter E. Conn argues that instead of two functions of conscience in Newman's thought, the moral sense and the sense of duty, there are three dimensions. Conn interprets the sense of duty in terms of conscience as desire (seeking the voice of God), the moral sense in terms of conscience as judgment (adopting Aristotle's *phronesis*), and the actions that arise in terms of conscience as demand or dictate from an authoritarian monitor.[31] Conn properly discusses the moral sense in terms

[27] Jago (1981), 61.

[28] Kent (1980).

[29] Newman (1986), 78.

[30] Ledek (1996), 28–42; Weidner (1990), lxxi–lxxii; Mackie (1982), 103–106.

[31] Conn (2010), 113–121; Conn (1981, 2009).

of Aristotle's *phronesis*, though the preceding analysis has emphasized that Newman's use of *phronesis* extended beyond Aristotle's practical wisdom – only informal inference can be compared with *phronesis*, not the assent of certitude, a distinction that Conn appears to overlook. More significantly, the distinction that Conn makes between conscience as desire and demand does not properly represent the nuance of Newman's argument. Newman elides conscience as desire and conscience as demand in the sense of duty for a purpose: to relate the feeling of an imperative with the reality of God.

There is a basic question that must be addressed about the sense of duty. How does the sophisticated shift occur from the childlike intuition of sanction (as the dictate of a divine sovereign) to the complex assent of certitude? After all, the connection between conscience and intelligence characterizes his approach.[32] He acknowledged the intuitive apprehensions of the child-like mind that elicits simple assent. Yet, the accomplishment of his *Grammar* was to explain the important shift to the complex assent of certitude – if that was crucial for his explanation of religious belief, so also is it indispensable for the meaning of the sense of duty. It would appear odd to provide a sophisticated explanation of the moral sense as entailing the assent of certitude while permitting the sense of duty to languish in the primitive realm of child-like apprehension. The following discussion addresses how the sense of duty can shift from simple assent to the complex assent of certitude in a manner that interprets the religious significance of the feeling of an imperative.

6.2.1 Voice of God

Newman's view of conscience as the creative principle of religion echoes his remark about consciousness of self and God in the *Apologia*. He was confident in "the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator" (*Apo*, 18). This stance shows his Calvinistic tendencies as a young man.[33] He was very sensitive to the influence of "Calvinistic tenets" and was highly attuned to their implications for salvation: "of the Calvinistic tenets the only one which took root in my mind was the fact of heaven and hell, divine favor and divine wrath, of the justified and the unjustified" (*Apo*, 19). Similarly, he explained that the sense of duty presented a vivid image of a judgmental God – "the real apprehension of a Divine Sovereign and Judge" (*GA*, 105). He elaborated in this manner when writing the *Grammar*:

> If the cause of these emotions does not belong to the physical world, the Object to which his perception is directed must be Supernatural and Divine; and 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, and is the creative principle of religion (*GA*, 110).

[32] Beaumont et al. (2012).

[33] Dupré (2002).

He made a similar observation earlier in 1830: "Conscience is the essential principle and sanction of Religion in the mind. Conscience implies a relation between the soul and a something exterior, and that, moreover, superior to itself" (*US*, 18). These passages raise the idea of an encounter with God when faced with moral obligation.[34] Also, this apprehension fosters an image of a good God when an individual experiences wrongdoing: "it is the image of One who is good, inasmuch as enjoining and enforcing what is right and good" (*GA*, 113–114). Moreover, he related his conversion experience to the voice of God in his conscience: "Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world" (*Apo*, 216–217). It is important to emphasize that his point was not that individuals have a private revelation or mystical encounter with God. Rather, he suggested that religious consciousness entails an obligation that makes religion an ethical affair.[35] Not surprisingly, his remarks are susceptible to Freudian critique, but it should be noted that he never reduced the experience of conscience merely to the experience of a bad conscience.[36]

Newman's account here refers to simple assent whereby instinctive apprehensions generate notional abstractions that are then held as concrete images in belief (integrating the three stages of his theory of knowledge). The instinctive apprehension of God in the sense of duty pertains only to simple assent: "conscience is nearer to me than any other means of knowledge" (*GA*, 390). Nonetheless, he was astute enough to recognize that the instinctive apprehensions of the sovereign lawgiver can have a variety of influences:

> How far this initial religious knowledge comes from without, and how far from within, how much is natural, how much implies a special divine aid which is above nature, we have no means of determining … Whether its elements, latent in the mind, would ever be elicited without extrinsic help is very doubtful (*GA*, 115).

These remarks refer to simple assent, undertaken by an act of the imagination, that characterizes the mind of a child. It is mistaken to argue, as suggested by some, that the role of reason is subordinate to this direct mental image of God.[37] The image is child-like, reason leads to a much more nuanced approach. In the above passage, he does not deal with the sophisticated account of belief that occurs when informal inference elicits the complex assent of certitude. This raises an obvious problem. Construed as dealing merely with simple assent makes it difficult to perceive the sense of duty as being comparable with the moral sense as being the two senses of conscience. After all, the moral sense engages informal inference and real assent in a sophisticated manner. It is mistaken to suggest, though argued by some,[38] that the

[34] Crosby (2004), 64–92; Crosby (1986).

[35] Merrigan (2009), 49–51.

[36] Merrigan (2008), 24–26; Crosby (2004), 93–112; Ledek (1996), 57–83; Kenny (1990) 119–120.

[37] Rupert (2010), chapter 3.

[38] Bischofberger (1974), 101–104, 117.

sense of duty has primary importance in conscience guiding the moral sense. Nor is it sufficient to perceive the sense of duty as merely not downplaying the ethical concern, as suggested by others.[39] The stark difference between simple assent and complex assent suggests that a much deeper explanation of the relation between the sense of duty and the moral sense needs to be achieved. To treat the sense of duty as the pivotal point of conscience misconstrues Newman's thought.[40]

Nonetheless, there is an important insight in his interest in the experience of moral obligation in the sense of duty. A similarity can be drawn between Newman and Kant regarding a sense of moral obligation that conveys a responsibility before God. Kant did not interpret the experience as an immediate experience of God.[41] The question for Newman is whether the experience of moral obligation as the voice of God can shift from being an intuitive apprehension, such as occurs in the mind of a child, to creating a nuanced meaning that can elicit certitude.

The sense of duty can present (but cannot be reduced to) an association between the voice of God and the intuitive apprehension of moral experience. This simply constitutes an assumption that leads to simple assent: "I assume the presence of God in our conscience, and the universal experience, as keen as our experience of bodily pain, of what we call a sense of sin or guilt" (*GA*, 417). These intuitive apprehensions can be, but need not be, related with the voice of God: "We are accustomed to speak of conscience as a voice, … or the echo of a voice, imperative and constraining, like no other dictate in the whole of our experience" (*GA*, 107). Although he was talking about the simple assent of a child, he was aware that such an apprehension does not occur for every child. In a theological paper he noted that natural belief "does not necessarily suppose a speaker" (*TP*, I, 38). Nonetheless, when such an intuitive apprehension occurs in the mind of the child he associated the moral experience with the image of God.

> this image … is the image of One who by implicit threat and promise commands certain things which he, the same child coincidentally, by the same act of his mind, approves; which receive the adhesion of his moral sense and judgment, as right and good. It is the image of One who is good, inasmuch as enjoining and enforcing what is right and good, and who, in consequence, not only excites in the child hope and fear, … but kindles in him love towards Him, as giving him a good law (*GA*, 113–114).

Even late in his life in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* written in 1874 he explained this "apprehension which even a child may have of his Sovereign Lawgiver and Judge" in terms of the "divine voice" that commands our "dutiful obedience" (*Diff*, II, 255). He did not consider these intuitive apprehensions to be irrational, rejecting the view "that conscience is but a twist in primitive and untutored man … that the very notion of guiltiness … is simply irrational" (*Diff*, II, 249). The purpose of his *Grammar*, several years preceding this observation, had been to explain that the shift from simple assent to complex assent in religious belief is a rational enterprise. His point that the "divine voice" of conscience is not irrational

[39] Norris (1977), 93.

[40] Schüller (1986), 64.

[41] Hughes (2009), 214–216; Kant (1964), 104–105.

suggests a more nuanced understanding of the sense of duty than the perception of simple assent in the mind of a child. Just as his argument on religious belief elicits complex assent, his observations about the sense of duty also can be shown to involve complex assent. The image of God grasped by the sense of duty in the mind of a child may be understood to be a metaphor to pursue a more nuanced accountability of assent.[42] The sense of duty's perceptions of a Supreme Governor or the voice of God can be interpreted in a manner that transitions from simple assent to the complex assent of certitude. That transition occurs only to this extent: the sense of duty provides a theonomous interpretation for the autonomous judgment of the moral sense. The integration of the sense of duty with the moral sense in conscience can be understood as the theonomous autonomy of conscience, even though Newman never used this phraseology. This needs to be explained.

6.2.2 Theonomous Autonomy

In his 1874 *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, this transition to complex assent is suggested in an important observation by Newman when he referred to "the voice of conscience" as the "divine voice, speaking within us." He explained that conscience is not a personal revelation from God, but the voice of God that can be perceived within human nature. To elaborate he turned to what Aquinas described as the natural law.[43]

> 'The natural law' says St. Thomas, 'is … a participation of the eternal law in the rational creature' … This law, as apprehended in the minds of individual men, is called 'conscience' (*Diff*, II, 247).

He added that we can discern "the voice of God in the nature and heart of man, as distinct from the voice of Revelation" (*Diff*, II, 247) – "truths which the Lawmaker has sown in our very nature" (*Diff*, II, 253). Making a similar point at the end of his life in a letter to W. S. Lilly on June 12, 1882, he remarked: "There is little in the ethics of Christianity, which the human mind may not reach by its natural powers" (*LD*, XXX, 96). It may seem surprising that he turned to the theory of natural law to identify "the voice of God in the nature and heart of man" as a "rational" endeavor of humanity ("the rational creature"). He did not simply resort to his standard view of the sense of duty as an instinctive apprehension of a sovereign governor in simple assent. There is a connection between the "voice of God" and the interpretation of morality through nature as a rational endeavor. This suggests that the sense of duty involves a process of reasoning that is similar to the moral sense. As suggested earlier, the primary function of the moral sense is to use the concrete reasoning of informal inference and complex assent in certitude. That analysis can also pertain to the sense of duty.

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[42] Crowley (1991), 137–138, 150.

[43] Crowe (1977).

This explanation accounts for the seemingly conflicting observations about the sense of duty. He was reticent about the meaning of a divine voice: "How far this initial religious knowledge comes from without, and how far from within, how much is natural, how much implies a special divine aid which is above nature, we have no means of determining" (*GA*, 115). He also indicated that natural belief in which conscience plays a important role does not necessarily imply a voice of God. His reticence about the apprehension of a divine voice can be resolved by associating its meaning with the rational interpretation of human nature – the "divine voice" is interpreted as being "the voice of God in the nature and heart of man."

In this explanation the sense of duty gives theological meaning (as the "divine voice") to what is perceived autonomously through the complex assent of the moral sense. Here, the sense of duty transitions from the intuitive apprehension of a simple assent to the concrete reasoning that is involved in complex assent. That is, in complex assent the sense of duty provides a theonomous interpretation for the autonomous reasoning of the moral sense. This explanation of the sense of duty is referred to as the theonomous autonomy of conscience. The nuanced approach here reflects his theological hermeneutics by giving religious meaning to the rational perceptions of the moral sense. His use of the concept of hypothesis, discussed previously, functions in the concrete process of reasoning by giving "meaning" (*VM*, I, xx) – by throwing "light on a multitude of collateral facts, accounting for them, and uniting them together in one whole" (*GA*, 323). Similarly, the sense of duty enables the insights of the moral sense (using informal inference and assent) to be interpreted in a different light, giving the rational perceptions religious meaning, metaphorically reflecting human responsiveness to the voice of God.

In this manner the sense of duty is associated with the responsibility of conscience before God ("we feel responsibility") just as the moral sense is associated with the rationality of conscience. Understanding the sense of duty within the context of complex assent rather than merely with simple assent suggests a deeper meaning for his view of "sin and guilt" (*GA*, 417). In simple assent he explained that "Conscience implies a relation between the soul and something exterior" (US, 18), implying that sin primarily constitutes an offense against this "Divine Sovereign and Judge" (*GA*, 105). By interpreting the sense of duty as a complex assent that discerns morality from nature via the moral sense, sin can be understood as an infringement of nature. There has been a tendency to interpret his understanding of sin in light of the sense of duty offending God.[44] A more nuanced approach to the meaning of sin is suggested here: the religious dimension of sin as contrary to the voice of God in the sense of duty can be connected with the reasoning process of the moral sense. He was attentive to this combination when he explained "sin, as an infringement of the order of nature and the will of God" (*AW*, 224). A sound understanding of the meaning of sin in his writings requires an understanding of sin as being contrary to the law of nature.[45] We can discern God's voice by reasoning upon our nature using the moral sense. In complex assent a nuanced interpretation of sin

[44] Walgrave (1960), 152–153.

[45] Barmann (1964), 217.

as a religious occurrence of the sense of duty (dealing with God) requires the rational judgment of the moral sense (dealing with nature).

The integration of the sense of duty and the moral sense means that conscience can be presented as an exercise of theonomous autonomy in morality. This explanation provides a sophisticated view of conscience that fits well with scholarship on religious morality today. His approach can be interpreted as combining the autonomous characteristic of the moral sense (focusing upon the rationality of conscience) and the theonomous characteristic of the sense of duty (focusing upon the responsibility of conscience to God). Similar connections have been made in the twentieth century. For example, Bernard Lonergan explained that Karl Rahner's theological anthropology, in which religion is intrinsic to authentic humanism, meant that theocentrism and anthropocentrism can coincide constructively.[46] Also, the moral theologian Franz Böckle developed this approach by explaining that the structure of reason does not change when we trace reason to its ultimate ground.[47]

The ethicist whose work appears closest to the above interpretation of Newman's conscience is the German moral theologian Josef Fuchs. He combined the voice of God and reason in conscience by referring to the "theonomy of moral autonomy" explaining that moral reality and theological-religious reality are not merely supplementary entities. His combination of reason and religion is reminiscent of Newman's integration of the moral sense and the sense of duty. Fuchs explained: "the moral dimension, by remaining totally itself, is penetrated, enriched and fulfilled in every respect by the theological-religious dimension which grants it a meaning that it did not properly possess."[48] Fuchs developed his discussion of the theonomy of moral autonomy in his discussion about the distinctiveness of Christian ethics.[49] Similarly, Newman's approach to conscience has been discussed as dealing with the distinctiveness of Christian morality.[50]

Fuchs described conscience as the "most intimate experience-knowledge of man's total state of dependence and submissiveness in the face of the Absolute, and thus, ultimately, in the face of God." Like Newman, Fuchs claimed that the "character of absolute obligation" can be said to be legitimately the "voice of God." Also, again akin to Newman, for Fuchs this sanction always accompanies our "moral knowledge in conscience" which ultimately requires justification by "right reason." Moreover, Fuchs explained that reason engages us in "an active search for … moral insights" through "personal judgment in particular situations."[51] A caution that Fuchs voiced about the possibility of doubt in this interpretation of conscience can be enlightened by Newman's perspective. Fuchs argued that the judgment of conscience can only reach moral certainty which does not prevent reasonable doubt

[46] Lonergan (1974), 148; Surlis (1971); Rahner (1963), 235–263.

[47] Böckle (1980), 63.

[48] Fuchs (1983), 101.

[49] Morgan (1996); Fuchs (1980).

[50] Morgan (1996), 369–527; Walgrave (1971, 1976, 1982b, c).

[51] Crosby (1989); Tollefsen (1987); Fuchs (1983), 45; Fuchs (1971).

from arising.[52] On this point Newman's argument about certitude, including morality, focused upon the exclusion of reasonable doubt even if doubt remains theoretically possible.

Newman's approach to the theonomous autonomy of conscience and the account of religious morality as the theonomy of moral autonomy of Fuchs can be reciprocally enlightening. It might appear that by providing a theonomous interpretation of conscience, the religious component (for Newman the sense of duty) merely provides a psychological motive (doing X in the name of God) for the otherwise autonomous judgment of the moral sense (to do X). But that would be a mistaken understanding of the theonomous autonomy. Several clarifications in Newman's thought can be made to clarify the deeper meaning of this theonomous interpretation of the autonomy of conscience.

The first clarification is that a theonomous interpretation of the sense of duty constitutes a radical transformation of the autonomous judgment by the moral sense. The sense of duty can provide a psychological motive for enacting the judgment of the moral sense: to do X in the name of God. However, the transformation that results from the religious interpretation of the sense of duty is substantial, not merely motivational. The moral sense, characterizing the rationality of conscience, makes moral judgments or discernment from human nature. They enhance their meaning within the interpretative religious horizon provided by the sense of duty, characterizing the responsibility of conscience to God. The theonomous function of morality (using the sense of duty) pervades the rational function of morality (using the moral sense). Scholars like Fuchs make a similar type of argument about the meaning of religious belief in moral judgment or discernment.[53] Fuchs explains that moral judgment with its accompanying obligation can be described as the voice of God insofar as the religious dimension permeates rational judgment. Religious belief gives interpretative significance to, thereby transforming the meaning of, rational judgment about moral conduct.[54]

Perhaps an example can make this transformation clear. When two people marry they remain the same individuals that they were prior to the ceremony, yet they can become transformed by the religious significance of marriage. This transformation is not merely a matter of psychological motive, to do X because of loving the other spouse. Rather, the transformation affects the salvation of the couple in the sense that what they do together celebrates God in their lives in profound ways. Their moral practice has a depth of religious meaning that did not exist before being married. Similarly, in Newman's view of conscience, the theonomous interpretation of the sense of duty transforms the autonomy of the moral sense, providing a religious meaning to rational moral judgment or discernment.

The second clarification is that understanding conscience in this integrative manner (the theonomous autonomy of conscience) does not detract from the moral guidance provided by biblical revelation or doctrinally inspired truths. Values and

[52] Fuchs (1984), 40; Fuchs (1983), 45–46, 101, 220–221.

[53] Schüller (1986), 15–42; Fuchs (1983), 54–57.

[54] Fuchs (1983), 45–46, 101.

obligations can be learned from scriptural revelation or church doctrine.[55] However, the process of eliciting moral obligations from these revelations and doctrines requires the rational judgment that Newman associated with the moral sense. In turn, these rational judgments can receive a theonomous interpretation through the sense of duty that transforms their meaning. This approach does not compromise the legitimate role of norms from revelation or doctrine to elicit assent – that is exactly the function of notional assent the he upheld in his *Grammar* as an indispensable part of church tradition, ecclesial life, and theological history. The theonomous autonomy of conscience deals with the transition from notional assent to the complex assent of certitude.

The moral sense and the sense of duty can be understood in terms of the relation between reason and responsibility. The concrete reasoning of the moral sense (informal inference and certitude) constitutes the autonomous nature of conscience. This function of conscience reflects his hermeneutics of the imagination by combining the interpretative and assertive roles that characterize the Illative Sense. The religious interpretation of the sense of duty (responsibility to God) constitutes the theonomous nature of conscience. This function of conscience reflects his theological hermeneutics by giving religious meaning to the rational perceptions of the moral sense, metaphorically reflecting human responsiveness to the voice of God.

The moral sense includes the mental function that applies moral law to specific circumstances as discussed in the previous chapter. However, this chapter has explained that the moral sense uses informal inference to make concrete moral judgments even when there is not a relevant moral law to be considered. The sense of duty provides a religious interpretation or meaning for these concrete moral judgments.

This explanation suggests how there can be a transition from simple assent as the original context for the sense of duty to complex assent whereby the moral sense and sense of duty are integrated in practice. This integrative account of the moral sense and the sense of duty reflects Newman's lifelong commitment to truth and holiness. The next section explores this close relationship between God, truth, and holiness to shed further light on his view of conscience.

6.2.3 God, Truth and Holiness

Because of Newman's profound sense of the presence of God in our lives, his approach to conscience might be construed as a proof for the existence of God. This is a mistaken perspective, though his specific analysis on conscience can contribute to the general debate on the existence of God. He claimed that the sense of duty elicits "the presence of a Moral Governor" as "an exercise, and a sound exercise, of the Illative Sense" (*GA*, Textual Appendix, 341). In his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* he supported "the doctrine that conscience is the voice of God" in the sense that

[55] Gustafson (1981), 3, 92, 134–135; Gustafson (1975), 174.

conscience is "the internal witness of both the existence and the law of God" (*Diff*, II, 247–248). However, he was not inferring the existence of God from the experience of conscience. Rather, his account of conscience only involved an assumption about God, as mentioned earlier. In a theological paper written in 1869 he explained that he was not attempting "to draw *out a proof* of the being of God, but the mode in which practically an individual believes in it" (*TP*, I, 139). In other words, while it appears that his argument claims "there is a God, because there is a moral obligation" (*Proof*, 103), it is also clear that he did not seek a proof for God: "I am not proposing here to prove the Being of a God" (*GA*, 104).[56] He went out of his way to respect the traditional arguments for the proof of God, but was not inspired by them as he indicated when describing his conversion process: "I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God, … but these do not warm me or enlighten me; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold and the leaves grow within me, and my moral being rejoice" (*Apo*, 217).

A plausible argument for the existence of God from the sense of duty would typically require a metaphysical inquiry. Yet, Newman was unwilling to explore metaphysics,[57] for example, rejecting the sort of Kantian metaphysics that might support an argument for the existence of God.[58] Nonetheless, Newman's argument from conscience could contribute in a variety of ways to an argument for God's existence.[59] This could be done, as suggested by some commentators, as follows: by focusing on self-awareness in conscience as providing the ground for religious knowledge[60]; by exploring consciousness as implying the limiting agency of another consciousness (that of God)[61]; by investigating the common roots for morality and religion that lie in the experience of conscience[62]; or by explaining that the God of conscience grows out of obligation in the sense that God is contained in the moral imperative.[63] He obviously welcomed an approach that related our awareness of God in conscience and self-consciousness, not only reflecting the experience of self as a person,[64] but doing so in a manner that elicits both moral obligation and a sense of a supreme lawgiver.[65] However, his awareness of two self-evident beings was not so much a reference to metaphysics as an account of what emerged from his

[56] de Achaval and Holmes (1976), I, 139.

[57] Walgrave (1960), 361.

[58] Brechtken (1973), 64.

[59] Casey (1984), 63.

[60] Miller (1987), 33; Collins (1961), 19.

[61] Mongrain (2009); Roberts (2007); Rule (2004), 5, 9–10, 160; Armour (1986), 89–90; Boekraad (1979), 238–242, 247; Boekraad (1974) 139–142; O'Donoghue (1975), 256–268; O'Donoghue (1970), 21–22; Sillem (1964); Boekraad and Tristram (1961), 53–87; Nedoncelle (1945), 52, 64–65.

[62] Gaffney (1992); Gaffney (1988), 156–157.

[63] Crosby (2004), 110–111.

[64] Ledek (1996); Sillem (1969–1970), II, 59, note 2.

[65] Hughes (2009), 210–213.

empirical experience,[66] focusing upon what can be described as an inner world guide.[67] In an unpublished paper (dated November 1, 1859) on the *Proof of Theism*, published in the book by Adrian J. Boekraad and Henry Tristram on Newman's argument from conscience to the existence of God, Newman wrote:

> If then our *or* my knowledge of our *or* my existence is brought to me by my consciousness of thinking, and if thinking includes as one of its modes Conscience or the sense of an imperative coercive law, and if such a sense, (when analysed, i.e.) reflected on, involves an inchoate recognition of a Divine Being, it follows that such recognition comes upon my recognition that I am, and is only not so clear an object of perception as is my own existence (*Proof*, 15).[68]

This passage certainly indicates his receptivity to the link between consciousness and conscience pointing towards God. He even used the language of argument and of proof on this matter: "Such is the argument for the being of a God … It has been my chosen proof of that fundamental doctrine for the past thirty years past" (*Proof*, 18).[69] However, as mentioned above, generally he was not interested in providing a proof of God's existence. Certainly he never worked out the details of such an argument in a discursive manner. As noted by Boekraad and Tristram, Newman's observations in his unpublished essay about "an inchoate recognition of a Divine Being" would require significant development to constitute an effective argument.[70] He never provided a sustained argument for the existence of God. However, that lack does not detract from his sophisticated view of God's presence in our lives, especially represented in the relation between human nature and divine grace.

He recognized the role of God's grace in our lives. He was especially interested in the influence of grace in religious belief as a function of natural religion and in divine faith as a function of revealed religion.[71] This interest included the rapport between Christianity and other world religions.[72] Some commentators have suggested there is a dichotomy between nature and grace in his thought that is reflected in a dichotomy in his understanding of the relation between knowledge and morality,[73] for example suggesting that the distinction between intellectual and moral perfection reflects a tension between nature and grace.[74] These views are mistaken insofar as a strong argument can be made about the coherence between nature and grace and between knowledge and morality in his thought. For Newman both the act of divine faith that is influenced by grace and the act of natural belief use the Illative Sense to justify the assent of certitude through the concrete reasoning

[66] Merrigan (2008), 26–27; Walgrave (1981), 63–73, 148; Walgrave (1960), 221–223, 228.

[67] Miller (2008), 142.

[68] Boekraad and Tristram (1961), 119.

[69] Boekraad and Tristram (1961), 121; Sillem (1969–1970), II, 67.

[70] Boekraad and Tristram (1961), 71, 74.

[71] Rosenberg (2007).

[72] Merrigan (2003).

[73] DeLaura (1969), 33.

[74] Coulson (1970), 89.

of informal inference.[75] He did not always distinguish clearly between divine faith of revelation and natural belief.[76] However, it is clear that when he made the distinction each adopted his hermeneutics of the imagination. His views on nature and grace reflected the distinction between natural belief and divine faith:

> I mean by belief, not precisely faith, because faith, in its theological sense, includes a belief, not only in the thing believed, but also in the ground of believing; that is, not only belief in certain doctrines, but belief in them expressly because God has revealed them; but here I am engaged only with what is called the material object of faith, – with the thing believed, not with the formal (*GA*, 99–100).

This passage distinguishes between what is believed and why it is believed. What is believed is indicated by several phrases: "belief," "the thing believed," "belief in certain doctrines," and "the material object of faith." The rationale for belief (why) is stated in the other phrases: "faith," "the ground of believing," "expressly because God has revealed them," and "the formal" object of faith. He distinguished between the natural phenomenon of belief (what), whereby assent is reasonable, and its religious rationale (why). As his argument developed he engaged both aspects of belief (what and why), and the above passage helps to distinguish them. Although natural belief and divine faith differ in terms of revelation, they share the same process that justifies belief.

Many other passages indicate this coherence between nature and grace or natural belief and divine faith. In a sermon preached in 1841 he delineated a stance that he followed throughout his life: "We gain Truth by reasoning, whether implicit or explicit, in a state of nature: we gain it in the same way in a state of grace" (*US*, 281). Similarly, in a theological paper in 1853 he discussed "grace generally as a stimulus enabling, not superseding, the intellect" (*TP*, I, 37). He reiterated this stance in his university discourses when he argued that, "Nature and Grace, Reason and Revelation, come from the same Divine Author, whose works cannot contradict each other" (*Idea*, 219). In an essay in 1859 he indicated that the process he pursued for justifying belief specifically excluded a consideration of grace: by "supposing no grace" he sought to justify "human faith" (*TP*, I, 37). Nonetheless, there is coherence between nature and grace, between what he identified in his University discourses as the "voice of nature" (*Idea*, 191) and what he described in his 1874 letter to the Duke of Norfolk as the voice of God in the sense of being "a sacred and sovereign monitor" (*Diff*, II, 247).

He recognized that with divine grace in revealed religion there is something significantly different due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.[77] Yet he insisted on an underlying coherence with natural belief because of the shared process of justification through informal inference and imaginative assent. He noted this similarity and difference in a sermon preached in 1831 when he explained: "The difference, then, between the extraordinary Christian 'spirit', and human faith and virtue, viewed

[75] Ferreira (1980), 136–137.

[76] Miller (2010).

[77] Connolly (2008); Dessain (1962).

apart from Christianity, is simply this:– that, while the two are the same in nature, the former is immeasurably higher than the other,, … by the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost" (*US*, 43). Several decades later he explained this coherence and difference in the following manner in a rather long but carefully parsed passage accompanied by dense footnotes in Latin to demonstrate the consistency of his argument about human belief with Catholic theology on divine faith:

> Nor lastly, does this doctrine of the intrinsic integrity and indivisibility (if I may so speak) of assent interfere with the teaching of Catholic theology as to the pre-eminence of strength in divine faith, which has a supernatural origin, when compared with all belief which is merely human and natural. For first, that pre-eminence consists, not in its differing from human faith, merely in degree of assent, but in its being superior in nature and kind, so that the one does not admit of a comparison with the other; and next, its intrinsic superiority is not a matter of experience, but is above experience. Assent is ever assent; but in the assent which follows on a divine announcement, and is vivified by a divine grace, there is, from the nature of the case, a transcendent adhesion of mind, intellectual and moral, and a special self-protection, beyond the operation of those ordinary laws of thought, which alone have a place in my discussion (*GA*, 186–187).

Several observations can be made about this passage on the relation between nature and grace or between human belief and divine faith. First, he was emphatic that for each the concrete process of assent is the same ("assent is ever assent"). Second, the focus of his argument in the *Grammar* was specifically upon informal inference and imaginative assent as being foundational for human belief and divine faith ("the operation of those ordinary laws of thought, which alone have a place in my discussion"). Third, he presented divine faith as including divine grace ("a divine announcement, … is vivified by a divine grace"). Fourth, he described "divine faith" as "being superior in nature and kind" because of its "supernatural origin" in the sense that revealed doctrines or truths are beyond the reach of natural religion or human belief. Finally, the difference between human belief and divine faith is not that they entail different types of assent – they do not as he clearly stated – but rather that there is "transcendent adhesion of the mind" reaching "beyond the operation of those ordinary laws of thought." The "transcendent adhesion" does not depict a different type of assent. The process of informal inference and real assent pertains both to human belief and divine faith. He reiterated this important point later in the *Grammar* when discussing revealed religion:

> belief in revealed truths depends on belief in natural; … the habits of thought and the reasonings which lead us on to a higher state of belief than our present, are the very same which we already possess in connexion with the lower state (*GA*, 413).

For Newman revealed faith, such as Christianity, and natural religion fit together cogently: "Christianity is simply an addition to it; it does not supersede or contradict it; it recognizes and depends on it, and that of necessity" (*GA*, 388). In a later passage he added: "The Religion of Nature is a mere inchoation, and needs a complement, – it can have but one complement, and that very complement is Christianity" (*GA*, 487). Because Christianity is "the completion and supplement of Natural Religion" (*GA*, 388) he argued that "the progress of which man's nature is capable is a development, not a destruction of its original state" (*GA*, 395).

This account of nature and grace fits well with the interpretation of the moral sense and the sense of duty as the rationality and responsibility of conscience. Just as nature and grace function in an integrative manner, so does the moral sense and sense of duty in conscience. Just as religious faith through grace builds on the process of natural belief in nature, the religious interpretation of the sense of duty builds on the concrete reasoning of the moral sense. Just as there is "a transcendent adhesion of mind, intellectual and moral" that accompanies the religious belief that is "vivified by a divine grace," the sense of duty provides profound religious meaning to the concrete judgments of the moral sense. This coherence sheds significant light on his lifelong commitment to truth and holiness that was discussed in Chap. 2 and traced through the subsequent chapters. A brief consideration of each reinforces the importance of conscience in his thought.

His commitment to truth reflected his continuing concern with doctrine about God. In Chap. 2 it was noted that he relied on reason and not on conscience to address his concern with doctrine. Through his hermeneutics of the imagination he relied on the concrete reasoning of informal inference to justify the imaginative assent of certitude that justifies belief and generates doctrine, including the realm of morality. The two components of conscience highlight the importance of this shared process. The reasoning of the moral sense is the primary function of conscience insofar as it uses reasoning to elicit truth, especially when making concrete judgments in specific historical circumstances. The sense of duty can provide profound religious significance, which constitutes the theonomous autonomy of conscience. In other words, in morality Newman's pursuit of truth to address his concern with doctrine relies on the reasoning of the moral sense, albeit with religious significance accruing through the sense of duty. As a result, his commitment to truth highlights his reliance upon reasoning through the moral sense as a basis for eliciting religious significance, both in matters of belief and morality.

However, there is a strand in his early thought that needs to be clarified to be consistent with this explanation. The strand suggests that belief is accountable to love, rather than being accountable to reason. This ambiguous strand appeared in his University Sermons when he discussed "dutifulness."[78] In a sermon of 1839, on "Love as the Safeguard of Faith," he explained:

> if holiness, dutifulness, or love, however we word it, and not reason, is the eye of Faith, the discriminating principle … let us examine how it does so, what in the actual course of thinking and determining is the mode by which Love does regulate as well as animate Faith, … Right Faith is the faith of a right mind. Faith is an intellectual act, done in a certain moral disposition (*US*, 238–239).

In the same sermon, he re-iterated this emphasis upon "dutifulness" in this manner:

> Such then, in all circumstances, is real Faith; a presumption, … kept in the narrow path of truth by the Law of dutifulness which inhabits it, the Light of heaven which animates and guides it, … It is itself an intellectual act, and it takes its character from the moral state of the agent (*US*, 249–250).

[78] Magill (1991).

These observations can appear to be contrary to the basic argument of the *Grammar* that relied upon the process of concrete reasoning to justify religious belief. These passages appear to rely on "holiness, dutifulness, or love" – presenting the impression of a relationship with God, such as conveyed in his sense of duty's instinctive apprehensions of a divine governor, as being the relevant "discriminating principle" of "Faith" rather than "reason." However, these early writings can be construed to highlight a central feature of his theory of certitude that is crucial for religious morality: the texts draw attention to his later thought on the rationality of certitude. The point deals with the responsibility to accept the rational inferences that justify assent. In a sermon preached in 1839 he made a fascinating comment in a footnote. He was explaining a point similar to the one in the above passages, that "we believe, because we love" and he explained: "This means, not love precisely, but the virtue of religiousness, under which may be said to fall the … *voluntas credendi*" (*US*, 236) – the phrase "voluntas credenda" refers to the will to believe. A theological paper written in 1853 clarifies the meaning of this Latin phrase, referring to the "voluntas credendi, determining and commanding the intellect to believe" (*TP*, I, 37). It has been discussed previously that his mature thought interpreted this sort of remark ("commanding the intellect to believe") as referring to the weight of sufficient reasoning that justifies the assent of certitude. It did not refer to a role for the will to shift from informal inference to assent. A closer scrutiny of his texts can make this point more evident.

The sequence of his concepts can be presented in this way, each remark dealing with the same discussion about justifying belief. He associated "dutifulness" with "love" in his 1839 sermon and in 1853 he explained that by "love" he meant the "virtue of religiousness" which in turn he associated with "determining and commanding the intellect to believe." In his 1839 essay there may have been a suggestion that by "dutifulness" as the "discriminating principle" of faith he meant a responsibility to God, such as love. That suggestion could arise from his explanation of the child-like apprehension of a divine governor in the sense of duty. Such a perspective would suggest the priority of the sense of duty over the moral sense, which would undermine the argument that the moral sense has priority in his view of conscience.

However, his remark in 1853 dispelled the possibility of giving priority to the sense of duty (construed as dutifulness). His remarks in 1853 identified what he later clarified as the responsibility to accept the concrete reasoning of informal inference to justify certitude. He connected the "voluntas credendi" (the will to believe) with "determining and commanding the intellect to believe," recalling the debate on the role of the will in certitude. In other words, the "virtue of religiousness" can be explained by reference to the phrase, "commanding the intellect to believe" – conveying the responsibility incumbent upon an individual to rely on informal inference.

In matters of morality, this would mean that the sense of duty should accept the rationality of conscience that is characterized by the moral sense. The meaning of the phrase "commanding the intellect to believe" is that the rationally justified

conclusion should be accepted. That is, an individual "will be incurring grave responsibility, if he does not accept it as certain, and act upon the certainty of it" (*GA*, 291). In other words, the ambiguous strand in his thought in the above passages can be interpreted in a manner that is consistent with his hermeneutics of the imagination: the intellect is commanded to believe in the sense of being required to accept the sufficient reasoning of informal inference that justifies certitude. This clarification reinforces his commitment to truth through the pursuit of reason.

Previously, Chap. 2 explored Newman's commitment to truth to address his concern with doctrine by relying upon reason. The explanation of the moral sense of conscience reinforces this point: that in matters of morality, he relied upon the sufficient reasoning of informal inference to justify certitude – moral judgments can engage objective truths in historical circumstances. The moral sense is the mental function that applies moral law to specific circumstances using informal inference. However, the moral sense extends far beyond this role of applying moral law – the moral sense also uses informal inference to make concrete moral judgments with the imaginative assent of certitude in specific circumstances when there is not a relevant moral law to be considered.

Chapter 2 also explored Newman's commitment to holiness to address his concern with salvation by relying on conscience. This chapter's discussion of the sense of duty in conscience helps to clarify specifically what this reliance meant. The sense of duty has been shown to provide religious meaning to the rational discernments of the moral sense. However, the religious interpretation that the sense of duty can confer should not be restricted only to the meaning of the moral judgment or discernment that is made by the moral sense. At the heart of his hermeneutics of the imagination is the subjective or personal process that is involved. The sense of duty also can confer religious meaning to the moral character of the individual when using the moral sense. The importance of moral character appears clearly in the above passages that discuss the role of "holiness, dutifulness, or love." The texts refer to faith as "intellectual act, done in a certain moral disposition" and "an intellectual act" reflecting "the moral state of the agent." These phrases draw attention to the subjective process of informal reasoning and imaginative assent that he discussed in his later writings, as explained previously. The "moral disposition" or "moral state" of the individual is necessary for the Illative Sense when dealing with certitude, in matters of belief and of morality. The sense of duty of conscience can provide religious meaning to an individual's moral character specifically from the perspective of "holiness, dutifulness, or love," recalling the "responsibility" to God. The connection between conscience and God refers to the capacity of the sense of duty not only to provide religious meaning to moral judgment or discernment but also to instill a God-oriented significance to the moral temperament of the individual involved. This is what he meant by "a transcendent adhesion of mind, intellectual and moral" that accompanies divine grace. This "transcendent adhesion" in a religiously oriented moral temperament can be called holiness, influencing what moral judgments are made in the process of certitude and being influenced by them.

6.3 Conclusion

Conscience has two components, the moral sense and the sense of duty. This chapter has explained how they are consistent with and apply his argument about certitude. The moral sense and the sense of duty combine the rationality of conscience with its responsibility to God. The rationality of conscience in the moral sense constitutes its autonomous characteristic that engages the abstract and concrete processes of reason. This function of conscience reflects his hermeneutics of the imagination, implementing the interpretative and assertive functions of the Illative Sense. The responsibility of conscience in the sense of duty constitutes its theonomous characteristic that engages the "magisterial dictate" of a "Supreme Governor." This function of conscience reflects his theological hermeneutics, providing religious meaning to the rational perceptions of the moral sense. Although Newman at times gives the impression that the sense of duty has priority, the analysis in this chapter suggests otherwise: the moral sense is the primary function of conscience. This explanation entails using the Illative Sense to justify certitude in matters of morality through the sufficient reasoning of informal inference. In this manner the moral sense is attuned to the realities of historical consciousness. The role of the sense of duty is to provide religious meaning to the rational judgments of the moral sense (dealing with truth). This can be construed as the theonomous autonomy of conscience. However, this change in meaning is not merely motivational whereby, for example, a moral action is undertaken in the name of God. Rather, the change in meaning is substantive providing religious significance to moral decisions and actions. The sense of duty also confers religious meaning to moral character (dealing with holiness), thereby highlighting the subjective process of reaching the objective truth of certitude. This explanation of the rationality of the moral sense and the responsibility of the sense of duty reflects his commitment both to truth by the use of reason and to holiness before God. This commitment to truth and holiness is further explored in the next chapter to discuss the tension-prone relation that arises between the faithful, theologians, and the bishops in the ongoing development of Church tradition.

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Chapter 7
Church Tradition

Abstract In addition to moral law and moral conscience, Church tradition provides another practical foundation of religious morality in Newman's writings, creating a dynamic interaction between the faithful, theologians, and bishops. He drew a parallel between the consent of the faithful and the consensus of theologians, each using the concrete process of informal inference and certitude that is attentive to historical consciousness. This characterizes his hermeneutics of the imagination in general and his theological hermeneutics in particular. Just as he advocated for consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine, he vigorously supported the role of theologians who require both freedom and courage to perform their work effectively. When bishops too quickly intervene to censor a theological opinion, as he perceived occurred with himself over his work on the faithful, he metaphorically described this as "fighting under the lash." Of course he respected and upheld the role of the bishops in their teaching office. He ardently defended them, but recognized that they can easily overreach with their authority. His anxiety about this was especially evident in his antecedent opposition to the declaration of Papal Infallibility. His consternation and coping strategy provide a fascinating case example for dealing with conflict over the authority of bishops. Although he accepted the declaration after the Council he nonetheless emphasized the supremacy of conscience, highlighting the need for balance between the faithful, theologians, and bishops. That balance in Church tradition constitutes an indispensable foundation of religious morality in his thought.

Newman's approach to Church tradition constitutes another practical foundation of religious morality, creating a dynamic balance between the faithful, theologians, and bishops. Together, they contribute to the process of developing doctrine to accommodate changing historical insights, especially with regard to morality. In particular, he drew a parallel between the consent of the faithful and the consensus of theologians, each using the concrete process of informal inference and certitude that is attentive to historical consciousness. This characterizes his hermeneutics of the imagination in general and his theological hermeneutics in particular insofar as he addressed pivotal issues in theology. The account of this hermeneutical process in the *Grammar* provided a theoretical justification of his conversion that he explained in the *Apologia*. His sensitivity to concerns with Church doctrine and personal salvation led him to convert from Anglicanism. The drama of the event

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inevitably meant changing his prior certitude of belief from one religious denomination to another. With hindsight, by explaining the legitimate process of assent he clarified the meaning of his dissent from Anglicanism when he converted.

At the heart of the argument for certitude, including "assent or dissent" (*Apo*, 239), there is a hermeneutical process that can enlighten his view of Church tradition. Defining his understanding of tradition is complex.[1] Nonetheless, in general he fostered what he referred to as an "ecclesiastical sense or phronema" (*Diff*, II, 313). This communal sense appears to be the communal counterpart of *phronesis* as the judgment of the Illative Sense using the concrete process of informal inference. This "ecclesiastical sense" reflects his theory of informal inference that justifies certitude, thereby implementing his hermeneutics of the imagination. More specifically, the "ecclesiastical sense" is as an exercise of theological hermeneutics that deals with matters of the Church – in this case the complex interaction between the faithful, theologians, and bishops.

The role of each of these constituents clarifies the interpretative process that is involved. First, his argument about the faithful is identified explicitly with the communal counterpart of *phronesis*, thereby implementing his general hermeneutics: "the fidelium sensus and consensus is a branch of evidence which it is natural or necessary for the Church to regard and consult, before she proceeds to any definition" (*Cons*, 55) – "the Consent of the faithful" should be regarded "as a sort of instinct, or phronema, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ" (*Cons*, 73).[2] This hermeneutical contribution of the faithful continues to provide significant lessons for the Church today.[3] Second, just as he advocated for consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine, he vigorously supported the role of theologians, as illustrated in his response to Kingsley who accused him of lying during his conversion process. In response Newman decided to "submit myself and what I shall say to the judgment of the Church, and to the consent, … of the Schola Theologorum" – the schools of theologians (*Apo*, 452). The previous analysis has shown that he adopted an approach to theology that implemented his hermeneutics, being especially attentive to historical consciousness such as in the charge of lying by Kingsley. There is a parallel between the consent of the faithful and the consensus of theologians insofar as each reflects the interpretative process of his theological hermeneutics. Third, despite several contestations with the Catholic bishops, he vigorously supported the authority (the Magisterium) of the Church: "the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition resides solely in the Ecclesia docens" – the teaching office of the Church (*Cons*, 63).[4] In his 1877 Preface to the *Via Media* he made a connection between the teaching office of the Church and the work of theologians to focus upon their "critical judgments of clear heads and holy hearts" (*VM*, I, lxxv). This is discussed later, but it is important to note here that the metaphor suggests the interpretative process ("critical judgments") in his hermeneutics of the imagination. Just as he drew a parallel between the faithful

[1] Biemer (1967), 138–149.

[2] Patterson (1971).

[3] Miller (2006).

[4] McClelland (1996).

and theologians, here he draws a parallel between theologians and the teaching office of the Church.

His approach to Church tradition emphasized the importance of historical consciousness that characterized his theological hermeneutics to foster a sound interaction between the *consensus fidelium*, the *schola theologorum*, and the *magisterium* of bishops (the consent of the faithful, the schools of theologians, and the teaching office of bishops). These constituents must work together to enliven Church tradition. Each has a distinct role that must function constructively with the others: "Each constituent portion of the Church has its proper functions, and no portion can safely be neglected" (*Cons*, 103). Yet, they are not equal or in equivalence. For example, in a letter to Fredrick Rymer on August 3, 1870 he made the following remark, referring to the faithful: "their voice was considered as a witness, not as an authority … I expressly reserved the 'magisterium' for the authorities of the Church" (*LD*, XXV, 172). He acknowledged that the primary authority of the Church lies in the hands of the *magisterium* of bishops while fostering a constructive or dialectical balance with the *schola theologorum* and the *consensus fidelium*.[5]

To highlight the significance of his view of Church tradition (requiring a balance between the faithful, theologians, and the bishops) it can be helpful to connect his analysis with a Church document on the role of the theologian today. On May 24, 1990, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Prefect, published *Donum Veritatis*, the *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*.[6] The document was promulgated approximately 16 months after a group of dissenting European theologians published the so-called Cologne Declaration (January 25, 1989) challenging the conservative teaching of Pope John Paul II.[7] In the Vatican *Instruction*, the "sense of faith" that characterizes the living mind of the Church was closely associated with the "Magisterium of the Church's Pastors" and was contrasted with what was called "a supreme magisterium of conscience."[8] Newman's understanding of Church tradition can enlighten this connection between the sense of the faith, the role of theologians, and the Church Magisterium that was suggested in this *Instruction* from the Vatican: each must enrich the others in a manner that makes authority intelligible in relation to doctrinal truth.[9]

7.1 The Faithful and Theologians

Newman recognized the indispensable role of the faithful and theologians in the Church. But he also realized his view was not commonly recognized. That is why he argued strenuously for the role of each in his view of the Church. In a letter on June 17, 1867 to Canon J. Walker of Scarborough, a professor at St. Edmund's

[5] Miller (1987), 120.

[6] CDF (1990).

[7] Cologne Declaration (1989).

[8] CDF (1990), numbers 4, 38.

[9] CDF (1990), numbers 14, 40.

College in Ware, he made a fascinating remark about the theological condemnation in the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864). Here he emphasized the reciprocity between theologians and the faithful:

> For myself I think the securus judicat orbis terrarum, is the real rule and interpretation of the words of the Church, i.e. the sensus theologorum primarily, then consensus fidelium next (*LD*, XXIII, 254).

Written 7 years after publishing the *Grammar*, this comment indicates his robust support for the contribution of the faithful and of theologians. The general meaning of these Latin phrases can be stated this way: he translated the phrase "the securus judicat orbis terrarium" as meaning the "judgment in which the whole Church at length rests and acquiesces,"; the "sensus theologorum" refers to consensus opinion of theologians; and the "consensus fidelium" refers to the consent of the faithful. To understand how the Church can settle upon any truth, these three bodies need to interact in a constructive manner.

7.1.1 Consent of the Faithful

In the above passage Newman drew a parallel between the consensus of theologians ("sensus theologorum") and the consent of the faithful ("consensus fidelium"). Each uses the concrete process of informal inference and certitude. He explained: "the Consent of the faithful" should be regarded "as a sort of instinct, or phronema, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ" (*Cons*, 73). He used the word phronema as the communal counterpart of phronesis in the *Grammar* – phronema refers to the communal discernment that arises from the concrete process of informal inference, as discussed above. This involves an ecclesiastical sense,[10] and it can be connected with the voice of the infallible Church.[11] Some commentators have claimed that theology played only a modest role in his essay "On Consulting the Faithful."[12] But that is a mistaken view. The conjunction between "the sensus theologorum primarily, then consensus fidelium next" indicates that his argument implemented his theological hermeneutics. He had confidence in the judgments of the faithful and theologians. Each is worth considering in turn.

First, a perusal of several texts clarifies his confidence in the role of the faithful. All through his life he referred in different ways to the idea of "securus judicat orbis terrarum": in 1864 he referred to the Latin maxim of Vincent of Lerins, "Quod semper, quod unique, quod ab omnibus'" – taught always, everywhere, and by all (*Apo*, 103); in 1859 in his argument on the faithful he referred to the "the orbis terrarum" (*Cons*, 78). In a letter on October 20, 1869 to Mrs. Magdalene Helbert, an Anglican drawn to Catholicism, he explained this phrase in the following manner: "Securus

[10] Merrigan (1991), 236; Thiel (1991), 85.

[11] Ker (2002), 69–89.

[12] Dulles (1990b), 382.

judicat orbis terrarum – 'the Christian commonwealth judges without misgiving.' That is the maxim, (as I also feel now,) on which all depends" (*LD*, XXIV, 354). Also, in the *Apologia*, he explained the maxim in this manner: "the deliberate judgment, in which the whole Church at length rests and acquiesces, is an infallible prescription" (*Apo*, 110). It is worth recalling that Pope John Paul II recognized a similar role for the faithful when he remarked: "the universal body of the faithful who have received the anointing of the holy one cannot be mistaken in belief … it expresses the consensus of all in matters of faith and morals."[13] This remark by Pope John Paul II is reminiscent of the maxim, "securus judicat orbis terrarum," though the Papal Encyclical made no reference to it. Moreover, the Vatican's 1990 *Instruction* that was mentioned earlier adopted a similar stance, explaining that the "sense of faith" belongs to the whole people of God, yielding "a universal consent in matters of faith and morals."[14]

Second, Newman also had confidence in the role of theologians. He clarified that the above maxim referred not only to the consent of the faithful as suggested in his 1859 argument but also and especially to the contribution of theologians. Anticipating the debate on Papal Infallibility in the First Vatican Council, he explained:

> How do we know that Pius ix is true Pope? Securus judicat orbis terrarum. How shall we know that the coming Council is a true Council – but by the after assent and acceptance of it on the part of that Catholic organization which is lineally descended, as one whole, from the first ages? – How can we interpret the decisions of that Council, how the Pope's decisions in any age, except by the Schola Theologorum, the great Catholic school of divines dispersed all over the earth? (*LD*, XXIV, 355).

7.1.2 Freedom of Theologians

Newman's understanding of the phrase "schola theologorum" reflected his more generic phrase "securus judicat orbis terrarium," specifically applied to theological discourse.[15] He discussed the role of the "Schola Theologorum" in his 1874 *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*. He was responding to the former Prime Minister William Gladstone's critique of the 1870 doctrine of Papal Infallibility as a ploy to regain temporal power.[16] The Catholic Church had been immersed in significant political turmoil at the time, and politicians were especially attuned to the over-reach of bishops in secular society.[17] Newman tried to explain the relation between conscience and Papal authority.[18] In defense of Pius IX and Vatican I he highlighted the role of theology: "None but the Schola Theologorum is competent to determine the

[13] Pope John Paul II (1993), number 109; Dogmatic Constitution (1966), number 12; Kirk (2010).

[14] CDF (1990), number 4; Dogmatic Constitution (1966), number 12.

[15] Boyle (1995), 173; Misner (1976).

[16] Bastable (1978).

[17] Larkin (1990).

[18] Trevor (1974), 236.

force of papal and Synodal utterances, and the exact interpretation of them is a work of time" (*Diff*, II, 176). The ecclesial significance of the "schola theologorum" is evident – its competence is necessary for interpreting Councils, Synods, and Papal encyclicals ("the Pope's decisions"). This constructive relation between theologian and Church Councils had been a longstanding part of the Catholic conciliar tradition.[19]

The meaning of the "schola theologorum" has changed over the centuries. For example, the schools of Antioch and Alexandria that occupied his attention in the *Arians* rejecting the rationalism of Antioch for the allegorizing of the Alexandrians,[20] are no longer in existence. The medieval notion of schools being bastions of orthodoxy was no longer operative in his own day,[21] and the concept of a theology faculty constituting a recognized magisterium in the Church, such as in seventeenth century Paris,[22] had significantly dissipated.[23] Yet, he celebrated the idea of the "schola theologorum" and perhaps tried to retrieve the concept (akin to the development of an idea in his view of doctrinal development). For example, his leadership in the Oxford Movement with its *Tracts for the Times* might be interpreted as such an effort, ending disappointingly with *Tract 90*; also, the history that he presented in his *Development of Doctrine* represented an account of the "schola theologorum" through the ages, suggesting its continuance in his own age; and his efforts to establish a foundational role for theologians, a so-called "theological faculty" (*Apo*, 239), in the University in his Dublin discourses might appear as defending a role for the "schola theologorum" in Victorian universities.

However, in the wake of the Vatican's reaction to his 1859 essay *On Consulting the Faithful*, he complained to Emily Bowles on May 19, 1863: "there are no schools now, no private judgment (in the religious sense of the phrase), no freedom, that is, of opinion … the system goes by the tradition of the intellect of former times" (*LD*, XX, 447). This seems to have been somewhat of an exaggeration insofar as a year later he wrote about liberalism that he opposed throughout his life: "Liberalism was the badge of a theological school" (*Apo*, 234). Nonetheless, his perception of the demise of the schools had to be a disconcerting recognition, especially in light of his comment in the 1877 Preface to his Via Media: "nor is religion ever in greater danger than when, in consequence of national or international troubles, the Schools of theology have been broken up or ceased to be" (*VM*, I, xlvii).

Today, the traditional concept of and role for the "schola theologorum" is very different, not least because of the recurring tensions since Newman's time between theologians and Church authorities, including on matters of morality. Theologians today are typically the laity, unlike previous ages in the Church. However, schools of theology continue to emerge, such as on transcendental Thomism, liberation theology, or feminist theology. Whether these constitute "schola theologorum" as Newman

[19] Oakley (2003).

[20] King (2009); Daley (2008).

[21] Misner (1976); Boyle (1995).

[22] Boyle (1995), 174.

[23] Gres-Gayer (1992).

understood or theological movements could be debated. What is worth noting is that perhaps more than before, theologians typically stand on their own today. Only a few theologians are recognized as approved authors to interpret Church teaching.[24] However, theologians contribute to ecclesial life through their individual publications, teaching, and service. Many belong to theological associations that represent their scholarly cause, support their professional needs, and provide a prominent platform to foster diversity in theological discourse.

Despite this shift in what Newman envisioned by the "schola theologorum" his advocacy for theology can enlighten the tension between theologians and the magisterium today.[25] He insisted on the necessity of theology for the continuance of the Church. In his 1877 preface to the *Via Media*, he wrote: "Theology is the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system" (*VM*, I, xlvii),[26] suggesting a principle of equilibrium in the Church.[27] He made this remark in the context of explaining the three offices of the Church as being mutually complementary, none being inherently superior to the other: the priestly office that deals with matters of worship, the prophetic office that deals with matters of teaching, and the regal office that deals with matters of governance. All three offices were necessary for Newman, presenting a dialogical vision for Church tradition.[28] The Church should not be understood in a merely juridical manner ruled by ecclesiastical officers.[29] He distributed these responsibilities across different segments of the Church, though subsequently Vatican II associated them with the episcopate.[30] For example, he explored the prophetical office in *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*. This was written as an Anglican in 1837 in which he presented his theory of the via media. In 1877, as a Catholic, he wrote a lengthy preface to the third edition.[31] There he presented his theology of the Church, constituting his greatest contribution to ecclesiology.[32] He had previously emphasized in his *Apologia* that he included both moral and dogmatic issues in his view of theology as "the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system":

> The freedom of the Schools, indeed, is one of those rights of reason, which the Church is too wise really to interfere with. And this applies not to moral questions only, but to dogmatic too (*Apo*, 447).

These are strong words. He insisted that the freedom of theology constitutes one of the "rights of reason" in matters of doctrine and morality. Naturally, this entails a

[24] Boyle (1995), 223, note 37.

[25] Merrigan (2005); Merrigan (1991), 240–251.

[26] Morgan (2009); Weidner (1990), lxii.

[27] Coulson (1970), 167.

[28] Weidner (1990), lvii–lviii; Miller (1981); Walgrave (1960).

[29] Bucher (1978); Dessain (1966), 116.

[30] Dulles (1990b); Dulles (2009), 183–184.

[31] Mongrain (2008).

[32] Beaumont (2009): Thomasset (2006); Ker (1988), 110–111, 139; Tolhurst (1987); Coulson (1967).

degree of theological pluralism that can be contentious for the bishops.[33] This remark anticipated his nuanced view of theology that emerged later in his theological hermeneutics (not fully developed until the *Grammar*). Two points are worth noting. First, his phrase "rights of reason" anticipates the concrete process of informal inference that is attuned to historical consciousness. Second, he included moral and dogmatic issues as being within the purview of theological schools. Theology has the fundamental freedom as one of the "rights of reason" and a basic duty to the life of the Church to investigate matters of dogma and morality. This appreciation for theological freedom as a right of reason was echoed in Vatican II when appealing to reason to justify the right of religious freedom.[34]

Newman understood that pursuing freedom in theological inquiry involves charity to those who deserve the truth, as he had suggested in his 1877 Preface to the *Via Media*: "It is the worst charity, … not to speak out, not to suffer to be spoken out, all that there is to say. Such speaking out is … the triumph of religion, … but it is not always so" (*VM*, I, lvii). He also understood that pursuing the freedom of theological inquiry requires courage. He associated this freedom with courage in an earlier passage: "It is manifest how a mode of proceeding, such as this, tends not only to the liberty, but to the courage, of the individual theologian or controversialist" (*Apo*, 239). It is interesting that he added the word "controversialist" – he certainly recognized himself as being such in the wake of the Catholic bishops opposition to his essay *On Consulting the Faithful*, published 6 years previously in 1859. Just as he had decided to pursue a path of silence after his dispute with the Anglican bishops over *Tract 90*, he again followed a path of silence between 1859 and 1864 to recover from the opposition of Catholic bishops.

What is clear from the remainder of the passage, cited below, was that he understood theology as a typically controversial endeavor ("by the means of controversy" whereby a theological opinion is deemed "safe" or not) – but that should not distract theologians from their work. Surprisingly, he was not satisfied with his remarks about the freedom and courage of theologians. He went much further, again reflecting his own experience of being reported to Rome by Bishop Brown of Newport over his essay on the faithful. He wrote this remarkable reflection that could have been written about so many theologians whose works have been investigated by Church officials since his time. The passage is illuminating about his experience and about the ongoing task of theology:

> It is manifest how a mode of proceeding, such as this, tends not only to the liberty, but to the courage, of the individual theologian or controversialist. Many a man has ideas, which he hopes are true, and useful for his day, but he is not confident about them, and he wishes to have them discussed. He is willing, or rather would be thankful, to give them up, if they can be proved to be erroneous or dangerous, and by the means of controversy he obtains his end. He is answered, and he yields; or on the contrary he finds that he is considered safe. He would not dare do this, if he knew an authority, which was supreme and final, was watching

[33] Misner (1971).

[34] Declaration on Religious Freedom (1966), number 9.

> every word he said, and made signs of assent or dissent to each sentence, as he uttered it. Then indeed he would be fighting, as the Persian soldiers, under the lash, and the freedom of his intellect might truly be said to be beaten out of him. But this has not been so: – I do not mean to say that, when controversies run high, in schools or even in small portions of the Church, an interposition may not advisably take place; and again, questions may be of that urgent nature, that an appeal must, as a matter of duty, be made at once to the highest authority in the Church (*Apo*, 239).

Several points emerge from this passage that seeks a balance between theological freedom and Church authority.[35] He drew attention to the frustration based on his own experience that can debilitate theologians in their service to the Church. He recognized the need to respect theological discourse as one of the "rights of reason" that works through the process of informal inference. However, his remark that oppressive intervention by Church authorities "has not been so" was not quite accurate. In the year prior to writing the *Apologia*, he reflected on the scrutiny from the Vatican over his 1859 essay *On Consulting the Faithful*. In a letter to Emily Bowles on May 19, 1863 he wrote: "in former times, primitive and medieval, there was not the extreme centralization which is now in use…. The Holy See was but the court of ultimate appeal. Now, if I, as a private priest, put anything into print, *Propaganda* answers me at once. How can I fight with such a chain on my arm? It is like the Persians driven to fight *under the lash*" (*LD*, XX, 447). Just 4 years after writing the *Apologia*, in a letter on August 13, 1868 to Henry Wilberforce, one of his oldest friends since Oriel, he voiced a deep sense of discouragement using the same language that he had mentioned in the *Apologia*:

> Every word I publish will be malevolently scrutinized, and every expression which can possibly be perverted sent straight to Rome, … I shall be fighting *under the lash*, which does not tend to produce vigorous efforts in the battle or to inspire either courage or presence of mind (*LD*, XXIV, 120).

Obviously, he felt oppressed by the scrutiny of Church authorities after his 1859 essay on the faithful. Earlier, in 1854, he had warned of a "wrong Conservatism" among clerics, due to "an over-attachment to the ecclesiastical establishment" (*HS*, III, 132). No wonder then, in the *Grammar* he took the opportunity to appeal to the power of reason "to emancipate us from the capricious ipse dixit of authority" (*GA*, 262). Caution is needed when discussing his rapport with bishops or the hierarchy because he typically engaged the issue in the heat of some controversy.[36] Nonetheless, he acknowledged that Church authority in the magisterium of bishops has the responsibility to intervene in an appropriate manner when there is sufficient cause. He sought a balance between the freedom and courage of theological discourse and the authority of the bishops.[37]

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[35] Ker (2009), 142–146; Ker (1988), 553–554; Ford (1985).

[36] Dulles (2005).

[37] Barron (2005); Milbank (1990).

7.2 Church Magisterium

From early in his Anglican career he defended the right and responsibility of bishops to intervene in some theological controversies. For example, when he was an Anglican Vicar he wrote to another Anglican Vicar Simeon Lloyd Pope on August 15, 1830: "A system of Church government was *actually established* by the Apostles, and is thus the *legitimate* enforcement of Christian truth" (*LD*, II, 265). This governance is aligned with the teaching office of the Church.

7.2.1 Church Teaching

He was all too familiar with the tensions that arise between theologians and the magisterium of bishops. As there are rights for theology there are limits too.[38] Given his approach to doctrinal development that had been one of the most significant and original contributions he made,[39] he was especially sensitive to the timeliness and the appropriateness of efforts to advance truth in Church tradition, reflecting his principle of economy on the progressive unfolding of truth. In a passage he explained this attentiveness:

> In reading ecclesiastical history, when I was an Anglican, it used to be forcibly brought home to me, how the initial error of what afterwards became heresy was the urging forward some truth against the prohibition of authority at an unseasonable time. There is a time for everything, and many a man desires a reformation of an abuse, or the fuller development of a doctrine, or the adoption of a particular policy, but forgets to ask himself whether the right time for it is come: …. He may seem to the world to be nothing else than a bold champion of truth and a martyr to free opinion, when he is just one of those persons whom the competent authority ought to silence; and, though the case may not fall within the subject-matter in which that authority is infallible, or the formal conditions of the exercise of that gift may be wanting, it is clearly the duty of authority to act vigorously in the case. Yet its acts will go down to posterity as an instance of tyrannical interference with private judgment, and of the silencing of a reformer … (*Apo*, 232).

Clearly, he supported the authority of the bishops to intervene with the faithful or with theologians when critical matters of doctrinal truth are at stake. In his 1877 preface to the *Via Media* he defended even more strenuously the legitimacy of Church authority when he wrote: "there was nothing wrong in censuring abrupt, [startling], unsettling, unverified disclosures" (*VM*, I, lv). This recognition complements his support for the consent of the faithful and the freedom of theologians. For example, in his essay *On Consulting the Faithful*, he made clear that the magisterium of bishops, the *ecclesia docens*, has legitimate authority:

> It follows that none of the channels of tradition may be treated with disrespect; granting at the same time fully, that the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition resides solely in the Ecclesia docens (*Cons*, 63).

[38] Holmes (1980).

[39] Gaffney (1992).

He also recognized in this 1859 essay, long before the doctrine on Papal Infallibility was defined in 1870, that "a Pope, … and … Bishops, … might, … be infallible in their *ex cathedra* decisions" (*Cons*, 112–113). Also, long before Vatican II in the twentieth century, he supported the doctrinal authority of the magisterium of bishops as central to the life of the Church. In Vatican II, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church taught that beyond the *ex cathedra* infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith and morality, the ordinary magisterium of bishops has authentic teaching authority whose force can be discerned by three criteria[40]: the character of the documents, the frequency of proposing the doctrine, and the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.[41] Also, the 1990 Vatican *Instruction* explained that truths proposed in a definitive way "must be firmly accepted and held,"[42] referring to the 1989 text of the new profession of faith, *Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity*.[43] There is a "hierarchy of truths" that reflect the foundation of faith in Catholic teaching.[44]

In the Church today the authority of the magisterium of bishops, including the authority of Vatican congregations, raises questions about the legitimacy of dissent and changes in Catholic morality.[45] In particular, the 1990 Vatican *Instruction* claims that documents from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith "expressly approved by the pope participate in the ordinary magisterium,"[46] which can "withdraw(s) from a theologian who departs from the doctrine of the faith the canonical mission or the teaching mandate."[47] The critical issue revolves around "the degree of authority" with which a doctrine is taught, as theologians and bishops seek ways of cooperating constructively together.[48] In a pastoral letter from the Catholic bishops of the United States three norms are listed as conditions for legitimate theological dissent. Following the tradition of the textbooks in Catholic moral theology the bishops explained that the reasons for dissent had to be serious and well-founded, that the manner of dissent must not question the teaching authority of the Church, and that scandal should not be given.[49] Moreover, Pope John Paul II in his 1990 encyclical on Catholic education recognized that the Catholic university properly "possesses that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the

[40] May (1987b); Sullivan (1983).

[41] CDF (1990), numbers 15–17, 24; Dogmatic Constitution (1966), number 25.

[42] CDF (1990), number 23.

[43] Canon Law Society of America (2012), canon 833; CDF (1998), number 15.

[44] International Theological Commission (1990): section 111:3; Ernst (2005); Happel and Walter (1986), 184–191; Decree on Ecumenism (1966), number 11.

[45] Curran and McCormick (1982, 1988, 2003); Gula (1978).

[46] CDF (1990), number 17.

[47] CDF (1990), number 37; USCCB (2001); Canon Law Society of America (2012), code 812.

[48] Pope John Paul II (1990), number 29; O'Donovan (1982); Dogmatic Constitution (1966), number 25.

[49] USCCB (1968b).

truth and the common good."[50] This focus upon theologians as individuals presents an interesting contrast from Newman's discussion of theological schools.[51]

Although Newman did not explain how to resolve conflicts between the magisterium of bishops and the faithful or theologians, he adopted an approach to deal with the issues of conflict that he encountered personally: he deployed his principle of economy. This provides an interesting lesson for disputes today. It can be surprising to read of his intentional dissent from the authority of his bishops when he was an Anglican in the wake of his disastrous *Tract 90* in February 1841. That dissent anticipated his pivotal dissent from Anglican doctrine in 1845 that led to his conversion, later explained by his theory of assent in the *Grammar*.[52] In that Tract he examined whether the doctrine of the ancient Church was contained in the Thirty-Nine Articles, though he had anticipated no controversy[53]:

> I yielded to the Bishops in outward act, viz. in not defending the Tract, … not only did I not assent inwardly to any condemnation of it, but I opposed myself to the proposition of a condemnation on the party of authority (*Apo*, 416).

By the time he became a Catholic, he had developed a more nuanced approach to contestations with bishops by applying his principle of economy. This principle reflected his theological hermeneutics, as discussed previously. He used the principle to achieve balance and moderation between issues in tension.[54] He understood the wisdom of "withholding the truth" and "setting it out to advantage" (*Ari*, 65), an insight that he later adopted in the *Apologia* against the accusation of lying by Kingsley. He understood that speaking out is not always wise – he learned that lesson from the failure of his theory on the via media: "veracity, like other virtues, lies in a mean" (*VM*, I, lix). Although the tension between the magisterium of bishops and individuals would always recur, he wanted to suggest ways to deal with it: "Catholic Christendom … presents a continuous picture of Authority and Private Judgment alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and flow of the tide" (*Apo*, 226). This tension with Church authority came to a climax over the debate on Papal Infallibility.

7.2.2 Papal Infallibility

Newman's view of infallibility, whether applied to the Church or the Pope, either within or outside of a general Council, has elicited a great deal of discussion.[55] He distinguished between areas of doctrine with which disagreement might ensue and

[50] John Paul II (1990), 266–275, number 12.

[51] Fleming (2004).

[52] Magill (1993b).

[53] Ker (1988), 218.

[54] Selby (1975), 99–101.

[55] Powell (2009); Strange (2008), 49–62; Page (1994); Dulles (1990a); Klausnitzer (1980); Strange (1975); Dibble (1955).

doctrines that do not permit any disagreement. In his preface to the third edition of the *Via Media* in 1877 he explained how some doctrines may not permit dissent: "The Catholic Church is ever more precise in her enunciation of doctrine, and allows no liberty of dissent from her decisions, (for on such objective matters she speaks with the authority of infallibility)" (*VM*, I, lxxv). However, his anxiety about defining Papal Infallibility as a dogma of the Church provides a fascinating case example for dealing with conflict involving the authority of the bishops. On this debate he had to find the right balance between his personal preference (reflecting a sense of the faithful and theologians in his day) that antecedently opposed defining Papal Infallibility as a dogma and the authority of the magisterium of bishops that eventually defined the dogma in July 1870 at Vatican I. After the declaration he accepted it.[56]

He had upheld the infallibility of the Church, including a role for the faithful and theologians, from his early career as an Anglican.[57] After his conversion in 1845, he celebrated the doctrine of infallibility of the Church as characteristic of the Catholic Church. He explained this view in his *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* (1848), though his main explanation appeared earlier in the *Apologia*. As an Anglican he had believed generally in "the Church's infallibility" (*Apo*, 220). After his conversion, as a Catholic he had no difficulty accepting "the infallibility lodged in the Catholic Church" – "I profess my absolute submission to its claim. I believe the whole revealed dogma" (*Apo*, 224). However, he emphasized that this dogma of the Church's infallibility had clear constraints, including the realm of morality:

> Infallibility cannot act outside of a definite circle of thought, and it must in all its decisions, or definitions, as they are called, profess to be in keeping within it. The great truths of the moral law, of natural religion, and of Apostolic faith, are both its boundary and its foundation. It must not go beyond them, it must ever appeal to them… And it must ever profess to be guided by Scripture and tradition (*Apo*, 227).

He even recognized the Pope as representing the infallibility of the Church at Ecumenical Councils: "It is to the Pope in Ecumenical Council that we look, as to the normal seat of Infallibility" (*Apo*, 229). In a theological paper written in 1865, he explained his stance in a straightforward manner: "I never have been against the doctrine of the Pope's Infallibility – …but I don't see that the munus pascendi requires infallibility" (*TP*, II, 102). The "munus pascendi" referred to the practical pastoral function of the papacy. Newman illustrated his reticence by referring to the ambiguity in Church teaching and practice over usury: "Benedict XIV against usury. Say he is infallible then – yet it is now put on the shelf – its infallibility is on an abstract point and avails nothing practically i.e. as an act pascendi, of teaching practically, it is useless. It is an infallible truth, not an infallible command" (*TP*, II, 102). He expanded on his ambivalence a few pages later: "… what is the use of the Pope having an infallible judgment in his Briefs, … not touching on practice, not reacting to what is real and tangible" (*TP*, II, 118). Newman certainly had difficulty with the doctrine of Papal Infallibility as it appeared to be emerging in the years prior to

[56] Costigan (2005); Oakley (2003).

[57] Femiano (1967).

1870. Detailing his anxieties about the doctrine in 1870 can shed light on the depth of his opposition and his coping strategy when facing the magisterial authority of the bishops. In a well-known letter written on January 28, 1870 to his own ordinary (Bishop Ullathorne who was attending Vatican I),[58] he voiced this dismay from the perspective of the faithful about the Council's work on of Papal Infallibility:

> A Council's proper office is, when some great heresy or other evil impends, to inspire the faithful with hope and confidence; but now we have the greatest meeting which ever has been, and that at Rome, infusing into us … little else than fear and dismay.
>
> When we are all at rest, and have no doubts, and at least practically, not to say doctrinally, hold the Holy Father to be infallible, suddenly there is thunder in the clear sky, and we are told to prepare for something we know not what to try our faith we know not how. No impending danger is to be averted, but a great difficulty is to be created…. I look with anxiety at the prospect of having to defend decisions, which may not be difficult to my private judgment, but may be most difficult to maintain logically in the face of historical facts. What have we done to be treated, as the faithful were never treated before (*LD*, XXV, 18).

He perceived the difficulty of the impending dogma in terms of being inconsistent with historical facts in the tradition of the Church. He also seems to have connected this difficulty with the perceived lack of consulting the faithful that he had described in his 1859 essay – there he considered consultation of the faithful (including theologians) as part of the process of doctrinal development.[59] He had favorable impressions of how the faithful had received his doctrine on development.[60] However, he also identified another aspect of the difficulty in this manner. In a letter dated July 24, 1870, after the doctrine was defined, he explained: "the actual tendency of the definition then in prospect will be to create in educated Catholics a habit of skepticism or secret infidelity as regards all dogmatic truth" (*LD*, XXV, 166). He was in a very uncomfortable situation. He suspected there was manipulation by what he referred to as "an aggressive insolent faction" (*LD*, XXV, 19), as a "tyrant majority" (*LD*, XXV, 192), as "a fanatical party" (*LD*, XXV, 278), and as "a violent reckless party" (*LD*, XXV, 310), alluding to the Ultramontanist movement that he strenuously opposed. His opposition to the extreme positions on infallibility held by the Ultramontanists eventually had a moderating influence on the Second Vatican Council.[61]

The details of Newman's antecedent opposition to the doctrine of Papal Infallibility are breathtaking. However, it is important to emphasize that these details were in private communications, even though some found there way into the public domain, such as his letter to Ullathorne that appeared in the Standard newspaper, much to the embarrassment of the bishop.[62] Newman was not afraid to voice the extent of his anxiety. It can be helpful to read some of his correspondence that specifies his perplexity. By comprehending the depth of his feeling, his coping

[58] Ker (1988), 651.

[59] Kelly (2006).

[60] Dessain (1964).

[61] Ker (2004), 132; Coulson (1974); Holmes (1969).

[62] Ker (1988), 653.

strategy can provide an example for theological disputes with Church authority today.

In a letter on March 17, 1870 he noted frankly that until the doctrine was defined he could not believe it as a dogma. In responding to an inquiry from Alfred E. Smith on March 16 on whether he believed in the dogma of Papal Infallibility, Newman wrote: "Answered that there is no such dogma – as Papal Infallibility: It is only a doctrine. No one can *believe* any doctrine except it is de fide, or comes for certain from God. If the infallibility is made a point of faith then it will be believed – till then it can only be held. Accordingly from the nature of the case neither I nor others believe Papal Infallibility as a dogma – at present" (*LD*, XXV, 57). A few days later in a letter on March 20, 1870 he strenuously voiced his opposition to the definition to the Bishop of Kerry, David Moriarty: "If it is God's will that some definition in favour of the Pope's infallibility is passed, I then shall at once submit – but up to that very moment I shall pray most heartily and earnestly against it" (*LD*, XXV, 57). Then in a letter to Ambrose Phillipps De Lisle on April 7, 1870 he wrote: "Anxious as I am, I will not believe that the Pope's infallibility can be defined at the Council till I see it actually done…. When it is actually done, I will accept it as His act; but, till then, I will believe it impossible" (*LD*, XXV, 82).

He had no difficulty accepting the previous "definition in 1854" of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception that "was received everywhere on its promulgation with the greatest enthusiasm" (*Apo*, 228). Five years before the declaration on the Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius IX in the encyclical *Ubi primum* (1849) had asked the Church's bishops to inform him whether the clergy and faithful of their dioceses believed that Mary had been conceived without original sin as a revealed truth that should be defined. The overwhelmingly positive response led the pope to mention in the bull of definition the remarkable consensus of the bishops and faithful supporting the definition (*Cons*, 71). It is interesting to note that Newman's views on the indispensable role of the faithful, though controversial in his day, were vindicated by Vatican II's support for the supernatural sense of the faith in the whole people of God.[63]

He referred to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception to highlight how he contrasted it with the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. Within a week of his letter to De Lisle, in a letter to Robert Whitty on April 12, 1870, he wrote again about the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception: "Think how slowly and cautiously you proceeded in the definition of the Immaculate Conception how many steps were made, how many centuries passed, before the dogma was ripe; – we are not ripe for the Pope's Infallibility" (*LD*, XXV, 93). This comparison with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception made his concern about the doctrine on Papal Infallibility all the more evident. A short time later, he explained controversially in a letter to Peter Le Page Renouf on June 21, 1868 that he deemed the dogma of infallibility to be merely a probability and not a certainty: "I hold the Pope's Infallibility, not as a dogma, but as a theological opinion; that is, not as a certainty, but as a probability… To my mind the balance of probabilities is still in favour of it" adding that "the

[63] Dulles (2002), 107–108; Lash (1990); Butler (1967).

doctrine of papal Infallibility must be fenced round and limited by conditions" (*LD*, XXIV, 92). He was hesitant not because he deemed the doctrine to be untrue but because he considered the declaration to be untimely.

Finally, just before the doctrine was defined, in correspondence with Francis Diederich Wackerbarth on June 28, 1870, his resistance was strenuous: "I will not believe that this definition about Papal Infallibility is passed, till it is passed. It seems to me a duty, out of devotion to the Pope and charity to the souls of men, to resist it, while resistance is possible" (*LD*, XXV, 153). Nonetheless, despite his anxiety and opposition, he anticipated that the doctrine would be defined. In his January letter to Bishop Ullathorne he balanced resistance by indicating his willingness to accept the doctrine: "If it is God's will that the Pope's infallibility should be defined, … I shall feel I have but to bow my head to His adorable, inscrutable Providence" (*LD*, XXV, 19).

In July 1870 the doctrine of Papal Infallibility was defined at Vatican I in *Pastor Aeternus* (the other Council document was *Dei Filius* on faith and reason).[64] Yet, even after its promulgation, Newman voiced reticence. On July 24, 1870, he wrote a long letter to Ambrose Phillips de Lisle (though he did not send it) the day after he read the definition. He voiced reservation about the legitimacy of the doctrine in terms of the lack of unanimous support by the Council's bishops:

> I saw the new Definition yesterday, and am pleased at its moderation, that is, if the doctrine in question is to be defined at all. The terms are vague and comprehensive; and personally, I have no difficulty in admitting it. The question is, does it come to me with the authority of an Ecumenical Council? … it cannot be denied that there are reasons for a Catholic, till better informed, to suspend his judgment on its validity (*LD*, XXV, 164–165).

Of course, communication in 1870 was not what it is today. It is not surprising that he wanted to obtain more detail before committing to the declaration, though he indicated his willingness if required to do so. His reason for caution dealt with the number of bishops who were not in attendance, possibly concerned that such a lack of support (based on his "orbis terrarum" maxim) might compromise the validity of the declaration: "at the time when it was actually passed, more than 80 Fathers absented themselves from the Council, and would have nothing to do with its act" (*LD*, XXV, 165). The Constitution on Papal Infallibility was approved by 533 votes, 2 opposing votes, and approximately 80 leaving Rome (though specific numbers vary) before the final vote thereby signaling their opposition.[65] He knew of the military strife in the region at the time as Italy was being formed as a nation: there could have been many reasons for the bishops to be absent. He took the opportunity to identify what he deemed to be the necessary threshold for attesting to the definition as sound dogma: "if the definition is eventually received by the whole body of the faithful, as valid or as the expression of truth, then too it will claim our assent by the force of the great dictum, 'Securus judicat orbis terrarum'" (*LD*, XXV, 165).

[64] Denzinger and Schönmetzer (1967), number 3074.

[65] Dulles (2002), 93–94.

In a blunt letter to his close friend and fellow Oratorian Ambrose St. John on August 21, 1870, after the doctrine had been declared, he wrote: "putting the validity of the Acts of the Council aside, the fact of Pope and so may Bishops taking one side, if backed by the faithful, would practically make the doctrine de fide" (*LD*, XXV, 192). After the dissident bishops had submitted, any serious opposition dissipating quickly, he acceded to the declaration convinced that the orbis terrarum had provided a legitimate consensus.[66] Yet, in a frank note of despair, he added a heart wrenching remark in his letter to Ambrose St. John. He alluded to a way around the problem insofar as the political turmoil in Italy might cause the Pope to be forced from Rome. Doing so might prevent the Council from continuing: "But we must hope, for one is obliged to hope for it, that the Pope will be driven from Rome, and will not continue the Council, or that there will be another Pope" (*LD*, XXV, 192). In fact, Pope Pius IX surrendered Rome to the surrounding forces on September 20, 1870, permanently forfeiting much of territorial governance that the Vatican had held for centuries in Italy. However, the doctrine remained and Newman regrouped. He took comfort in the historical development of tradition, again reflecting his principle of economy on the progressive unfolding of truth, and hoping for a future refinement of the doctrine. He remarked several months later in a letter to Alfred Plummer on April 30, 1871:

> Another consideration has struck me forcibly, and that is, that, looking at early history, it would seem as if the Church moved on to the perfect truth by various successive declarations, alternately in contrary directions, and thus perfecting, completing, supplying each other. Let us have a little faith in her, I say. Pius is not the last of the Popes – the fourth Council modified the third, the fifth the fourth…. The late definition does not so much need to be undone, as to be completed. It needs *safeguards* to the Pope's possible acts – explanations as to the matter and extent of his power…. Let us be patient, let us have faith, and a new Pope, and a re-assembled Council may trim the boat (*LD*, XXV, 310).

The context of this letter to Plummer was an exchange on the pressure being placed upon the renowned German theologian Johann Joseph von Döllinger (1799–1890), under threat of excommunication, to accept the dogma of Papal Infallibility. In March 1871 Döllinger refused to accept the Council's doctrine and his bishop subsequently excommunicated him. Newman did not agree with Döllinger's arguments, though he empathized with his plight, reminiscent of his comments about theologians fighting under the lash when oppressed by their bishops: "my heart goes along with Dr. Döllinger with extreme sympathy in this his cruel trial – … I can hardly restrain my indignation at the reckless hard heartedness with which he and so many others have been treated by those who should have been their true brethren" (*LD*, XXV, 308). He was highly attuned to the clash of conscience that Döllinger encountered. However, his own conscience let him accept the doctrine even though he had strenuously resisted its declaration.

After the Council, the former Secretary-General of Vatican I, Bishop Joseph Fessler, provided a moderate interpretation of Papal Infallibility avoiding any connection with the *Syllabus of Errors* (related to Pope Pius IX's 1864 encyclical

[66] Dulles (2009), 179; Dulles (2002), 94.

Quanta Cura).[67] The Ultramontanists had tried to make that connection. Pope Pius IX approved the explanation of Bishop Fessler. Newman liked this interpretation and adopted it. He asked his close friend Ambrose St. John to prepare an English translation of the work from German while he was preparing his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* in which he responded to Gladstone's attack on Catholics about the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. In this response he referred to Bishop Fessler's interpretation supporting his own stance that "a moderation of doctrine, dictated by charity, is not inconsistent with soundness in the faith" (*Diff*, II, 321).[68] This interpretation of Papal Infallibility can be referred to as the moderate infallibility that orthodox theologians have adopted since Vatican I.[69]

7.3 Truth and Holiness

In the 1877 Preface to the Via Media Newman provided an inspired metaphor for his lifelong commitment to truth and holiness, "clear heads and holy hearts,"[70] as mentioned previously. His point was to draw a contrast between "the religion of the uneducated classes" and the sophisticated judgments of Church Councils and theologians:

> … the formal decrees of Councils and statements of theologians differ … from the religion of the uneducated classes; the latter represents the wayward popular taste, and the former the critical judgments of clear heads and holy hearts (*VM*, I, lxxv).

Not only does he integrate truth and holiness in this metaphor, he associates the integration both with Church councils and with theologians. This emphasizes the important contribution of theology to Church tradition, distinct from the more obvious influence of Church councils. This emphasis on theology late in his life only makes sense after writing the *Grammar* 7 years previously if it is understood in relation to his theological hermeneutics. Indeed his metaphor of "clear heads and holy hearts" encapsulates with poetic vision the integration of truth and holiness as his lifelong leitmotif. However, the metaphor also provocatively expresses the objective and subjective dimensions of theology when using the concrete reasoning of informal inference to justify the imaginative assent of certitude: objective truth is attained through subjective perception that is attuned to historical consciousness. There is no subject-free objectivity in matters of religious belief and morality. It is fascinating that he used this metaphor to bolster the contribution of theology after his consternation over the declaration of Papal Infallibility in Vatican I – pitting the "critical judgments" of theologians against the bishops in the Council. His anxiety over the declaration illustrates his concern with doctrine, reflecting his lifelong

[67] Boudens (1995), 82–90.

[68] Sullivan (2009), 167; Sullivan (1990).

[69] Powell (2009), 123–162.

[70] Merrigan (1991).

commitment to truth. Even after his acceptance of the definition, his concerns about its implications can be interpreted through his concern with salvation, reflecting his lifelong commitment to holiness. Each concern is addressed in turn.

His concern with doctrine can be understand in light of his theological hermeneutics that he used to justify the objective truth of certitude. Before the declaration on Papal Infallibility occurred there appears to have been no convergence of probabilities that could represent the concrete process of informal inference to justify certitude. As mentioned earlier, he construed Papal Infallibility only as a probability, not a doctrinal truth that can elicit certitude: "I hold the Pope's Infallibility, not as a dogma, but as a theological opinion; that is, not as a certainty, but as a probability" (*LD*, XXIV, 92). By the time he accepted the declaration events had changed, his thought had developed, and the details of the definition were moderate. This seems to have enabled him to perceive the actual definition (not the one that he feared would accommodate the extremes of Ultramontanism) in light of converging probabilities that could justify certitude. Unlike other theologians at the time such as Döllinger, he accepted the definition despite its imperfections. Although he accepted the declaration after the Council he nonetheless emphasized the supremacy of conscience (reflecting his commitment to truth), highlighting the need for balance between the bishops, theologians, and the faithful.

7.3.1 Supremacy of Conscience

Even after Newman accepted the definition of Papal Infallibility he made a remark that has echoed in disputes with Church authority ever since – his after-dinner toast about the supremacy of conscience. The comment reflects the tension between the conscience of an individual and the magisterium of bishops.[71] In his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* he took up the thorny issue, reflecting a continuing trait of liberal Catholicism.[72] He wrote with some bravado:

> Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, (which indeed does not seem quite the thing) I shall drink–to the Pope, if you please,–still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards (*Diff*, II, 261).

His suggestive comments presents a defense of "the supremacy of Conscience" versus "an absolute obedience" to the Pope if cases arose in which the Pope might be "transgressing the laws of human society" (*Diff*, II, 243). There have been many efforts to explain what seems to be a highly contentious remark.[73] The previous explanation of conscience can shed light on the matter, implementing his theological hermeneutics. The primary component of conscience is the moral sense that makes moral judgments through informal inference to justify certitude. The sense of

[71] Kent (1974); Calkins (1969).

[72] Holmes (1975).

[73] Finnis (1990), 401–418; Donagan (1977), 418.

duty, as the other component of conscience, can be interpreted as the voice of God. But he explained that the proper meaning of the voice of God (outside of revelation) is found in human nature: "the voice of God in the nature and heart of man, as distinct from the voice of Revelation" (*Diff*, II, 247). In this case, interpreting human nature requires the moral sense, thereby reinforcing its primary function in conscience. However, the sense of duty also can provide religious meaning to the rational judgments of the moral sense to address our responsibility before God. Conscience combines rationality (through the moral sense) with responsibility before God (through the sense of duty).

This nuanced view of conscience can explain his toast to the supremacy of conscience. The primary function of conscience is the rational judgment of the moral sense that interprets the meaning of human nature, even though its insights can elicit religious meaning through the sense of duty. If a case ever arose where the Pope transgressed the laws of nature ("transgressing the laws of human society"), the primary function of conscience could justify an individual rejecting such a transgression. That rejection would be based on the authority of the moral sense of conscience. Even though the toast to conscience deals with religion, the sense of duty in conscience can only give religious meaning to the sound judgment of the moral sense ("the voice of God in the nature"). This explanation of the authority of conscience, interpreting the laws of nature given by God and responsible to God, cannot permit any Church authority, even the Pope, to transgress those basic laws. Hence, his after dinner toast was necessarily made to conscience first. This toast reflected his commitment to the truth that the moral sense perceives through the concrete process of informal inference. However, there is a strand in his thought that can appear contrary to this explanation. The strand suggests that conscience should trump reason. The passage appears towards the end of the *Apologia*:

> One special reason why religious men, after drawing out a theory, are unwilling to act upon it themselves, is this: that they practically acknowledge a broad distinction between their reason and their conscience; and that they feel the latter to be the safer guide, though the former may be the clearer, nay even though it be the truer. They would rather be wrong with their conscience, than right with their reason (*Apo*, 455).

It might appear that the passage places conscience above reason – but that interpretation would be mistaken. The context of this remark is his explanation of the discursive process of reasoning that characterizes one aspect of theology, its abstract component. He wrote: "A theologian draws out a system; he does it partly as a scientific speculation" (*Apo*, 454–455). His point is that the abstract reasoning process of formal inference generates the "system" that theology can create by "scientific speculation." The type of "reason" that he contrasts with "conscience" in the above passage is the abstract reasoning of formal inference that may provide a "clearer" guide but one that "religious men … are unwilling to act upon." The abstract process of reasoning tends not to inspire action, as explained previously. In contrast, the concrete reasoning process of informal inference in the moral sense leads to action – highlighting his moral rhetoric that connects certitude with action. In other words, the supremacy of conscience lies in the concrete judgment of the moral sense that justifies the imaginative assent of certitude to inspire action.

The meaning of the above passage is to contrast the abstract reasoning of formal inference with the concrete process of informal inference that characterizes the moral sense of conscience. Only in this way does the above passage place conscience (the informal inference of the moral sense) above reason (formal inference). The contrast is really between two types of inference (formal and informal) and not between reason and religion. His dispute over Papal Infallibility highlights the role of the moral sense in conscience, reflecting his commitment to truth.

7.3.2 Patience, Silence, and Prayer

Newman's dispute over Papal Infallibility also recalls his commitment to holiness. In another remarkable passage he connected disobeying the Papal injunction with sin, thereby recalling his concern with salvation ("in the Presence of God"):

> 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 (*Diff*, II, 258).

His conversion in 1845 resulted from addressing his concerns with salvation and doctrine: he decided to protect his soul for eternal salvation even though doing so involved dissent from the doctrines of the Anglican Church; he recognized orthodoxy in the doctrines of Catholicism. As a result, he repudiated the authority of the Anglican Church to become a Catholic. Similarly, at the end of his life over the debate on Papal Infallibility, his concern about salvation re-emerged. Before the declaration his anxiety about the impending doctrine did not reach a threshold that caused him to fear for his salvation, as had occurred at the time of his conversion to Catholicism. However, after he accepted the doctrine, as indicated in the above passage, he perceived a threat to salvation if an individual accepted the doctrine as being true and yet disobeyed it. Nonetheless, this does not mean that accepting the declaration led to calmness in his soul. His continuing anxiety caused him to pursue a coping strategy of patience, silence, and prayer, reflecting his commitment to holiness. This strategy enabled him to address the tension between obedience to Church authority and theological freedom.[74] His principle of economy as an application of his theological hermeneutics had taught him that doctrine and truth progressively unfold. At times this occurs through contestation between theological freedom and Church authority, ebbing and flowing like the tide, even across centuries as tradition develops. This awareness led to his coping strategy as a prudent way of dealing with the controversy over Papal Infallibility.

In his letter to Bishop Ullathorne in January 1870 he pondered whether to make his reservations public before the doctrine was defined, but instead he opted for prayer: "I am continually asking myself whether I ought to make my feelings public; but all I do is to pray to those great early Doctors of the Church, whose

[74] Cooper (2007).

intercession would decide the matter, Augustine and the rest, to avert so great a calamity" (*LD*, XXV, 19). After the doctrine was declared he continued to worry about what public course of action to pursue. In a letter to Mrs. William Maskel on January 31, 1871, he discussed his strategy as one of patience, silence (keeping quiet), and prayer:

> It has long been my belief that the Pope had the infallibility which he was proclaimed to have last July – … But what has been the deepest of distresses to me, has been the cruel unsettlement which the conduct of a fanatical party has brought to so many good religious minds … But under a great trial, the question is what are we to do – and I seem to see clearly that our duty is patience…. Our Wisdom is to keep quiet, not to make a controversy, not to make things worse, but to pray that He, who before now has completed a first Council by second, may do so now (*LD*, XXV, 277–278).

He again appealed to patience in April 1871 when he responded to Alfred Plummer's correspondence that about Döllinger's argument against Papal Infallibility: "Let us be patient, let us have faith, and a new Pope, and a re-assembled Council may trim the boat" (*LD*, XXV, 310). This strategy of patience, silence, and prayer reflected his previous experience in high profile controversies with the Anglican bishops early in his career and with the Catholic bishops after his conversion. The opposition of the Anglican bishops to *Tract 90* in 1841 led to the long period of quiet reflection ending in his conversion in 1845: "The Bishops one after the other began to charge against me… I wish to keep quiet" (*Apo*, 130–131). The opposition of the Catholic bishops to his essay *On Consulting the Faithful* in 1859, after Bishop Brown had written to Rome to complain, led to another extended period of retreat.[75] He only emerged from these silent years in 1864 to write his *Apologia*: "The cause of my not writing from 1859 to 1864 was my failure with the *Rambler*. I thought I had got into a scrap and it became me to be silent" (*AW*, 272). Also, he explained his silence to Emily Bowles on May 19, 1863, referring to the Vatican's inquiry of his work: "As what was said to me was very indirect and required no answer, I kept silence and the whole matter was hushed up" (*LD*, XX, 447).

He had been seriously scarred, not least by a remark made in 1867 about his 1859 essay on the faithful by Monsignor George Talbot to Archbishop Manning. This criticism was quoted by Newman's first biographer Wilfred Ward, the son of William George Ward with whom Newman had disagreed over the dogma of Papal Infallibility: "Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England, and you will see that he will make use of the laity against your Grace."[76] Nonetheless, Newman had confidence that his strategy was astute, hoping ardently that his patience would turn negative perceptions around. In a letter on January 13, 1863 to William Monsell, a convert and friend in the Irish government who was fearful of the ecclesiastical restriction of religious freedom, Newman described his approach: "All this will be overruled; it may lead to much temporary mischief but it will be overruled. And we do not make things better by disobedience. We may be able indeed to complicate

[75] Ker (1988), 490–532.

[76] Ward (1912), II, 147.

matters, and to delay the necessary reforms; but our part is obedience. If we are but patient, all will come right" (*LD*, XX, 391). His strategy was built upon respect for the authority of the Church, despite his profound hurt at the way he had been treated by ecclesial authorities during his life. He chose not to engage in the acrimony that he attributed to Richard Simpson who had preceded him as editor of the *Rambler*. In a letter dated July 6, 1963 he made the following amusing quip about Simpson's foibles: "He will always be flicking his whip at Bishops, cutting them in tender places, throwing stones at sacred Congregations, and, as he rides along the high road, discharging pea shooters at Cardinals who happen by bad luck to look out of window" (*LD*, XX, 4).

Newman's anxiety about Papal Infallibility continued after its declaration. Nonetheless, he chose the high ground and avoided acrimony. His commitment to holiness recalled the importance of the intellectual and moral temperament that was so important for the Illative Sense. This commitment led to adopting a long view in his strategy of patience, silence, and prayer. His strategy can provide a case example to deal with theological disputes today. Of course, this does not mean that his strategy presents a road-map for negotiating disagreements with bishops. Rather the case example suggests that whatever practical strategy is adopted (such as patience, silence, and prayer out of respect for Church authority) it should reflect deeper concerns with doctrine and salvation. His theological hermeneutics enabled him to envision a dynamic view of Church tradition that required a robust interaction between the magisterium of bishops, theologians, and the faithful. That balance in Church tradition constitutes an indispensable foundation of religious morality not only in Newman's writings but for theological discourse today.

7.4 Conclusion

The book has explored religious morality in Newman's writings through the lens of his hermeneutics of the imagination. By religious morality is meant the religious significance that he attributed to the natural perception of moral truth. Just as his justification of religious belief focused upon the natural capacity for belief in his explanation of informal inference and the real assent of certitude, a similar approach was used to examine his approach to religious morality. The analysis discussed the natural capacity for morality connecting it with the religious significance that can accrue in terms of God, theology, and Church tradition. To pursue the discussion in a systematic manner the analysis considers several foundations of religious morality, three theoretical foundations and three practical foundations.

The first theoretical foundation is his commitment to truth and holiness that enabled him to address recurring concerns with doctrine and salvation by relying on reason (to deal with truth) and conscience (to deal with holiness) – surprisingly, he did not resort to faith to deal with them. This commitment constitutes a leitmotif that permeates the other foundations of religious morality. The second theoretical foundation is his religious epistemology of reason and belief that can be construed

as his hermeneutics. This interpretative process focuses upon the concrete reasoning of informal inference as a subjective endeavor to justify the assent of certitude in matters of belief and morality. Here he relied on moral demonstration to reach objective truth – there is no subject-free objectivity in these practical matters. The third theoretical foundation is his hermeneutics of the imagination. Here he aligned his general hermeneutics on reason and belief with the role of the imagination both to justify the imaginative assent of certitude and to inspire accompanying moral activity. This connection between reaching certitude and moral action constitutes what can be described as his moral rhetoric. When applied to theology, his hermeneutics of the imagination becomes his theological hermeneutics whereby the concrete process of informal inference and certitude is attentive to historical consciousness.

These three theoretical foundations are integrated with the three practical foundations of religious morality in his thought. The first practical foundation of religious morality is the moral law. It implements the abstract and concrete processes of reason (reflected in notional and real assent) in his hermeneutics of the imagination. Moral law is generated by abstractions from concrete moral experiences. The abstraction of moral law characterizes its objective and absolute character. However, this does not mean that a moral law can be applied indiscriminately to reality. To apply moral law requires the concrete reasoning of informal inference and real assent of certitude. When abstract moral law is applied to reality, new experiences can arise that cause the law to be refined subsequently. The ongoing interpretation of moral law, through its application and subsequent refinement, requires a keen sensitivity to historical consciousness.

The second practical foundation of religious morality is moral conscience. Conscience has two functions. The moral sense represents the rationality of conscience, being its autonomous characteristic that engages reason. This is similar to the concrete reasoning of informal inference that applies abstract moral law to concrete reality. But it is broader insofar as the concrete reasoning process deals with circumstances whether there is a relevant moral law or not. The moral sense determines when moral judgments can attain certitude. This is the primary function of conscience and it reflects his hermeneutics of the imagination. The sense of duty represents the responsibility of conscience before God, being its theonomous characteristic that engages the voice of God (without arguing for the existence of God). Here, the sense of duty introduces a theological dimension by providing a religious interpretation for the moral sense. This function reflects his theological hermeneutics.

The third practical foundation of religious morality in his thought is Church tradition that creates a dynamic interaction between the faithful, theologians, and bishops. He applied his theological hermeneutics to explain that the faithful and theologians have a crucial role in Church tradition using the concrete process of informal inference and certitude that is attentive to historical consciousness. Also, the authority of the bishops must be respected, but there are the dangers of overreach in their authority, as exemplified in his anxieties over the declaration of Papal Infallibility. Although he accepted the declaration after the Council he nonetheless emphasized the supremacy of conscience, highlighting the dynamic balance

between the faithful, theologians, and bishops. Because this balance can never be fully achieved, strategies are needed to negotiate conflicts with the authority of bishops, with Newman being a fascinating case example for future controversies.

These theoretical and practical foundations of religious morality in his thought are inspired by the leitmotif of his lifelong commitment to truth and holiness. This book seeks to provide a systematic account of a very unsystematic writer. Typically scholars focus on his account of conscience to gain insight into religious morality. This analysis suggests that his particular view of conscience needs to be interpreted in the much broader context of his hermeneutics. By considering his hermeneutics of the imagination in general and his theological hermeneutics in particular, religious morality becomes alive throughout his major works – highlighting the interpretative process of informal inference and the imaginative assent of certitude in a manner that can elicit profound religious meaning without diminishing the rational enterprise involved.

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