

argument is usually ill-advised.

In part, perhaps, Hopkins was crowded out of his mind by T S Eliot, to whom he pays an eloquent and welcome tribute. And I fully agree with his general judgment of Eliot's status as a great religious poet. But he strikes me as much more theologically explicit than Coulson appears to suppose. The 'wounded surgeon' passage in *East Coker* was rejected by the late Dr Leavis precisely on the ground of its theological explicitness. Eliot, I imagine, would have said: 'So much the worse for Leavis', and so would I. What would Dr Coulson say, I wonder? I think he rather misses the point of the Krishna passage in *The Dry Salvages* by assimilating it to the very different use of Buddhism in *The Waste Land*. Krishna is quoted as Plato might be quoted, because he has a wise and relevant thing to say. He is certainly not in the slightest degree a rival to Christ in the poem's terms; while in *The Waste Land* there really is a syncretistic tendency. And this is not surprising, since Eliot was not a Christian when he wrote it.

Much of this, I am afraid, may sound peevish. But I can at any rate close with a heart-felt tribute. Dr Coulson never fails to interest and stimulate. Everything he writes is freshly his own, even when he is expounding the thought of others. The process of disagreeing with him is enlarging and salutary.

John Coulson replies:*

I am indeed grateful to Dr Cockshut and Professor Swanston for so thorough an examination of my book. How does one give a coherent reply to so many diverse issues? Perhaps the best way is to try to remove two mis-apprehensions. I should not like Dr Cockshut to suppose that I hold that there is no more to religion than imagination; but I would wish to affirm my contention that a religious claim which fails to become credible to imagination may fail to establish itself, or, if it does, it is almost certain to perish in the sands of rationalism. Conversely, it is equally possible to undervalue the force of our imaginative response to Homer or Dante. It should certainly lead us to distinguish real from notional assent.

The other mis-apprehension arises from Professor Swanston's query why I did not confine myself to a more exhaustive exposition of Newman on Imagination, especially because his position appears to be ambiguous. At one moment Newman speaks of mere

* The page references in brackets are to the text of *Religion and Imagination*.

poetry and of the limitations of literature in relation to religion, whereas elsewhere he writes of poetry as 'our mysticism', and of the Church as 'the poet of her children', while in the *Grammar of Assent* he claims that our assent to faith must first be credible to imagination. In addition to what Newman has to say in unpublished manuscripts, changes of emphasis and perspective must be taken into account. For example the passages quoted by Professor Swanston from *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* are especially concerned to emphasise the uniqueness of the action of grace: 'grace gives certainty, reason is never decided'. Newman himself warns us that, 'It is a property of depth to lead a writer into verbal contradictions; and it is a property of simplicity not to care to avoid them.' (p 63).

The chief difficulty with what Newman has to say on the subject, particularly in the published form of *A Grammar of Assent*, is not in its ambiguity but in what Hopkins criticised as 'its narrow circle of instance and quotation' (p 47). Hopkins's desire to provide a commentary was frustrated by Newman, but the need for a wider illustration is now even greater, and this I have tried, however inadequately, to provide. But why did I not decide to deal more fully with Hopkins, as Dr Cockshut suggests?

W. H. Gardner called Hopkins an 'idiosyncratic' talent; and for Newman's argument to be adequately illustrated it would have to be seen to fit the imaginative insights of others more representative of our own times and of its crisis of faith. Hence my recourse to the Modernists, including Arnold. It is Arnold's capacity to coin images and maxims to express this crisis which maintains his value as a theological source. Like the Scholar Gipsy, we are between two worlds: we cannot do without Christianity, we cannot do with it as it is. Far from being a new religion, as Dr Cockshut argues, it is as old as Hampden's rational theology and as contemporary as Don Cupitt, Maurice Wiles, and the *Myth of God Incarnate*. All theologians, today, stand willy nilly on Dover Beach; and what I have tried to establish is whether Newman's argument is adequate to such a challenge, or whether, with Hopkins, he remains on the other side of the fiery brook.

The nerve of my argument (so far unchallenged) is that T. S. Eliot provides a significant and *independent* exemplification of what Newman understood to be the way in which we grow to the explicit certitude of belief. (p 127). To take an excellent term from Professor Swanston, Newman's 'disturbed' interest in the powers of imagination lays the foundations for a theology largely compatible with such assertions by Eliot as (pp 110-111) that 'doubt and uncertainty are merely a variety of belief', and that 'Christianity will probably continue to modify itself, as in the past,

into something that can be believed in'.

Faced by such challenges we can see why Dr Johnson will not do, and why Keble, like Pusey, remains a Tractarian 'haunted by no intellectual perplexities'. Only the author of an *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, although strictly orthodox, is sufficiently perceptive to anticipate the Modernist dilemma, while establishing the foundations on which it might be resolved. This requires us to accept as legitimate the distinction between clear ideas which may be systematically related to each other – what Hopkins calls 'the dull algebra of the schoolmen – and knowledge 'that leaves their minds swinging, poised but on the quiver . . . the ecstasy of interest' (p 73).

This brings me to my claim that Newman's method is patristic and literary, rather than systematic and scholastic. I understand 'literary' to refer to what Newman calls 'the personal use or exercise of language'; its tone is conversational (sic!), that of person talking to person, of our saying and unsaying to a positive result, so that (to use Professor Swanston's fine quotation from Whitman) 'who touches this touches a man'. How is this 'patristic'? In order to give a direct source in Newman I would cite his essay on 'The Last Years of St Chrysostom' where he writes of the Fathers thus:–

They do not write a *summa theologiae*, or draw out a *catena*, or pursue a single thesis through the stages of a scholastic disputation.... Instead of formal doctrinal treatises, they write controversy; and their controversy, again is correspondence.... Their authoritative declarations are written, not on stone tablets, but on what Scripture calls 'the fleshly tables of the heart'.... Dogma and proof are in them at the same time hagiography. (*Historical Sketches*, vol 2, p 223).

To pursue the distinction I have been drawing also enables me to deal with the invitation to say more about Newman and Manning. I would like to do so in terms of the distinctions made by Coleridge and Keats between men of commanding genius or power, and men of absolute genius. The former, of whom Manning is characteristic, must impress their pre-occupations upon the world without, in order to present them back to their own view with a satisfying degree of clearness and distinctness. Newman, by contrast, is more content to rest between thought and reality, to live in mysteries and uncertainties without any irritable reaching after fact and reason: 'I say as far as I see', he wrote. Manning (like Dr Johnson) wanted a satisfactorily objective, even cut and dried *summa theologiae*.

Here, once again, we return to the rapport between Newman and Eliot. If Eliot is able to show the inhabitants of Dover Beach how imaginative assents convert into certitude, then Newman

might be looked to for an answer to Dr Leavis's objection to 'the wounded surgeon' passage in *East Coker*. I suggest he might reply that all parts of the poem are religiously explicit, but in different ways for different readers, 'the measure of probability necessary for certainty varying with the individual mind'. (p 58).

In conclusion I should like to respond briefly to Professor Swanston's invitation to consider the place of the image in Newman's way of appreciating the world. When I spoke of cliché I had in mind Newman's reference to 'moor' and 'fen' in *Lead, Kindly Light* rather than to the 'angel faces' in the next line. Even so, I would be inclined to argue that they are not so effectively realized as are the Angels in the passage cited from the *Apologia*, with its echo of St Augustine, who 'by a playful device' may have concealed themselves from the dreaming boy. Starting from the essential image of Jesus Christ – 'the original instrument' of our conversion (p 53) – our conversation might soon arrive at icons and their place in the arousing and teaching of religion, and especially in the liturgy; but we should also want to discuss the interrogative form which images take in diverse cultures – secular and non-Christian.

I should also like to respond to Dr Cockshut's enlarging references to Keble and Hopkins. What is the secret of Hopkins's appeal to sensibilities so much at variance from his own? This might lead us to the fundamental mystery – our firm assent to the word of God obscurely revealed.

Lonergan and Hume – I

Epistemology (1)

J Fitzpatrick

There are several reasons for undertaking a comparison of Lonergan and Hume. It is my intention to move the discussion on to the realm of philosophy of religion and as the author of the most powerful critique of religion ever written in English, Hume lays strong claims for inclusion. It will, I trust, be interesting to see how Lonergan's argument for the existence of God copes with Hume's famous objections and to see further how a Lonerganian response might be fashioned to meet the various facets of Hume's critique.