



Newman, the Church of England and the Catholic Church

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Abstract

Newman was formed in the Church of England and all his major theological concerns were developed in an Anglican context. The rebuttal of utilitarian scepticism in the *University Sermons*; the ecclesial context of Christian faith and life in *The Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church*; the strong sense of mystery in Newman's epistemology and apologetic; the sacramental character of Christian truth are all significantly part of the Anglican inheritance that he took to the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore Newman's early formation was 'pre-Victorian' – he was engaged when writing his *Essay on Scriptural Miracles* with earlier debates with the Deists, as well as sharing in the rediscovery of the imagination that characterised Coleridge and the Romantic Movement. This paper explores these and other issues to show an important part of Newman's enduring Anglican inheritance.

Keywords

Newman; Church of England; Catholic; ecumenical; mystery

I have been given the title 'Newman, the Church of England, and the Catholic Church', and it is clear that there are many different ways of speaking to such a title. Furthermore, given the extent of Newman's writing, one cannot but be selective. What I have chosen to do is to consider some of the important theological and apologetic themes from Newman's Anglican days, and then make a few concluding comments.

John Henry Newman's life, as we are well aware, spanned almost the whole the nineteenth-century. We need, however, to remember that he was born in 1801 in the reign of George III; grew up in Regency England and was an undergraduate and elected a Fellow of Oriel in the reign of George IV, journeying to Sicily in the reign of William IV, which saw the political tensions over the Great Reform Bill. The same reign saw John Keble's Assize Sermon of 1833, the

beginning of the *Tracts for the Times* and Newman's publication of the first volume of his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1834) and his significant ecclesiological work, *The Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church* (1836). Although we no longer think of historical periods as defined simply by the reigns of monarchs, it is still worth remembering that Newman was 36 by the time Victoria came to the throne in 1837. (Newman interestingly noted William IV's death on 20 June that year, but not the accession of the young Victoria, and with only a brief note that it was 'Coronation Day' a year later.¹) When he died in 1890 it was just over a decade before the end of Victoria's long reign. It is understandable that we think of Newman as an 'eminent Victorian' but it is good to remember that he grew up and was shaped by an earlier period.

Religiously, likewise, we need to remember that he was 44 when he left the Church of England to join the Church of Rome. In the *Apologia pro vita sua* (1864), the reply to Charles Kingsley which was in large part 'the history of my religious opinions', he traces his theological pilgrimage. It was a pilgrimage concerned in many ways with the identity of the Church of England, and shaped, not only by the particular, personal events of Newman's own spirituality, but by the contexts of the Church of England and the University of Oxford in which he lived. When his long-time friend and fellow Tractarian, Edward Bouverie Pusey, heard the news of Newman's leaving the Church of England for the Church of Rome, he wrote a remarkable open letter to an anonymous friend:

Our Church has not known how to employ him.... Here was one marked out as a great instrument of God, fitted through his whole training, of which, through a friendship of twenty-two years, I have seen at least some glimpses, to carry out some great design for the restoration of the Church; and now after he had begun that work among ourselves in his retirement – his work taken out of his hands, and not directly acting upon our Church.... He is gone unconscious (as all great instruments of God are) what he himself is. He has gone as a simple act of duty with no view for himself, placing himself entirely in God's hands. And such are they whom God employs. He seems then to me not so much gone from us as transplanted into another part of the Vineyard, where the full energies of his powerful mind can be employed, which here they were not. And who knows what in the mysterious purposes of God's good Providence may be the effect of such a person among them? You too have felt that it is what is unholy on both sides which keeps us apart. It is not what is true in the Roman system, against which the strong feeling of ordinary religious persons amongst us is directed, but against what is unholy in her practice. It is

¹ J. H. Newman, *Letters and Diaries*, VI, pp. 86, 259 (28.6.1838) 'Manning came in. (Coronation Day). Walked about with Manning.'

not anything in our Church which keeps them from acknowledging us, but heresy existing more or less within us. As each, by God's grace, grows in holiness, each Church will recognize, more and more, the Presence of God's Holy Spirit in the other; and what now hinders the union of the Western Church will fall off. As the contest with unbelief increases, the Churches which have received and transmitted the substance of the Faith as deposited in our common Creeds must be on the same side with it.²

Pusey went on to claim that 'it is perhaps the greatest event which has happened since the Communion of the Churches has been interrupted, that such an one, so formed in our Church, and the work of God's Spirit as dwelling in her should be transplanted into theirs.'³ It is a remarkable ecumenical statement which rightly stresses the note of holiness of which Newman had spoken, when, after his Evangelical conversion in the autumn of 1816, he noted how he had taken from the Evangelical commentator on Scripture, Thomas Scott, two themes which 'for years I used almost as proverbs . . . "Holiness before peace," and "Growth the only evidence of life."⁴ No less prescient are both Pusey's sense of the importance of a common, credally orthodox, apologetic needed by all the churches in the face of the growing contest and struggle with unbelief, and an awareness of the importance of the shaping of Newman's theology within the Church of England as something which might be a gift to the Church of Rome. Part of that inheritance may lie behind Newman's assertion that he was not a theologian, not, certainly, a systematic theologian in the sense that scholastic or neo-scholastic theologians were. As Francis McGrath comments in relation to the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*:

He never thought of himself as a theologian or a philosopher. In the *Essay*, as in most of his works, he uses theological and philosophical terms for immediate, practical purposes. Technical consistency was never a priority.⁵

The Scottish Presbyterian divine, John Campbell Shairp, who came from Glasgow to Balliol in 1840 and was to revere Newman as one of the most important influences on his faith and life, wrote of Newman's genius, 'not indeed of a philosopher, but of a subtle

² H. P. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, II (1836–1846), 1893 (2nd edn.), London, 1893, p. 461.

³ Ibid.

⁴ J. H. Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua – the history of my religious opinions*, London, 1864, p. 61.

⁵ Francis McGrath, FMS, *John Henry Newman: Universal Revelation*, Burns & Oates, Tunbridge Wells, & John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia, 1997, p. 119.

and original thinker, an unequalled edge of dialectic, and these all glorified by the imagination of a poet.’⁶

At Newman’s death in 1890 among the tributes paid to him was a long letter published in the Church newspaper, *The Guardian*, by William Charles Lake, then Dean of Durham. In this he describes Newman as the ‘founder of the Church of England as we see it’. The twelve years of the Oxford Movement in which Newman played so prominent a part, resulted for Lake in ‘the establishment of principles which have gone so far to change the character of the Church of England.’ It was Newman’s devotion to the ‘high ideal of a living Church in its reality and its power’ which Lake saw as Newman’s legacy to the Church of England as well as to the Church of Rome.⁷

As an Anglican, Newman wrestled with a number of issues and many of them were continuous for his life and writing as a Catholic. It is noteworthy – and no accident – that when he republished as a Catholic his theological writings as an Anglican there is very little by way of correction and emendation: a footnote here, a short appendix there. Even where he did publish a significant new preface – to the 1877 edition of the *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*, now newly titled as the *Via Media of the Anglican Church* – he maintained the application of the three-fold Office of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King to the Church as the Body of Christ, and in that new and very significant ecclesiological preface he continued to explore what could be construed as a continual commitment to a *via media* or at least the Aristotelian ‘golden mean’. The three offices need to be balanced both between themselves and within themselves.

It was the late John Coulson in a paper ‘Newman on the church – his final view, its origins and influence’,⁸ who explored the continuities between Newman’s Anglican ecclesiology in the *Lectures on the Prophetical Office* and Newman’s later ecclesiology. Coulson’s paper was given at the first Newman symposium to be held in Oxford in 1966, a symposium I attended as a young research student, when Archbishop Michael Ramsey came fresh from Rome with the episcopal ring on his finger given to him a few days before by Pope Paul VI as they left St Paul’s without the Walls having agreed to the setting up of the ARCIC conversations based on ‘the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions’. Coulson noted how Newman wanted to speak, concretely of the Church as the body of Christ:

⁶ Quotation in Wilfrid Ward, *Ten Personal Studies*, ‘John Henry Newman’, London, 1908, p. 222.

⁷ Katherine Lake (ed.), *Memorials of William Charles Lake, Dean of Durham*, London, 1901, pp. 301–2.

⁸ John Coulson, ‘Newman on the Church – His Final View, its Origin and Influence’ in John Coulson & A. M. Allchin (eds), *The Rediscovery of Newman; an Oxford Symposium*, London, 1967, pp. 121–143.

His purpose is to show how the different and apparently contradictory faces of the Church may be reconciled... His problem is how to define the parts of the Church without compromising its antecedent unity; and he succeeds by deriving his definitions from the three offices of Christ.⁹

So Newman writes in this 1877 Preface:

Christianity, then, is at once a philosophy, a political power, and a religious rite: as a religion, it is Holy; as a philosophy, it is Apostolic; as a political power, it is imperial, that is One and Catholic. As a religion, its special centre of action is pastor and flock; as a philosophy, the Schools; as a rule, the Papacy and its Curia.¹⁰

The four notes of the Church – one, holy, catholic and apostolic – appear here, and I am reminded of the present Holy Father’s response to a question I asked him as Cardinal Ratzinger, to elucidate what was meant by the description of Anglicans as ‘an ecclesial community.’ The adjective, he said was important. ‘You cannot be an *ecclesial* community without having the marks of the Church – and you Anglicans have them very deeply.’ John Coulson notes how Newman’s way of describing the church is very different from anything found until very recent times. It is significant, he argued, that Newman set out his understanding in a preface to a book written when he was still an Anglican.

Newman’s method of description derives initially from the Anglican tradition. In the *Apologia* Newman speaks of gaining his understanding of ‘a visible Church’ and of ‘the historical nature of revelation’ from Butler, of ‘the doctrine of Tradition’; from Hawkins, and of ‘the idea of the Church’ as independent of the state from Whateley.¹¹

In this essay, which he expanded in his discussion of Newman’s idea of the Church in his book, *Newman and the Common Tradition*,¹² Coulson also notes the important parallels and background in Coleridge. Newman first read parts of Coleridge’s works in the spring of 1835 and was ‘surprised how much I thought mine, is to be found there.’¹³ In a letter of February of that year to Samuel Rickards, Newman notes how ‘the stimulus we have been able to give to Churchmen [in the *Tracts*] has been like the application of volatile salts to a person fainting, pungent but restorative. High and true principle there is

⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁰ J. H. Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* illustrated in Lectures, Letters and Tracts written between 1830 and 1841, I, 1891, p. xl, and in the critical edition of H. D. Weidner, Oxford, 1990, p. 25.

¹¹ Coulson, op. cit. p. 125.

¹² John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition: a Study in the Language of Church and Society*, Oxford, 1970..

¹³ J. H. Newman, *L&D*, V, Oxford, 1981, p. 53.

all through the Church, I fully believe, and this supported and consecrated by our great writers of the seventeenth-century.¹⁴ In the same letter Newman goes on to cite with approval the Irish Anglican lay theologian, Alexander Knox, and also Coleridge, writing of the latter, 'with all his defects of doctrine . . . he seems capable of rendering us important service. At present he is the oracle of young Cambridge men, and will prepare them (please God) for something higher.'¹⁵ As Coulson put it, 'for Newman, as for Coleridge, the Church "partakes of the reality it renders intelligible"; and it is not surprising that Newman should speak of the Romantic Movement as preparing the imagination of the nation for the reception of Catholic truth, and of the contribution of Coleridge in particular.'¹⁶

If Coleridge was an antecedent of Newman's understanding of the Church, Coulson also notes the influence that Newman had on von Hügel in his discussion of the 'three elements of religion,' though noting that von Hügel was interested in religion in general and Newman in the Christian Church. As Coulson writes:

What Newman gave von Hügel was a logical model for the analysis of religion into its elements; but whereas von Hügel starts with a general theory, with which the three offices of Christ are subsequently shown to be compatible, Newman is entirely concerned with these offices as they elucidate the structure of the Church.¹⁷

Both Newman's ecclesiological model, and von Hügel's more general analysis of religion continue to be fruitful for Anglicans and Catholics (and more widely) in our own situation today.

Newman's Evangelical conversion – his 'great change of thought' – in 1816 impressed upon him 'a definite Creed, and [I] received into my intellect impressions of dogma which, through God's mercy, have never been effaced.'¹⁸ The reality of God, and his life *coram Deo*, made him 'rest in the thought of two and two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator.'¹⁹ Newman had already, as a precocious, intellectual teenager, been reading sceptical anti-Christian works by Voltaire and Tom Paine.²⁰ His brother-in-law, Tom Mozley, remembered how well Newman knew Hume's *Essays* and how he kept 'Paine's works under lock and key, and lent them, with much caution to such as could bear the shock.'²¹ In his own

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26 (February 9, 1835).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁶ J. Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition*, p. 58.

¹⁷ Coulson & Allchin, p. 141.

¹⁸ *Apologia*, p. 58.

¹⁹ *Apologia*, p. 59.

²⁰ *Apologia*, p. 58.

²¹ Tom Mozley, *Reminiscences chiefly of Oriel College and the Oxford Movement*, London, 1884, I, p. 40.

family he was confronted with the atheism of his elder brother, Charles, and some of his later apologetic ideas are worked out in correspondence with Charles, and with his other brother, Francis, who was first an Evangelical enthusiast, and later a rather non-dogmatic theist. In responding to the request to write one of his earliest works, the *Essay on Biblical Miracles* for the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, Newman had to engage with the scepticism of Hume and Bentham to develop an apologetic which was subtler than contemporary evidence theology of writers such as William Paley. In preparing the introduction and notes of this *Essay* and Newman's subsequent *Essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles*, I was struck, in following up his numerous footnote references, at the range of his reading and how much he entered into and drew upon earlier debates with eighteenth-century Deists.²² It was a debate which drew Newman into the underlying questions of faith and reason, which he carried forward in his *University Sermons*.

A reductionism which excluded the moral sense was for Newman inadequate as an understanding of human nature including its reasoning capacity. This became a major ground for his critique of the scepticism of Hume and the utilitarianism of Brougham and Bentham. As he put in a memorandum of 1829, he had 'been forcibly struck with the importance of insisting much on the *moral sense* etc. as a preparatory to religion'. In utilitarian writers, '*moral discipline* is quite excluded, and bare *knowledge everything*.'²³ In his 1831 sermon on 'The Usurpations of Reason' he both set out the limitations of evidence theology and underlined the importance of conscience. Evidences, Newman says, for the great part 'are rather answers to objections than direct arguments for Revelation; and even the direct arguments are far more effective in the confutation of captious *opponents*, than in the conviction of enquirers.'²⁴ Thus,

Evidences are...rather to be viewed as splendid philosophical investigations than practical arguments; at best bulwarks intended for overawing the enemy by their strength and number, rather than for actual use in war. In matter of fact, *how* many men do we suppose, in a century, out of the whole body of Christians, have been primarily brought to belief, or retained in it, by an intimate and lively perception of the force of what are technically called Evidences?²⁵

²² J. H. Newman, *Two Essays on Biblical and on Ecclesiastical Miracles* (with an Introduction and Notes by Geoffrey Rowell), (The Works of Cardinal John Henry Newman Birmingham Oratory Millennium Edition, Volume VIII), Leominster and Notre Dame, 2010.

²³ Cf the reference to this Memorandum in the Oratory archives, in J. D. Earnest & G. Tracey (eds). John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, Oxford, 2006, p. 316 n.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Even at this pre-Oxford Movement date (1831) Newman traces the usurpations of reason to the Reformation (an instance of Protestantism as the begetter of the Enlightenment).

The usurpations of the Reason may be dated from the Reformation. Then together with the tyranny, the legitimate authority of the ecclesiastical power was more or less overthrown, and in some places its ultimate basis also, the moral sense. One school of men resisted the Church; another went farther, and rejected the supreme authority of the law of Conscience. Accordingly Revealed Religion was in a great measure stripped of its proof; for the existence of the Church had been its external evidence, and its internal had been supplied by the moral sense. Reason now undertook to repair the demolition it had made, and to render the proof of Christianity independent both of the Church and of the law of nature. From that time (if we take a general view of its operations) it has been engaged first in making difficulties by the mouth of unbelievers, and then claiming power in the Church as a reward for having, by the mouth of apologists, partially removed them.²⁶

As Earnest and Tracey comment in their introduction to the critical edition of Newman's *University Sermons*:

Throughout the *Oxford University Sermons* and through his career, Newman stressed that 'Conscience is the essential principle and sanction of Religion in the mind.' It is the foundation of natural religion. He argues that conscience, the 'inward monitor' of our actions, implies the existence of an external moral authority which, even if only an idea or 'principle', possesses the absolute virtue that the refined conscience continually strives for and continually fails to attain. The religious nature of conscience is evident in that our obedience to it is a form of faith; its promptings are often vague, and we have no proof of its authority.²⁷

In No 73 of *Tracts for the Times*, 'On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Revealed Religion', subsequently republished in *Essays Critical and Historical*, Newman contrasts the rationalistic and catholic tempers. 'To rationalize in matters of Revelation is to make our reason the standard and measure of the doctrines revealed. . . to reject them, if they come in collision with our existing opinions or habits of thought, or are with difficulty harmonized with our existing stock of knowledge. . . . Thus, a rationalistic spirit is the antagonist of Faith: for Faith is, in its very nature, the acceptance of what our reason cannot reach, simply and absolutely upon testimony.'²⁸ In this *Tract* Newman stresses that to speak of Revelation is to speak of Mystery, and necessarily so.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. xl-xli.

²⁸ J. H. Newman, *Essays Critical and Historical*, 1872 (2nd ed.), p. 31.

No revelation can be complete and systematic, from the weakness of the human intellect; *so far as* it is not such, it is mysterious A Revelation is religious doctrine viewed on its illuminated side; a Mystery is the selfsame doctrine viewed on the side unilluminated. This Religious Truth is neither light nor darkness, but both together; it is like the dim view of a country seen in the twilight, with forms half extricated from the darkness, with broken lines and isolated masses.²⁹

To put it another way, theology is necessarily apophatic as well as kataphatic. It is of a piece with what Newman wrote of the way in which theology makes progress: ‘we can only set right one error of expression by another. By this method of antagonism we steady our minds . . . by saying and unsaying to positive result.’³⁰ Religious knowledge was something inseparable from reverence and devotion, as he told Sir James Stephen in 1835. The sacramental worship of the church, as he believed Bishop Butler (to whom he owed much) had grasped, was the context in which Christian truth as revelation and mystery was apprehended:

No mode of inculcating doctrine upon Christians can be imagined so constant, public, universal, permanent and at the same time reverential than that which makes the form of devotion, the memorial and declaration of doctrine, reverential, because the very posture of the mind in worship is necessarily such. In this way Christians receive the gospel literally on their knees, and in a different frame of mind from the critical and argumentative temper which sitting and listening engender.

Hence the supreme importance of sacraments, as demonstrated by the history of the Primitive Church I am persuaded that the only way to stop fanaticism, irreverence and (on the other hand) Popish superstition is to return to this primitive Catholicism on which happily our Services are constructed The Sacraments with their accompaniment are the permanent presence of Christ and his Gospel.³¹

Mystery, as Clyde Nabe has made clear in his study of Newman’s epistemology of religion,³² was a key theme for Newman. It is there in his poem of pilgrimage, *Lead, kindly light*, ‘I do not ask to see the distant scene, One step enough for me.’ As Nabe comments,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.

³⁰ Quotation in John Coulson, *Religion and Imagination: ‘in Aid of a Grammar of Assent’*, Oxford, 1981, p. 64 from an unpublished theological paper of Newman at the Birmingham Oratory.

³¹ Newman to Sir James Stephen, 15 March, 1835, quotation in David Newsome, *the Parting of Friends: a study of the Wilberforces and Henry Manning*, London, 1966, pp. 185–6 (see pp. 179–188 for the wider context of this correspondence and Samuel Wilberforce’s comments on Newman’s position). J. H. Newman, *L&D*, V, Oxford, 1981, p. 46.

³² Clyde Nabe, *Mystery and Religion: Newman’s Epistemology of Religion*, University Press of America, Lanham, New York, London, 1988.

In *Tract 73*, he tied the idea of mystery to ‘half-views and partial knowledge... guesses, surmises, hopes and fears... truths faintly apprehended and not understood’. In *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* he said that ‘a mystery implies in part what is incomprehensible or at least unknown... it implies a partial manifestation... In the *Grammar* he wrote [that] ‘A mystery is a proposition conveying incompatible notions, or is a statement of the inconceivable’.³³

In his 1829 Trinity Sunday sermon on the *Christian Mysteries* he notes that it is right that Trinity Sunday should follow Whit Sunday, the Feast of Pentecost, to remind us that the Spirit was given not primarily to impart knowledge but to enable us to grow in holiness. ‘The enlightening vouchsafed to us is not an understanding of “all mysteries and all knowledge,” but that love or charity which is “the fulfilling of the law”.’³⁴ ‘We detect,’ Newman says, ‘in Revelation this remarkable principle, which is not openly propounded, *that religious light is intellectual darkness*... Religious truth requires you should be told *something*, your own imperfect nature prevents your knowing *all*; and to know *something*, and *not all*, - *partial knowledge*, - must of course perplex; doctrines imperfectly revealed must be mysterious.’³⁵ Newman’s understanding of the significance of mystery as an essential concomitant of revelation was not only derived from his concerns with the relationship and character of faith and reason but also from his engagement with the Fathers whose works he first started to read systematically in 1828. As he says in the *Apologia*, ‘the broad philosophy of Clement and Origen carried me away; the philosophy, not the theological doctrine... some portions of their teaching, magnificent in themselves, came like music to my inward ear, as if the response to ideas, which, with little external to encourage them, I had cherished so long. These were based on the mystical or sacramental principle, and spoke of the various Economies or Dispensations of the Eternal.’³⁶ As Newman wrote in his study of the Arians, ‘strictly speaking, all those so-called Economies or Dispensations, which display [God’s] character in action, are but condescensions to the infirmity and peculiarity of our minds, shadowy representations of realities which are incomprehensible to creatures such as ourselves, who estimate everything by the rule of association and arrangement, by the notion of a purpose and plan, object and means, parts and wholes.’³⁷ In a note on ‘Economical language’ in Newman’s edition of Athanasius, he notes again

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15,16.

³⁴ J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, I, London, 1875, p. 204.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³⁶ *Apologia*, ppp. 88–89.

³⁷ J. H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, 4th ed., London, 1876. p. 75.

that ‘mystery is the necessary note of divine revelation, that is, mystery subjectively to the human mind.’³⁸ As Robin Selby showed in a monograph some years ago reserve, economy, mystery, dispensation, and the argument from antecedent probability (which he first gained from Richard Whateley’s *Elements of Rhetoric*) are all linked together.³⁹

Newman’s position was one shared with Pusey, who set out in his (unpublished) 1836 *Lectures on Types and Prophecies* a defence of symbol, typology and sacrament as the essential Christian language. It is not, says Pusey, ‘the things which we know clearly, but the things which we know unclearly, [which] are our highest birth-right.’⁴⁰ For Pusey the attempt to reduce the whole economy of God’s revelation to conceptual terms is radically mistaken. God reveals himself in a way which captures the imagination. As part of the background to these lectures Pusey drew on his knowledge of the rich Syriac tradition of poetic theology and in particular the works of St Ephraim.⁴¹ Dr Alf Härdelin in his study, *The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist*,⁴² A. M. Allchin, in a significant contribution to the 1966 Newman Symposium on *The Theological Vision of the Oxford Movement*⁴³ and David Jasper in the symposium, *Pusey Rediscovered*,⁴⁴ all testify to the significance of these lectures, which we know Newman attended. In that light it is interesting to find Newman writing to Pusey saying that he had heard that Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* was undermining the faith of young men at Cambridge, and that he believed that Pusey’s *Lectures on Types and Prophecies*, providing a positive imaginative and symbolic theology of revelation were the only adequate counterbalance to Strauss’s dissolving of Christian doctrine into the reductive miasma of an ‘unconscious mythologising process.’⁴⁵

³⁸ J. H. Newman, *Select Treatises of St Athanasius in Controversy with the Arians*, 7th ed. London, 1897, II, p. 92.

³⁹ Robin C. Selby, *The Principle of Reserve in the Writings of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, Oxford, 1975. On Clement and Origen see pp. 4–11 and on ‘antecedent probability’ see pp. 75–88. Of that argument, and the place of ‘prejudice’ (in the positive sense) Newman said that if he had brought out one truth in anything I have written, I consider it to be *the importance of antecedent probability* in conviction. It is how you convert factory girls as well as philosophers. (*L&D*, XV, p. 381).

⁴⁰ Cited in Coulson & Allchin, p. 59.

⁴¹ Cf. Geoffrey Rowell, ‘Making the Church of England Poetical: Ephraim and the Oxford Movement’, *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 2.1., January, 1999.

⁴² Uppsala, 1965.

⁴³ J. Coulson & A. M. Allchin, *The Rediscovery of Newman*, pp. 50–75.

⁴⁴ ‘Pusey’s *Lectures on Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament*’ in Perry Butler (ed.), *Pusey Rediscovered*, London, 1983, pp. 51–70.

⁴⁵ J. H. Newman, *L&D*, VII, p. 145; J. H. Newman to E. B. Pusey, *Seot.* 12, 1839.

The theme of implicit reasoning, and of mysteries which cannot be fully expressed in words, has run through much of what we have been considering. In the same way, I suggest, Newman's exploration of tradition in his *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*, in which he distinguishes between the episcopal tradition, expressed in the formal statements of the creeds and conciliar definitions, and the imaginative, devotional matrix of faith out of which they emerge (the mind and life of the church) which he characterises as prophetic tradition. (And we should note that the poetic and the prophetic were seen as closely interrelated in Newman's day). In defending the Anglican *via media*, with its appeal to the Fathers and not simply *sola scriptura*, he was arguing against on the one hand the individualism and private judgement of popular Protestantism, and on the other the Church of Rome, which, he believed, had added to the faith. He was recalling the Church of England to what he believed to be its true identity. When the Church of England of his day refused to identify with the programme that Newman and his fellow Tractarians promoted – culminating in the bishops' charges after the publication of *Tract XC*, when Newman famously commented to Pusey that they had leant on the bishops and they had broken under them – and when the mirror of the Fathers, which Wiseman and others had held up to him, seemed to indicate that the *via media* in the patristic period might mean semi-Arians or Eutychians, then Newman's confidence in the Church of England began to crumble. In the *Lectures on the prophetical office of the Church* he had said that it still remained to be tried 'whether what is called Anglicanism [altered in later editions to 'Anglo-Catholicism'], the religion of Andrewes, Laud, Hammond, Butler and Wilson, is capable of being professed, acted on, and maintained on a large sphere of action and through a sufficient period, or whether it be a mere modification or transitions-state either of Romanism or of popular Protestantism, according as we view it.'⁴⁶

Was Anglicanism as Newman and his fellow-Tractarians conceived it, a paper church? And where did authority reside when there were differences? William Palmer, who was critical of Newman's part in the tendency to Romanism in the later stages of the Oxford Movement, was clear that Anglicans had a reverence for catholic tradition, reminding the readers of his *Treatise on the Church of Christ* that the Book of Homilies laid it down that preachers should only teach in sermons what was agreeable to Scripture and to that 'which the catholic fathers and ancient bishops have collected from that very doctrine.' It was a principle 'calculated not merely for the

⁴⁶ H. D. Weidner, *The Via media of the Anglican Church* by John Henry Newman, Oxford, 1990, p. 71ff.

maintenance of Christian truth always received, but it was essentially a corrective and reforming principle; for it taught the church to look beyond the limits of existing practices and opinions into the mind of all ages, and to take the belief of the universal church in most holy union with Scripture, as the rule by which she might be enabled to give due importance to matters essential, and to correct abuses and innovations inconsistent with apostolic truth.⁴⁷ The question of authority, and the question of the development of doctrine was what led Newman on his pilgrimage which brought him from the Church of England to the Church of Rome.

As I have tried to show in this paper, what Pusey said of Newman as he left the Church of England, was prescient that who could know what would be the result of one so formed and shaped amongst us in that other part of the Lord's vineyard. All that is represented in the *University Sermons* in the rebuttal of utilitarian scepticism; all that Newman learnt from the Fathers of the ecclesial context of Christian life and truth; the strong sense of mystery in his epistemology and apologetic; all this and much more was already deeply part of Newman's theology which he brought with him to the Church of Rome. It is also an inheritance which is still important for the Church of England, an inheritance which some of us who are Anglicans in the catholic tradition of our church are concerned it may be in danger of losing or ignoring. When Cardinal Kasper told a major workshop at the 2008 Lambeth Conference that he wanted to see a new Oxford Movement and a re-appropriation of the work of ARCIC and our Anglican inheritance, we could not but agree. When Cardinal Ratzinger told me in 2002 when we were speaking about mission in Europe 'that in Europe today no one of us can do it alone', that was an invitation which Newman's teaching enables us to welcome and share. His apologetic for faith, his concern for a truth that is not a post-modern 'your truth and my truth', his concern that the truth with which we are concerned is the living Christ, the one through whose indwelling Spirit we grow in holiness, are surely common concerns. For Anglicans there remain the sharp questions of authority, and the discernment of legitimate and illegitimate developments, and within Anglicanism those questions have come to the fore in a way that earlier generations would not have imagined. All of us, as Newman knew, as individual Christians and as communities are on that pilgrimage of faith which leads *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* – from shadows and images into truth.

⁴⁷ William Palmer, *A Treatise on the Church of Christ*, 3rd ed. London. I, p. 381. Cf Geoffrey Rowell, 'Newman and the Anglican Tradition: Reflections on Tractarianism and the Seventeenth-Century Anglican Divines' in Terence Merrigan (ed.), *John Henry Cardinal Newman, 1801–1890, Louvain Studies* 15.2–3, 1990.

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