

**SPIRITUALITY IN THE *PAROCHIAL AND PLAIN SERMONS* OF JOHN
HENRY NEWMAN**

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ABSTRACT

John Henry Newman was a renowned preacher especially in his years as an Anglican priest. This thesis aims to see what spiritual counsel he was preaching to his Anglican congregations and why he was so successful. For reasons of practicality it is limited to an examination of his principal collection of sermons, the eight volumes of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* which are pastoral sermons selected by Newman himself from those he delivered as an Anglican priest.

It begins with some background on Newman himself and the religious context of England in the early 19th century. It also considers the basic principles of rhetorical skill.

The discussion of the spirituality set out in the sermons begins with Newman's presentation of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The thesis outlines his teaching on prayer, grace and the sacraments. It describes his emphasis on the unreality of this life and the prospect of immortality, the danger and evil of sin and the need for constant striving to do God's will. It then lists the principal elements of behaviour of the true Christian, concluding with the Blessed Virgin Mary as the model of Christian behaviour.

The final chapter cites the views of a range of authors on Newman's effectiveness as a spiritual leader and identifies the elements which made him so successful as a preacher.

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Contents

Preface = p. v

Chapter 1 = Spirituality. Newman's Anglican career p 1

Chapter 2 = Rhetoric and the sermons p 22

Chapter 3 = God and holiness p 36

Chapter 4 = Immortality and striving p 62

Chapter 5 = Christian behaviour p 87

Chapter 6 = Conclusion p 96

Appendix = Passages on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit p 109

Bibliography = p 114

Preface

Some things in the presentation of this thesis require explanation.

The thesis contains a great many quotations from Newman's sermons; that seems entirely justifiable. However, some of the quotations are unusually long. The reason is Newman's style. He was not a succinct preacher; his preference was for amplitude, together with beauty of imagery and diction. It has seemed to me better to indulge Newman and ask the reader to enjoy him than to summarise, paraphrase and reduce to banality. A prime example may be found in the quotation beginning on page 93 "Nothing perhaps is more remarkable...". From this beginning to the end of the quotation some twenty lines of text later we have read only two sentences, one of extraordinary length; yet it is so powerful and leads to such a conclusion conveying the calm that Newman is commending that I cannot believe the reader would prefer me to omit the quotation and merely say: "Newman draws attention to the Apostle Paul, who remained calm in all his travels and sufferings".

Another point concerns the references. Almost all of Newman's works are on the Internet at <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/index.html> I have used this as my source rather than taking eight volumes out of the library for some years. The editions of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* on this site were edited by W.J. Copeland and published by Longmans, Green & Co of London, New York, Bombay and Calcutta in 1907 (vols. 1, 3, 5 and 6), 1908 (vols.2, 7 and 8) and 1909 (vol.4). They do not give page numbers for each sermon, but simply the page number within the volume, inserted in the electronic text. Thus for the passage mentioned above, which comes from *PPS V, 5*, in the footnote I refer the reader to pages 59-60 of volume V; there the page number is inserted in the text like this: "...as free from excitement {60} and effort, as full of repose, ..." but I have deleted it from the quotation.

It remains to thank most warmly Fr. Austin Cooper OMI and Dr Kerrie Hide. Would that all graduate students had such supervisors !

Spirituality in the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* of John Henry Newman

Chapter 1. Spirituality. Newman's Anglican career

John Henry Newman has been much studied for various reasons. His *Idea of a University* put forward in compelling language a particular view of liberal education. His *Arians of the Fourth Century* was for its time a major work of theological history. His writings on the place of the laity in the church, the role of conscience, the development of Christian doctrine have each had strong influence in the thinking of the Roman Catholic Church, challenging the views prevalent in his day. He was a major writer of tracts for the Tractarian Movement of devout people concerned to revitalise the traditions of the Church of England, to resist the domination of the Church by the State and to oppose the spread of religious liberalism and also what they perceived as the emotionalism of Methodists and other Evangelical Protestants - a Movement which caused much rethinking and some upheaval in the Anglican Church in his time.

Newman was a renowned preacher, and eight volumes of his parish sermons as an Anglican vicar were published, running through many reprintings. This thesis is concerned with the spirituality he was preaching in those sermons rather than with his ecclesiology or his other theological or educational ideas. There are other books which investigate Newman's own intellectual and spiritual life, his movement from Evangelicalism to high Anglicanism and eventually to Roman Catholicism, but they are, one might say, inward-looking. This thesis examines what Newman the priest was saying to his people in the period when he was a curate, a parish vicar and a celebrated preacher. In the Foreword to a selection of Newman's sermons, his editor says:

Nowhere else is the spirituality of Newman displayed so abundantly and concentratedly....Out of his profound and prolonged study of the sources of Christianity, the Bible and the Fathers, there emerges a spiritual theology that is

based on a remarkably balanced and comprehensive grasp of the fullness of the Christian revelation in its primitive purity¹.

This thesis attempts to see in what ways he conveys this “spiritual theology”, this “fullness of the Christian revelation” to his congregation.

What is spirituality ? What is holiness ?

“Spirituality” is a word that many people understand in many different ways. Rather than canvass them all, I propose to set out what three recent writers regard as specifically Christian spirituality, and indicate my choice amongst them, a definition which seems to me to embrace the best elements of the others. This thesis tries to see how Newman’s preaching might be measured against that.

Louis Bouyer spends much of his first chapter commenting on the spirituality of other religions or outlooks, contrasting these with Christian spirituality, and then comparing Catholic and Protestant spirituality. His definition of Catholic spirituality is very broad and strongly Trinitarian:

Catholic spirituality is simply Christian spirituality in its fullness: a spiritual life in which our own most interior, most personal life opens out, develops, only in the development of that personal relationship which God wishes to establish with us in speaking to us in Christ. But this Word of Christ, this Word which is Christ, which reveals to us the love of God in revealing to us the trinitarian life of the divine Persons, reveals this to us only as it extends this love to all men, as, in the Church, it opens out, so to say, the holy society of the Trinity to all mankind².

As we shall see, Newman’s spirituality is fully Trinitarian, not simply acknowledging the doctrine but leading us into relationship with each Person of the Trinity in different ways.

¹John Henry Newman, *Selected Sermons* ed. Ian Ker. New York: Paulist Press, 1994, 1.

²Louis Bouyer *Introduction to Spirituality*.(Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1961, 14

Ronald Rohlheiser³ begins by describing “an unquenchable fire, a restlessness, a longing, a disquiet, a hunger, a loneliness, a gnawing nostalgia” and so on – a desire that “can show itself as aching pain or delicious hope”. He concludes: “Spirituality is, ultimately, what we do with that desire. What we do with our longings, both in terms of handling the pain and the hope they bring us, that is our spirituality”. He quotes Augustine – “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you” – and summarises: “Spirituality is about what we do with our unrest”. At one point or another throughout the book he repeats the formula: “Spirituality is about what we do with---”. Perhaps the most helpful definition is in a footnote where Rohlheiser paraphrases St John of the Cross:

Spirituality is the attempt by an individual or a group to meet and undergo the presence of God, others, and the cosmic world in such a way so as to come into a community of life and celebration with them. The generic and specific patterns and habits of interaction that develop from this then form the basis of a spirituality⁴.

Rohlheiser⁵ takes Jesus’ injunctions to prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and stretches his interpretation of these to four things essential to a healthy spiritual life: private prayer and private morality; social justice; mellowness of heart and spirit; and community worship. Newman, we will see, urges his congregations to private prayer, private morality and community worship; he also enjoins them to rejoice and be of good heart and at peace, which might be taken to correspond to Rohlheiser’s “mellowness”. Newman makes little reference to social justice as we would understand it today, but as Rohlheiser explains (citing Fr. P. Arrupe’ S.J.) : “[Nowadays] we are less sociologically naïve...We understand better [than earlier generations] how social systems affect us, both for good and for bad...It is not enough simply to be a good person within our own private lives”⁶.

³Ronald Rohlheiser *The Holy Longing: the search for a Christian spirituality*. New York: Doubleday, 1999, 4-5

⁴ *ibid.* 244

⁵ *ibid.* 53

⁶ *ibid.* 172. Gordon Mursell speaks of the Tractarians’ “profound commitment to social justice not immediately evident in most of the earliest works of Keble, Pusey and others”. It is certainly not evident in

Newman lived before the great papal social encyclicals and other measures which have brought social issues so forcefully before our generation.

For Philip Sheldrake spirituality embraces “the whole of human life”:

In Christian terms, ‘spirituality’ concerns how people subjectively appropriate traditional beliefs about God, the human person, creation, and their interrelationship, and then express these in worship, basic values and lifestyle. Thus, spirituality is the whole of human life viewed in terms of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and within the community of believers⁷.

Sheldrake surveys the use of the term “spirituality” and its relationship to theology. “Spirituality has broadened beyond attention to a limited range of phenomena, for example mysticism, to include reflection on the values and lifestyles of all Christians” . It is now “associated with a renewed theology of grace and of the human person”, and thus with moral theology. Formerly moral theology was “preoccupied with sinfulness and the enfeebled nature of the human condition”, which is certainly true of Newman’s preaching.

Nowadays, however, moral theology has moved away from a concern primarily with the quality of actions to a greater interest in people’s dispositions of character....Moral theologians increasingly emphasize that our ultimate guide to goodness is not objective codes of behaviour or moral rule books but the presence within us of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of God grounds the recovery of a fruitful relationship between ethics and spirituality...Spirituality overlaps with ethics but cannot be reduced to it⁸.

Newman’s sermons, which are very much about individual holiness: Gordon Mursell *English Spirituality from 1700 to the present day*. London: SPCK, 2001, 194.

⁷ Philip Sheldrake *Spirituality and Theology: Christian living and the doctrine of God*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998, 34-5

⁸ *ibid.* 57

I propose to take as the definition of “spirituality” in this thesis Sheldrake’s sentence quoted above: “Spirituality is the whole of human life viewed in terms of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and within the community of believers”. The thesis then becomes an examination of the ways in which Newman tried to cultivate this attitude and behaviour in his congregations. In particular, how did he try to lead them to view their whole lives (“the whole of human life”) in “conscious relationship with God”? And what did he mean by “in Jesus Christ” and “through the indwelling of the Spirit”? And what emphasis did Newman place on public worship and “the community of believers”?

Newman’s view of holiness

The sermon Newman selected to be the very first of his published sermons he entitled *Holiness necessary for future blessedness*⁹ and takes as its text Hebrews xii. 14: "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.". It is worth looking closely at some sections of this sermon to discover what Newman regarded as essential to holiness. In the following paragraph from the beginning of the sermon Newman sums up what to him are the elements of holiness; I have put that summary in italics:

Now some one may ask, "Why is it that holiness is a necessary qualification for our being received into heaven? why is it that the Bible enjoins upon us so strictly *to love, fear, and obey God, to be just, honest, meek, pure in heart, forgiving, heavenly-minded, self-denying, humble, and resigned?*" (My italics)¹⁰.

The themes of love and holy fear and obedience and self-denial recur continually in these sermons. These qualities, says Newman, are not simply internal; they must be manifest in our behaviour – not as being good works in themselves but as bringing our hearts and wills closer to God.

⁹ *PPS I,1*

¹⁰ *ibid.* pp.1-2

If a certain character of mind, a certain state of the heart and affections, be necessary for entering heaven, our *actions* will avail for our salvation chiefly as they tend to produce or evidence this frame of mind. Good works (as they are called) are required, not as if they had any thing of merit in them, not as if they could of themselves turn away God's anger for our sins, or purchase heaven for us, but because they are the means, under God's grace, of strengthening and showing forth that holy principle which God implants in the heart, and without which (as the text tells us) we cannot see Him. The more numerous are our acts of charity, self-denial, and forbearance, of course the more will our minds be schooled into a charitable, self-denying, and forbearing temper. The more frequent are our prayers, the more humble, patient, and religious are our daily deeds, this communion with God, these holy works, will be the means of making our hearts holy, and of preparing us for the future presence of God. Outward acts, done on principle, create inward habits¹¹.

However, this is not achieved easily or quickly. The development of any habit takes time. In the following paragraph the last sentence in particular seems aimed to oppose the Evangelical idea current at the time that “conversion” is sudden and permanent¹².

But observe what follows from this. If holiness be not merely the doing a certain number of good actions, but is an inward character which follows, under God's grace, from doing them, how far distant from that holiness are the multitude of men! They are not yet even obedient in outward deeds, which is the first step towards possessing it. They have even to learn to practise good works, as the means of changing their hearts, which is the end. It follows at once, even though Scripture did not plainly tell us so, that no one is able to prepare himself for heaven, that is, make himself holy, in a short time;—at least we do not see how it is possible; and this, viewed merely as a deduction of the reason, is a serious thought. Yet, alas! as there are persons who think to be saved by a few scanty

¹¹ *ibid.* pp.8-9

¹² See John Wesley's account, p. 11 below.

performances, so there are others who suppose they may be saved all at once by a sudden and easily acquired faith¹³.

Holiness then is “a certain character of mind, a certain state of the heart and affections ...necessary for entering heaven” which is fostered by habits of behaviour, not only manifested in behaviour. Newman’s preaching endeavoured to cultivate in his audience these habits that lead to holiness. The success of the preaching depended on the frame of mind of the audience. Avery Dulles points out that: “In considering what determines a person to accept a creed or believe a witness, Newman holds that the mind is ‘mainly swayed by antecedent considerations’The mind does not operate in a vacuum. People react to the evidence in accordance with their previous attitudes and expectations”¹⁴. We all know on a given topic how easy it is to persuade some people and impossible to persuade others, depending on “their previous attitudes and expectations”.

Development of Anglican spirituality

To appreciate the religious context in which his preaching career began and the frame of mind of his audience it is necessary to sketch the development of Anglican religious attitudes up to Newman’s time. The Church of England did not initially arise out of doctrinal disagreement with the sixteenth-century Catholic Church as continental Protestantism did; it broke away from the authority of the Pope and the jurisdiction of Rome, but it regarded itself as a national branch of the Catholic Church, retaining Catholic beliefs in all other matters. This attitude was sharply different from that of the continental theologians, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and others, who advanced theological positions incompatible with parts of Catholic doctrine at that time. Inevitably these Protestant ideas spread also to England and came to be held by many, sometimes most Anglican clergy and faithful, but at all times much of the traditional Catholic belief and practice remained.

The most immediate changes in England were the abandonment of Latin and the use of English in the ceremonies of the Church, and encouragement of the reading of the Bible

¹³ *ibid.* p.10

¹⁴ Avery Dulles S.J. *Newman*. London and New York: Continuum, 2002, 39.

in English translation – “a practice at the root of all Anglican religious custom”¹⁵. The reforming clergy then worked to produce the *Book of Common Prayer*, in English, displacing the Latin Missal and Breviary. With the use of English as the language of the liturgy it became possible for laymen to take some part in the liturgy, which came to include more extended readings from the Bible and more emphasis on sermons and homilies, with less attention to the ceremony of the Mass. Indeed, up until Newman’s time the two Sunday services usually comprised, from the *Book of Common Prayer*, Matins (Morning Prayer) and Evensong (Vespers) which included readings from Scripture, and a homily or sermon. The Communion service was a relatively infrequent occurrence.

The more radical Anglican clergy embraced more of the ideas of continental Protestantism. They rejected the belief that the Mass was a sacrifice, seeing the Communion Service simply as a representation of the Last Supper. They rejected the theory of transubstantiation and the belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This theology devalued the Communion Service and the Eucharist and led to church services with little ritual. Moorman summarises well the “two opposed views of the nature of worship” at the end of Elizabeth’s reign:

The Anglicans were prepared to keep all old traditions unless they were forbidden by Scripture, while the Puritans needed positive scriptural approval for everything. Anglican worship was basically sacramental....whereas the Puritans put all their effort into the reading and exposition of the Bible, and extemporary prayer....Anglican worship was organized and controlled, great efforts being made to preserve dignity and reverence; while the Puritans wanted freedom and flexibility, a more casual approach, claiming thereby a far greater sense of joy¹⁶.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Puritan position gained ground within the Church of England.

¹⁵ John R. H. Moorman *The Anglican Spiritual Tradition*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1983, 19.

¹⁶ *ibid.* 63.

There existed ... a genuine, though not slavish, theological affinity between Anglican and continental theologies, especially the Reformed (Calvinist). A moderate Calvinist view of the ‘doctrines of grace’ (the interlocking sequence of predestination, election, justification, sanctification, final perseverance, glorification) was, we may say, the norm.... In the reign of Charles I most bishops were Calvinist by conviction...The Thirty-nine Articles are an expression of modulated Calvinism¹⁷.

Nevertheless, High Anglican theology continued to expound Catholic ideas. Although Newman based his theology primarily on the Church Fathers¹⁸, amongst the Anglican writers those who most appealed to him were such men as Richard Hooker (1555-1600) and the ‘Caroline divines’ of the seventeenth century, and their ecclesiology and sacramental theology formed the basis of his own until he joined the Church of Rome. In two of the *Tracts for the Times* which Newman wrote Tract 74 is entitled “Testimony of Writers in the later English Church to the Doctrine of the Apostolical Succession” and quotes from 43 Anglican writers; Tract 76 is headed “Testimony of Writers in the later English Church to the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration” and quotes from 41. These two doctrines are central Roman Catholic doctrines.

By the seventeenth century the religious affiliations in England had settled into four main groups. At one extreme were the Roman Catholics, at the other “the more extreme Protestants who saw no need for any visible Church....To these must be added others outside the mainstream – Baptists, Quakers and the smaller and less significant sects”¹⁹. The great majority in England were Anglicans, who formed the other two groups: “the conservative churchmen....who stood for the traditional form of an episcopal church and who wished both theology and worship to be in conformity with the Book of Common Prayer”, and the Calvinistic Anglicans who “belonged to the Church of England,

¹⁷ Paul Avis *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* 2nd edition. London: T&T Clark / New York: Continuum Books, 2002, 67-8.

¹⁸ I am informed that “Newman’s appreciation (unique in the West) of the role of the Holy Spirit” in our sanctification derives particularly from the Greek Fathers (Dr. Austin Cooper O.M.I. pers.comm.)

¹⁹ Moorman *The Anglican Spiritual Tradition* 95.

but...disapproved of its form of church government and its methods of worship”²⁰. These two streams contended within the Church of England, now one having more influence, now the other, until after the defeat of Cromwell’s Puritans the restoration of Charles II saw also the restoration of traditional Anglicanism to leadership in the Church.

During the eighteenth century, the Church, it used to be said, was asleep. The fires of the seventeenth century had burnt themselves out and had given place to a dull, formal sort of religion in which the clergy did very little and the people were largely uninterested in what they did²¹.

After this introduction to the century, Moorman acknowledges that this picture is exaggerated and that a quiet piety and decent morality continued for a large part of the population. Gordon Mursell puts it more strongly:

The long-held assumption that the eighteenth century represented, if not a trough, then certainly a dull plateau, in the history of the Church of England has recently been effectively challenged. At the very least, the established church ministered to the needs of far more English people during this century than all other denominations of faiths put together and, even allowing for some laxity and neglect, was actively involved at every level in the life of individual and nation²².

However the main spiritual change in the course of the century was the coming of John and Charles Wesley, the rise of Wesleyanism and its evolution into the separate Methodist Church. As with the Protestant and Puritan doctrines of the previous two centuries, this new spirit attracted large numbers of Anglican clergy and lay people who remained Anglicans (as did John Wesley) but came to be called the Evangelical wing.

John Wesley could identify the moment when he was ‘converted’:

²⁰ *ibid.* 94.

²¹ *ibid.* 128.

²² Mursell *English Spirituality* v.2, 10.

At about 8.45 p.m. on 24 May 1738 among the Moravians at Aldersgate Street in London. It was then that he knew he was saved, that his sin was forgiven through the death of Christ on the cross; it was his faith which had assured him of this....The joy and wonder which this sort of experience brought to the tormented soul was indescribable. It gave a person a sense of spiritual peace, of a new birth, of belonging to the company of the redeemed, of being a whole-hearted and complete Christian. People believed themselves to be different men and women²³.

Religion in England, 1820-1840

Through the vigorous preaching of the two Wesleys and others Evangelicalism spread throughout the eighteenth century and “laid the foundation for what became the predominantly Anglican way of thought for many generations”.²⁴ This was a religion of deep commitment and moral earnestness, a strong rejection of the “dull, formal sort of religion” mentioned above and widespread among the more traditional and easygoing Anglican lay and clergy. It became Newman’s work to point out that conversion was not a matter of a moment but of lifelong effort, and that prayer, sacraments and self-denial were the channels of grace, holiness and salvation rather than overwhelming emotions. He and his colleagues in the Oxford Movement thus were opposed to both the spiritual approaches predominant in Anglicanism up to their time. I describe below the religious positions in England in the early 19th century.

In broad continuity from the preceding century, two major and two lesser groupings marked the religious condition of England in the early nineteenth century. At one extreme were the Roman Catholics, a minority of some tens of thousands, against whom extensive discrimination still applied. At the other extreme were those broadly called the Dissenters, who also suffered discrimination because they subscribed to continental Protestantism, the teachings of Calvin and Luther; such were the Pilgrim Fathers who sought religious freedom in America. The great middle ground was shared between

²³ Moorman op. cit. 136

²⁴ *ibid.* 142

Anglicanism and Wesleyanism or Methodism. The Anglicans included both a High Church wing, politically conservative and following many Catholic practices, and a Low Church or Evangelical wing which had strong affinities with Methodism²⁵.

The Anglican historian George Herring quotes the Tractarian Robert Wilberforce's view of his Church at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

Those who remember the commencement of the century will not need to be reminded of the lifeless condition in which it found the Church of England. Her great material wealth and high secular honours did but add intensity to her spiritual degradation. The sacraments were ministered infrequently, and in the most perfunctory manner. The voice of daily prayer had ceased in almost all churches. The gospel was well nigh banished from the pulpit. The education of the poor was wholly neglected. The missionary functions of the Church were forgotten; although the colonial empire afforded the fairest opening ever offered to any nation for such exertions. Such was the inheritance transmitted to us by a century and a half of worldliness, during which the Church had been converted to be the mere tool of the State²⁶.

Newman has a sermon describing *The Religion of the Day*.

What is the world's religion now? It has taken the brighter side of the Gospel,—its tidings of comfort, its precepts of love; all darker, deeper views of man's condition and prospects being comparatively forgotten. This is the religion natural to a civilized age, and well has Satan dressed and completed it into an idol of the Truth. As the reason is cultivated, the taste formed, the affections and sentiments refined, a general decency and grace will of course spread over the face of society, quite independently of the influence of Revelation. That beauty and

²⁵ This summary, like most summaries, oversimplifies. The complex relations between Evangelicals, High Church Anglicans and the Oxford Movement are explored at length in thorough detail by P.B. Nockles *The Oxford Movement in Context* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994.

²⁶ George Herring, *What was the Oxford Movement?* London & New York: Continuum Books 2002, 99.

delicacy of thought, which is so attractive in books, then extends to the conduct of life, to all we have, all we do, all we are. Our manners are courteous; we avoid giving pain or offence; our words become correct; our relative duties are carefully performed. Our sense of propriety shows itself even in our domestic arrangements, in the embellishments of our houses, in our amusements, and so also in our religious profession. Vice now becomes unseemly and hideous to the imagination, or, as it is sometimes familiarly said, "out of taste." Thus elegance is gradually made the test and standard of virtue, which is no longer thought to possess an intrinsic claim on our hearts, or to exist, further than it leads to the quiet and comfort of others²⁷.

In truth, however, from early in the previous century some Anglicans had been preaching with zeal to bring people to conversion, and both Wilberforce and Newman are seriously exaggerating²⁸. Being leaders of the Tractarian or Oxford Movement it was not surprising that they painted in the direst colours the condition of the Church they had set themselves to reform; but from 1738 John Wesley had begun his teaching and ministry as an Anglican, the persuasion in which he died. He brought to that teaching a religious fervour akin to modern-day revivalists, emphasising the need for conversion and an intense personal relationship with Jesus.

It is in the contemplation of Jesus as loving us and as shedding his blood for us that the Wesleyan gives himself to Him, and it is during an intense and passionate outpouring of the emotions that he attains to what he calls faith, by which he means the certain conviction that the blood of Jesus was shed for him, that it has cleansed him from his sins and made him a new man²⁹.

The tepidity which Wilberforce and Newman describe may well have been true of the moderate Anglicans rather than the Evangelicals or the Methodists, who had undergone "conversion". Newman experienced some such conversion at the age of fifteen, but by

²⁷ *PPS I*, 24 pp.311-12

²⁸ Both Herring and Nockles (cited in nn. 25 and 26) support this contention.

²⁹ Louis Bouyer, *Newman*. New York: Meridian Books, 1960, 12

the time he came to Oxford he was somewhat less of an Evangelical, and he moved steadily towards the more conservative position of the Anglican theologians of the seventeenth century. Only gradually, and as a result of his study of the early Church Fathers, did he become convinced that the Roman church was the true heir of the apostles, and the Anglican church an offshoot from it rather than the church of Jesus in its purest form³⁰. His Anglican preaching therefore – though no less directed towards reforming the conduct and saving the souls of his parishioners - was strongly doctrinal and biblically based, rather than the highly emotional homilies of the revivalist preachers.

A single passage from his sermon on *Self-Contemplation* may serve as a sample of his mature antipathy to Evangelicalism and his commitment to doctrinal orthodoxy:

Now, in the first place, this modern system certainly does disparage the revealed doctrines of the Gospel, however its more moderate advocates may shrink from admitting it. Considering a certain state of heart to be the main thing to be aimed at, they avowedly make the "truth as it is in Jesus," the definite Creed of the Church, secondary in their teaching and profession. They will defend themselves indeed from the appearance of undervaluing it, by maintaining that the existence of right religious affections is a security for sound views of doctrine. And this is abstractedly true;—but not true in the use they make of it: for they unhappily conceive that they can ascertain in each other the presence of these affections; and when they find men possessed of them (as they conceive), yet not altogether orthodox in their belief, then they relax a little, and argue that an admission of (what they call) the strict and technical niceties of doctrine, whether about the Consubstantiality of the Son or the Hypostatic Union, is scarcely part of the definition of a spiritual believer. In order to support this position, they lay it down as self-evident, that the main purpose of revealed doctrine is to affect the heart,—that that which does not seem to affect it does not affect it,—that what does not

³⁰ It must be pointed out that F.M. Turner has recently advanced a much more negative view of Newman, ascribing his move to the Roman communion, and many other moves, to worldly personal motives including misogyny and a continual self-aggrandizing desire to be the head of a group of younger celibate males. See Turner, Frank M. *John Henry Newman*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002, especially the final chapter. Amongst modern writers this seems to be the view of Turner alone.

affect it, is unnecessary,—and that the circumstance that this or that person's heart seems rightly affected, is a sufficient warrant that such Articles as he may happen to reject, may safely be universally rejected, or at least are only accidentally important³¹.

After several further paragraphs attacking the views of such preachers and believers, Newman sums up by denying that they are at all “evangelical”:

The foregoing remarks go to show the utterly unevangelical character of the system in question; unevangelic in the full sense of the word, whether by the Gospel be meant the inspired document of it, or the doctrines brought to light through it, or the Sacramental Institutions which are the gift of it, or the theology which interprets it, or the Covenant which is the basis of it. A few words shall now be added, to show the inherent mischief of the system as such; which I conceive to lie in its necessarily involving a continual self-contemplation and reference to self, in all departments of conduct. He who aims at attaining sound doctrine or right practice, more or less looks out of himself; whereas, in labouring after a certain frame of mind, there is an habitual reflex action of the mind upon itself³².

Newman as preacher

In 1824 John Henry Newman was ordained deacon and from 1825 to 1845 was a priest of the Church of England. For most of this time as part of his ministry he preached sermons, many in the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford, but also in other parishes which he visited in England. We have seen above how large a part the sermon played in Anglican worship; it was, paradoxically, the Tractarians led by Newman, Keble and Pusey who emphasised the sacramental element in Christianity and contributed to a stronger

³¹ *PPS II*, 15 166-7

³² *ibid.* 170-1

emphasis on liturgy in their Church. Newman was a preacher of renown whose audiences grew to fill St Mary's, and his published sermons reached a far wider audience; the collection or selections from them were frequently republished.

The first three volumes of parochial sermons...represent Newman's preaching up to the end of 1835, most of them first delivered before the end of 1832....After this there was a pause, and the next three volumes were not published until 1839, 1840 and early in 1842. Almost all the sermons in these later volumes were preached between 1836 and 1841. There have been many graphic descriptions of Newman's sermons in St. Mary's. Dean Church's verdict was, 'They made men think of the things which the preacher spoke of, and not of the sermon or the preacher.' The influence of sermons and lectures was greater still, when they appeared in print....[Printed sermons] did not usually go through more than one edition of a thousand copies. Newman's volumes of parochial sermons went through five, four and three large editions, only his sixth volume in 1842 being limited to two editions, owing to his leaving the Church of England in 1845³³.

The collection *Parochial and Plain Sermons* was published as a whole in 1869 – testimony to their power a quarter of a century after Newman had left the church of his birth and upbringing. A selection of 54, edited by W.J. Copeland, was published in 1878; in its preface the editor says: "In the short Preface to the eight volumes mention was made of the effect of the Sermons 'in bringing out the fundamental Articles of the Faith, and their bearing on the formation of the Christian character.'" According to Copeland it was Newman's "great aim from the first... to show, with deep study of our moral nature, and far-reaching sympathy, how faith on the basis of exact and definite doctrine energizes in enlarged and expansive love"³⁴.

³³ Charles Stephen Dessain, *John Henry Newman* London: Nelson, 1966, 45.

³⁴ W.J. Copeland, *Selection of Parochial and Plain Sermons* London, Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1878, vi.

Newman's audience

The focus of this thesis is Newman's approach to his audience. It must therefore set the preacher in the context of his time and place, Oxford in the first four decades of the 19th century, and broadly describe his audience; its central concern is with what he was trying to achieve with that audience.

The modest market town of Oxford had a population in the eleventh century of some 4000 souls. The beginnings of the university in the next century raised the population by some 1500, but by the time Newman enrolled as an undergraduate over six centuries later (1816) the city had grown only to about 16 000; by the time he left in 1845 it had grown again to about 26 000 - a rapid growth consistent with the general urban population increase in England throughout the nineteenth century. The population of the university, undergraduates and dons together, which had been about 1200 in 1801, rose only to about 1400 by 1861³⁵.

The nature of Newman's congregation, however, was very different from an average parish congregation in England at the time. As Peter Snow says:

Economically Oxford became an academic version of a 'company town'. The old prosperity of crafts and market withered and were replaced by an economy servicing the university, based on tailoring, shoemaking and supplying provisions³⁶.

In 1831 "domestic service constituted the largest single occupational group"³⁷. Thus the congregation (had all members of the parish attended) would have comprised shopkeepers and tradesmen and their wives and families, college servants who cooked and cleaned and generally attended to the wants and comforts of the college residents,

³⁵ Christopher & Edward Hibbert (eds) *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford* London: Macmillan London 1988, 330-331.

³⁶ Peter Snow, *Oxford Observed* London: John Murray, 1991, 14.

³⁷ R.C. Whiting (ed.) *Oxford: studies in the history of a university town since 1800* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993, 14.

and also the academics and the students - a congregation very mixed in interests and intellectual attainments. In commenting on the congregation, Dessain says:

There was hardly a studious undergraduate, we are told, who was not affected. Thus, at a time when England really was divided into two nations, Newman began to influence an important section of the educated and ruling class...Gladstone said: 'I do not believe there has been anything like his influence in Oxford, when it was at its height, since Abelard lectured in Paris'³⁸.

Newman's pastoral attitude

Newman was ordained deacon on June 13, 1824 and began his ministry as a curate at St Clement's church, then on the outskirts of Oxford. Bouyer quotes a letter written some two months later in which Newman outlines his approach to that ministry:

Nor do I visit the poor only; I mean to go all through the parish; and I have already visited the shopkeepers and principal people. These, it is obvious, have facilities for educating their children, which the poor have not; and on that ground it is that a clergyman is more concerned with the children of the latter³⁹.

This was merely the expression in one context of an attitude which Newman showed in all aspects of his life. As Bouyer says:

We may observe, on their respective levels, the same preoccupations, the same sense of responsibility in educational matters which governed not only Newman's relations with his family, but his entire university and clerical life. At home, as at

³⁸ Dessain, *Newman* 15, 41.

³⁹ Bouyer, *Newman*, 77

Alban Hall⁴⁰, he was the one to whom the younger folk looked for guidance, to help them in this life, and to show them the path to the next; to find themselves, and to find God⁴¹.

Dessain quotes from Newman's journal for the day he was ordained deacon "a sentence which gives the real key to his actions henceforward: ' I have the responsibility of souls on me to the day of my death.' All his undertakings would have a pastoral purpose"⁴².

When he was appointed to a tutorship at Oriel, at that time the most intellectual of the Oxford colleges, he had to give up his parish work, but that did not alter his attitude. "Newman himself applied the term 'pastoral' to his tutorial work, as he conceived it, and in contradistinction to purely secular instruction"⁴³. Indeed, it was his insistence on the importance of a pastoral approach and his concern for the spiritual and moral as well as the intellectual life of the students allotted to him that brought him into conflict with Hawkins, the Provost or head of Oriel, who saw the tutor's duties as purely secular and intellectual. When Newman refused to amend his approach Hawkins allocated no more students to his tutorial care.

That was in the future. Before he became Provost (a post for which Newman supported him over his own friend Keble) Hawkins had been another though more senior tutor in Oriel, and vicar of St Mary's, the university church. When he became Provost in 1828 he resigned his position as vicar and Newman was appointed in his place. This was the setting of most of his parish work.

Situated in the very heart of the city, St Mary's is the official University Church. There the Vice-Chancellor has his permanent stall, and there it is that all the official religious ceremonies take place. But that is quite separate from the work

⁴⁰ "Whately, newly appointed Principal of St Alban Hall, a small and undistinguished residence for weaker exiles from the colleges, made Newman his Vice-Principal" in 1825 - Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and his Age* London : Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990, 55, cf.58.

⁴¹ Bouyer, *Newman*, 83

⁴² Dessain, *Newman*, 8

⁴³ Bouyer, *Newman*, 84

of the parish. At the time of which we are speaking, the parishioners consisted of a few High Street shopkeepers. Later on, of course, as Newman's influence gained ground, undergraduates flocked to the services to listen to sermons which, to begin with at any rate, by no means had them in view⁴⁴.

This indeed became a problem for him. as we see from a letter of October 1840 to John Keble, "the friend whom it was most natural for me to consult on such a point"⁴⁵.

For a year past a feeling has been growing on me that I ought to give up St. Mary's... First, it is certain that I do not know my Oxford parishioners; I am not conscious of influencing them, and certainly I have no insight into their spiritual state. I have no personal, no pastoral acquaintance with them. To very few have I any opportunity of saying a religious word. Whatever influence I exert on them is precisely that which I may be exerting on persons out of my parish. In my excuse I am accustomed to say to myself that I am not adapted to get on with them, while others are. On the other hand, I am conscious that by means of my position at St. Mary's, I do exert a considerable influence on the University, whether on Undergraduates or Graduates. It seems, then, on the whole that I am using St. Mary's, to the neglect of its direct duties, for objects not belonging to it; I am converting a parochial charge into a sort of University office."

On going to Littlemore (a village a mile or two from Oxford) he wrote to his bishop (April 14, 1842) :

I purpose to live there myself a good deal, as I have a resident curate in Oxford. In doing this, I believe I am consulting for the good of my parish, as my population at Littlemore is at least equal to that of St Mary's in Oxford, and the whole of Littlemore is double of it. It has been very much neglected; and in providing a parsonage-house at Littlemore, as this will be, and will be called, I conceive I am

⁴⁴ Bouyer, *Newman*, 117. It is worth noting that St. Mary's is quite a large church, with a capacity of at least 300 worshippers.

⁴⁵ *Apologia*, 127

doing a very great benefit to my people. At the same time it has appeared to me that a partial or temporary retirement from St. Mary's Church might be expedient under the prevailing excitement [the controversy following the publication of Tract 90]⁴⁶.

Tract 90, which Newman had written and published in 1841, attempted to show that the 39 Articles, the bedrock of Anglicanism in those days, could be interpreted as compatible with Roman Catholic doctrine as set out by the Council of Trent. Avis quotes Newman as saying in the Tract that his aim was “merely to show that...our Articles are...to say the least, not uncatholic and may be subscribed by those who aim at being Catholic in heart and doctrine”⁴⁷. Avis says that Newman “dressed the work up as a peace offering, a final attempt at reconciliation. Others saw it as a deliberate challenge and provocation: Newman seemed to be saying, ‘Turn me down’”⁴⁸. In the same passage Avis describes Tract 90 as “a peace offering to the Church of England – delivered with a slap in the face”.

Newman retired from St Mary's and Oxford to Littlemore where he established a small community of like-minded men, intending gradually to fall back into lay communion. In September 1843 he delivered his last sermon as an Anglican, *The Parting of Friends*⁴⁹. On 9 October 1845 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church.

⁴⁶ *Apologia*, 164

⁴⁷ *Avis Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, 249

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*: 26

Chapter 2. Rhetoric and the sermons

Newman published several collections of sermons, including *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, a collection of occasional sermons, and *Oxford University Sermons* which were more theologically scholarly sermons for an audience of his academic peers. The sermons with which this thesis is concerned were published by Newman under the title *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. That is exactly what they are: the sermons of an Anglican vicar to his congregation, delivered Sunday after Sunday and on major holy days. One index to this collection lists them by season and major feast: Advent (five sermons), Christmas (eight sermons), Epiphany (eleven sermons), New Year (one sermon) and so on, through Lent, Holy Week, Easter to All Saints Day and the feast of Christ the King. This thesis looks at the spiritual effects he aimed to produce through these ordinary parish sermons. As the thesis shows, he aimed to impress on his hearers that eternity was more important than the concerns of this life, that obedience to God was the way to eternal life, that this required effort and self-denial but that God was loving, forgiving and supportive. Many witnesses testify to the power of his preaching.

When Newman began preaching in 1824 he was still under the influence of Evangelicalism. In the next couple of years under the influence, at first of discussions with Hawkins, and then of wider reading, he gradually moved away from Evangelicalism towards a more central Anglican position⁵⁰; only some years later did his friend Hurrell Froude in particular turn his steps towards the Romanizing end of the Anglican spectrum. This early change of views meant that many of his sermons were directed against Evangelical views and attitudes⁵¹. That is not to say that the sermons were polemical or expressions of a systematic theology; they aim to influence behaviour. Blehl quotes from Newman's autobiographical writings:

Those who make comfort the great subject of their preaching seem to mistake the end of their ministry. *Holiness* is the great end. There must be a struggle and a

⁵⁰ This shift is described in some detail in Vincent Ferrer Blehl *Pilgrim Journey* London & New York: Burns & Oates 2001, 64-8.

⁵¹ The sub-title of Turner's book (see note 33) is *The Challenge to Evangelical Religion*.

trial here. Comfort is a cordial, but no one drinks cordials from morning to night⁵².

It is not easy to persuade people to undertake “struggle and trial” and it would be naïve to think that Newman’s success in preaching was not based on sound foundations of rhetoric.

Principles of rhetoric; Newman’s delivery

This chapter draws its rhetorical theory largely from ancient Greek and Roman authorities. This is partly because they remain very perceptive analysts of rhetoric and partly because Newman, having been thoroughly educated in the Greek and Roman writers, would be familiar with them and would have turned to them for rhetorical principles when he needed them. Fraser Mitchell points out:

The speaker who composes his orations with a view to their being afterwards read [as Newman did] . . . is not only a rhetorician, but also a literary artist. Such was Cicero, and such, in the noblest periods of pulpit oratory, have been the greatest preachers. . . . The Isocratean prose, as developed and modified by Cicero, became the great model of patristic preaching⁵³.

Newman for a time was a close associate of Richard Whately, whose *Elements of Rhetoric* appeared in 1828.

Whately was one of that brilliant group of Oxford reformers that gravitated to Oriel College in the 1820’s. . . . In 1826, with some help from John Henry Newman,

⁵² Blehl *Pilgrim* 59-60.

⁵³ W. Fraser Mitchell *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson* New York: Russell and Russell 1962, 50. Isocrates was a contemporary of Plato and the originator of the periodic style of oratory which Cicero brought to perfection.

he published his *Elements of Logic*....Whately's rhetoric has a strong Aristotelian flavor⁵⁴.

It is therefore not inappropriate to examine Newman's sermons in the light of classical principles, of which the leading exponents were Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian.

In classifying the three kinds of oratory, Aristotle pointed out that deliberative oratory is concerned with future time; that the means used in this kind of oratory are exhortation and dissuasion; and that the special topics that figure most prominently in this kind of discourse are the worthy and the worthless, or the advantageous and the injurious. In other words, when we are trying to persuade a person to do something, we try to show that the recommended course of action is either a good in itself (and therefore worthy of pursuit for its own sake) or something that will benefit the person⁵⁵.

Amongst the classic categories of oratory, Newman's sermons clearly fall into this class of exhortation and dissuasion, speeches designed to produce reflection and action in the hearer.

The rhetoricians listed five tasks in the preparation and delivery of a speech: *inventio*, the gathering of material, arguments, examples and so on – deciding what to say; *dispositio*, the arrangement of the material, the structure of the speech; *elocutio*, the details of style and diction; *memoria*, committing the speech to memory; and *actio*, the delivery of the speech. The last two need not concern us long. Since his Anglican sermons were written, Newman did not have to commit them to memory; and from the few descriptions we have, his style of delivery seems to have been plain, the sermons deriving their force from their content and from the character of the speaker rather than from gestures, acting or grandiloquence. Gilley⁵⁶ quotes Matthew Arnold describing Newman's preaching:

⁵⁴ Edward P.J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 517

⁵⁵ Corbett & Connors *Rhetoric* 10

⁵⁶ Gilley *Newman and his Age* 126

Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music – subtle, sweet, mournful?

Bouyer, raised in the French tradition of preaching, comes from a different angle:

Never, in his own view, or in other peoples', was there less of an orator, at least as we in France understand the word. Almost entirely without gesture, in a voice which, though clear as crystal, was entirely innocent of inflection, as one rapt in inward contemplation, a mood which he quickly communicated to his hearers, he would speak for a quarter of an hour, or perhaps a little less. In order to spare his eyes, worn with much reading and nocturnal study, the lights round about him were turned low. His lineaments were dimly discernible, his tall, slender figure was a little bowed. Were sermons ever preached, we may surely ask, in circumstances better calculated to keep success at bay? ⁵⁷

From other sources Gilley makes clear that Newman's delivery was

calm and passionless as marble.... Yet his very restraint hinted at the fire within... Newman disliked Evangelical preaching of the Atonement for its want of reserve, and for bandying the most sacred doctrine of Christ's suffering about like a talisman or charm to convert. His own preaching of the Passion was exactly the reverse. As Froude recalled it, Newman paused in his recital:

"For a few moments there was a breathless silence. Then, in a low, clear voice, of which the faintest vibration was audible in the farthest corner of St Mary's, he said, 'Now, I bid you recollect that He to whom these things were done was Almighty God'. It was as if an electric stroke had gone through the church, as if

⁵⁷ Bouyer, *Newman* 176-7

every person present understood for the first time the meaning of what he had all his life been saying”.

Treat the doctrine in tones of quiet, though it is tremendous; even hide it; then when you unveil it, strike, and strike to the heart⁵⁸ .

Inventio

As regards the gathering of material, the Christian preacher is overwhelmed with riches. He – and increasingly she – speaks about the infinite Godhead, the dealings of God with humans, about the depths of human depravity and the sublimity of generosity, sacrifice and love. There is a danger in this. When people hear these topics week in, week out, year after year, they can become inured to them; the astonishing idea, for instance, that God the Almighty took human form, lived the life of a poor man and died a cruel human death becomes so familiar as to lose its power to impress, at least if told by a pedestrian preacher – “Ho, hum! There he goes again”.

Newman attempted to avoid this danger by skilful rhetoric and delivery, as described above by Hurrell Froude (and despite Bouyer’s assessment), but there is one advantage which he had in generous measure and which cannot usually be fabricated: his personal reputation for integrity, even holiness. Quintilian tells us: “He who would have all men trust his judgment as to what is expedient and honourable, should possess and be regarded as possessing genuine wisdom and excellence of character”⁵⁹. Dessain says: “Part of Newman’s ascendancy was due to his strictness and holiness of life, which gave authority to his words”⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Gilley *Newman and his Age* 125-6. The exact words of the sentence Froude quoted do not occur in the published sermons, but Froude is almost certainly recalling *PPS VI, 6* on the Passion, where Newman – after referring to the striking and spitting and mockery and scourging and crowning with thorns and crucifixion – begins a powerful paragraph with the words: “Now I bid you consider that that Face, so ruthlessly smitten, was the Face of God Himself” and continues in this vein throughout the paragraph.

⁵⁹ Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria*, III, viii, 13, quoted in Corbett & Connors *Rhetoric* 72.

⁶⁰ Dessain *Newman* 16.

Quintilian in that quotation, following Aristotle, names the two basic sources of persuasion in deliberative oratory: the expedient or advantageous, and the honourable or morally good. Applying these to Christian themes requires some interpretation; for instance, the prospect of heaven or threat of hell is a legitimate religious appeal to the advantageous, whereas “honesty is the best policy”, the argument that moral conduct leads to worldly advancement, may be legitimate as persuasion but is not religious. Appealing to “the honourable” includes invoking the goodness of God, His love, the example of Jesus and so on; it includes also denouncing the ugliness of sin and the wickedness of Satan. Corbett and Connors add a salutary reminder:

The age and sex of an audience, its economic and educational level, its political and religious affinities, its interests and values – all of these have a great influence on the types of virtues, assets, and achievements we tend to stress for a particular audience at a particular time in history⁶¹.

The danger mentioned above, of familiarity breeding indifference, remains even with sublime topics. Newman attempted to overcome this with novel interpretations and paradoxical approaches. One example is his sermon on the non-prodigal son⁶².

He takes as his text Luke 15:29. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends". Newman begins by comparing the dutiful son's comments with those of the labourers in the vineyard who complained that the same payment was made to latecomers as to those who had worked all day, and with the behaviour of the son in another parable who said: "I go, sir" and went not. Newman points out that the non-prodigal son was not speaking from selfishness but in perplexity and distress of mind. "Now let us try

⁶¹ Corbett & Connors *Rhetoric* 127. I have described in the previous chapter the nature of Newman's customary audience and Newman's view of their likely attitudes, "the religion of the day".

⁶² *PPS III*, 8.

to understand the feelings of the elder brother, and to apply the picture to the circumstances in which we find ourselves at present”.

The father’s conduct appears to be “an evident departure from the rules of fairness and justice”. As the son might think, “What was the use of serving him dutifully, if there were no difference in the end between the righteous and the wicked?” Now, “apply this to the case of religion, and it still holds good. At first sight, the reception of the penitent sinner seems to interfere with the reward of the faithful servant of God”. Newman supports this apparent position by quoting from Psalm 73: “Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain”. He counters this view with quotations from the Epistle to the Romans, Ezekiel, several other Psalms and the Epistle to the Hebrews to confirm that God loves the righteous and will punish the wicked⁶³.

But “the restoration of sinners seems to interfere with this confidence”. The joy shown to the repentant sinner seems greater than God’s attitude to his ever-faithful. Newman corrects this misinterpretation: “The condescending answer of the Father in the parable is most instructive”. The Christian penitent is not treated equally with the ever-faithful; the fidelity of the latter is taken for granted, and results in their familiarity with God Himself, whereas the penitent needs to be encouraged and praised – and warned that he is not yet in the same state as the other, to whom alone was it promised “and all I have is thine”.

One might think that the sermon could have ended there; instead, it has just begun, as Newman turns to afflict the comfortable, “those who are in the most favoured situation in the Church”. It is easy for them to become blasé. “We should be on our guard lest we suppose ourselves to have such a clear knowledge of God’s ways, as to rely implicitly on our own notions and feelings”. In the extreme state of self-satisfaction, “they become not only over-confident of their knowledge of God’s ways, but positive in their over-confidence. They do not like to be contradicted in their opinions...They forget that all men are but learners in the school of Divine Truth”. Newman reinforces this with

⁶³ Rom. ii. 11. Ezek. xviii. 20. Ps. i. 6; xi. 7; xviii. 25-27; xxxii. 10; cxxv. 4. Heb. xi. 6.

passages from Habakuk and Psalms to emphasise the need to be ever on watch, and to be humbly grateful for the good one has received⁶⁴.

He points out also that “God works wondrously in the world; and at certain eras His providence puts on a new aspect. Religion seems to be failing, when it is merely changing its form”. God sometimes “brings about good by means of wicked men” but Christians should accept this and not resist it, and should constantly pray for “the spirit of a sound mind, the power to separate truth from falsehood, and ...the wisdom to act as the varied course of affairs requires”. The sermon concludes with exhortations to charity, humility and trust and hope in God.

If we compare that summary with the sermons one usually hears on the Prodigal Son, Newman’s originality and vigour shine out. The usual treatment is to emphasise the father’s forgiveness, the joy in the sinner’s repentance, and to pass over the older son’s churlishness with as little notice as possible. To turn the sermon into a berating and arousal of the complacent faithful – the ordained men, the Oxford dons and students, the dutiful shopkeepers and their families sitting in front of him – was typical of Newman.

Dispositio

I turn to the structure of his sermons. The classical structure of both deliberative and forensic speeches is – an introduction, in which the speaker tries to win the goodwill and interest of the audience and names the main point at issue; perhaps a narrative section, if some story needs to be told; argument in favour of one’s position; rebuttal of arguments against it; perhaps a recapitulation, and a conclusion which often was an appeal to the emotions of the audience. Newman would have been brought up on such a structure, tried and true over twenty centuries and more. However, he does not follow it mechanically; it is more important to have in any given sermon an effective structure than one which accords with technical rules. Not every sermon requires a section of narrative. Also, in

⁶⁴ Hab. ii. 1. Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2.

particular in arguing his case Newman makes abundant use of scriptural quotations, a resource not available to the classical Greeks and Romans.

We may see this applied in a sermon for Advent⁶⁵. For their beauty the first words deserve to be quoted at length (bearing in mind that Advent is a winter season in Newman's hemisphere):

Year after year, as it passes, brings us the same warnings again and again, and none perhaps more impressive than those with which it comes to us at this season. The very frost and cold, rain and gloom, which now befall us, forebode the last dreary days of the world, and in religious hearts raise the thought of them. The year is worn out; spring, summer, autumn, each in turn, have brought their gifts and done their utmost; but they are over, and the end is come. All is past and gone, all has failed, all has sated; we are tired of the past; we would not have the seasons longer; and the austere weather which succeeds, though ungrateful to the body, is in tone with our feelings, and acceptable. Such is the frame of mind which befits the end of the year; and such the frame of mind which comes alike on good and bad at the end of life. The days have come in which they have no pleasure; yet they would hardly be young again, could they be so by wishing it. Life is well enough in its way; but it does not satisfy. Thus the soul is cast forward upon the future, and in proportion as its conscience is clear and its perception keen and true, does it rejoice solemnly that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand," that there are "new heavens and a new earth" to come, though the former are failing; nay, rather that, because they are failing, it will "soon see the King in His beauty," and "behold the land which is very far off". These are feelings for holy men in winter and in age, waiting, in some dejection perhaps, but with comfort on the whole, and calmly though earnestly, for the Advent of Christ.

And such, too, are the feelings with which we now come before Him in prayer day by day. The season is chill and dark, and the breath of the morning is damp,

⁶⁵ *PPS V, 1*, pp.1-2.

and worshipers are few, but all this befits those who are by profession penitents and mourners, watchers and pilgrims. More dear to them that loneliness, more cheerful that severity, and more bright that gloom, than all those aids and appliances of luxury by which men nowadays attempt to make prayer less disagreeable to them.

Newman goes on in this style for another paragraph and a half, leading into his main point: “This we know to be our own fearful lot, that before us lies a time when we must have the sight of our Maker and Lord face to face”. He contrasts us with the brute creation, animals which will not know God. “But this is not our case. We are destined to come before Him; nay, and to come before Him in judgment; and that on our first meeting; and that suddenly”. If that had not made the congregation shiver at the thought of the inevitable individual judgement, they must have had hearts of stone.

He has first caught their attention. He has directed their thoughts to eternity, their true home in “new heavens and a new earth”. He has then stated his main point. He reinforces it from Scripture: “I need hardly quote any of the numerous passages of Scripture which tell us this, by way of proof; but it may impress the truth of it upon our hearts to do so”. He quotes Job; he cites Balaam; he quotes Jesus, and the Book of Revelations, and the Epistles of John and Paul. He concludes this section of proof and introduces a further idea - that the moment will be sudden and unexpected – and a question: how should we prepare ourselves?

Now observe, that it is scarcely a sufficient answer to this question to say that we must strive to obey Him, and so to approve ourselves to Him. This indeed might be enough, were reward and punishment to follow in the mere way of nature, as they do in this world. But when we come steadily to consider the matter, appearing before God, and dwelling in His presence, is a very different thing from being merely subjected to a system of moral laws, and would seem to require another preparation, a special preparation of thought and affection, such as will enable us to endure His countenance, and to hold communion with Him as we

ought. Nay, and it may be, a preparation of the soul itself for His presence, just as the bodily eye must be exercised in order to bear the full light of day, or the bodily frame in order to bear exposure to the air⁶⁶.

Notice that Newman has used a common rhetorical trick: he has posed a question, given a conventional answer and declared it insufficient, thus leading the congregation to listen for his true answer. The true answer is, religious worship. This leads him to a string of further questions:

Men sometimes ask, Why need they profess religion? Why need they go to church? Why need they observe certain rites and ceremonies? Why need they watch, pray, fast, and meditate? Why is it not enough to be just, honest, sober, benevolent, and otherwise virtuous?⁶⁷

These true-to-life questions go on for most of a paragraph, until Newman gives the rebuttal, the true answer which is the message he wants his congregation to take away with them: that such worship, sacraments and ceremonies involve us in communion with God and prepare us for meeting Him directly. He reinforces this with examples of the overwhelming vision of God such as happened to Peter and other apostles, and to Moses. He develops the idea that we prepare ourselves for this by private prayer, by public prayer and ceremonies, “and by psalm and sacred song, by confession and by praise, I learn my part. And what is true of the ordinary services of religion, public and private, holds in a still higher or rather in a special way, as regards the sacramental Ordinances of the Church”⁶⁸. He describes some of the sacraments as if directly connected to Jesus: “We recollect a hand laid upon our heads, and surely it had the print of nails in it, and resembled His who with a touch gave sight to the blind and raised the dead”⁶⁹.

This leads Newman to his concluding paragraphs and back to his topic of Advent:

⁶⁶ *ibid.* pp.6-7

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 7

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p.10

⁶⁹ *ibid.* p.11

What I have said concerning Ordinances, applies still more fully to Holy Seasons...They are times when we may humbly expect a larger grace...a time for purification of every kind...a season for chastened hearts and religious eyes; for severe thoughts, and austere resolves, and charitable deeds; a season for remembering what we are and what we shall be⁷⁰.

In the two sermons analysed above, Newman has used abundant texts from the Old Testament, the Gospels, the Epistles and Revelations to support his arguments. The index to texts in his *Selected Sermons*⁷¹ shows that of the evangelists, Matthew is much the most cited, followed by Luke, then John, and Mark least of all; I do not conjecture a reason for these choices. Acts and Paul's epistles are very frequently cited. The Old Testament is also much used, Psalms most of all, by far; then Isaiah and Jeremiah, Genesis and Exodus; then episodes or texts from a wide array of sources. Even in his own time, a time of widespread biblical scholarship, Newman had a reputation for his command of the Scriptures, and he tells us how he was brought up on constant reading of the Bible.

Ian Ker tells us: "One day [Newman] was to say that the only writer who had really influenced his style was Cicero, whom he calls here 'the greatest master of composition that the world has seen'"⁷². What Newman says of Cicero in the following quotation might just as well be said of Newman himself:

But it is not enough to have barely proved his point; he proceeds, either immediately, or towards the conclusion of his speech, to heighten the effect by amplification. Here he goes (as it were) round and round his object; surveys it in every light; examines it in all its parts; retires, and then advances; turns and returns it; compares and contrasts it; illustrates, confirms, enforces his view of the

⁷⁰ *ibid.* pp.11-12

⁷¹ Newman *Selected Sermons* ed. Ker

⁷² Ker, Ian *John Henry Newman* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, 24.

question, till at last the hearer feels ashamed of doubting a position which seems built on a foundation so strictly argumentative⁷³.

It seems appropriate to conclude this chapter on Newman's rhetoric with the paragraphs which concluded the last Anglican sermon Newman delivered, before a full congregation which was moved to tears, the celebrated *The Parting of Friends*. In these paragraphs we see the force of Newman's emotions, his beauty of diction, his command of Scripture, his pastoral concern and, especially in the last paragraph, his statement of what he was constantly trying to do: to stir his hearers to reflection, to stimulate insights, to lead them to awareness of "a higher life than this daily one".

And now, my brethren, "bless God, praise Him and magnify Him, and praise Him for the things which He hath done unto you in the sight of all that live. It is good to praise God, and exalt His Name, and honourably to show forth the works of God; therefore be not slack to praise Him." "All the works of the Lord are good; and He will give every needful thing in due season; so that a man cannot say, This is worse than that; for in time they shall all be well approved. And therefore praise ye the Lord with the whole heart and mouth, and bless the Name of the Lord." [Tob. xii. 6. Eccles. xxxix. 33-35.] "Leave off from wrath, and let go displeasure; flee from evil, and do the thing that is good." "Do that which is good, and no evil shall touch you." "Go your way; eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth your works; let your garments be always white, and let your head lack no ointment." [Ps. xxxvii. 8, 27. Tob. xii. 7. Eccles. ix. 7, 8.]

And, O my brethren, O kind and affectionate hearts, O loving friends, should you know any one whose lot it has been, by writing or by word of mouth, in some degree to help you thus to act; if he has ever told you what you knew about yourselves, or what you did not know; has read to you your wants or feelings, and

⁷³ From Newman's article on "The personal and literary character of Cicero" for the *Encyclopedia Metropolitana* 1843.

comforted you by the very reading; has made you feel that there was a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see; or encouraged you, or sobered you, or opened a way to the inquiring, or soothed the perplexed; if what he has said or done has ever made you take interest in him, and feel well inclined towards him; remember such a one in time to come, though you hear him not, and pray for him, that in all things he may know God's will, and at all times he may be ready to fulfil it⁷⁴.

This sense of “a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see” is at the heart of Newman’s spirituality and of his preaching. The next chapter will explore this stance in more detail.

⁷⁴ John Henry Newman *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* 26, pp.408-9. This was delivered on 28 September 1843, full two years before Newman became a Roman Catholic (9 October 1845), at a time when he was in uncertainty and great distress of mind.

Chapter 3 = God and holiness

The definition of spirituality adopted for this thesis says it is a relationship with God. God is central, rather than human behaviour; but it is humans who live the spiritual life in their behaviour. This chapter sets out the elements of the spiritual life to be lived as Newman would have his hearers live it: getting to know God, praying to Him, using the means He provides to grow in the knowledge and love of Him and obedience to Him.

God

Newman can be disappointingly vague in his attempts to give an account of heaven, but he is more forthcoming in the equally impossible task of giving an account of God - more forthcoming in that he frankly faces the impossibility, and the contradictions to human logic inherent in the doctrine of the Trinity. In a sermon appropriately entitled *The mysteriousness of our present being* he says:

God, as He is in Himself, is hid from us. We are informed concerning him by those who were inspired by Him for the purpose, nay by One who "knoweth the Father," His Co-eternal Son Himself, when He came on earth. And, in the message which they brought to us from above, are declarations concerning his nature, which seem to run counter the one to the other. He is revealed to us as One God, the Father, One indivisible Spirit; yet there is said to exist in Him from everlasting. His Only-begotten Son, the same as He is, and yet distinct, and from and in Them both, from everlasting and indivisibly, exists the Co-equal Spirit⁷⁵.

The first page of this thesis notes the solidly theological basis of Newman's spirituality, and that is shown here, in his uncompromising avowal of the Trinitarian nature of God. He does not shy away from the difficulty; it must simply be accepted.

⁷⁵ PPS IV, 19 pp.286-7

Profane minds ask, "Is God one, or three?" They are answered, He is One, and He is also Three.We cannot reconcile, we confess, the distinct portions of the doctrine; we can but take what is given us, and be content. They rejoin, that, if this be so, we are using words without meaning. We answer, No, not without meaning in themselves, but without meaning which *we* fully apprehend.

[I acknowledge] the impossibility of duly delineating in earthly words the first Cause of all thought, the Father of spirits, the One Eternal Mind, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see, the incomprehensible infinite God⁷⁶.

This is the God whom Newman means when he speaks of only two beings in our lives, oneself and God. This is the God whom he means when he argues that we should get to know God. Newman knows well, as do unnumbered others, what St Augustine so memorably expressed: "You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts will know no rest until they rest in you"⁷⁷. Newman is more expansive, as is appropriate in a sermon, but the sentiment is exactly the same, and the concept of God is expressed to include the Son and the Spirit:

But there is another reason why God alone is the happiness of our souls, to which I wish rather to direct attention:—the contemplation of Him, and nothing but it, is able fully to open and relieve the mind, to unlock, occupy, and fix our affections.... None but the presence of our Maker can enter us; for to none besides can the whole heart in all its thoughts and feelings be unlocked and subjected. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." "My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." "God is

⁷⁶ *ibid.* pp.289-91

⁷⁷ *Confessions I, 1,1*

greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." [Rev. iii. 20. John xiv. 23. Gal. iv. 6. 1 John iii. 20.] It is this feeling of simple and absolute confidence and communion, which soothes and satisfies those to whom it is vouchsafed⁷⁸.

This being so, it is essential for us to get to know God as far as we can in this world, to contemplate His attributes as they are manifested in His creation and in His dealings with humanity. Religion – specifically, the Bible, prayer and the sacraments – are the ways that make us more familiar with our Creator and our Judge. What has been quoted in the previous chapter is amplified:

This we know to be our own fearful lot, that before us lies a time when we must have the sight of our Maker and Lord face to face.... We are destined to come before Him; nay, and to come before Him in judgment; and that on our first meeting; and that suddenly.

Men sometimes ask, Why need they *profess* religion? Why need they go to church? Why need they observe certain rites and ceremonies? Why need they watch, pray, fast, and meditate? Why is it not enough to be just, honest, sober, benevolent, and otherwise virtuous? Is not this the true and real worship of God? Is not activity in mind and conduct the most acceptable way of approaching Him? How can they please Him by submitting to certain religious forms, and taking part in certain religious acts? Or if they must do so, why may they not choose their own? Why must they come to church for them? Why must they be partakers in what the Church calls Sacraments? I answer, they must do so, first of all and especially, because God tells them so to do. But besides this, I observe that we see this plain reason why, that they are one day to change their state of being. They are not to be here for ever. Direct intercourse with God on their part now, prayer and the like, may be necessary to their meeting Him suitably hereafter: and direct intercourse on His part with them, or what we call sacramental communion, may

⁷⁸ PPS V, 22 pp.317-8

be necessary in some incomprehensible way, even for preparing their very nature to bear the sight of Him⁷⁹.

The position Newman is putting here rests on the fundamental attitude that once we are born, eternity has begun for us, and that true reality is simply the two beings, ourselves and our Creator. God the Creator, the Redeemer, the all-merciful and all-loving, is all our future; it is mere commonsense to become as familiar with Him as we can; and the way to do that is by prayer and obedience to His will and joining in the life of His Church. Every other interest or ambition is of lower priority because whatever they are, they will not last, while we human beings, body and soul, and God endure forever.

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

While that view of human life in the perspective of eternity is Newman's fundamental attitude, the heart of his spirituality is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. I return to Sheldrake's definition of spirituality which I have adopted: "Spirituality is the whole of human life viewed in terms of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and within the community of believers". Newman emphasises over and over that this indwelling is real, that it is an "incomprehensible" privilege that we can believe only because it comes on the word of God Himself:

The condescension of the Blessed Spirit is as incomprehensible as that of the Son. He has ever been the secret Presence of God within the Creation: a source of life amid the chaos, bringing out into form and order what was at first shapeless and void, and the voice of Truth in the hearts of all rational beings, tuning them into harmony with the intimations of God's Law, which were externally made to them. ...These were great mercies; yet, great as they were, they are as nothing compared with that surpassing grace with which we Christians are honoured; that great privilege of receiving into our hearts, not the mere gifts of the Spirit, but His very presence, Himself, by a real not a figurative indwelling... The Saviour, when

⁷⁹ PPS V, 1 pp 3-4, 7-8

once He entered into this world, never so departed as to suffer things to be as before He came; for He still is with us, not in mere gifts, but by the substitution of His Spirit for Himself, and that, both in the Church and in the souls of individual Christians....The Holy Ghost, I have said, dwells in body and soul, as in a temple.He is all-knowing and omnipresent, He is able to search into all our thoughts, and penetrate into every motive of the heart. Therefore, He pervades us (if it may be so said) as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume the folds of some honourable robe; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in Him, and He in us. It is plain that such an inhabitation brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvellous, far above the possession of mere gifts, exalts him inconceivably in the scale of beings, and gives him a place and an office which he had not before.⁸⁰

Thus we are from the moment of birth committed to immortality; the only two beings who really matter are God and ourselves; and God dwells within us, by His own ineffable gift of Himself, unless we reject Him and drive Him out. This is such a basic element in Newman's preaching that this thesis collects into an appendix the main passages on this Indwelling. This is an extraordinarily powerful basis for a spiritual life – even more than the “awareness of being saved” which was the attraction of Evangelicalism. One who is convinced that he is saved believes in an assurance for the future; but Newman is preaching of here and now, of God as Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts and souls at all times, intimately sharing in our lives. It is hard to see how someone who really believes this could bear to separate from that intimacy. This, one assumes, is the attitude Newman is trying to effect in his congregation.

⁸⁰ *PPS II, 19* for the feast of Pentecost pp.218,219-20, 221, 222; Newman cites Exod. xxxi. 3, 4; Numb. xi. 17, 25; Gal. iv. 6. John xx. 22; xvi. 7; Rom. viii. 9, 11. 1 Cor. vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Rom. v. 5; viii. 16. See also extracts from *PPS III, 18*; *PPS IV, 9* and *11*; *PPS VI, 10* in the Appendix to this thesis.

God's providence

Newman hails God's "wonderful providence indeed which is so silent, yet so efficacious, so constant, so unerring!"⁸¹ He means by "providence" an insight, a penetrating understanding of a situation, and he admires the surprising and paradoxical ways by which the divine purposes in any situation are achieved. The Indwelling of the Spirit is one "surprising and paradoxical way". In another sermon Newman used that trust in providence (so understood) to warn the audience against any inflated sense of their own importance.

The reflection which rises in the mind on a consideration of the election of St. Matthias, is this: how easily God may effect His purposes without us, and put others in our place, if we are disobedient to Him. It often happens that those who have long been in His favour grow secure and presuming. They think their salvation certain, and their service necessary to Him who has graciously accepted it. They consider themselves as personally bound up with His purposes of mercy manifested in the Church; and so marked out that, if they could fall, His word would fail. They come to think they have some peculiar title or interest in His promises, over and above other men.... such an interest that the very supposition that they can possibly fall offends them. Now, this feeling of self-importance is repressed all through the Scriptures, and especially by the events we commemorate today⁸².

In another sermon Newman dispels by a vivid example "this feeling of self-importance". In a beautiful passage he points out the hidden, imperceptible nature of the workings of

⁸¹ *PPS IV, 17* p.259

⁸² *PPS II, 11* for the feast of St Matthias the Apostle; p.118

God. Newman's contemporaries, like our own, observed what appeared to be the great events of the world, but were incapable of seeing the truly momentous events taking place out of their sight. Newman's object, as ever, is to reiterate the insignificance of the things of the world compared to the true reality of the spiritual and eternal:

Malachi had announced the Lord's visitation of His Temple in these words, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His Temple;" [Malachi iii. 1] words which, though variously fulfilled during His ministry, had their first accomplishment in the humble ceremony commemorated on this day [Feast of the Presentation in the Temple, or Purification of the BVM]. And, when we consider the grandeur of the prediction, and how unostentatious this accomplishment was, we are led to muse upon God's ways, and to draw useful lessons for ourselves.

Consider what the occurrence in question consists in. A little child is brought to the Temple, as all first-born children were brought. There is nothing here uncommon or striking, so far. His parents are with him, poor people, bringing the offering of pigeons or doves, for the purification of the mother. They are met in the Temple by an old man, who takes the child in his arms, offers a thanksgiving to God, and blesses the parents; and next are joined by a woman of a great age, a widow of eighty-four years, who had exceeded the time of useful service, and seemed to be but a fit prey for death. She gives thanks also, and speaks concerning the child to other persons who are present. Then all retire.

Now, there is evidently nothing great or impressive in this; nothing to excite the feelings, or interest the imagination. We know what the world thinks of such a group as I have described. The weak and helpless, whether from age or infancy, it looks upon negligently and passes by. Yet all this that happened was really the solemn fulfilment of an ancient and emphatic prophecy. The infant in arms was the Saviour of the world, the rightful heir, come in disguise of a stranger to visit His own house⁸³.

⁸³ *PPS II*, 10 pp.108-110

The reaction of the congregation presumably was a more positive perception of the poor and weak, an enhanced awareness of the mysterious ways of the Almighty and a greater readiness to trust in Him. In trying to bring people genuinely to seek to know God, Newman shows them the surprising ways in which God works "His wonders to perform"; and they may be readier to believe that God the Spirit comes to visit each of them as "His own house".

Prayer

Prayer is above all the way in which we commune with the Spirit. In Dom Placid Murray's edition of Newman's hitherto unpublished sermons from 1824 to 1843, volume I sermon 152 is a sermon on prayer⁸⁴. In the first part of the sermon Newman addresses three questions: What is prayer? When am I to pray? How am I to pray? That last question was put to Jesus by the disciples [Luke xi, 1], and in answer he gave them the Lord's Prayer, the discussion of which forms the second part of Newman's sermon.

"What is to pray? It is to hold communion and fellowship with God - to converse with Him - to bring the soul before Him and to bring His presence down to the soul...Every spiritual man prays - and everyone who prays is spiritually minded". Lest this be taken as too generous, even lax a definition, Newman immediately refines it. Not everyone who comes to church, or who says formal prayers, or who prays as a matter of routine or conformity without the requisite interior dispositions can be said to "live in the spirit of prayer, and hold communion with God - They do not pray in the sense in which I use the word". He appeals to Scripture, citing Paul's "pray without ceasing", and the example of Moses with hands uplifted while the Israelites were fighting their enemies: "while his hands were raised, they conquered - when they fell, they began to be driven back". Prayer is "not a mere outward act or an occasional accidental act". It is "a frame of mind, rather than a something which is done at intervals".

⁸⁴ Murray (ed.) *Sermons* 33

This has answered the question "When am I to pray?" but as a good preacher Newman does not leave the answer to be deduced, he makes it explicit. We should pray in the morning, "because we are about to enter into the affairs of life for the day" and in the evening "to review our conduct during the day"; but such morning and evening prayers, which for many of his hearers were routine, "are by no means a substitute for a devotional spirit all through the day".

He then turns to the question: "How am I to pray, what am I to pray about?" and answers by analysing the Lord's Prayer. He points out "how small a part is given for petitions for goods of this life". Only one petition, for "our daily bread", is for temporal good, while five relate to spiritual matters; and even this temporal petition is for the mere necessities of life, and only present needs at that ("this day", "daily bread"). We are taught to pray rather for spiritual good, which in Newman's view means "to be resigned - to be contented with our station - patient, meek, believing - to delight in God, not in the world - and to prefer the good of our souls to all the comforts and pleasures which this life can supply". In its worldly aspect of being "contented with our station", that is the view of a middle class Englishman reacting against the revolutionary French idea of democracy, and would not be accepted today by those oppressed who strive to change the established oppressive order; but the principle, to pray for spiritual good rather than worldly goods, is the heart of Newman's position.

In a sermon already quoted above, for the feast of Pentecost⁸⁵ Newman included an extended reflection on the Our Father, emphasising the father/child relationship. This complements the sermon quoted above.

He who sent the Spirit to dwell in us habitually, gave us also a form of words to sanctify the separate acts of our minds. Christ left His sacred Prayer to be the peculiar possession of His people, and the voice of the Spirit. If we examine it, we shall find in it the substance of that doctrine, to which St. Paul has given a name in the passage just quoted. We begin it by using our privilege of calling on

⁸⁵ *PPS II*, 19 pp.225-6

Almighty God in express words as "Our Father." We proceed, according to this beginning, in that waiting, trusting, adoring, resigned temper, which children ought to feel; looking towards Him, rather than thinking of ourselves; zealous for His honour rather than fearful about our safety; resting in His present help, not with eyes timorously glancing towards the future. His name, His kingdom, His will, are the great objects for the Christian to contemplate and make his portion, being stable and serene, and "complete in Him," as beseems one who has the gracious presence of His Spirit within him. And, when he goes on to think of himself, he prays, that he may be enabled to have towards others what God has shown towards himself, a spirit of forgiveness and loving-kindness. Thus he pours himself out on all sides, first looking up to catch the heavenly gift, but, when he gains it, not keeping it to himself, but diffusing "rivers of living water" to the whole race of man, thinking of self as little as may be, and desiring ill and destruction to nothing but that principle of temptation and evil, which is rebellion against God;—lastly, ending, as he began, with the contemplation of His kingdom, power, and glory ever-lasting. This is the true "Abba, Father," which the Spirit of adoption utters within the Christian's heart, the infallible voice of Him who "maketh intercession for the Saints in God's way."

In that paragraph Newman has drawn out the Lord's Prayer to be a model for all our prayer: the trust in our Father; "looking towards Him, rather than thinking of ourselves; zealous for His honour --- His name, His kingdom, His will"; then "a spirit of forgiveness and loving-kindness" towards others, deliverance from temptation and evil to oneself. This is not only a single prayer; it is the basis of a way of life.

Newman practised what he preached in praying for spiritual rather than temporal goods. Blehl describes Newman's personal series of prayers:

From the beginning of his ministry Newman organized a series of prayers for various intentions. He did so by dividing them up for each day of the week. The first set comprised a series of references to readings and prayers in Scripture and

the Book of Common Prayer. When he later transcribed from the collection, he copied only the general intentions listed for each day as follows:

Sunday intercession for the extension of Christ's kingdom.

Monday prayer for faith, holiness etc.

Tuesday prayers for good works, usefulness etc.⁸⁶.

And so on through the week, always praying for spiritual benefits.

Not that prayer for temporal benefits is spurned by Newman; in his memoirs he records for 5 February 1822, when he is a candidate for a fellowship at Oriel, "I am perpetually praying to get into Oriel, and to obtain the prize for my Essay"⁸⁷. Yet he follows this immediately with: "O Lord, dispose of me as will best promote Thy glory - and, after that, as will best advance my sanctification - but give me resignation and contentment".

Intercessory prayer

"Newman is a master of the theology and practice of Christian intercessory prayer, he does not deal with the progress of the soul through the stages of mystical prayer"⁸⁸. In his intercessory prayer Newman prays for the Church, the heathen, his university, his family and so on:

Though prayer for self is the first and plainest of Christian duties, the Apostles especially insist on another kind of prayer; prayer for others, for ourselves with others, for the Church, and for the world, that it may be brought into the Church. Intercession is the characteristic of Christian worship, the privilege of the heavenly adoption, the exercise of the perfect and spiritual mind...If Christians are to live together, they will pray together; and united prayer is necessarily of an intercessory character, as being offered for each other and for the whole, and for self as one of the whole....

⁸⁶ Blehl *Pilgrim* 58

⁸⁷ Blehl *Pilgrim* 42

⁸⁸ Murray (ed.) *Sermons* 32

Our first prayers ever must be for ourselves. Our own salvation is our personal concern; till we labour to secure it, till we try to live religiously, and pray to be enabled to do so, nay, and have made progress, it is but hypocrisy, or at best it is overbold, to busy ourselves with others.... We shall find that consistent obedience, mature, habitual, lifelong holiness, is therein made the condition of His intimate favour, and of power in Intercession. "If ye abide in Me," he says, "and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you...."

By words and works we can but teach or influence a few; by our prayers we may benefit the whole world, and every individual of it, high and low, friend, stranger, and enemy.... How can we answer to ourselves for the souls who have, in our time, lived and died in sin; the souls that have been lost and are now waiting for judgment, the infidel, the blasphemer, the profligate, the covetous, the extortioner; or those again who have died with but doubtful signs of faith, the death-bed penitent, the worldly, the double-minded, the ambitious, the unruly, the trifling, the self-willed, seeing that, for what we know, we were ordained to influence or reverse their present destiny and have not done it?⁸⁹

In these last sentences Newman makes each of us responsible through prayer for the whole of humankind, good and bad, friends and enemies, those known to us and those we have never known; we should have prayed for them all. This is perhaps an axiom to a Carmelite nun, but it is unusual to hear it from the pastor of a parish.

In his exhortations to his congregations, the central message of Newman's preaching is that true prayer is of the heart and the internal disposition, it is not a matter of "saying prayers" or mere external observance. "Why have you come hither today? --- It is not enough to be present here --- It is not enough to listen to what is preached --- You must pray; now this is very hard in itself to anyone who tries --- This is very difficult because our thoughts are so apt to wander. But even this is not all; - you must, as you pray, really intend to try to practise what you pray for." The rest of the long paragraph gives

⁸⁹ *PPS III*, 24 pp.350, 352-3,354, 356, 364-5

examples and emphasises this message. Challenging as it may be, Newman is unrelenting: “Christ says ‘Watch and pray’; herein lies our cure. To watch and to pray are surely in our power, and by these means we are certain of getting strength. You feel your weakness; you fear to be overcome by temptation: then keep out of the way of it. This is watching.”⁹⁰

“Watch and pray” is a refrain which runs through many of Newman’s sermons, bringing home to the congregation the demanding nature of serious religious practice. He gives one of his sermons the title “Watching” and takes as his text Mark 13, 33: “Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is”.

We are not simply to believe, but to watch; not simply to love, but to watch; not simply to obey, but to watch; to watch for what? for that great event, Christ's coming... Most of us have a general idea what is meant by believing, fearing, loving, and obeying; but perhaps we do not contemplate or apprehend what is meant by watching.... He watches for Christ who has a sensitive, eager, apprehensive mind; who is awake, alive, quick-sighted, zealous in seeking and honouring Him; who looks out for Him in all that happens, and who would not be surprised, who would not be over-agitated or overwhelmed, if he found that He was coming at once... This then is to watch; to be detached from what is present, and to live in what is unseen; to live in the thought of Christ as He came once, and as He will come again; to desire His second coming, from our affectionate and grateful remembrance of His first. And this it is, in which we shall find that men in general are wanting.... May this be the portion of every one of us! It is hard to attain it; but it is woeful to fail. Life is short; death is certain; and the world to come is everlasting⁹¹.

Set times for prayer

Even in private prayer, we should pray at set times:

⁹⁰ *PPS I*, 3 pp.33-4, 37-8

⁹¹ *PPS IV*, 22, pp.322-3-5, 333

Now it is necessary to insist upon this duty of observing private prayer at stated times, because amid the cares and hurry of life men are very apt to neglect it: and it is a much more important duty than it is generally considered, even by those who perform it.

It is important for the two reasons which follow.

It brings religious subjects before the mind in regular course. Prayer *through* the day, is indeed the characteristic of a Christian spirit, but we may be sure that, in most cases, those who do not pray at stated times in a more solemn and direct manner, will never pray well at other times...

...I now come to the second reason for stated private prayer. Besides its tending to produce in us lasting religious impressions, which I have already enlarged upon, it is also a more direct means of gaining from God an answer to our requests. He has so sanctioned it in the text:—"Shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which seeth in secret, and He shall reward thee openly." ...Now, at stated times, when we gather up our thoughts to pray, and draw out our petitions in an orderly and clear manner, the act of faith is likely to be stronger and more earnest; then we realize more perfectly the presence of that God whom we do not see, and Him on whom once all our sins were laid, who bore the weight of our infirmities and sickness once for all, that in all our troubles we might seek Him, and find grace in time of need. Then this world is more out of sight, and we more simply appropriate those blessings, which we have but to claim humbly and they are really ours.

Stated times of prayer, then, are necessary; first, as a means of making the mind sober, and the general temper more religious; secondly, as a means of exercising earnest faith, and thereby of receiving a more certain blessing in answer, than we should otherwise obtain.⁹²

The importance of prayer is that it brings us into communication with God:

⁹² *PPS I, 19*, pp.248-51

What, then, is prayer? It is (if it may be said reverently) conversing with God... divine converse, differing from human as God differs from man... He who does not pray, does not claim his citizenship with heaven, but lives, though an heir of the kingdom, as if he were a child of earth... He who does not use a gift, loses it - ...he who neglects to pray...is in a way to lose the possession of his divine citizenship ...A habit of prayer, the practice of turning to God and the unseen world, in every season, in every place, in every emergency (let alone its supernatural effect of prevailing with God), - prayer, I say, has what may be called a natural effect, in spiritualizing and elevating the soul⁹³.

The rest of this sermon – which, to use an old terminology, is about the practice of the presence of God – is a series of examples to fortify his message.

"One thing," says the Psalmist, "have I desired of the Lord ... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple." He desired to have continually that communion with God in prayer, praise, and meditation, to which His presence admits the soul; and this, I say, is the portion of Christians. ...Prayer, praise, thanksgiving, contemplation, are the peculiar privilege and duty of a Christian, and that for their own sakes, from the exceeding comfort and satisfaction they afford him, and without reference to any definite results to which prayer tends, without reference to the answers which are promised to it, from a general sense of the blessedness of being under the shadow of God's throne.⁹⁴

Continual prayer is the mark of the Christian – argued with an abundance of scriptural quotations, as was Newman's way, leading to:

⁹³ *PPS IV, 15*, pp.227-230

⁹⁴ *ibid.* pp.226-7

In a word, there was no barrier, no cloud, no earthly object, interposed between the soul of the primitive Christian and its Saviour and Redeemer. Christ was in his heart, his thoughts, words, and actions, savoured of Christ. The Lord was his light, and therefore he shone with the illumination.⁹⁵

This complements the quotations above on “watch and pray”. It also complements Sermon 15 of Volume IV of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* from which some quotations have already been noted above; the gist of that sermon is that prayer makes a person observably different from others.

We know those who have been used to kings' courts or educated society from others. By their voice, accent, and language, and not only so, by their gestures and gait, by their usages, by their mode of conducting themselves and their principles of conduct, we know well what a vast difference there is between those who have lived in good society and those who have not.... So a habit of prayer, the practice of turning to God and the unseen world, in every season, in every place, in every emergency (let alone its supernatural effect of prevailing with God),—prayer, I say, has what may be called a *natural* effect, in spiritualizing and elevating the soul. A man is no longer what he was before; gradually, imperceptibly to himself, he has imbibed a new set of ideas, and become imbued with fresh principles.... Such is the power of God's secret grace acting through those ordinances which He has enjoined us; such the evident fitness of those ordinances to produce the results which they set before us⁹⁶.

It is not surprising, given Newman's exposition of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, if over time, “gradually, imperceptibly to himself” a person imbibes “a new set of ideas” and becomes “imbued with fresh principles”; one would expect this to be the result of that indwelling, “the power of God's secret grace” acting within our souls. It is the indwelling – the notion that God is actually within us - that is the surprising idea, more

⁹⁵ *SSD 19*, p.281

⁹⁶ *PPS IV, 15*, pp.229-30

than its consequences. We interact with the indwelling Spirit through prayer and the sacraments – “those ordinances which He has enjoined us”. While the indwelling is a grace, a free gift of God to us, it does require our cooperation through prayer and reception of the sacraments and rites of God’s community, the Church. Thus Newman ties his theology of indwelling to his teaching on religious practice by private and communal prayer, in exemplification of the definition of spirituality which I have adopted from Sheldrake: “Spirituality is the whole of human life viewed in terms of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and within the community of believers”.

Soul

In the preceding extract Newman refers to the effect of prayer in “spiritualizing and elevating the soul”. What did Newman understand by the soul ? He has one sermon (*PPS IV, 6*) on “The Individuality of the Soul” which takes as its text: “The spirit shall return unto God, who gave it” (Eccles. xii, 7). Newman begins:

Here we are told that upon death the spirit of man returns to God. The sacred writer is not speaking of good men only, or of God's chosen people, but of men generally. In the case of all men, the soul, when severed from the body, returns to God. God gave it: He made it, He sent it into the body, and He upholds it there; He upholds it in distinct existence, wherever it is. It animates the body while life lasts; it returns again, it relapses into the unseen state upon death. Let us steadily contemplate this truth, which at first sight we may fancy we altogether enter into. The point to be considered is this, that every soul of man which is or has been on earth, has a separate existence; and that, in eternity, not in time merely,—in the unseen world, not merely in this,—not only during its mortal life, but ever from the hour of its creation, whether joined to a body of flesh or not⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ *PPS IV, 6*, p.80

Newman amplifies this at some length, in fact prefiguring Margaret Thatcher's dictum that there is no such thing as society, there are only individuals. To Newman it is the soul that makes the individuality. "Soul" to him is distinct from body, and from intellect; it seems to be close to what we would call personality; it is what makes each of us uniquely what we are when physical characteristics are stripped away.

Survey some populous town:every being in that great concourse is his own centre and all things about him are but shades.... He has his own hopes and fears, desires, judgments, and aims; he is everything to himself, and no one else is really any thing. No one outside of him can really touch him, can touch his soul, his immortality; he must live with himself for ever. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface⁹⁸.

Clearly the soul to Newman is the essence of the person. "No one can really touch him, can touch his soul...he must live with himself forever". Our souls are what we are. It is here that the Holy Spirit dwells, it is this which is transformed by the indwelling of the Spirit. This quotation also reinforces Newman's deeply held idea that in reality there are only two beings, oneself and God. This idea is treated more fully on pages 43-45 below.

Liturgy

In the sermon *PPS I, 19* cited above Newman makes it clear that private prayer is not the full requirement for a Christian. Since the Spirit dwells in the Church as He dwells in each of us, Newman emphasizes the importance of communal prayer and the liturgy of the Church:

⁹⁸ *ibid.* pp.82-3

They deal with Scripture as violently, who think to be saved by faith without Church fellowship, as those who think to be saved by Church fellowship without faith⁹⁹.

Scripture tells us to meet together for prayer, and has connected the grant of the Christian blessings on God's part, with the observance of *union* on ours; but since it does not tell us the times and places of prayer, the Church *must* complete that which Scripture has but enjoined generally. ...

The Bible then may be said to give us the *spirit* of religion; but the Church must provide the body in which that spirit is to be lodged. Religion must be realized in particular acts, in order to its continuing alive. ...

The services and ordinances of the Church are the outward form in which religion has been for ages represented to the world, and has ever been known to us. Places consecrated to God's honour, clergy carefully set apart for His service, the Lord's-day piously observed, the public forms of prayer, the decencies of worship, these things, viewed as a whole, are *sacred* relatively to us, even if they were not, as they are, divinely sanctioned. Rites which the Church has appointed, and with reason,—for the Church's authority is from Christ,—being long used, cannot be disused without harm to our souls¹⁰⁰.

These quotations illustrate Newman's commitment to his Church. It is not enough for people to be moral; it is not enough for them to be moral and believing and prayerful as individuals. They should be visible members of a visible Church: "The Church must provide the body in which that spirit [of religion] is to be lodged". The Church is more than our teacher, more than the celebrant of ceremonies. The Church is the Body of Christ; the Spirit dwells in the Church as He dwells in each of us, or rather, He dwells in the Church because He dwells in each of us.

⁹⁹ *PPS VI, 12*, p.155

¹⁰⁰ *PPS II, 7*, pp.73-4-5, 77-8

Newman's position on the liturgy is in close accord with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy produced by the Second Vatican Council in 1963. This Constitution says:

The liturgy, "through which the work of our redemption is accomplished", most of all in the divine sacrifice of the eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it¹⁰¹.

Newman has anticipated the Constitution's emphasis on the visibility of the Church at prayer, and the community of members praying together.

Every religious writer, probably every person who prays knows that there are manifold forms of prayer.¹⁰² One is communal prayer, the liturgy. Obviously there is private prayer, which Newman practised and which perhaps most people mean by "prayer". There is meditation, or reflection on the great religious truths, the life of Christ and of his saints, and on the lessons to be found in the Bible; this was a constant practice with Newman. "What he [Newman] calls 'mental prayer' is a state or habit which consists in the continuous activity of prayer....The prayer Newman calls 'mental' was known to the Fathers, especially St Augustine and St John Chrysostom, but the classic phrase to describe it is St Ignatius Loyola's 'contemplation in action'"¹⁰³. There is the wordless awareness of the presence of God, which with Newman seems to have been a habitual state almost from his earliest years. There is the prayer of reading religious works; this was his life's work, reading and reflecting especially on the Bible, the Fathers, and Anglican writers down to his contemporaries; he seems to have given less attention to the writers of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. And though writers often do not mention this form, Newman was constantly engaged in spiritual conversation with his

¹⁰¹ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* para. 2 in *The Liturgy Documents: a Parish Resource* Archdiocese of Chicago 1980.

¹⁰² Cunningham & Egan *Christian Spirituality* has a chapter on prayer which sets these out well.

¹⁰³ Blehl *Pilgrim* 103-4

intimates such as Keble and Pusey, Hurrell Froude and - after his move to Roman Catholicism - his fellow Oratorians, especially "dear Ambrose St John" whom he names in those terms at the very end of his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*.

To sum up: Prayer in all those forms, both private and communal, should be regular and constant; should include frequent Holy Communion; and should lead to communion with God and to amendment of one's behaviour. It is hard work and must be undertaken with commitment to action

Sacraments:

Newman tells us:

Our Lord has instituted two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but has not told us, except generally, with what forms we are to administer them. Yet we *cannot* administer them without some sort of prayers; whether we use always the same, or not the same, or unpremeditated prayers. And so with many other solemn acts, such as Ordination, or Marriage, or Burial of the Dead¹⁰⁴ .

Newman attached great importance to the two sacraments which the Church of England recognised, Baptism and the Eucharist¹⁰⁵ . Regarding the other Roman sacraments, he clearly values repentance and accepts the concept of auricular confession; equally he values the ceremonies of marriage and confirmation; he was quite awed by his own ordination; but as an Anglican he did not regard these as within the canon of sacraments.

Highly though he values the two sacraments, he is explicit that one's internal dispositions are more efficacious than any external process:

¹⁰⁴ *PPS II*, 7, p.74. In the same sermon he speaks of "the Sacraments, Public Worship, the Observance of the Lord's day, Ordination, Marriage, and the like" – clearly differentiating Ordination and Marriage from the Sacraments.

¹⁰⁵ *Book of Common Prayer* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d. 294 (from the Catechism); cf. 621 (article XXV of the 39 Articles of Religion).

... By reading Scripture, thousands, we may trust, who are not baptized, yet are virtually catechumens, and in heart and spirit *candidates* for the cleansing Sacrament. Thousands who are in unconscious heresy or unwilling schism, still are, through faith, in the state of Cornelius, when his prayers and alms went up before God. Thousands who are obliged to partake of the elements of Holy Communion unconsecrated, or administered with doubtful rites, yet have that within them which the fault or ignorance of the minister cannot take away,—a preparation of heart. Thousands who are in branches of the Church which profane men have stripped of holy ordinances, though the two Sacraments themselves remain to it, may through their faith receive in the Sacraments those graces besides, which were wont to be given through those lost ordinances¹⁰⁶.

He repeats this in another sermon, in which he appears to add confirmation to baptism and the Eucharist:

... if we have remained without baptism or have not been confirmed, or have not been frequent at the Lord's Table, or have fallen away to religious bodies where that sacred rite cannot be administered, or in any way have been deprived of that full circle of privileges which Holy Church dispenses; if we have thus been at disadvantage in one or other way, and yet are not without faith; if, I say, we have fallen into a Jewish *state*, it might be expected that we should display also a Jewish *character of mind*, and *course of conduct*, and should exemplify in ourselves that paradox, which we so wonder at when recorded of the Jews in the text, of embracing promises which we do not or do but partially enjoy¹⁰⁷.

It is the Eucharist that he values above all, at one point comparing it to the manna of the Old Testament:

¹⁰⁶ *PPS VI, 12*, pp.171-2

¹⁰⁷ *PPS VI, 13*, p.178

The manna was not simply health, or life, or God's favour, but a certain something which caused health, continued life, and betokened God's favour. The manna was a gift external to the Israelites, and external also to God's own judgment of them and resolve concerning them, a gift created by Him and partaken by His people. And Christ, in like manner, says, that He Himself is to us the *true* Manna, the *true* Bread that came down from heaven; not like that manna which could not save its partakers from death, but a life-imparting manna. What therefore the manna was in the wilderness, that surely is the spiritual manna in the Christian Church; the manna in the wilderness was a real gift, taken and eaten; so is the manna in the Church. It is not God's mercy, or favour, or imputation; it is not a state of grace, or the promise of eternal life, or the privileges of the Gospel, or the new covenant; it is not, much less, the doctrine of the Gospel, or faith in that doctrine; but it is what our Lord says it is, the gift of His own precious Body and Blood, really given, taken, and eaten as the manna might be (though in a way unknown), at a certain particular time, and a certain particular spot; namely, as I have already made it evident, at the time and spot when and where the Holy Communion is celebrated¹⁰⁸.

The appropriate internal dispositions are essential if the sacrament is to be efficacious. Yet the sacrament is a visible, tactile item situated at particular places and times, and the human must come bodily to receive it:

He has shown us, that to come to Him for life is a literal bodily action; not a mere figure, not a mere movement of the heart towards Him, but an action of the visible limbs; not a mere secret faith, but a coming to church, a passing on along the aisle to His holy table, a kneeling down there before Him, and a receiving of the gift of eternal life in the form of bread and wine. There can be no mistaking His own appointment. He said indeed, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger;" but then He explained what this coming was, by adding, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." If then a man does not seek Him where He is, there is no profit in

¹⁰⁸ *PPS VI, 11*, pp.143-4

seeking Him where He is not. What is the good of sitting at home seeking Him, when His Presence is in the holy Eucharist?¹⁰⁹

Newman's emphasis on the Eucharist and the desirability of frequent communion was quite unusual in his day – for instance “as late as 1864 nearly a third of the parishes in the Lincoln diocese had Holy Communion only four times a year or less”¹¹⁰.

Beyond his treatment of individual sacraments, Newman took what Blehl regards as a sacramental view of the world – that the world and all our activities are occasions for grace. In Blehl's words:

The sacramental principle Newman saw as flowing from the dogma of the Incarnation, for the latter ‘establishes in the very idea of Christianity the sacramental principle as its characteristic’....The sacramental principle is at the root of many of Newman's sermons, as well as of his own religious life. The latter is not something totally distinct from his daily life and activity. It is what gives it its religious meaning¹¹¹.

Newman's preaching on the importance of the sacraments as visible, tangible channels of grace is another illustration of his rejection of the Protestant ideas of the Evangelicals.

Grace

Spiritual grace is intrinsically connected to the Indwelling of the Spirit in us. Nowhere in his parish sermons does Newman attempt to define grace¹¹², but he certainly identifies grace with God's favour, and in a sermon entitled *The State of Grace* says we should rejoice in it:

¹⁰⁹ *PPS VII, 11*, p.149

¹¹⁰ Moorman *The Anglican Spiritual Tradition* 163. Both English and Irish Anglican Evangelicals did much to restore the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper.

¹¹¹ Blehl *Pilgrim* 103-5

¹¹² In Rickaby's index to Newman's works there are some 32 entries under “Grace” (only one from *Parochial and Plain Sermons*); none of them contains a definition but they are consistent with the OED definition below (in the paragraph after the quotations).

No one on earth is free from imperfection and sin, no one but has much continually to repent of; yet St. Paul bids us "rejoice in the Lord always;" and in the text, he describes Christians as having peace with God and rejoicing in hope of His glory.

Let us steadily contemplate this comfortable view, and we shall gain strength, and feel cheerful and joyful in spite of our sins. ...Much and rightly as thou thinkest of thy sins, hast thou no thought, I do not say of gratitude, but of wonder, of admiration, of amazement, of awful and overpowering transport, at what thou art through grace?¹¹³

“Grace” is a concept not always easily understood by Catholics, to whom it has been sometimes presented as a sort of spiritual fluid poured into the soul as if into a container, and fluctuating in level. For instance, a Catholic textbook of an earlier generation, long outdated, says: “Sanctifying grace is infused (poured) into the soul through Baptism.... It is a permanent quality of the soul which is lost only through mortal sin and which is regained through the Sacrament of Penance...Grace can be attained by prayer and by receiving the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist”¹¹⁴. From our earliest years we learn that the mother of Jesus was “full of grace”; we are told how we may as it were adjust the levels and acquire more grace; sin diminishes the amount of grace in our souls, repentance restores grace to our souls and prayer tops it up.

A standard English dictionary corrects such misconceptions, defining “grace (in Christian belief)” as “the free and unearned favour of God”¹¹⁵.

In a sermon already quoted Newman develops the idea that grace works within us almost as a spiritual medication or a vitamin so that we become observably different people through the action of grace:

¹¹³ *PPS IV*, 9, pp.135, 145-6

¹¹⁴ “Grace” in *Practical Catholic Dictionary* 102. The parenthesis (*poured*) is in the original text.

¹¹⁵ “Grace” (4) in *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* 479.

...prayer, I say, has what may be called a *natural* effect, in spiritualizing and elevating the soul. A man is no longer what he was before; gradually, imperceptibly to himself, he has imbibed a new set of ideas, and become imbued with fresh principles. He is as one coming from kings' courts, with a grace, a delicacy, a dignity, a propriety, a justness of thought and taste, a clearness and firmness of principle, all his own. Such is the power of God's secret grace..¹¹⁶.

Unhappily, it is not difficult to point to people who spend regular time in prayer who lack “justness of thought and taste”, and even who behave unjustly, cruelly and sinfully. One must question the quality of their prayer and their receptivity to grace. Newman himself in his Catholic days suffered much from such people¹¹⁷. His basic position is not that grace is a medication, but that it is the favour of God, freely bestowed to people with the appropriate disposition, and that we are entitled to rejoice in that goodness. More fundamental than any treatment of grace as some additive to our souls is Newman's teaching on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. Holiness then is not a matter of “acquiring grace” but of cooperating with the Deity Who has come to dwell in us.

¹¹⁶ *PPS IV, 15*, p.230; cf. p.33 above

¹¹⁷ Notably his fellow Oratorian, Fr. Faber; also some of the Irish bishops and English prelates.

Chapter 4 = Immortality and striving

This chapter sets out the ambience within which, in Newman's view, the Christian lives and must work out his or her salvation. That ambience is not the world we see around us, but the world of eternity.

Unreality of this world

The title which Newman gave to the second edition of his *Apologia* in 1865 (the first edition had been published in 1864) was *History of my Religious Opinions* - a phrase which he retained as a subtitle for the revision published in 1873. The heart of the *Apologia* is the account of how he moved gradually from rejection to acceptance of the claims of the Roman Catholic Church to be the one true church established by Christ on the basis of His apostles. Although this part of his adult life is the heart of the book, it is a complete history, beginning with Newman's earliest childhood perceptions that give a sense of his invisible world:

I used to wish the Arabian Tales were true: my imagination ran on unknown influences, on magical powers, and talismans....I thought life might be a dream, or I an Angel, and all this world deception, my fellow-angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world¹¹⁸.

He tells us that at the age of fifteen "a great change of thought took place in me. I fell under the influences of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma"¹¹⁹. The particular doctrine which he adopted was the Calvinist one of final perseverance of the elect, of whom he believed that he was one.

¹¹⁸ *Apologia* 23

¹¹⁹ *Apologia* 25

I retained it [this belief] till the age of twenty-one, when it gradually faded away: but I believe that it had some influence on my opinions, in the direction of those childish imaginations which I have already mentioned, viz. in isolating me from the objects which surrounded me, in confirming me in my mistrust of the reality of material phenomena, and making me rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator¹²⁰.

A worldly reader cannot help being forcefully struck by Newman's unremitting emphasis on the unreality of this world, the reality only of the next world, of immortal life, and that life commencing here and now. According to Blehl this emphasis of Newman's was greatly furthered by the death of his favourite sister Mary in January 1828, at the age of 19: "The greatest spiritual effect...seems to have been an enlivened sense of an invisible world hidden behind the veil of this world,"¹²¹. Blehl quotes from letters to his other sisters and from poems dedicated to his dead sister, leading to Blehl's conclusion: "The theme of living in the invisible world will grow more and more frequent, but it seems to have been given an impetus by reason of this experience. Out of it came many wonderful sermons on the invisible world, which made it a real world for his auditors"¹²².

Although it was not the second sermon Newman preached (being dated to 1833), in his own selection of sermons for publication the second one is on the immortality of the soul; the place of the sermon in that collection may be taken as an indication of the importance he placed on impressing the idea on his audience:

To understand that we have souls, is to feel our separation from things visible, our independence of them, our distinct existence in ourselves, our individuality, our power of acting for ourselves this way or that way, our accountableness for what we do. These are the great truths which lie wrapped up indeed even in a child's mind, and which God's grace can unfold there in spite of the influence of the

¹²⁰ *Apologia* 27

¹²¹ Blehl *Pilgrim* 80

¹²² *ibid.* 82

external world....The unprofitableness and feebleness of the things of this world are forced upon our minds; they promise but cannot perform, they disappoint us. Or, if they do perform what they promise, still (so it is) they do not satisfy us. We still crave for something, we do not well know what; but we are sure it is something which the world has not given us.... And should it so happen that misfortunes come upon us, (as they often do,) then still more are we led to understand the nothingness of this world; then still more are we led to distrust it, and are weaned from the love of it, till at length it floats before our eyes merely as some idle veil, which, notwithstanding its many tints, cannot hide the view of what is beyond it;—and we begin, by degrees, to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe, our own soul, and the God who made it.

Sublime, unlooked-for doctrine, yet most true! To every one of us there are but two beings in the whole world, himself and God¹²³.

In this sermon the childhood idea has become a seminal thought. It also permeates the first sermon in the collection, which is about heaven, for which this world is but a preparation. Newman's title for this sermon is: *Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness*. His point is not the obvious one, that only the holy go to heaven; it is the more subtle point, that only the holy could be happy there – as is clear in the following quotation.

If then a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there; but when he arrived there, he would find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth, no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised, nothing which bound him to aught else in the universe, and made him feel at home, nothing which he could enter into and rest upon....

¹²³ *PPS I*, 2, pp.19-20. Much the same point is made at full length in *PPS IV*, 13: *The Invisible World*.

...Holiness, or inward separation from the world, is necessary to our admission into heaven, because heaven is not heaven, is not a place of happiness except to the holy....

Nay, I will venture to say more than this;—it is fearful, but it is right to say it;—that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to summon it to heaven. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man¹²⁴.

This is a further illustration of what in a previous chapter I called “Newman’s originality and vigour”, the novel angle from which he approaches the message he wishes to convey. His message in essence is that nothing in this world is as real as the next world, and that holiness is supremely important for ultimate happiness. We will see below how demanding are Newman’s standards for holiness.

Death and Judgement

If a sermon such as that just quoted did not strike fear into several hearts, it would at least have made them think. The Four Last Things – death, judgement, heaven and hell – have been a staple of Christian preachers from the time and the words of Jesus Himself. They jolt people into seriousness. They comprise the contents of the first week of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* as the most effective way to start the hearts and minds of sinners on the path to spiritual advancement. Newman commends holy fear and works upon it frequently. His God is a stern God of justice, and we should never forget the Day of Judgement.

What a prospect, to be judged for all our doings by an unerring Judge. Try to trace back the history of your life in memory, and fancy every part of it confessed by you in words, put into words before some intimate friend, how great would be your shame! but how gladly would you in that day resign yourself to a disclosure to a fellow-sinner, how gladly to a disclosure to a world of sinners, compared with

¹²⁴ *PPS I, 1*, pp.5-6,7

the presence of an All-holy, All-seeing Creator with His eyes upon you, "beholding you," as the gospel speaks of Him in the days of His flesh,—and one deed of evil after another told forth, while all your best actions and best qualities fade away and become as discoloured and unsightly as if there were nothing good in them; and you the while uncertain how the decision shall be.... Think of all this, and you will not deny that the thought of standing before Christ is enough to make us tremble¹²⁵ .

Newman excuses no one from the necessity to fear:

There are two classes of men who are deficient in awe and fear, and, lamentable to say, taken together, they go far to make up the religious portion of the community....These are the two classes of men who are deficient in this respect: first, those who think that they never were greatly under God's displeasure; next, those who think that, though they once were, they are not at all now for all sin has been forgiven them;—those on the one hand who consider that sin is no great evil in itself, those on the other who consider that it is no great evil in them, because their persons are accepted in Christ for their faith's sake¹²⁶ .

Although Newman is trying to foster a holy fear in his congregation, it is quite distinct from the destructive fear that in an earlier age Satan encouraged in the human race:

Satan took the darker side of the Gospel: its awful mysteriousness, its fearful glory, its sovereign inflexible justice; and here *his* picture of the truth ended, "God is a consuming fire;" so declares the text, and we know it. But we know more, viz. that God is love also; but Satan did not add this to his religion, which became one of *fear*. The religion of the world was then a fearful religion. Superstitions abounded, and cruelties. The noble firmness, the graceful austerity of the true

¹²⁵ *PPS* V,4, pp.49-50

¹²⁶ *PPS* V,2, p.15

Christian were superseded by forbidding spectres, harsh of eye, and haughty of brow; and these were the patterns or the tyrants of a beguiled people¹²⁷.

Newman knows that he has before him an audience partly of the respectable academics and burghers of Oxford, conscious that they are free of scandalous behaviour; and partly of undergraduates, and perhaps older people, who – although conscious of sinful pasts – have reformed at least sufficiently to attend his sermons, and who may therefore also feel self-satisfied. Others of them will have been subscribers to the Evangelical view that faith alone is sufficient for justification – “who consider that it [sin] is no great evil in them, because their persons are accepted in Christ for their faith's sake” as described in *PPS V*, 2 quoted above. It is this complacency that he must shake, and bring home to people that respectability is not enough, that inert faith is not enough, that holiness and self-sacrifice are what Christ expects and demands:

At the last day who can tell the affright and horror of a man who lived to himself on earth, indulging his own evil will, following his own chance notions of truth and falsehood, shunning the Cross and the reproach of Christ, when his eyes are at length opened before the throne of God, and all his innumerable sins, his habitual neglect of God, his abuse of his talents, his misapplication and waste of time, and the original unexplored sinfulness of his nature, are brought clearly and fully to his view? Nay, even to the true servants of Christ, the prospect is awful¹²⁸.

I say, when any one, man or woman, young or old, is conscious that he or she is going wrong, whether in greater matter or less, whether in not coming to church when there is no good excuse, neglecting private prayer, living carelessly, or indulging in known sin,—this bad conscience is from time to time a torment to such persons. For a little while, perhaps, they do not feel it, but then the pain comes on again. It is a keen, harassing, disquieting, hateful pain, which hinders sinners from being happy. They may have pleasures, but they cannot be happy.

¹²⁷ *PPS I*, 24, pp.310-11

¹²⁸ *PPS I*, 4, p.48

They know that God is angry with them; and they know that, at some time or other, He will visit, He will judge, He will punish¹²⁹.

This, then, is what death means to Newman: it is the moment when we come face to face with God. The judgement is not something external to ourselves; in that moment in the presence of God we see ourselves as God sees us, with all our weaknesses and faults and sins laid bare to us in their full horror as defiance or withdrawal from the Almighty God. God knows all things, what we do and what we think, even the inner recesses of our hearts – and He will judge each one of us by letting us see ourselves truly. “He will look on us, while we look on him”¹³⁰ and our guilty consciences will have nowhere to hide, no easy rationalisations. Then the truly holy will be admitted to His company in heaven; those less than holy “whether in greater matter or less” – what will become of them? The Anglican Newman seems to accept the concept of purgatory:

Then will the good man undergo the full sight of his sins, which on earth he was labouring to obtain, and partly succeeded in obtaining, though life was not long enough to learn and subdue them all. Doubtless we must all endure that fierce and terrifying vision of our real selves, that last fiery trial of the soul before its acceptance, a spiritual agony and second death to all who are not then supported by the strength of Him who died to bring them safe through it, and in whom on earth they have believed¹³¹.

Sin

Newman tells us that one abstains from lawful pleasures to strengthen one’s will to refrain from sinful ones. What then is Newman’s idea of sin? The world commonly thinks of “turning from sin” as rejection of gross sins of the flesh or injustice or cruelty and the like, whereas he includes “not coming to church when there is no good excuse,

¹²⁹ *PPS VII, 13*, p.182

¹³⁰ *PPS V, I*, p.4

¹³¹ *PPS I, 4*, pp.48-9. Article XXII of the *39 Articles* explicitly rejects “the Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory” (*BCP* p.620).

neglecting private prayer”¹³². This is not scrupulosity; it reflects Newman’s concept of sin. While sin frequently manifests itself in discrete acts or omissions, Newman knows and teaches that these derive from attitudes of intellect and will; that is where sin resides. That is the fruit of original sin.

Our corruption is not merely in this act or that, but in our *nature*.... Any *one* deliberate habit of sin incapacitates a man for receiving the gifts of the Gospel. All such states of mind as these are fearful symptoms of the *existence* of some such wilful sin in our hearts; and in proportion as we trace these symptoms in our conduct, so much we dread, lest we be reprobate.

Let us then approach God, all of us, confessing that we do not know ourselves; that we are more guilty than we can possibly understand, and can but timidly hope, not confidently determine, that we have true faith. Let us take comfort in our being still in a state of grace, though we have no certain pledge of salvation. Let us beg Him to enlighten us, and comfort us; to forgive us all our sins, teaching us those we do not see, and enabling us to overcome them¹³³.

Newman devoted that sermon to “sins of ignorance and weakness” and another¹³⁴ to “sins of infirmity” in addition to the frequent mention of sin and our sinfulness in sermons on other themes. He does not simply condemn sin and harp on its punishment, as many a preacher might do. It is interesting that he picks on these two categories which both result from human frailties of one kind or another, and are therefore far more likely to be found amongst his listeners than the fully deliberate malevolent sins of the deeply wicked; he spends much of each sermon setting out how we slide into these sins and how we should overcome them. Sin, whether great or small, he sees as turning away from Christ’s friendship, while acceptance and pursuit of that friendship is a turning away from sin:

¹³² See p.67 above, n. 121

¹³³ *PPS I*, 7, pp.87, 95-6

¹³⁴ *PPS V*, p.15

To be dead with Christ, is to hate and turn from sin; and to live with Him, is to have our hearts and minds turned towards God and Heaven. To be dead to sin, is to feel a disgust at it. We know what is meant by disgust. Take, for instance, the case of a sick man, when food of a certain kind is presented to him,—and there is no doubt what is meant by disgust. Consider how certain scents, which are too sweet or too strong, or certain tastes, affect certain persons under certain circumstances, or always,—and you will be at no loss to determine what is meant by disgust at sin, or deadness to sin. On the other hand, consider how pleasant a meal is to the hungry, or some enlivening odour to the faint; how refreshing the air is to the languid, or the brook to the weary and thirsty;—and you will understand the sort of feeling which is implied in being alive with Christ, alive to religion, alive to the thought of heaven....

This is a point which must be insisted on for the encouragement of the fearful, the confutation of the hypocritical, and the abasement of the holy. ... This, indeed, is what all men now have in common, a root of evil in them, a principle of sin, or what may become such;—what they differ in is this, not that one man has it, another not; but that one lives in and to it, another not; one subdues it, another not¹³⁵.

One does not necessarily begin with sinful attitudes. They can be acquired, and the prickings of conscience can be stifled, ignored, until finally they cease and the sinful attitude becomes habitual. This process must be resisted, and the means of resistance includes repeated repentance:

We are ever sinning; and though Christ has died once for all to release us from our penalty, yet we are not pardoned once for all, but according as, and whenever each of us supplicates for the gift.... Guilt is again contracted, and must be again repented of and washed away¹³⁶.

¹³⁵ *PPS VII, 13*, pp.179, 186-7

¹³⁶ *PPS I, 7*, p.83

Newman is realistic enough to recognise that repeated sins, even after repentance, can be discouraging to the penitent, but – he points out – that is the human condition and we must not lose heart:

True faith is not shown here below in peace, but rather in conflict; and it is no proof that a man is not in a state of grace that he continually sins, provided such sins do not remain on him as what I may call ultimate results, but are ever passing on into something beyond and unlike themselves, into truth and righteousness.... As men in a battle cannot see how it is going, so Christians have no certain signs of God's presence in their hearts, and can but look up towards their Lord and Saviour, and timidly hope¹³⁷.

This sermon sets out almost a taxonomy of sins:

...those which arise from our former habits of sin, though now long abandoned. Men have been slothful, or self-conceited, or self-willed, or impure, or worldly-minded in their youth... their former self clings to them, as a poisoned garment, and eats into them...

Another class of involuntary sins are such as arise from want of self-command...

And Newman then lists numerous examples of such, before continuing:

Further, I might dwell upon sins which we fall into from being taken unawares,—when the temptation is sudden, as St. Peter, when he first denied Christ; though whether it became of a different character, when he denied twice and thrice, is a further question.

And again, those sins which rise from the devil's temptations, inflaming the wounds and scars of past sins healed, or nearly so; exciting the memory, and

¹³⁷ *PPS V,15*, pp.210-11

hurrying us away; and thus making use of our former selves against our present selves contrary to our will.

And again, I might speak of those which rise from a deficiency of practical experience, or from ignorance how to perform duties which we set about. Men attempt to be munificent, and their acts are prodigal; they wish to be firm and zealous, and their acts are cruel; they wish to be benevolent, and they are indulgent and weak; they do harm when they mean to do good; they engage in undertakings, or they promote designs, or they put forth opinions, or they set a pattern, of which evil comes; they countenance evil; they mistake falsehood for truth; they are zealous for false doctrines; they oppose the cause of God. One can hardly say all this is without sin, and yet in them it may be involuntary sin and pardonable on the prayer of faith.

....Those unworthy motives, low views, mistakes in principle, false maxims, which abound on all sides of us, and which we catch (as it were) from each other;—that spirit of the world which we breathe...

And, lastly... what the Litany calls "negligences and ignorances," on forgetfulnesses, heedlessnesses, want of seriousness, frivolities, and a variety of weaknesses, which we may be conscious of in ourselves, or see in others¹³⁸.

It is surprising to see such imperfections, often unavoidable, listed in the category of sins. I have already remarked on Newman's sensitivity of conscience. It is true, he does not regard those imperfections as grave matters – "even to know only thus much, that infirmities are no necessary mark of reprobation, that God's elect have infirmities, and that our own sins may possibly be no more than infirmities, this surely, by itself, is a consolation". The main point of this sermon is that God works good even through our weaknesses and infirmities. Newman brings this out in a passage about Satan. People, even those who regard themselves as virtuous, are easily led astray by Satan; but Satan himself is constantly defeated. Newman presents a picture almost of two human generals engaged in warfare on earth:

¹³⁸ *ibid.* pp.212-3-4, 216-7-8

Wonderful providence indeed which is so silent, yet so efficacious, so constant, so unerring! This is what baffles the power of Satan. He cannot discern the Hand of God in what goes on...He makes a guess here, or does a bold act there, but all in the dark. He knew not of Gabriel's coming, and the miraculous conception of the Virgin, or what was meant by that Holy Thing which was to be born, being called the Son of God. He tried to kill him, and he made martyrs of the innocent children; he tempted the Lord of all with hunger and with ambitious prospects; he sifted the Apostles, and got none but one who already bore his own name, and had been already given over as a devil. He rose against his God in his full strength, in the hour and power of darkness, and then he seemed to conquer; but with his utmost effort, and as his greatest achievement, he did no more than "whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." [Acts iv. 28.] He brought into the world the very salvation which he feared and hated¹³⁹.

Did Newman actually believe this anthropomorphism, which is shown also in Newman's presentation of heaven as a locality, and the next life as being lived in time? Or was it an accommodation to his audience, who might not follow too abstract a presentation?

Newman's discussion of sins ends encouragingly:

If we have, through God's mercy, an inward sense of our own sincerity and integrity, if we feel that we can appeal to God with St. Peter, that we love Him only, and desire to please Him in all things,—in proportion as we feel this, or at such times as we feel it, we have an assurance shed abroad on our hearts, that we are at present in His favour, and are in training for the inheritance of His eternal kingdom¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁹ *PPS IV, 17*, pp.259-60

¹⁴⁰ *PPS V, 15*, pp.220-21

Despite these words of comfort, Newman will not allow his congregation to become complacent.

The Christian is a soldier; he may have many falls; these need not hinder his joy in the Gospel; he must be humbled indeed, but not downcast; it does not prove he is not fighting; he has enemies within and without him; he has the remains of a fallen nature. ...I do not mean to say that in the course of years, and after severe humiliation, it is not possible for a repentant sinner to feel a well-grounded peace and comfort, but he must not expect it. He must expect to be haunted with the ghosts of past sins, rising from the charnel-house, courting him to sin again, yet filling him the while with remorse; he must expect "a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind" [Deut. xxviii. 65]¹⁴¹.

So, after uttering words of comfort to the repentant, Newman tells them not to expect peace of mind, but rather the ghosts of past sins, a trembling heart and so on. Even in encouragement he is on guard against the possibility of backsliding. Newman is always urging on his congregation the maxim, familiar from the ancient Greeks and Augustine to the English mystics, to *know oneself*¹⁴². He knows how easy it is to rationalise and deceive oneself, to persuade oneself that all is well when it is not, and he warns us to listen to conscience all the time:

God gives us warnings now and then, but does not repeat them.... You, my brethren, now hear what you may never hear again, and what perchance in its substance is the word of God. You may never hear it again, though with your outward ears you hear it a hundred times, because you may be impressed with it now, but never may again.... Beware of trifling with your conscience. It is often

¹⁴¹ *PPS IV*, 9, p.138

¹⁴² The Ancient Greek aphorism "Know thyself" (Greek: γνῶθι σεαυτόν or *gnothi seauton*) was inscribed in golden letters at the lintel of the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. The phrase has been attributed to at least five ancient Greek sages: Chilon of Sparta, Thales of Miletus, Socrates, Pythagoras, Solon of Athens; see Plato *Protagoras* 343 b, also Diogenes Laertius I, xl.

said that second thoughts are best; so they are in matters of judgment, but not in matters of conscience. In matters of duty first thoughts are commonly best—they have more in them of the voice of God. May He give you grace so to hear what has been said, as you will wish to have heard, when life is over; to hear in a practical way, with a desire to profit by it, to learn God's will, and to do it¹⁴³.

Newman knows well the ways we can slip into small faults, then disregard them and move on to greater sins. In a sermon entitled *Curiosity a Temptation to Sin*¹⁴⁴ he warns us against “Satan's craft, the father of lies, who knows well that if he can get us once to sin, he can easily make us sin twice and thrice, till at length we are taken captive at his will [2 Tim. ii. 26]”. Newman knows also that sins begin in the mind:

When I say, resist the beginnings of evil, I do not mean the first act merely, but the rising thought of evil. For consider, in the next place, what must in all cases be the consequence of allowing evil thoughts to be present to us, though we do not actually admit them into our hearts. This, namely,—we shall make ourselves familiar with them. Now our great security against sin lies in being shocked at it.

Therefore he reminds us, as he often does in his sermons: “ ‘Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.’ To enter not the path of the wicked, to avoid it, and pass by it, what is this but the exercise of *watching*?”

In a paragraph that would resonate with everybody in the church, he says:

Every one must know in his own case, how difficult it is to command himself, and do that he wishes to do;—how weak the governing principle of his mind is, and how poorly and imperfectly he comes up to his own notions of right and truth; how difficult it is to command his feelings, grief, anger, impatience, joy, fear; how difficult to govern his tongue, to say just what he would; how difficult to

¹⁴³ *PPS IV*, 2, pp.35-6

¹⁴⁴ *PPS VIII*, 5, p.65

rouse himself to do what he would, at this time or that; how difficult to rise in the morning; how difficult to go about his duties and not be idle; how difficult to eat and drink just what he should, how difficult to fix his mind on his prayers; how difficult to regulate his thoughts through the day; how difficult to keep out of his mind what should be kept out of it¹⁴⁵.

It is clear that Newman searched his own heart as he is urging his congregation to do in theirs. This makes the sermon more effective; it is not some superior person telling us how we should behave, but a fellow sinner sharing with us his experiences and remedies.

He knew also how easy it is for religious impulses to lead to strong emotions and for the emotions to be thought to be the substance of true religion. He criticised the Evangelicals and the Methodists for this attitude, and states that resolution is more truly religious than such emotions:

Violent impulse is not the same as a firm *determination* — men may have their religious feelings roused, without being on that account at all the more likely to obey God in practice, rather the less likely.... The contrast displayed in the Gospels between [Christ's] behaviour on the one hand, as the time of His crucifixion drew near, and that both of His disciples and of the Jewish populace on the other, is full of instruction, if we will receive it; *He* steadily fixing His face to endure those sufferings which were the atonement for our sins, yet without aught of mental excitement or agitation; His disciples and the Jewish multitude first protesting their devotion to Him in vehement language, then, the one deserting Him, the other even clamouring for His crucifixion....To mistake mere transient emotion, or mere good thoughts, for obedience, is a far commoner deceit than at first sight appears.

Consider the prayer He gave us; and this is the more to the purpose, for the very reason that He has given it as a model for our worship. How plain and unadorned

¹⁴⁵ *PPS V, 15*, p.214; cf.p.72 above, n.131

is it! How few are the words of it! How grave and solemn the petitions! What an entire absence of tumult and feverish emotion! Surely our own feelings tell us, it could not be otherwise.

Let us not be content with saying "Lord, Lord," without "doing the thing which He says." The husbandman's son who said, "I go, sir," yet went not to the vineyard, gained nothing by his fair words. One secret act of self-denial, one sacrifice of inclination to duty, is worth all the mere good thoughts, warm feelings, passionate prayers, in which idle people indulge themselves. It will give us more comfort on our deathbed to reflect on one deed of self-denying mercy, purity, or humility, than to recollect the shedding of many tears, and the recurrence of frequent transports, and much spiritual exultation. These latter feelings come and go; they may or may not accompany hearty obedience; they are never tests of it; but good actions are the fruits of faith, and assure us that we are Christ's; they comfort us as an evidence of the Spirit working in us. By them we shall be judged at the last day; and though they have no worth in themselves, by reason of that infection of sin which gives its character to every thing we do, yet they will be accepted for His sake, who bore the agony in the garden, and suffered as a sinner on the cross¹⁴⁶.

Here we see again Newman's teaching that "good actions", not gratifying emotions, are the "fruits of faith" and the assurance that we are complying with God's will.

Repentance, forgiveness, encouragement

Perhaps the most fundamental element of Christian ethics and an essential task of a preacher is the call to repentance, to a change of mindset (which the Greek word for it, *metanoia*, means) and consequently of behaviour. As we have already seen, Newman constantly tried to shake the complacency of his listeners and make them aware of their sinfulness. This element of the Christian message is sweetened by the assurance of

¹⁴⁶ *PPS I, 14*, pp.177-8,179,186,188-9

forgiveness for the truly penitent, even if they continue to lapse into sin, as long as they keep repenting and making an effort of amendment. Newman uses a parable to which he frequently returned, that of the Prodigal Son, to exemplify his argument:

The very best that can be said of the fallen and redeemed race of Adam is, that they confess their fall, and condemn themselves for it, and try to recover themselves. And this state of mind, which is in fact the only possible religion left to sinners, is represented to us in the parable of the Prodigal Son...

Let it not be supposed...that I think that in the life-time of each one of us there is some clearly marked date at which he began to seek God, and from which he has served Him faithfully. This may be so in the case of this person or that, but it is far from being the rule.... Repentance is a work carried on at diverse times, and but gradually and with many reverses perfected.... It is a work never complete, never entire...We are ever sinning, we must ever be renewing our sorrow and our purpose of obedience, repeating our confessions and our prayers for pardon....¹⁴⁷

He is here again attacking the Evangelical idea of conversion at “some clearly marked date”. Repentance is not merely a form of words or a feeling of compunction; it requires a lasting change of behaviour, and especially towards the behaviour Newman never tires of emphasizing – obedience. In the same sermon he says:

When a man begins to see his wickedness, and resolves on leading a new life, he asks, *What must I do?* he has a wide field before him, and he does not know how to enter it. He must be bid to do some particular plain acts of obedience, to fix him. He must be told to go to Church regularly, to say his prayers morning and evening, and stately to read the Scriptures. This will limit his efforts to a certain end, and relieve him of the perplexity and indecision which the greatness of his work at first causes¹⁴⁸.

In another sermon he says:

¹⁴⁷ *PPS III*, 7, pp.90-91

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.92

To all those who are perplexed in any way soever, who wish for light but cannot find it, one precept must be given,—*obey*. It is obedience which brings a man into the right path; it is obedience keeps him there and strengthens him in it. Under all circumstances, whatever be the cause of his distress,—*obey*¹⁴⁹.

Not many people rejoice in obedience to another. Newman recognises this:

The conscience of a repentant sinner is often uneasy at finding religion a task to him. He thinks he ought to rejoice in the Lord at once.... Perhaps he is even warned against offering to God what is termed a *formal service*. Now this is reversing the course of a Christian's life. The prodigal son judged better, when he begged to be made one of his father's servants—he knew his place. *We must begin* religion with what looks like a form. Our fault will be, not in beginning it as a form, but in continuing it as a form. For it is our duty to be ever striving and praying to *enter* into the real spirit of our services, and in proportion as we understand them and love them, they will cease to be a form and a task, and will be the real expressions of our minds. Thus shall we gradually be changed in heart from servants into sons of Almighty God¹⁵⁰.

The pain of obedience will be far less than the pain which will result from a failure to repent. Newman's stern vision of God as Judge comes once again to the fore:

So I say of persons who have in any way sinned. It is good for them not to forget that they have sinned. It is good that they should lament and deplore their past sins. Depend upon it, they will wail over them in the next world, if they wail not here. Which is better, to utter a bitter cry now or then?—then, when the blessing of eternal life is refused them by the just Judge at the last day, or now, in order that they may gain it? Let us be wise enough to have our agony in this world, not in the next. If we humble ourselves now, God will pardon us then. We cannot

¹⁴⁹ *PPS I*, 18, p.230

¹⁵⁰ *PPS III*, 7, pp. 93-4

escape punishment, here or hereafter; we must take our choice, whether to suffer and mourn a little now, or much then¹⁵¹.

In this sermon Newman's vision is not that all suffering in this world is a punishment from God; that would be unscriptural, given that from Job to Jesus the innocent have suffered exceedingly. In the passage just quoted he is talking rather of the pain of recognising one's past sins, the lamenting and wailing and deploring of the penitent sinner. Below he also suggests accepting suffering as a form of penance.

I recommend them to look on all pain and sorrow which comes on them as a *punishment* for what they once were; and to take it patiently on that account, nay, joyfully, as giving them a hope that God *is* punishing them here instead of hereafter. If they have committed sins of uncleanness, and are now in narrow circumstances, or have undutiful children, let them take their present distress as God's merciful punishment. If they have lived to the world, and now have worldly anxieties, these anxieties are God's punishment. If they have led intemperate lives, and now are afflicted by any malady, this is God's punishment¹⁵².

He does nevertheless recognise and encourage the honest striver, weak though one may be. Yet even his encouragement is laced with grim warning:

Some one may say, "It is so very *difficult* to serve God, it is so much against my own mind, such an effort, such a strain upon my strength ...I have begun several times, I have had seasons of repentance, and set rules to myself; but for some reason or other, I fell back after a while, and was even worse than before. I know, but I cannot do. O wretched man that I am!"

Now to such an one I say, You are in a much more promising state than if you were contented with yourself....You are, I admit, in a better state than if you were satisfied with yourself, *but you are not in a safe state*. If you were now to die, you would have no hope of salvation: no hope, that is, if your own showing be true,

¹⁵¹ *PPS VI, 2*, p.21

¹⁵² *ibid.* p.25

for I am taking your own words. Go before God's judgment-seat, and there plead that you know the Truth and have not done it. This is what you frankly own;— how will it there be taken? "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee," says our Judge Himself, and who shall reverse His judgment?¹⁵³

From such warning Newman returns to encouragement; then back to warning, then back to encouragement:

Every thing is plain and easy to the earnest; it is the double-minded who find difficulties. If you hate your own corruption in sincerity and truth, if you are really pierced to the heart that you do not do what you know you should do, if you *would* love God if you could, then the Gospel speaks to you words of peace and hope.... Here is the test between earnestness and insincerity. You say you wish to be a different man; Christ takes you at your word, so to speak; He offers to make you different. He says, "I will take away from you the heart of stone, the love of this world and its pleasures, if you will submit to My discipline." Here a man draws back.... But if a man is in earnest in wishing to get at the depths of his own heart, to expel the evil, to purify the good, and to gain power over himself, so as to do as well as know the Truth, what is the difficulty?—a matter of time indeed, but not of uncertainty is the recovery of such a man. So simple is the rule which he must follow, and so trite, that at first he will be surprised to hear it. ...Christ says, "Watch and pray;" herein lies our cure. To watch and to pray are surely in our power, and by these means we are certain of getting strength. You feel your weakness; you fear to be overcome by temptation: then keep out of the way of it. This is watching¹⁵⁴.

Newman's frequent theme "Watch and pray" here appears again as a phrase of encouragement. We can all be alert and pray; and thus we avoid sin and ready ourselves for good actions, relying on the help of the indwelling Spirit.

¹⁵³ *PPS I*, 3, pp.35-6

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* pp. 36-8

As we have seen from the quotations above, Newman is ready to frighten his audience into holy obedience. He also takes pains to encourage them, but he remains realistic. The beginner will be confused and unhappy for a time, and he should accept the fact and not be as if he were confused about being confused. This is no more than the doctor warning that pain or other side-effects are to be expected:

Let, then, every beginner make up his mind to suffer disquiet and perplexity. He cannot complain that it should be so; and though he should be deeply ashamed of himself that it is so (for had he followed God from a child, his condition would have been far different, though, even then perhaps, not without some perplexities), still he has no cause to be surprised or discouraged. The more he makes up his mind manfully to bear doubt, struggle against it, and meekly to do God's will all through it, the sooner this unsettled state of mind will cease, and order will rise out of confusion. "Wait on the Lord," this is the rule; "keep His way," this is the manner of waiting. Go about your duty; mind little things as well as great¹⁵⁵.

Here Newman comes back to another of his constant themes: holiness for most of us does not consist in heroic and spectacular acts of virtue, but in the faithful discharge of everyday tasks for God's sake.

"*Blessed* are they that keep His commandments." And besides this express promise, even if we had to seek for a way to understand His perfect will, could we conceive one of greater promise than that of beginning with little things, and so gradually making progress? In all other things is not this the way to perfection? Does not a child learn to walk short distances at first? Who would attempt to bear great weights before he had succeeded with the lesser? It is from God's great goodness that our daily constant duty is placed in the performance of small and comparatively easy services. To be dutiful and obedient in ordinary matters, to speak the truth, to be honest, to be sober, to keep from sinful words and thoughts,

¹⁵⁵ *PPS I*, 18, p.235

to be kind and forgiving,—and all this for our Saviour's sake,—let us attempt *these* duties first¹⁵⁶.

Holy fear is a good thing, as is compunction and mindfulness of our sinful nature; but Newman knows that an unrelieved dwelling on our sinfulness can lead to discouragement. In other sermons Newman puts forward reasons for cheerfulness in our religious lives.

Joy and gladness are also characteristics of [the Christian], according to the exhortation in the text, "Rejoice in the Lord always". ...Now I am speaking about the duty of rejoicing, and I say, that whatever be the duty of fearing greatly and trembling greatly at the thought of the Day of Judgment, and of course it is a great duty, yet the command so to do cannot reverse the command to rejoice; it can only so far interfere with it as to explain what is meant by rejoicing.

Once more, peace is part of this same temper also. "The peace of God," says the Apostle, "which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." There are many things in the Gospel to alarm us, many to agitate us, many to transport us, but the end and issue of all these is peace. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." It may be asked indeed whether warfare, perplexity, and uncertainty be not the condition of the Christian here below....Did you ever look at an expanse of water, and observe the ripples on the surface? Do you think that disturbance penetrates below it? ...The foundations of the ocean, the vast realms of water which girdle the earth, are as tranquil and as silent in the storm as in a calm. So is it with the souls of holy men¹⁵⁷.

For one sermon Newman takes as his text:

"O taste and see how gracious the Lord is: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."
(Psalm xxxiv 8). Newman begins:

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.* p.236

¹⁵⁷ *PPS V, 5*, pp.65-6, 68-9

You see by these words what love Almighty God has towards us, and what claims He has upon our love. He is the Most High, and All-Holy. He inhabiteth eternity: we are but worms compared with Him. He would not be less happy though He had never created us; He would not be less happy though we were all blotted out again from creation. But He is the God of love; He brought us all into existence, because He found satisfaction in surrounding Himself with happy creatures.

"What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done to it?"

[Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Isa. v. 4]¹⁵⁸

While this is theologically true, one wonders how consoling it would be to the deeply deprived and oppressed amongst the working class in England in the early nineteenth century, who would perhaps have responded more to the messages of modern liberation theology. That working class responded well, in great numbers, to the message of God's love as preached by the two Wesleys and the Methodists. Newman was preaching to a less deprived and oppressed congregation who needed to be shaken out of complacency more than they needed emotional or spiritual comfort.

Heaven

Yet everybody needs some encouragement. One great topic to encourage the Christian in the spiritual life is the thought of heaven, the prospect of everlasting happiness. This can easily be presented in childish terms of endless gratifications or, less childishly, of seeing our loved ones again, or of meeting Jesus and the saints face to face – less childish, but still human satisfactions. One would expect Newman to be beyond such beliefs; he said, in a passage already quoted above, that heaven would be intolerable for the unregenerate sinner, that all its happiness consists in divine worship, an activity the sinner rejected throughout life on earth, an activity utterly distasteful to him or her.

Despite such expectations, Newman's relatively few attempts to describe heaven are very strange. Accepting that we cannot hope adequately to describe heaven, nevertheless we

¹⁵⁸ *PPS VII, 14*, p.192

can conclude certain things about it. It is eternal; therefore time has no meaning, heaven is a constant state of “now”; and without time it is unchanging. Yet Newman gives it both time and place.

They [the Saints] are incomplete, as being neither awake nor asleep; I mean, they are in a state of rest, not in the full employment of their powers. ..At present, till the end comes, they are at rest only, which is enough for their peace, enough for our comfort on thinking of them, still, incomplete, compared with what one day shall be.

This, then, on the whole, we may humbly believe to be the condition of the Saints before the Resurrection, a state of repose, rest, security; but again a state more like paradise than heaven—that is, a state which comes short of the glory which shall be revealed in us after the Resurrection, a state of waiting, meditation, hope, in which what has been sown on earth may be matured and completed¹⁵⁹.

First, Christ's Ascension to the right hand of God is marvellous, because it is a sure token that heaven is a certain fixed place, and not a mere state. That bodily presence of the Saviour which the Apostles handled is not here; it is elsewhere,—it is in heaven¹⁶⁰.

Newman does quote Scripture to give an account of heaven, but it is curiously disappointing:

None of us, even the holiest, can guess how happy we shall be; for St. John says, "We know not what we shall be;" [1 John iii. 2.] and St. Paul, "Now we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face." Yet in proportion to our present holiness and virtue, we have some faint ideas of what will then be our blessedness. And in Scripture various descriptions of heaven are given us, in order to arrest,

¹⁵⁹ *PPS III*, 25, pp.373, 382

¹⁶⁰ *PPS II*, 18, p.207

encourage, and humble us. We are told that the Angels of God are very bright, and clad in white robes...¹⁶¹

There follows a long paragraph about white robes and shining faces, and how the lost souls will recognise their own loss and the happiness of the blessed, but Newman gives no indication in what that happiness consists; yet we should strive after it:

Think of all this, my Brethren, and rouse yourselves, and run forward with a good courage on your way towards heaven. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Strive to get holier and holier every day, that you may be worthy to stand before the Son of Man. Pray God to teach you His will, and to lead you forth in the right way, because of your enemies. Submit yourselves to His guidance, and you will have comfort given you, according to your day, and peace at the last¹⁶².

¹⁶¹ *PPS VII, 14*, p.201

¹⁶² *ibid.* p.203

Chapter 5 Christian behaviour

This chapter sets out the details of behaviour that Newman recommends for a Christian trying to advance in the spiritual life. In our own day one might venture to say that the basic disposition urged upon us by Christian preachers is love properly understood – love of God and love of our neighbour for God’s sake. For Newman the basic disposition was obedience. God is the Lord of all and expects obedience from His people, and will judge them against that standard of obedience. Yet the obedience must be for the right spiritual motives; it is possible to obey a superior for one’s own self-seeking motives, or for worldly ones:

Balaam obeyed God from a sense of its being right to do so, but not from a *desire to please Him*, not from *fear and love*. He had other ends, aims, wishes of his own, distinct from God's will and purpose, and he would have effected these if he could. His endeavour was, not to please God, but to please self without displeasing God; to pursue his own ends *as far* as was consistent with his duty. In a word, he did not give his heart to God, but obeyed Him, as a man may obey human law, or observe the usages of society or his country, as something external to himself, because he knows he ought to do so, from a sort of rational good sense, a conviction of its propriety, expediency, or comfort, as the case may be....

Men are just, honest, upright, trustworthy; but all this not from the love and fear of God, but from a mere feeling of obligation to be so, and in subjection to certain worldly objects. And thus they are what is popularly called moral, without being religious. Such was Balaam¹⁶³.

For Newman, the chief, perhaps the only worthwhile motive for doing anything was because it was God’s will – not in a spirit of servile fear, but in accordance with his overriding awareness that only two people really matter, God and himself, and that the only world which really matters is the eternal one. He acknowledges that many men (he

¹⁶³ *PPS IV*, 2, pp.28, 30

speaks almost always only of men) live a respectable life which in externals appears Christian, and they live it with ease. Yet the true Christian life is hard, and “they, who think they enter into it easily, may be quite sure they do not enter into it at all”. The Scripture is strict in its demands. It requires “careful obedience [and] that *self-denial* which is the very substance of true practical religion”:

The multitude of men even who profess religion are in this state of mind.... They have an eye to what the world thinks of them; are charitable when it is expected. They are polished in their manners, kind from natural disposition or a feeling of propriety. Thus their religion is based upon self and the world, a mere *civilization*; ...so they admire it, and accept it as a rule of life, so far forth as it agrees with the carnal principles which govern them. So far as it does *not* agree, they are blind to its excellence and its claims. They overlook or explain away its precepts. They in no sense obey *because* it commands....

It is not enough to listen to what is preached; though many think they have gone a great way when they do this. You *must pray*; now this is very hard in itself to any one who tries (and this is the reason why so many men prefer the sermon to the prayers, because the former is merely the getting *knowledge*, and the latter is to do a *deed* of obedience): you must *pray*; and this I say is very difficult, because our thoughts are so apt to wander. But even this is not all;—you must, as you pray, really intend to *try to practise* what you pray for.... This is difficult; still more is behind. You must actually carry your good intentions into effect during the week, and in truth and reality war against the world, the flesh, and the devil¹⁶⁴.

War against the world, the flesh and the devil is hard. Newman makes no attempt to soften that reality. We cannot “carry good intentions into effect” without constant self-denial.

¹⁶⁴ *PPS I*, 3, pp.30-31, 33-4

Self-denial

Newman reminds us of the need for such self-denial in the continual “war against the world, the flesh, and the devil” and gives us guidelines for pursuing it.

A rigorous self-denial is a chief duty... it may be considered the test whether we are Christ's disciples, whether we are living in a mere dream, which we mistake for Christian faith and obedience, or are really and truly awake, alive, living in the day, on our road heavenwards. ...Christian obedience does not consist merely in a few occasional efforts, a few accidental good deeds, or certain seasons of repentance, prayer, and activity; a mistake, which minds of a certain class are very apt to fall into. ...the word *daily* implies, that the self-denial which is pleasing to Christ consists in little things. This is plain, for opportunity for great self-denials does not come every day. Thus to take up the cross of Christ is no great action done once for all, it consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us¹⁶⁵.

As this quotation implies, heaven is not to be achieved without constancy in effort and God's grace:

Till we, in a certain sense, detach ourselves from our bodies, our minds will not be in a state to receive divine impressions, and to exert heavenly aspirations. A smooth and easy life, an uninterrupted enjoyment of the goods of Providence, full meals, soft raiment, well-furnished homes, the pleasures of sense, the feeling of security, the consciousness of wealth,—these, and the like, if we are not careful, choke up all the avenues of the soul, through which the light and breath of heaven might come to us. A hard life is, alas! no certain method of becoming spiritually minded, but it is one out of the means by which Almighty God makes us so¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶⁵ *PPS I*, 5, pp.66-67

¹⁶⁶ *PPS V*, 23, p.337

In many sermons, and in the example of his whole life, Newman advocated asceticism. He constantly fasted and urged fasting on his congregations – not as a good in itself, in an anorexic fervour, but as a denial of self, an abstention from something intrinsically good in order to strengthen oneself to resist harmful temptations. He also saw such self-denial as an earnest of one's commitment to God. It must be acknowledged that this led him to some excesses, for instance a diet entirely of protein and carbohydrate, devoid of vitamins, for six weeks. Blehl quotes from his journal:

I have this Lent abstained from fish, fowl, all meat but bacon at dinner; from butter, vegetables of all sorts, fruit, pastry, sugar, tea, wine, and beer and toast...I breakfasted on bread & hot milk with an egg; dined on cold bacon, bread, cheese, and water; supped on barley water, bread, and an egg¹⁶⁷.

We are by human nature almost committed to the pursuit of self-interest, ease and pleasure, so that the concept of self-denial can be unfamiliar. Someone newly embarking on such a life might readily take certain steps which might be excessive, or more commonly one might forego things pleasant in themselves but not difficult to give up; one thinks of those who give up chocolates for Lent, instead of resolving to curb their tempers. Newman has sound practical advice on how to go about real self-denial:

...Now let every one consider what his weak point is; in that is his trial. His trial is not in those things which are easy to him, but in that one thing, in those several things, whatever they are, in which to do his duty is against his nature. ...It may so happen that the sin you are most liable to, is not called forth every day. For instance: anger and passion are irresistible perhaps when they come upon you, but it is only at times that you are provoked, and then you are off your guard; so that the occasion is over, and you have failed, before you were well aware of its coming. It is right then almost to *find out* for yourself daily self-denials; and this because our Lord bids you take up your cross daily, and because it proves your earnestness, and because by doing so you strengthen your general power of self-mastery, and come to have such an habitual command of yourself, as will be a

¹⁶⁷ Blehl *Pilgrim* 256-7

defence ready prepared when the season of temptation comes. Rise up then in the morning with the purpose that (please God) the day shall not pass without its self-denial, with a self-denial in innocent pleasures and tastes, if none occurs to mortify sin. Let your very rising from your bed be a self-denial; let your meals be self-denials. Determine to yield to others in things indifferent, to go out of your way in small matters, to inconvenience yourself (so that no direct duty suffers by it), rather than you should not meet with your daily discipline. ...A man says to himself, "How am I to know I am in earnest?" I would suggest to him, Make some sacrifice, do some distasteful thing, which you are not actually obliged to do, (so that it be lawful,) to bring home to your mind that in fact you do love your Saviour, that you do hate sin, that you do hate your sinful nature, that you have put aside the present world. Thus you will have an evidence (to a certain point) that you are not using mere words¹⁶⁸.

We see in that quotation Newman's moderation, his balance, insisting that our sacrifices should be "lawful" and such "that no direct duty suffers" by them. We see also his practicality: "opportunity for great self-denials does not come every day. Thus to take up the cross of Christ ...consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us". Any of us can do this, because all of us face these small distasteful duties every day. His practicality shows further in his frank realism. As he constantly emphasises, the thorough practice of religion is not fun:

In books, everything is made beautiful in its way. Pictures are drawn of *complete* virtue; little is said about failures, and little or nothing of the drudgery of ordinary, everyday obedience, which is neither poetical nor interesting. True faith teaches us to do numberless disagreeable things for Christ's sake, to bear petty annoyances, which we find written down in no book. In most books Christian conduct is made grand, elevated, and splendid; so that any one, who only knows of true religion from books, and not from actual endeavours to be religious, is sure to be offended at religion when he actually comes upon it, from the roughness and

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.* pp.68-70

humbleness of his duties, and his necessary deficiencies in doing them. It is beautiful in a picture to wash the disciples' feet; but the sands of the real desert have no lustre in them to compensate for the servile nature of the occupation¹⁶⁹.

Newman is very conscious that religious sentiments can be warm and comforting and bear little relation to the actual living of the Christian life. He refers more than once to the parable of the two sons (Mt 21: 28-30), one of whom said he would not work in the vineyard but repented and went and worked, the other of whom "said: 'I go, Sir' and went not". In a sermon on that text Newman attacks idle self-deception and empty promises of repentance and amendment in old age, saying:

So very difficult is obedience, so hardly won is every step in our Christian course, so sluggish and inert our corrupt nature, that I would have a man disbelieve he can do one jot or tittle beyond what he has already done; refrain from borrowing aught on the hope of the future, however good a security for it he seems to be able to show; and never take his good feelings and wishes in pledge for one single untried deed. Nothing but *past* acts are the vouchers for *future*.... But trust nothing short of these. "Deeds, not words and wishes," this must be the watchword of your warfare and the ground of your assurance¹⁷⁰.

Unfortunately, people do not readily commit themselves to effort for religious motives. As a controversialist Newman displayed a gift for sarcasm. It comes seldom into his sermons, but here is one occasion:

If our hearts *must* be changed to fit us for heaven, let them be changed, only let us have no trouble in the work ourselves. Let the change be part of the work done for us; let us literally be clay in the hands of the potter; let us sleep, and dream, and wake in the morning new men; let us have no fear and trembling, no working out salvation, no self-denial. Let Christ suffer, but be it ours to rejoice only. What we

¹⁶⁹ *PPS II*, 30, p.374

¹⁷⁰ *PPS I*, 13, p.168

wish is, to be at ease; we wish to have every thing our own way; we wish to enjoy both this world and the next; we wish to be happy all at once¹⁷¹.

This passage reinforces what Newman has said about self-denial: that only through such effort, not simply by fine thoughts and words, do we show our obedience to God and our love of Him.

Joy

The austerity and strictness of Newman's demands were noted even by himself, let alone by modern writers; yet he frequently argues that true Christianity is a source of joy, and that Christ's yoke is indeed sweet, and though the burden may not be as light as one would wish, the burden of sin is greater. He recognizes the paradox of cheerfulness in the midst of strenuous efforts, but is concerned from time to time to arouse and inspire his congregations:

Nothing perhaps is more remarkable than that an Apostle,—a man of toil and blood, a man combating with powers unseen, and a spectacle for men and Angels, and much more than St. Paul, a man whose natural temper was so zealous, so severe, and so vehement,—I say, nothing is more striking and significant than that St. Paul should have given us this view of what a Christian should be. It would be nothing wonderful, it is nothing wonderful, that writers in a day like this should speak of peace, quiet, sobriety, and cheerfulness, as being the tone of mind that becomes a Christian; but considering that St. Paul was by birth a Jew, and by education a Pharisee, that he wrote at a time when, if at any time, Christians were in lively and incessant agitation of mind; when persecution and rumours of persecution abounded; when all things seemed in commotion around them; when there was nothing fixed; when there were no churches to soothe them, no course of worship to sober them, no homes to refresh them; and, again, considering that the Gospel is full of high and noble, and what may be called even romantic, principles and motives, and deep mysteries;—and, further, considering the very

¹⁷¹ *PPS VII, 11, p.153*

topic which the Apostle combines with his admonitions is that awful subject, the coming of Christ;—it is well worthy of notice, that, in such a time, under such a covenant, and with such a prospect, he should draw a picture of the Christian character as free from excitement and effort, as full of repose, as still and as equable, as if the great Apostle wrote in some monastery of the desert or some country parsonage¹⁷².

Having urged us to such calm in the midst of striving and suffering, Newman then gives the grounds for such equanimity: the assurance we have from Christ Himself that all will be well:

When we read a book of fiction, we are much excited with the course of the narrative, till we know how things will turn out; but when we do, the interest ceases. So is it with the Christian. He knows Christ's battle will last till the end; that Christ's cause will triumph in the end; that His Church will last till He comes¹⁷³.

Newman argues that holy fear should not diminish holy joy; the two are complementary:

Joy and gladness are also characteristics of him, according to the exhortation in the text, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," and this in spite of the fear and awe which the thought of the Last Day ought to produce in him. It is by means of these strong contrasts that Scripture brings out to us what is the real meaning of its separate portions. If we had been told merely to fear, we should have mistaken a slavish dread, or the gloom of despair, for godly fear; and if we had been told merely to rejoice, we should perhaps have mistaken a rude freedom and familiarity for joy; but when we are told both to fear and to rejoice, we gain thus much at first sight, that our joy is not to be irreverent, nor our fear to be

¹⁷² It is worth noting as a point of style that almost all of this passage comprises one elaborate sentence. The passage, and the next three quoted, come from *PPS V*, 5; this passage is on pp.59-60.

¹⁷³ *ibid.* p.65

desponding; that though both feelings are to remain, neither is to be what it would be by itself. This is what we gain at once by such contrasts¹⁷⁴.

It is this combination of holy fear and reverent joy and trust in the Lord that give the true Christian the peace of mind that Newman noted in St. Paul. He sums it up in a passage as beautiful in language as it is idealized in content:

The Christian has a deep, silent, hidden peace, which the world sees not,—like some well in a retired and shady place, difficult of access... What he is when left to himself and to his God, that is his true life.... The Christian is cheerful, easy, kind, gentle, courteous, candid, unassuming; has no pretence, no affectation, no ambition, no singularity; because he has neither hope nor fear about this world. He is serious, sober, discreet, grave, moderate, mild, with so little that is unusual or striking in his bearing, that he may easily be taken at first sight for an ordinary man. There are persons who think religion consists in ecstasies, or in set speeches;—he is not of those¹⁷⁵.

Indeed, in a sermon entitled “The State of Grace”, a sermon intended to cheer and uplift the congregation, Newman tells them:

Strictness is the condition of rejoicing. The Christian is a soldier; he may have many falls; these need not hinder his joy in the Gospel; he must be humbled indeed, but not downcast; it does not prove he is not fighting.... Penitents cannot hope to be as cheerful and joyful in faith as those who have never fallen away from God; perhaps it is not desirable they should be, and is a bad sign if they are. I do not mean to say that in the course of years, and after severe humiliation, it is not possible for a repentant sinner to feel a well-grounded peace and comfort, but he must not expect it¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* pp.65-6

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.* pp.69, 70-71

¹⁷⁶ *PPS IV*, 9, p.138

Again, this is like the doctor warning that the treatment, though beneficial, will be painful.

The Blessed Virgin

Newman sees in the Virgin Mary a model of the everyday Christian's life. In the early part of his career as an Anglican priest he had been critical of the Roman Catholic Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which he regarded as excessive, if not infringing on the worship due to her Son. Under the influence of some friends, in particular Hurrell Froude, his attitude softened, as it did to several other aspects of Roman Catholicism. In a sermon first preached on March 25, 1832 for the Feast of the Annunciation he says:

Who can estimate the holiness and perfection of her, who was chosen to be the Mother of Christ? If to him that hath, more is given, and holiness and Divine favour go together (and this we are expressly told), what must have been the transcendent purity of her, whom the Creator Spirit condescended to overshadow with His miraculous presence? What must have been her gifts, who was chosen to be the only near earthly relative of the Son of God, the only one whom He was bound by nature to revere and look up to; the one appointed to train and educate Him, to instruct Him day by day, as He grew in wisdom and in stature? This contemplation runs to a higher subject, did we dare follow it; for what, think you, was the sanctified state of that human nature, of which God formed His sinless Son; knowing as we do, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and that "none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" [1 John iii. 6. Job xiv. 4.]

He then draws lessons of conduct from Our Lady:

The highest graces of the soul may be matured in private, and without those fierce trials to which the many are exposed in order to their sanctification.... God gives His Holy Spirit to us silently; and the silent duties of every day (it may be humbly hoped) are blest to the sufficient sanctification of thousands, whom the world

knows not of. The Blessed Virgin is a memorial of this; and it is consoling as well as instructive to know it.... There are those who go on in a calm and unswerving course, learning day by day to love Him who has redeemed them, and overcoming the sin of their nature by His heavenly grace, as the various temptations to evil successively present themselves. And, of these undefiled followers of the Lamb, the Blessed Mary is the chief.... And when sorrow came upon her afterwards, it was but the blessed participation of her Son's sacred sorrows, not the sorrow of those who suffer for their sins¹⁷⁷.

This passage reinforces what Newman has said (quoted above) about the inner calm of committed Christians, “those who go on in a calm and unswerving course”. The Blessed Virgin is a model of this and a living demonstration that “God gives His Holy Spirit to us silently”.

The sermon quoted above is entitled “The Reverence due to the Blessed Virgin Mary”, a title which sounds almost as if redressing an inadequacy – which in the Anglicanism of the early 19th century may well be a true picture. Newman does not in his Anglican sermons preach any special devotion to Our Lady as a Catholic priest might. To go further would have put Newman far from the Anglican mainstream, a position to which he did not arrive until he had ceased public preaching, in his last two or three years before entering the Church of Rome. However he is happy to present the Virgin as an example of supreme holiness in the daily discharge of small duties. It is an unusual step for an Anglican priest to take at that time.

Summary

Newman’s principles of Christian behaviour require obedience to God in all circumstances, and constant self-denial, but always for pure motives, not for any self-centred motives such as inspired Balaam. In such a way of life, lived in the small duties of every day, one finds the calm and joy of the Apostle Paul and of the Mother of Christ.

¹⁷⁷ *PPS II, 12*, pp.131-2,136-7

Chapter 6 The basis of Newman's success; conclusion

An interesting discrepancy arises in the treatment of Newman by modern religious writers. The Catholic writers, Blehl, Bouyer, Dessain and Ker write warmly sympathetic accounts, at times verging on hagiography – George Herring describes Catholics' "almost reverential attitude to his life and work"¹⁷⁸. The Anglican writers Herring and Paul Avery are much more ready to see in Newman's writing exaggeration and distortion, while recognising his literary gifts and his influence in nineteenth-century English intellectual and religious history. One of the most recent writers, the American Jesuit Avery Dulles, in a sober assessment pays tribute to Newman's gifts and influence while gently rejecting some of the excessive claims, and points out: "Theologians who claim to be his followers tend to quote different passages and thus use Newman against one another. Modernists, liberals and theological conservatives can all find texts from his writings to support their preferred theses"¹⁷⁹.

Peter Nockles, who describes himself as "always a personally committed Roman Catholic" has great sympathy for Newman's views but is by no means uncritical. As he says, his researches "caused that questioning of some of the assumptions of the received Anglo-Catholic historiography which characterises the following pages"¹⁸⁰. In particular he finds more of tactics than candour in some of Newman's polemics; for instance, in the 1833-34 controversy over the Coronation Oath, Nockles says:

Newman's readiness to bow to the totems of Protestant constitutionalism purely as a rhetorical device to disarm contemporary churchmen should not be underestimated. The suspicion lingers that Newman's letter to the British Magazine may have been something of a tactical ploy¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁸ Herring, *Oxford Movement*, 51. That reverence is now sanctioned amongst Catholics by the progress of Newman's cause for canonisation.

¹⁷⁹ Dulles, *Newman*, 164

¹⁸⁰ Nockles *The Oxford Movement in context* xii

¹⁸¹ *ibid.* 76-7

The Anglican Moorman is frankly admiring of Newman's sermons, in style ("all written in the best possible English"¹⁸²) and especially in their content.

Newman's great theme was the need for holiness of life. 'A rigorous self-denial is a chief duty'. What is a Christian? he asks over and over again. Christianity is not just goodness, honesty, justice. All these things can be shown by Jews, infidels and heretics. To be a Christian is to love and worship Christ with everything that we have. It is to make Christ the very centre of our lives¹⁸³.

Another Anglican, Mursell, is more ambivalent, admiring Newman's integrity while daunted by his extremism:

There is a sense in which, of all the great spiritual writers considered in this book, he is the most difficult to assess, for the very reasons that led him on the journey to Rome: because he, like the truth which animated him, is indivisible, not susceptible of being taken piecemeal. Its strength is his: an intellectual integrity and coherence of extraordinary power, a vision of the spiritual life capable of anchoring those who make it their own in a tradition that reaches back to the wellsprings of Christianity, and in which Catholic truth becomes a living source of inexhaustible riches for those who submit themselves to its overriding demands. And that strength is all the more impressive for being so contrary to so much that was ephemeral and superficial at the time.

Yet it is also daunting, severe rather than beautiful, forbidding rather than attractive¹⁸⁴.

Blehl¹⁸⁵ cites Newman's correspondence to indicate what Blehl takes to be the heart of his message.

¹⁸² Moorman op.cit.157

¹⁸³ Moorman op.cit. 155-6, quoting *PPS I*, 5.

¹⁸⁴ Mursell, *English Spirituality*, v.2, 278.

¹⁸⁵ Blehl, *Pilgrim*, 152

Newman admitted that his sermons were concerned not with influencing or converting (which Evangelical sermons were concerned with) but with the means of sanctification, which he felt Evangelical sermons were deficient in. ‘We want the claims of duty and the details of obedience set before us strongly’.

Newman said also that in selecting his sermons for publication in the third volume of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* “I intended it to be milder and more affectionate than the others, i.e. I selected my severe ones for the first [two volumes] and my gentler ones for this”¹⁸⁶. His reason was in the first instance to distance his preaching from that of the Evangelicals, which was in his view emotional and lacking in due rigour.

Frank M. Turner has explored in detail Newman’s antipathy towards Evangelicalism, despite his early attraction to it. However, Turner comes to the conclusion that Newman’s psychological make-up drove his religious attitudes:

The restlessness of Newman’s mind, the inability of his spirit to find a steady spiritual refuge, his family conflicts, his resentment of authority, his frustrated personal ambitions, and his determination to live with other celibate males had led him to challenge evangelicalism and all its works¹⁸⁷.

Other writers on Newman have noted each of these features but do not place the weight on them that Turner does – in particular “Newman’s ambition for a monastic life defined largely on his own terms”, “Newman’s monastic yearning”. No other writer has accepted that: “Because of the power of the monastic imperative in his life, the aspiration to the Catholic in Newman seems invariably to have served the personal and the parochial”¹⁸⁸.

In Newman’s preaching, the means of sanctification, the claims of duty and the details of obedience are all set within the presumption that only the invisible world is real. Blehl

¹⁸⁶ Blehl, *Pilgrim*, 174

¹⁸⁷ Turner, *John Henry Newman*, 641

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.* 639

refers to “one of his most unforgettable sermons, ‘The Invisible World’ [*PPS IV, 13*].... In it he attempted... to make the invisible world as real to faith as the external world is to the senses. In the following years Newman gave the impression in his sermons that he himself dwelt in this world”. Blehl quotes the witness William Lockhart:

I could never have believed beforehand, that it was possible that a few words, read very quietly from a manuscript, without any rhetorical effort, could have so penetrated our souls. I do not see how this could have been, unless he who spoke was himself a *seer*, who saw God, and the things of God, and spoke that which he had seen, in the keen, bright intuition of faith¹⁸⁹ .

This extraordinary psychological power is attested by many. Bouyer spends several pages (pp. 178-186) on the two elements, the invisible world and Newman’s empathy:

It would be an endless task to quote what was said by people who dropped in more or less casually at St Mary’s to hear what was going on and were suddenly overwhelmed by the feeling that that slight and dimly seen figure in the pulpit was talking to *them*, quietly telling them about themselves, telling them things which they had thought unknown to any but themselves... Newman was endowed with a sort of second-sight which enabled him to see the invisible in and beyond the visible, things the most transcendental as well as those most deeply immanent in the human heart. Moreover, this visionary power was accompanied by a gift for acting on the minds of others which, though partly to be explained by his consummate command of language, derived also from some mysterious power he possessed of entering into their hearts and reading their sentiments...Newman understands our experiences as well as – nay, better than – we do ourselves...We recognise ourselves in what he tells us and discover what he alone had been able to discern¹⁹⁰ .

¹⁸⁹ Blehl, *Pilgrim*, 201

¹⁹⁰ Bouyer, *Newman*, 180, 181

In the course of several pages spent examining Newman's impact on his hearers, Blehl¹⁹¹ quotes a number of contemporaries describing his insight. They include a future Archbishop of Armagh, a future Lord Chief Justice of England, and others of less exalted station. For instance:

Newman, taking some Scripture character for a text, spoke to us about ourselves, our temptations, our experiences... He seemed to be addressing the most secret consciousness of each of us, as the eyes of a portrait appear to look at every person in a room (J. A. Froude).

The preacher seemed to enter into the very minds of his hearers, and, as it were, to reveal them to themselves, and to tell them their very innermost thoughts (Dean Lake).

He laid his finger – gently, yet how powerfully – on some inner place in the hearer's heart, and told him things about himself he had never known till then (Principal Shairp).

There is a remarkable commonality in these perceptions. That empathy is not something which can be taught or fabricated. It is the outcome of the process Newman took as the motto for his cardinalate coat of arms: *Cor ad cor loquitur* – Heart speaks to heart.

The doyen of Newman studies in our time, Professor Ian Ker, in *Healing the Wound of Humanity: the Spirituality of John Henry Newman* explores the strong theological base of Newman's preaching – his recognition of the weakness in his early Evangelicalism; the existence of a personal God; the person of Jesus Christ; the Trinitarian nature of God. Ker then discusses the importance of the sacraments in Newman's teaching, the nature of the Church as a communion of persons, holiness in our behaviour, and Newman's approaches to death, judgement, purgatory and heaven, with some reference to hell as the place of deprivation. Ker traverses the whole corpus of Newman's writings to present his picture, but these last two

¹⁹¹ Blehl, *Pilgrim*, 231-8

chapters draw almost entirely on the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* which are the concern of this thesis.

The penultimate chapter, *Christianity as the Presence of Persons*, begins with a reference to the severity and strictness which we have noted above in Newman's sermons. "Hilda Graef has accused him, as an Anglican, of overemphasizing the fear rather than the love of God, of lacking joy, of preaching 'a perpetual Lent', of an unchristian rigidity, of an unemotional detachment which is more Stoical than Christian"¹⁹². This attitude, to the extent that it existed, was in part a reaction shared by other Tractarians against the emotional attitude of the Evangelicals and in part a challenge to the complacency of traditional Anglicans at the time.

Ker argues that for Newman "the foundation of the Christian life" was "the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit" and this "lies at the heart of his uncompromising spirituality".

The intimate presence of the Holy Spirit carries with it the most momentous possibilities for personal sanctification....The failure to take advantage of such an extraordinary gift carries a special moral responsibility...Sin...for a Christian is not merely the transgression of a law or moral principle but is in effect a personal insult, as being an offence against the person of Christ whose deeply intimate presence in the Christian is guaranteed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit....Not merely the infringement of a norm or the lapse from a standard, sin takes on an alarmingly personal character¹⁹³.

Sinfulness and holiness are the result of an accumulation of acts, often small acts which lead to habits – a habit of rejection of God or a habit of cooperation with the Spirit. "If it is difficult to build up good habits, once they are built up virtue becomes almost effortless"¹⁹⁴. This comes through constant self-denial, through prayer and the sacraments and the grace of God; and the virtue is not self-regarding but is expressed in charity and in community . Thus in contrast to

¹⁹² Ian Ker *Healing the Wound of Humanity: the Spirituality of John Henry Newman* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1993) 87.

¹⁹³ Ker, *Healing the Wound* 88-9.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.* 91

the Evangelicals, who taught that one is justified by faith alone, achieved in a moment of conversion, and to the Calvinists who believed in the predestination of the elect regardless of human effort, Newman preached that faith and grace are necessary but so are self-denial, effort, repeated repentance and therefore holy fear of God's ultimate judgement. His severity is not to terrify us but to turn us from the sacrilege, the insult of evicting the Holy Spirit from our hearts.

More recently, in his introduction to his selection of Newman's sermons,¹⁹⁵ Ker discusses at length the spirituality that Newman expresses in the sermons. Ker's picture, though more succinct, accords closely with that set out in this thesis. He notes the deeply scriptural basis of the sermons, to the point that some of them are "an extended reading from Scripture...a veritable flood of biblical texts" (p.11). He notes also Newman's tendency (noted earlier in this thesis) to a paradoxical approach, as in his treatment of the non-prodigal son, and of Balaam. These are essentially matters of rhetorical style rather than spirituality itself.

Ker, like others, perceives Newman's spiritual teaching as in part a reaction against Evangelicalism. Hence his stress on the need to accept God's law and to practise obedience to it in contrast to the Evangelicals' emphasis on faith. Christianity, says Newman, is not a matter of emotions; it is hard and requires much self-denial, with a focus outwards towards Jesus, not inwards towards our own feelings (pp.14-16). That is not to deny the importance of self-knowledge; we need to recognise how readily we can rationalise our faults and excuse our sins. Ker says: "Newman is a preacher not of glowing words but of harsh realities" (p.45). We need also to face up to the reality of what we say we believe; many claim to be Christians without accepting into their hearts and behaviour what it means to be truly a Christian. Worldly respectability is by no means true religion.

Ker quotes from the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* Newman's naming of the Incarnation as the central aspect of Christianity, whereas the usual attitude of the time gave that place to the Crucifixion and Atonement – not that these great truths should be in competition. It

¹⁹⁵ *Selected Sermons* ed. Ian Ker (New York: Paulist Press 1994).

was his study of the Greek Fathers that brought Newman to this position, against the mainstream of his time. As Jesus on earth acted in total obedience to His Father, so Newman constantly preaches the importance of obedience to God's law, revealed in Scripture, the Church and our own consciences. We form a habit of obedience through habits of self-denial, formed through repeated small observances; once they become habitual, obedience becomes easy. Obedience is the ultimate self-denial, and "has a very positive as well as a negative importance, for 'it is the rule of God's providence, that those who act up to their light, shall be rewarded with a clearer light'" (p.50, citing *PPS VIII* 98).

This is the road to holiness; but in accordance with his distrust of our interpretations of our own states, Newman recommends that we should not pray simply to be holy; as Ker says: "There is little point in praying to be holy if one does not particularly want to be holy and if it is the wish to be holy for which one should in fact be praying" (p.46). With such prayer, and a commitment to self-denial and to obedience, we allow the indwelling Holy Spirit to be manifest in us. "The ultimate source of holiness is of course for Newman 'the indwelling of the Holy Spirit'" (p.49).

Ker has achieved here a remarkable distillation of the spirituality which Newman preached.

Concluding summary

It is time to summarise my view of the spirituality that Newman was trying to cultivate in his congregations. Most of them, almost certainly, were ordinary decent people, brought up in the Church of England, not given to questioning doctrines or practices, and not given to expending energy of mind, body or heart on religious matters beyond attending church on Sundays.

Newman's first task was to penetrate that complacency, to get them to realise that religious belief and practice are not matters of routine or optional extras in life. They are the very basis of life, now and forever. The titles of his first two published sermons are: *Holiness necessary for future blessedness*; and *The immortality of the soul*.

It should not be thought that Newman was raising these topics as mere devices to penetrate complacency. He has told us in his *Apologia* and we have seen again and again in his sermons that they are his own innermost beliefs. The real world, the important world to him is the world beyond the world of material phenomena, beyond the world we see; in the real world there are "two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator"¹⁹⁶.

His task as a preacher is to bring his congregations to that point of view. It is a difficult task.

As Newman says:

There are many men, nay the greater part of a Christian country, who have neither hope nor fear about futurity or the unseen world; they do not think of it at all, or bring the idea of it home to them in any shape. They do not really understand, or try to understand, that they are in God's presence, and must one day be judged for what they are now doing, any more than they see what is going on in another quarter of the world, or concern themselves about what is to happen to them ten years hence. The next world is far more distant from them than any future period of this life or any other country; and consequently, they have neither hope nor fear about it, for they have no thought about it of any kind¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹⁶ *Apologia* p.27; see also p. 63 above.

¹⁹⁷ *PPS* IV, 9, p.133

As others have pointed out, he has another constant task: to counteract the Evangelical view that one was saved by faith only, and knew that one was saved – a view which inevitably contributed to the complacency he was labouring to dispel.

There are others who feel no fear whatever, though they profess to feel much joy and transport. I cannot sympathize with such, nor do I think St. Paul would, for he bids us "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" nor St. Peter, who bids us "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear." [Phil. ii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 17.]¹⁹⁸

Instead Newman emphasises the need to "watch and pray", to practise self-denial and to be obedient to God's will. He attempts constantly to instil holy fear into the congregation, warning them that they are to face judgement after death. In a sermon entitled *Love the one thing needful*¹⁹⁹ he tells us "religion consists of love *and* fear", but much of that sermon is berating us for our lack of love. One might think that Newman uses fear as a principal driver of behaviour, but that is not his real purpose:

[Obedience] indeed might be enough, were reward and punishment to follow in the mere way of nature, as they do in this world. But when we come steadily to consider the matter, appearing before God, and dwelling in His presence, is a very different thing from being merely subjected to a system of moral laws, and would seem to require another preparation, a special preparation of thought and affection, such as will enable us to endure His countenance, and to hold communion with Him as we ought²⁰⁰.

Newman's real purpose in all his sermons is to prepare his hearers to dwell in God's presence and "to hold communion with him as we ought". He is in fact trying to implement spirituality as in Sheldrake's definition, quoted at the beginning of this thesis: "Spirituality is the whole of human life viewed in terms of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and within the community of believers". We have seen how Newman

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.* pp.133-4

¹⁹⁹ *PPS V*, 23.

²⁰⁰ *PPS V, I*, p.6

commends “a habit of prayer, the practice of turning to God and the unseen world, in every season, in every place, in every emergency”²⁰¹. Holiness, and its opposite, sinfulness, are not individual acts but a habit of the soul which expresses itself in individual acts both great and small and is developed by them. Few of us have the opportunity for great acts of any kind, and holiness is expressed and developed constantly in the small commonplace acts that all of us must perform, “the silent duties of every day” as he calls them in his sermon on the Blessed Virgin²⁰² whom he takes as the exemplar of such holiness. As we develop such habits, holiness becomes our nature, and the Spirit dwells welcome in us.

²⁰¹ See p. 50 above, and *PPS IV, 15*, p.230

²⁰² *PPS II, 12*, p.136

APPENDIX: PASSAGES ON THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

PPS II, 19, pp.218, 220, 221, 222

The condescension of the Blessed Spirit is as incomprehensible as that of the Son. He has ever been the secret Presence of God within the Creation: a source of life amid the chaos, bringing out into form and order what was at first shapeless and void, and the voice of Truth in the hearts of all rational beings, tuning them into harmony with the intimations of God's Law, which were externally made to them. Hence He is especially called the "life-giving" Spirit; being (as it were) the Soul of universal nature, the Strength of man and beast, the Guide of faith, the Witness against sin, the inward Light of patriarchs and prophets, the Grace abiding in the Christian soul, and the Lord and Ruler of the Church. Therefore let us ever praise the Father Almighty, who is the first Source of all perfection, in and together with His Co-equal Son and Spirit, through whose gracious ministrations we have been given to see "what manner of love" it is wherewith the Father has loved us.

When our Lord entered upon His Ministry, He acted as though He were a mere man, needing grace, and received the consecration of the Holy Spirit for our sakes. He became the Christ, or Anointed, that the Spirit might be seen to come from God, and to pass from Him to us. And, therefore, the heavenly Gift is not simply called the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, that we might clearly understand, that He comes to us from and instead of Christ. Thus St. Paul says, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts;" and our Lord breathed on His Apostles, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and He says elsewhere to them, "If I depart, I will send Him unto you."
[Gal. iv. 6. John xx. 22; xvi. 7.]

We are able to see that the Saviour, when once He entered into this world, never so departed as to suffer things to be as before He came; for He still is with us, not in mere gifts, but by the substitution of His Spirit for Himself, and that, both in the Church and in the souls of individual Christians.

To proceed: The Holy Ghost, I have said, dwells in body and soul, as in a temple. Evil spirits indeed have power to possess sinners, but His indwelling is far more perfect; for He is all-knowing and omnipresent, He is able to search into all our thoughts, and penetrate into every motive of the heart. Therefore, He pervades us (if it may be so said) as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume the folds of some honourable robe; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in Him, and He in us.

III, 18, pp.269-70

Let us adore the Sacred Presence within us with all fear, and "rejoice with trembling." Let us offer up our best gifts in sacrifice to Him who, instead of abhorring, has taken up his abode in these sinful hearts of ours. Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, "good works and alms-deeds," a bold and true confession and a self-denying walk, are the ritual of worship by which we serve Him in these His Temples. ...In this, then, consists our whole duty, first in contemplating Almighty God, as in Heaven, so in our hearts and souls; and next, while we contemplate Him, in acting towards and for Him in the works of every day; in viewing by faith His glory without and within us, and in acknowledging it by our obedience. Thus we shall unite conceptions the most lofty concerning His majesty and bounty towards us, with the most lowly, minute, and unostentatious service to Him.

IV, 9, p.146

O fearful follower of Christ, how is it thou hast never thought of what thou art and what is in thee? Art thou not Christ's purchased possession? Has He not rescued thee from the devil, and put a new nature within thee? Did He not in Baptism cast out the evil spirit and enter into thee Himself, and dwell in thee as if thou hadst been an Archangel, or one of the Seraphim who worship before Him continually?

IV, 11, pp.168-70

IT was the great promise of the Gospel, that the Lord of all, who had hitherto manifested himself externally to His servants, should take up His abode in their hearts. This, as you

must recollect, is frequently the language of the Prophets; and it was the language of our Saviour when He came on earth: "I will love him," He says, speaking of those who love and obey Him, "and will manifest Myself to him ... We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." [John xiv. 21, 23.] Though He had come in our flesh, so as to be seen and handled, even this was not enough. Still He was external and separate; but after His ascension He descended again by and in His Spirit, and then at length the promise was fulfilled.

There must indeed be a union between all creatures and their Almighty Creator even for their very existence; for it is said, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being;" and in one of the Psalms, "When Thou lettest Thy breath go forth, they shall be made." [Psalm civ. 30.] But far higher, more intimate, and more sacred is the indwelling of God in the hearts of His elect people;—so intimate, that compared with it, He may well be said not to inhabit other men at all; His presence being specified as the characteristic privilege of His own redeemed servants.

From the day of Pentecost, to the present time, it has been their privilege, according to the promise, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever,"—for ever: not like the Son of man, who having finished His gracious work went away. Then it is added, "even the Spirit of Truth:" that is, He who came for ever, came as a Spirit, and, so coming, did for His own that which the visible flesh and blood of the Son of man, from its very nature, could not do, viz., He came into the souls of all who believe, and taking possession of them, He, being One, knit them all together into one. Christ, by coming in the flesh, provided an external or apparent unity, such as had been under the Law. He formed His Apostles into a visible society; but when He came again in the person of His Spirit, He made them all in a real sense one, not in name only. For they were no longer arranged merely in the form of unity, as the limbs of the dead may be, but they were parts and organs of one unseen power; they really depended upon, and were offshoots of that which was One; their separate persons were taken into a mysterious union with things unseen, were grafted upon and assimilated to the spiritual body of Christ, which is One, even by the Holy Ghost, in whom Christ has come again to us. Thus Christ came, not to make us one, but

to die for us: the Spirit came to make us one in Him who had died and was alive, that is, to form the Church.

This then is the special glory of the Christian Church, that its members do not depend merely on what is visible, they are not mere stones of a building, piled one on another, and bound together from without, but they are one and all the births and manifestations of one and the same unseen spiritual principle or power, "living stones," internally connected, as branches from a tree, not as the parts of a heap. They are members of the Body of Christ.

VI, 10, pp.125-7, 133

But again: you may be led to explain His declaration thus; "He *has* come again, but in His Spirit; that is, His Spirit has come instead of Him; and when it is said that He is with us, this only means that His Spirit is with us." No one, doubtless, can deny this most gracious and consolatory truth, that the Holy Ghost is come; but why has He come? to supply Christ's absence, or to accomplish His presence? Surely to make Him present. Let us not for a moment suppose that God the Holy Ghost comes in such sense that God the Son remains away. No; He has not so come that Christ does not come, but rather He comes that Christ may come in His coming. Through the Holy Ghost we have communion with Father and Son. "In Christ we are builded together," says St. Paul, "for an habitation of God through the Spirit." "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The Holy Spirit causes, faith welcomes, the indwelling of Christ in the heart. Thus the Spirit does not take the place of Christ in the soul, but secures that place to Christ. St. Paul insists much on this presence of Christ in those who have His Spirit. "Know ye not," he says, "that your bodies are the members of Christ?" "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body ... ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And St. John: "He that hath the Son, hath Life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not Life." And our Lord Himself, "Abide in Me and I in you: I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth

in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." The Holy Spirit, then, vouchsafes to come to us, that by His coming Christ may come to us, not carnally or visibly, but may enter into us. And thus He is both present and absent; absent in that He has left the earth, present in that He has not left the faithful soul; or, as He says Himself, "The *world* seeth Me no more, but *ye* see Me." [Eph. ii. 22. 1 Cor. iii. 16. Eph. iii. 17. 1 Cor. vi. 15; xii. 13, 27. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Col. i. 27. 1 John v. 12. John xv. 4, 5; xiv. 19.]

Let so much suffice, by way of suggesting thoughts upon this most Solemn and elevating subject. Christ has promised He will be with us to the end,—with us, not only as He is in the unity of the Father and the Son, not in the Omnipresence of the Divine Nature, but personally, as the Christ, as God and man; not present with us locally and sensibly, but still really, in our hearts and to our faith. And it is by the Holy Ghost that this gracious communion is effected. How He effects it we know not; in what precisely it consists we know not. We see Him not; but we are to believe that we possess Him.

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