

John Henry Newman: Mariology and the Scope of Reason in the Modern Age

PAIGE E. HOCHSCHILD

Mount St. Mary's University

Emmitsburg, MD

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S *An Essay in Aid of the Grammar of Assent* is rightly read as a reaction to an increasingly narrow conception of human reasoning in nineteenth-century British philosophy. Scholars have noted the complexity of Newman's relation to Locke and Hume, but his chief ally in the *Essay* is Aristotle.¹ The "illative sense" that is developed in the conclusion of the *Essay* is a careful and creative appropriation of *phronesis*; it has received a fair amount of attention from scholars of Newman.² This essay considers the extent to which Newman's *Essay* offers an anthropological foundation for certain modes of argumentation, specifically arguments from fittingness (*ex convenientia*), which incorporate demonstration as a foundation for probable and dialectical arguments. While the basic use of fittingness arguments is best illustrated from the

¹ Fergus Kerr, O.P., "In an Isolated and Philosophically Uninfluential Way": Newman and Oxford Philosophy," in *Newman and the Word*, ed. Terrence Merri-
gan and Ian T. Ker (Louvain: Peters Press, 2000), 155–79; Joshua P. Hochschild,
"The Re-imagined Aristotelianism of John Henry Newman," *Modern Age* 45/4
(2003): 333–42.

² Frederick D. Aquino, *Communities of Informed Judgment: Newman's Illative Sense and Accounts of Rationality* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004); Martin X. Moleski, *Personal Catholicism: The Theological Epistemologies of John Henry Newman and Michael Polanyi* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000); Aidan Nichols, O.P., "John Henry Newman and the Illative Sense: A Re-consideration," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38/3 (1985): 347–68; Gerard Verbeke, "Aristotelian Roots of Newman's Illative Sense," in *Newman and Gladstone: Centennial Essays*, ed. James T. Bastable (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1978), 177–95.

theological tradition (in the present case, the third part of the *Summa theologiae*), examples will be considered from Newman's Mariological writings. For Newman, belief is reasonable, even in the absence of Lockean propositional certitude. For Newman, this is a properly philosophical matter. With regard to Mariology, Newman is responding to his Anglican friends, for whom the development of Catholic doctrine presents novelties far beyond the range of Scripture or tradition, thus violating some standard of reasonableness. Newman uses arguments *ex convenientia* to show that newly defined Catholic teachings on the Virgin Mary are not only delightful to the believer, but more than adequate to the demands of rationality.

The nineteenth-century in England was a time of unsettling change. The rise of industrialism brought about a dissolution of rural communities and agricultural infrastructures, the migration of the working class—notably of Irish Catholics to England during the Great Famine—and a measured increase in wealth and overall education. Intellectually and professionally, Newman identified a number of challenges to the integrity of theology as a discipline. In particular, the private realm of religious experience was sharply distinguished from the scientific study of biblical texts and the sociology of religious practice.³ A general secularizing pressure from the British Parliament was evident, for example, in the prime minister's proposal to establish "Queen's Colleges" in Ireland, in an effort to educate the Catholic population in a "non-sectarian" environment. Of course, a Catholic could not attend any of the great British universities, such as Durham and Oxford, since students had to subscribe to the 39 Articles from the *Book of Common Prayer* in order to take their degree. The Catholic Church in Europe in general began to suffer from the birth-pangs of modernity—from the promulgation of the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) and the loss of the Papal States in 1870, through to the firm but mostly ineffective responses of Pope Pius X in *Lamentabili Sane Exitu* (1907) and *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907). A church newly set adrift from its worldly moorings, in a hostile contemporary context, needed to learn again its genuine nature and mission.

³ Some argue that Newman himself contributes to the privatizing of religious practice with the particular "Athens" model he sets up in *The Idea of a University*, with the end of education consisting in the cultivation of the intellectual virtues of the "gentleman," in deliberate opposition to the "Berlin" model of education; see the 1993 convocation address to the Yale Divinity School by David Kelsey. On political interest in pedagogical isolation of Scripture study, see Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Leviathan and the Swallowing of Scripture: The Politics behind Thomas Hobbes' Early Modern Biblical Criticism," *Christianity and Literature* 61/1 (Autumn 2011): 33–54.

Newman and his band of fellow English Catholics were leery of ultramontanist: Britain had always stood somewhat apart from the tides of European history, for obvious geographical reasons. The same held true for Catholics in England, who were accustomed to the small persecutions and prejudices against them. During the French Revolution, the migration of working-class Catholics from France into England quickly swelled the ranks of the faithful and fired up piety, even as it gave rise to new friction with established, more aristocratic Catholic families. These had formerly constituted a close community supported by a local priestly hierarchy, and there was little change until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1832 and the re-establishment of Catholic dioceses in England, with actual bishops, by Pope Pius IX in 1850. New immigration added to the number of Irish in England, mostly poor, working class Catholics: the ensuing cultural conflict is exemplified in the lifetime of disagreement between Newman and Cardinal Manning, on matters of education, evangelization, social justice, and temporal papal power.

More significant for Newman, at this time, was the phenomenon of the Oxford Movement, an Anglo-Catholic attempt to renew the theological and liturgical practices of the established church, in light of its Patristic and Catholic roots. This movement was also a response to the rise of evangelicalism (Methodism and other denominations that emphasized the affective dimension of worship over and against the liturgical and doctrinal tradition) as well as liberalism (which Newman defines primarily as an anthropological-epistemological problem, involving the divorce of human experience from *integral reason*). The Oxford movement brought to public prominence well-educated Catholics and provided the impetus for several scandalous conversions, not least of all Newman's own. The movement, finally, produced a great deal of wonderful literature, theology, and music, reviving many of the traditions of seventeenth-century "Caroline" piety. In the end, Newman's break was over precisely the question of Catholicity: the "high" Anglican claim to Catholicity without actual ecclesial unity became untenable largely because, for an Anglican, one must claim certain periods of history as foundational and authoritative, and judge others as deficient. Newman saw that the appropriate criterion for such a judgment would have to be internal to the same theological tradition. During the years when Newman considered conversion, it was no accident that the book on which he worked was *The Development of Doctrine*, which is about the unity and organic coherence of the whole of tradition.⁴

⁴ In addition to the work of Hans Georg Gadamer, Josef Pieper, Yves Congar, and Josef Cardinal Ratzinger on this topic, see (on Newman), Andrew Meszaros,

In light of this, it is interesting that Newman is a hero to very different theological communities. There may be some High Church Anglicans who still venerate him, along with Pusey and Keble, as the father of contemporary Anglo-Catholicism. Newman would find this awkward: in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* he is at pains to reinterpret his entire spiritual journey as one leading inevitably to Roman Catholicism. Newman is also appropriated by modernist theologians at the end of the nineteenth century, such as George Tyrrell, the Irish Jesuit. To them, Newman is the champion of the development of doctrine, and the importance of the laity in shaping a sense of doctrinal truth and in authentic ecclesiology; this is a fair appropriation of Newman.⁵ He is widely known to have been concerned about the definition of the Immaculate Conception as infallible dogma. In a time when the Church was subject to attack on many fronts—and was anxious about scientific rationalism, the rise of the modern democratic state, its own loss of political power, rising secularism and the apparent disjunction between dogma and Christian living—Newman seems to advocate a moderate position. George Tyrrell said that reading Newman's *Grammar of Assent* effected a revolution in him precisely when he “had begun to feel the limits of scholasticism rather painfully.”⁶ But many who hoped Newman, in his lifetime (especially from the 1860s on), would champion their cause were disappointed. While he did indeed think that the Church acted at times too quickly,⁷ over-determining doctrine in a manner that suggested defensiveness and insensitivity to distinctly modern milieus, in the end he advocated submission to the teaching authority of the Church. Newman was a theologian and a true intellectual, who wanted to serve the faith, the English Catholic Church, and the Pope. His advocacy for higher education for lay Catholics was radical, and it anticipates the confident tone of *Fides et Ratio* concern-

“*Haec traditio proficit*: Congar's Reception of Newman in *Dei Verbum*, section 8,” *New Blackfriars* 92 (March 2011): 247–54; Gunter Beimer, *Newman on Tradition*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

⁵ See *Newman and the Modernists*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Marvin R. O'Connell, *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994); of particular value, Aidan Nichols, O.P., *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990).

⁶ M. D. Petre, *The Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912), vol. 2, p. 207.

⁷ See *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, Vol. XXVIII, ed. C. S. Dessain and T. Gornall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 71–72.

ing the role of theological reflection in the Church. Pope Leo XIII saw the truth of Newman's insight, and its implications for modern Catholic universities, and he acted quickly—by making him a cardinal in 1879—to lift the veritable cloud from Newman's reputation that Pope Pius IX had allowed to linger as a result of the association between Newman and various modernists.

To a modern European culture, the solemn definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (in *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854), and the definition of papal infallibility (at Vatican I, in 1870), appeared as an assertion of force, of institutional authority over and against the reasonableness of historical and scientific theology. On the other hand, to many Catholics, *Ineffabilis Deus* was a long overdue affirmation, not only of popular piety, but of theological tradition reaching into the early Church. For Newman, however, the extremes of authority-as-force and a mere affirmation of popular piety were inadequate positions.⁸ Catholic teachings on Mary were a particular stumbling block for Anglicans, even for Newman initially, and acceptance of these was presented as a test of total unthinking obedience to authority. Part of the solution was the concept of the development of doctrine—so controversial at one time, and so commonplace now, even after the initial reactions to modernism in the 1900s. "Development" means, quite simply, that the Church properly discerns the will and mind of God *through history*, as *incarnated*. Thus the Church may at one time know implicitly what it has not yet stated explicitly, because there is not yet an occasion for stating the same: as in the case, for example, of the divinity of Christ against the Arians in the fourth century. This was not a new teaching in any way, and indeed it was implicitly known to be *the* key to rightly understanding revelation. In this sense, doctrine of God develops as a process of *self-knowledge* for the Church. The doctrinal burden upon the Church is a matter of demonstrating the internal consistency of any teaching with the whole of revelation. In this vein, Newman must show that Mariology develops throughout history in a way that is totally consistent with Christology and the whole scope of salvation history. It is *consistent* with Christology; but even more, it must be needful for rightly locating Christ's divinity and mission. For his fellow Englishmen, in their admirable practicality,

⁸ See, for example, Newman's essay "On consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine" in *The Rambler* (July 1859), where he argues that the Church has always "consulted" the faithful insofar as their experience and their belief is a testimony of the apostolic tradition and its cogency. It is not a "consultation" in the manner of a poll, nor a soliciting of advice or opinion. This essay is available, edited and with an introduction by John Coulson (Oxford: Sheed & Ward, 1961).

Newman wanted above all to defend the Catholic Church's teachings on "St. Mary" as *reasonable*. He warmly acknowledged the value of popular piety for the formulation of doctrine and the spiritual life of the Church: but this piety, he is clear, is not doctrine.⁹

The problem that modernity opens up here is, in fact, a problem of philosophical anthropology, the opposition of thought and experience; or in the case of doctrine, the opposition of experience and authority.¹⁰ Piety must be put to the test of a certain reasonableness. Belief, on the other hand, must be directly subject to the light of revelation. Here, the argumentation mode of fittingness (or "fitness") is significant. This terminology will be explained more thoroughly shortly, with reference to St. Thomas's profound and systematic incorporation of this argumentative mode. Newman wants to avoid the contemporary fault of narrowing of the scope of human reasoning to the point where it wholly excludes evidence that does not meet the standards of demonstrative argumentation and new historical research into the person of Jesus. Arguments from fittingness bring to light the complexity of the intellectual affirmation of truth, in a way that is inclusive of the role of the will in assent, and the role of probability and authority in making judgments. By aligning Mariology with the biblical argument of salvation affirmed by his Anglican peers, Newman both respects their theological reason and offers a way for them to assent with a good conscience.

Anthropology in Newman's *Grammar of Assent*

Several of Newman's *University Sermons* address a theme that is given more solid ground in the *Grammar of Assent*.¹¹ This theme is the non-opposition of faith and reason, and the sermons contain a warning about contemporary natural theology, as it was understood by Paley. "Natural theologians" argued that a study of astronomy or of the natural world would inevitably lead to faith in the creator. Not so, said Newman, observing an uneasy combination of fideism and bad science. The natu-

⁹ This distinction is key in his 1865 *Letter to Pusey*, published as *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900).

¹⁰ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 343ff.

¹¹ See particularly Sermons I and II in *Oxford University Sermons*, 3d ed., (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). In Sermon II (29) he warns against reducing revealed religion to natural religion, thus destroying the gratuity of grace and the uniqueness of Christ. On the other hand, the fitness that exists between nature and grace is demanded by the structure of creation itself, because "the whole revealed scheme rests on nature for the validity of its evidence" (24).

ral world can lead us to a sense of divine handiwork, but this is not the same thing as faith. It is not the role of reason to give rise, by a kind of necessity, to religious *conviction*; faith is not an effect of sound reasoning. However, a person is open to God's transcendence by virtue of what Newman calls "implicit reason," a kind of disposition prior to evidence that determines how one apprehends the world. The world is not received by a strictly blank slate; rather, rationality has a structure that is *de facto* open to "assertions that transcend experience."¹² This is not just the will to believe: "reason itself tends to exceed the evidence: if it did not . . . human living would be rendered impossible."¹³

In the *Grammar*, Newman challenges a model of certitude that would exclude assertions such as these, as well as understanding that incorporates authority, tradition, and probable forms of argumentation. The first part of this work is a deeply original consideration of imagination and its role in the apprehension of things. He concludes that apprehension depends on experience, which has an ineluctably subjective dimension even when one assumes a "common measure between mind and mind": "We cannot (initially) make sure of real apprehension and assent, because we have to secure first the images which are their objects, and these are often peculiar and special. They depend on personal experience; and the experience of one man is not the experience of another."¹⁴ The diversity of the phantasms generated through the imagination is grounded in concrete reality, which in turn assumes a basically reliable form of sense perception. The reliable character of this *facticity* of experience becomes the foundation for the commonality of tradition and for the fruitful dialectic between piety (as a form of Christian experience) and dogma in the Church. The important role of imagination, according to Newman, is a safeguard against rationalism; at the same time, when the "affection" of worship fails, faith can fall back upon dogma.¹⁵

In the second part, Newman considers the reasonableness of faith: or, in Thomistic terms, that it is not foolish to assent to the truths of faith that exceed reason. Here he joins a long tradition of reflection that goes back, at least, to Augustine's *De utilitate credendi*. Faith, by definition, might well be a leap of trust that directly violates reason and thus good sense. Should we not assent only to what we can reasonably infer? This is what

¹² Aidan Nichols, O.P., *A Grammar of Consent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 25.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 82.

¹⁵ Ibid., 121.

the “constructive skeptics” argued, the British empiricists Hume and Locke (and Newman engages Locke warmly in the *Grammar*). But while certain judgment was possible only at the sensory level for the empiricists, because they collapsed knowledge and sensation, they tended to phenomenalism, concluding that things are not knowable in themselves, except as they expose themselves to us as perceivers. In response to the decadent speculation of these thinkers, Newman turns again to the question of how ordinary belief functions: how are we to justify the ordinary assents and certitudes required for living?¹⁶ There are many things that we claim to know and might well verify: that there is a world, that it is spherical, that there is a town called x, that we are tired and hungry and that obvious things will appease those sensations. We assent to these things by a “simple assent,” Newman says, as the result of a mass of probabilities that arise both from past experience and from consideration of present experience. The ordinary judgments of everyday life do not require or demand logical inference. We often assent to the truth of premises that are not well understood, or are merely probable, and find our reason satisfied with the best available conclusion. While we might, as Locke proposes, be satisfied with a highly certain form of probable knowledge, this does not necessarily mean that a more complex form of assent is not attainable.¹⁷

Newman completes his picture of complex assent with the *illative sense*, a creative appropriation of Aristotelian *prudence* which locates the standard for certitude in the knowing subject. This sense is possessed by all, and not only by the wise: it is a way of knowing and living that must be cultivated and is, in sum, the application of first principles in judgment by an organic and common sense process.¹⁸ With respect to God, the illative sense describes the reasonableness of faith in the absence of the possibility of strict inference. Just as practical wisdom dictates right action to the virtuous persons, so also the illative sense dictates to the believer the reasonableness of assent to faith as “true.” Scholars debate how truly Aristotelian the illative sense might be, given Newman’s focus on the moral sense as the arbiter of religion, and his appeals to the “voice of mankind,”

¹⁶ Nichols, *A Grammar of Consent*, 31.

¹⁷ Newman refers to Locke (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 4.16.6) on this, in *Grammar*, 137.

¹⁸ See Marty Miller Maddox, “Newman: Certain Knowledge and the Problem of the Criterion,” in *Newman Studies* 4, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 69–86. The use of the term “common sense” is significant (Gadamer identifies the *communis sensus* as distinctly Stoic), given that in Newman’s day (for example, for Thomas Reid) common sense suggested a flight from reason in its purity.

presumably the tendency to faith that is evident in history.¹⁹ Newman might be secretly Kantian, or a pragmatic, anti-metaphysical Protestant.²⁰ Assuming that the opposition of experience and thought is a consistent concern from the *University Sermons* through to the *Grammar*, it is worth noting Newman's care in incorporating both in the unity of human action. Newman wants to affirm (against bad natural theology) the proper sphere of science, as well as the experiential and affective (and even aesthetic) dimension of practical judgment.

Newman wants to restore a sense of integral reason that is inclusive of the complexity of human judgment. The fact that persons give assent to a variety of things without complex evidence demonstrates *not* that we tend to believe things when we really should not, but that we often determine the truth of a matter by the congruence of a whole host of reasons of varying kinds of certainty. One could charge Newman with granting too much to his skeptic interlocutors: we believe without good reasons, just as we live without good reasons. But Newman never denies the reliable certitude of complex assent. By focusing on assent in general, after the relatively imprecise manner of practical reason, Newman argues for epistemic humility in matters of reason, as well as faith. The cosmological approach might better demonstrate "that no religion is from God which contradicts our sense of right and wrong."²¹ While claiming Aristotle as his "master," Newman is a man of his age, speaking to the discordant extremes (skeptic-Liberal versus skeptic-rationalist) before him.²² The defensibility of theological argumentation, *ex convenientia*, depends first upon the assent of faith and second upon the plausibility of the philosophical anthropology offered in the *Grammar*.

Arguments from Fittingness (*ex convenientia*) according to St. Thomas

An argument from fittingness is a form of probable argumentation insofar as one premise or another will depend upon the assent of faith, through the authority of revelation. Theological arguments that are valid in their form, because valid in their deduction, can be said to be true insofar as the premises are true. Logic would demand the use of the term "probable" in the broad, descriptive sense, because of the limited certitude of something

¹⁹ Newman, *Grammar*, 303.

²⁰ It has to be acknowledged that Newman's terminology is often unique to him in usage and content; cf. Eric Steinberg, "Newman's Distinction between Inference and Assent," in *Religious Studies* 23.3 (1987): 351–65.

²¹ Newman, *Grammar*, 325.

²² *Ibid.*, 334.

assented to through authority. In more modern terminology, fittingness arguments would consist of inductive arguments that support, but do not compel, a certain conclusion, or, demonstrative arguments in which at least one premise is an agreed upon truth of faith.²³ There is a further step: an argument that expresses fittingness certainly depends on the prior assent of the believer to the truth of a premise (and thus the truth of the conclusion), but its *power to compel assent* depends on the coherence of the whole framework in which the premise(s) are located *and* the reference of particular premises (or concepts, ideas) to that framework. Fittingness arguments cannot stand alone; they presuppose a framework that has a claim upon the intellect precisely because it has a compelling character with respect to the imagination, or the *illative* sense of the whole. Theological argumentation begins from the accuracy of historical events (somewhat verifiable, although not strongly, through historical study and personal witness) in conjunction with the authority of faith itself, through the tradition of the Church. Divine authority does not make assent reasonable, even if the author is reliable: reasonableness depends on a certain understanding of the nature of God and of the reasons for creation and revelation. Even if one argues well for the existence of God through metaphysics and natural theology, one cannot identify the conclusion of that argument with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this would violate the faith essential to covenant with God. Upon the foundation of faith, however, this identification can be made, in conjunction with both philosophical and historical argumentation, and genuinely reasonable (or dialectical, *ex ratione*) arguments can be made.

One therefore reasonably assents to the particular arguments that make faith more intelligible, not just because one *believes* that the premises are true, but because the conclusion is true as matter of good argumentation, based upon premises some of which are held by faith. The quality of the argumentation must reveal (a) logical possibility, and (b) a grounding in

²³ Modern authors introduce further distinctions, semantic as well as more substantial; for example, Charles Taylor suggests that “transcendental arguments” have a distinctive form that arises from experience generating a “chain of indispensability claims” (in the chapter entitled “The Validity of Transcendental Arguments,” in *Philosophical Arguments* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995], 20–33), and Nikolas Kompridis explains a form of fallible argumentation based upon historical disclosure (in “Two Kinds of Fallibilism,” *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006], 180–83); both of these are relevant, but they fall outside of the scope of this essay. Taylor’s “chain” is generated by experience, through reflection, and this is close to what is meant by “fittingness,” except that indispensability would presuppose the authority of revelation, which in turn is formative of how experience is interpreted.

the order of creation. Faith seeks to understand, not as providing faith with a whole new foundation, but as grounding faith more deeply in the soil of the rational character of the believer. The Incarnation and the Trinity are not and cannot be demonstrable truths; but they are *truths* in the sense that they are intelligible, without their losing a sense of their fundamental mysteriousness ever being rejected.²⁴ The intelligible character of dogma incorporates fittingness when it depends upon a sense of the scope of the argument of salvation, the narrative of biblical revelation, and the accepted tradition of theological reflection. Arguments from fitness integrate the authoritative character of revelation and tradition with the natural and rational demands of human assent.²⁵ Such argumentation may presuppose a metaphysical understanding of the world, as well as a knowledge of doctrine; it also speaks to larger considerations of what inclines a person to affirm something as true. This is key, because Newman observes that many people initially object to Marian teachings because (a) they are new; (b) their relation to the whole of faith is not obvious; and (c) they want to find a reason to resist the truth of the Catholic faith. The first and last points are psychologically very significant. The second point, however, is critical for Mariology, because arguments from fittingness must show consistency with Christology; even more, however, to defend the appropriateness of Marian dogma, fittingness must show *more effectively* the internal coherence of the argument of salvation, and the nature of the Church.

Newman was not comfortable with natural theology as St. Thomas Aquinas would understand it, likely because of the form that this took in the writings of theists and deists in his day. Rather than cosmological and metaphysical arguments, Newman preferred to ground his argumentation for the divine nature upon the natural moral sense of man, and the conscience.²⁶ This constitutes an important difference, but it does not

²⁴ A prime example of this is Boethius's *De Trinitate*. Josef Pieper addresses the need to restore to both theological and philosophical argumentation a sense of "truth" as fundamentally like a well without bottom, a spring that cannot be exhausted; see "Philosophy and the Sense for Mystery," in *For the Love of Wisdom: Essays on the Nature of Philosophy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

²⁵ Gilbert Narcisse, O.P., *Les Raisons de Dieu: Argument de Convenance et Esthétique théologique selon saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1997), 147.

²⁶ This is also grounded in his suspicion of metaphysics, particularly of the "German kind"; here we might applaud his English pragmatism. See Fergus Kerr, "Newman and Oxford Philosophy," 170; cf. *Sermons, Chiefly on the Theory of Religious Belief*, 2d ed. (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1844), IX and X. Although these don't reveal a sense of a Thomistic natural theology in congruence with faith, with

amount to a rejection of natural theology in the Thomistic sense. St. Thomas puts the doctrine of creation at the heart of his spiritual theology, his metaphysics, and his ethics. Creation *ex nihilo*, significantly for St. Thomas, cannot be demonstrated; but it does have a powerful probable character which goes back to his genuinely demonstrative arguments for God as the necessary (*necesse est*) and causal ground of all being.²⁷ All of creation subsists as a *radical dependence* upon God as the cause and source of being, just as the contingent depends upon the necessary. Understanding God's relation to creation in terms of final causality, the diversity of creation is ordered to God's unity and God's goodness by a kind of fitness: *omnia in esse conveniunt*.²⁸ In grounding causality so firmly in God—primary/efficient causality and final/governmental causality—the *exitus-reditus* scheme on the macrocosmic level of creation reveals a goodness and intentionality that brings to light the meaning of the particular unfolding of the economy of salvation.²⁹

Fittingness arguments are thus compelling within an accepted scope of meaning: for St. Thomas, the fundamental goodness of the necessary being of God, and the corresponding goodness of the *ratio* of creation. The parallel but truly distinct scope of meaning is the deposit of revelation; but the harmony that exists between both is most compelling. This harmony is reflected in the distinctness and non-opposition of faith and reason. The Christian mystery is true: first, because of divine authority, and second, because the whole purpose of creation (as per Romans 1:20) is to make the invisible nature and purpose of God to be visible. The reasonableness of revelation lies in its deep ontological possibility.

For example, consider the simplicity of the very first question of the third part of the *Summa theologiae*: *utrum conveniens fuerit Deum incarnari*, whether it was *fitting* that God should be incarnate. The key attribute of God that recurs is "goodness." There is an objection: if God is from all eternity perfectly good, He should remain as He is. Doesn't the Incarnation lessen his dignity? Or does it imply something added to his essence? Likewise, God is wholly simple, and flesh is composite; two things totally unlike do not belong together. Therefore it is *not fitting* for God to be incarnate. These are good points: divine simplicity requires creation to be "other" than the divine essence, and to unite God and the creature in some way seems to introduce complexity into the divine at a certain point in time.

respect to philosophical anthropology, the profoundly Thomistic relationship between reasoning and faith is remarkable, and anticipates the language of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.13; 1.16; 1.22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.42.

²⁹ Narcisse, *Les Raisons de Dieu*, 176.

Thomas as usual builds on the objections. Quoting Romans 1:20, he challenges a picture of the divine that is lacking in final causality. The purpose of creation, he says, is to make manifest the invisible things of God, most of all his goodness.³⁰ If indeed this is the purpose of the act of creation, it is a purpose that touches upon the very essence of the divine nature. And it seems that the Incarnation of God fulfills this purpose *better* than the act of creation in itself, and thus *more fittingly*. The Incarnation makes *more evident* God's goodness, God's wisdom, his justice and his power, since it does so all at once: "by the mystery of Incarnation are made known at once the goodness, the wisdom . . . of God." Thomas continues, in the same response, in light of the recurring Dionysian argument for the generosity of divine goodness: "the very nature of God is goodness. . . . Hence what belongs to the essence of goodness befits God. But it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others. . . . Hence it belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature"—the "highest manner" being personal union, by reason of no other motivation than *infinite goodness*.³¹ The purposes of the Incarnation are co-extensive with the purposes of creation: not only causality of being, but the maximal communication of goodness to the creature. In the response to objections 3 and 4, Thomas says that the *fitting* (*conveniens*) is what belongs to a thing by nature, in this case, goodness to the Lord. What the initial objection is lacking is not an appreciation of divine goodness, or simplicity, but rather of final causality, and the desire of God to communicate his goodness to the creature in the most generous, effective and radical way.

The basic principles appealed to are familiar from Aristotelian-Platonic metaphysics as they are seen at work in *Summa contra Gentiles* I. Creation *ex nihilo* as a matter of faith clarifies divine freedom in the act of creation; the Incarnation must likewise proceed from freedom, given that the goodness of the divine nature confers a necessity that is bound by that same goodness, and no constraint of external necessity. Creation and Incarnation are gifts to the reason precisely as perfecting the natural-theological picture of divine causality. The argument is intelligible only by virtue of the language of metaphysical causality. In the second article of q. 1, St. Thomas invokes *necessity*: was it necessary for God to save mankind in *this* way? To the extent that the purpose of creation is the communication of goodness to the creature, and to the extent that God wills man's good—yes, it was necessary. But the particular mode of salvation is not *simpliciter* necessary (a. 2, *resp.*), because God's infinite power is not limited to one course of action. However, the Incarnation is deemed best and most *fitting*,

³⁰ ST III, q. 1, a. 1, *resp.*

³¹ Trans. *Fathers of the English Dominican Province* (2d ed., 1920).

and in this sense it has a necessity—that is, predicated on God’s goodness—and particular reasons follow to support the grounding of necessity in God’s goodness (for establishing faith, for love, for holiness, and so on). Thus demonstrative argumentation of the *goodness* of God, and the ordering of non-necessary beings to God as their end (good), is the metaphysical framework, demonstratively established, for making a central, revealed mystery *intelligible*. The purpose or end of creation as not only “the good” but personal union with God, is a matter of revelation. Its reasonableness and clarity, however, and its startling beauty as a theological argument, shine forth within the context of personal faith in the Incarnation, and a richly metaphysical understanding of creation.³²

Thomas will use arguments from fittingness in his approach to the person and role of Mary; these are not usually new arguments in that they are based in the whole tradition of Christological language. The role and the privileges of Mary flow from Christ’s mission, which are in turn grounded in the whole purposes of creation. A similar approach holds true for Newman, who frequently heard the charge that honoring Mary meant dishonoring Christ.³³ St. Thomas asks why was it fitting that Mary remain a virgin even in giving birth to Christ (q. 28, a. 2). The fittingness arguments excavate more deeply the theological meaning of the Incarnation: for example, concerning the *effect* of the Incarnation as the good of the creature, it is not *fitting* that he who takes away corruption should harm, or even reduce, the integrity of his mother. Furthermore, he who gave the commandment to honor one’s father and mother would not fittingly lessen the honor due to his mother. This point is not merely about bodily integrity, nor the singular developmental virtue of the young Jesus, but about the fact that there is a causal link between Christ’s mission (salvation) and her privilege: it is her relationship specifically to Christ that exalts her.³⁴ A second example, on the ecclesial dimension of Mary, is found in the *respondeo* of Question 30, a. 1, on the Annunciation, and why it was

³² Thomas, in *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1, refers to Augustine (cf. *ep.* 137), in that God is present to the world not primarily as a matter of physical extent, but in “greatness of might,” and is in no way constrained and limited by union. The argument from creation in this first article is compounded by the theological tradition, going back through Irenaeus (cf. *On the Apostolic Preaching* 1.4–5) to St. John (1:10–11), arguing for the fittingness of God coming “to his own.”

³³ For this reason, Newman frequently begins with reflection upon the controversy over the terminology of *theotokos*, and Protestant discomfort with the same: if Christ is God in his person, then Mary is in some very literal sense the Mother of God. The implications are infinitely more profound than if she is simply a means to His Incarnation.

³⁴ Cf. Narcisse, *Les Raisons de Dieu*, 386.

fitting that the conception of Christ be announced to Mary. The fourth reason incorporates the third—that she prove herself ready by the free gift of obedience—stating that a “spiritual wedlock” occurs *within her* between the Son of God and all of humanity, with the result that we, as the Church, are included in her “yes.” Given Thomas’s theology of nature and grace, it is not just fitting, but necessary that God ask for her free obedience in such a way that respects the integrity of the creature. As uniting humanity within her person, she combines the image of Christ as head of the Church with the image of the Church as the unified body of Christ. Here, again, Mary’s special role flows from her place in relation to Christ as a perfect disciple of Christ, and she unites other persons as subjects, in relation to him as head. In both of these examples, Thomas uses the language of fitness first in order to locate Mary within the original account of the purpose and mode of salvation (i.e., by showing doctrinal and narrative coherence), and second, by showing that Mary opens more profound insight into the same purpose of salvation. The effect, in terms more familiar to Newman, is a sense that the place of Mary in revelation is fitting as pertains to Christ’s mission, and thus *reasonable* as pertains to the whole economy of salvation.

Particular Arguments from Newman

There are different kinds of fittingness arguments, and this is a topic worthy of more than one monograph. For example, arguments from likeness of cause and effect (that is, not simply an evident correlation, such as “every action has an equal and opposite reaction,” but rather “what *kind* of a cause would an effect like this have,” which would constitute a form of analogical argument); arguments from the relation of parts to the whole (expressing a harmony; this is common in parables, e.g., if God cares for the lilies of the field *this much* . . .); and arguments from diversity with respect to contrast or opposition. Most common to Newman, eager to defend the coherence of Scripture as a whole, is argumentation from the fitness of parts in relation to the whole, whether in a manner comparable to St. Thomas above (with respect to goodness of final causality), or in a more vague relation of harmony, such as when one contemplates the distinct elements of a painting. Newman uses contrast and parallel frequently, as these are common in the theological tradition (e.g., as Christ is the new Adam, so Mary is the new Eve).

A homily entitled “The Glories of Mary for the Sake of Her Son” opens with a long, richly evocative passage on the beauty of creation.³⁵

³⁵ *Mary: The Virgin Mary in the Life and Writings of John Henry Newman*, ed. Philip Boyce (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 129–48. All references to Newman’s

We know, my brethren, that in the natural world nothing is superfluous, nothing incomplete, nothing independent; but part answers to part, and all details combine to form one mighty whole. Order and harmony are among the first perfections which we discern in this visible creation; and the more we examine into it, the more widely and minutely they are found to belong to it. "All things are double," says the Wise Man, "one against another; and He hath made nothing defective." It is the very character and definition of "the heavens and the earth," as contrasted with the void or chaos which preceded them, that everything is now subjected to fixed laws; and every motion, and influence, and effect can be accounted for, and, were our knowledge sufficient, could be anticipated. Moreover, it is plain, on the other hand, that it is only in proportion to our observation and our research that this truth becomes apparent; for though a number of things even at first sight are seen to proceed according to an established and beautiful order, yet in other instances the law to which they are conformed is with difficulty discovered; and the words "chance," and "hazard," and "fortune," have come into use as expressions of our ignorance. Accordingly, you may fancy rash and irreligious minds who are engaged day after day in the business of the world, suddenly looking out into the heavens or upon the earth, and criticising the great Architect, arguing that there are creatures in existence which are rude or defective in their constitution, and asking questions which would but evidence their want of scientific education.

The case is the same as regards the supernatural world. The great truths of Revelation are all connected together and form a whole. Every one can see this in a measure even at a glance, but to understand the full consistency and harmony of Catholic teaching requires study and meditation. Hence, as philosophers of this world bury themselves in museums and laboratories, descend into mines, or wander among woods or on the seashore, so the inquirer into heavenly truths dwells in the cell and the oratory, pouring forth his heart in prayer, collecting his thoughts in meditation, dwelling on the idea of Jesus, or of Mary, or of grace, or of eternity, and pondering the words of holy men who have gone before him, till before his mental sight arises the hidden wisdom of the perfect, "which God predestined before the world unto our glory," and which He "reveals unto them by His Spirit." And, as ignorant men may dispute the beauty and harmony of the visible creation, so men, who for six days in the week are absorbed in worldly toil, who live for wealth, or name, or self-indulgence, or profane knowledge, and do but give their leisure moments to the thought of religion, never raising their souls to God, never asking for His enlightening grace, never chastening their hearts and bodies, never steadily contemplating the objects of faith, but judging hastily and peremptorily according to their private views or the humour of the hour; such men, I say, in like

writings in the remainder of this essay are to texts that can be found in this edited volume.

manner, may easily, or will for certain, be surprised and shocked at portions of revealed truth, as if strange, or harsh, or extreme, or inconsistent, and will in whole or in part reject it.

I am going to apply this remark to the subject of the prerogatives with which the Church invests the Blessed Mother of God. They are startling and difficult to those whose imagination is not accustomed to them, and whose reason has not reflected on them; but the more carefully and religiously they are dwelt on, the more, I am sure, will they be found essential to the Catholic faith, and integral to the worship of Christ. This simply is the point which I shall insist on—disputable indeed by aliens from the Church, but most clear to her children—that the glories of Mary are for the sake of Jesus; and that we praise and bless her as the first of creatures, that we may confess duly Him as our sole Creator.³⁶

Most Protestant objections entertained by Newman propose that doctrines such as the Immaculate Conception or the Assumption are not biblical, and are therefore not *reasonable because they are not possible*.³⁷ Newman begins, in the passage above, with creation as a unity, but a unity that contains within it duality and contrast, light and darkness. But there is a fixed order that is wholly intelligible in itself, though it requires a great deal of work to discern. Those who do not see the place of a particular element in the whole should not jump to the conclusion that it does not belong: the coherence of the whole may not yet be apparent, and the burden is placed squarely on the limitations of the enquirer. Mary's place in the economy of salvation becomes apparent only in light of the complex meaning of the whole, which in some way points to Jesus. Newman does not begin with creation and its purposes, with the same metaphysical explicitness as St. Thomas. I would argue that he takes the goodness of creation and its ground in the divine goodness for granted, and heads straight for the sacrifice of the Cross. But there are reasons for this: first, his above-mentioned concern about bad natural theology and its theological implications, as well as his general aversion to idealist metaphysics. Second, his interlocutors are simply not thinking in these terms.³⁸ He attacks critics of Catholic doctrine as worldly and above all

³⁶ In Boyce, ed., 129–31.

³⁷ "A Memorandum on the Immaculate Conception," IV (ed. Boyce, 2001), 303–11; they are not possible because they are not *evidently* found in Scripture. The question raised by Newman follows: if these ideas are not present explicitly in Scripture, does it follow that they contradict the logic of salvation contained therein?

³⁸ Aidan Nichols (*A Grammar of Consent*) faults Newman for neglecting creation as a way to God's existence. On the other hand, Newman may simply wish to speak in the context of the concerns of his hearers (cf. *infra*). While philosophically sophisticated, he is writing, above all else, as a pastor and a preacher.

too hasty to be able to give the matter at hand a patient hearing. "Private views" are given priority over the grandeur of revelation, in the absence of a prayerful spirit. The ignorance is willful, much as philosophers and scientists too quickly judge nature to be imperfect, when they should fault the limits of their own understanding first. Newman is a seasoned controversialist, and he ends the opening paragraphs in the most innocuous place: with Jesus, the sole creator (by contrast to Mary, the creature). This grounds the whole discussion in the early Church, where the willingness to call Mary the *theotokos* (at the Council of Ephesus, in 431) became the marker of an adequate Christology. Newman goes on to deploy the three modes of fittingness already mentioned, and we shall consider particular examples: first, the fittingness of parallel and opposition; second, analogical likeness of cause and effect; and finally, the specific fitness of intended effect (very close to what St. Thomas means when he speaks of the "effects" of the Incarnation.)

The Coherence of Scripture: Parallel and Opposition

In arguing for the notion of Mary as the second Eve, Newman quotes Irenaeus:

With a fitness, Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying "Behold Thy handmaid, O Lord; be it to me according to Thy word." But Eve was disobedient; for she obeyed not, while she was yet a virgin. As she, having indeed Adam for a husband, but as yet being a virgin . . . becoming disobedient, became the cause of death both to herself and to the whole human race, so also Mary, having the predestined man, and being yet a Virgin, being obedient, became both to herself and to the whole human race the cause of salvation. . . . And on account of this the Lord said, that the first should be last and the last first . . . He Himself becoming the beginning of the living, since Adam became the beginning of the dying. . . . And so the knot of Eve's disobedience received its unloosing through the obedience of Mary; for what Eve, a virgin, bound by incredulity, that Mary, a virgin, unloosed by faith.³⁹

The series of parallels is compelling in itself, because the foundational one (last-first) is easily connected with the next, very familiar from Patristic authors (Jesus/life-Adam/death), and then we have two virgins, one first and the other last in the order of salvation. The series parallel one another through the narrative relationship of Adam and Jesus, but theologically one side supplants the other by cancelling out the original

³⁹ A reference to Irenaeus's *Adversus Haereses* 3.22.34, quoted in the third section of the *Letter to Pusey* (ed. Boyce), 210.

privation: obedience overcomes disobedience; life overcomes death; doubt is allayed by faith. The argument is biblical, familiar and certainly typological—typology being necessary for reading Scripture as a doctrinal unity, precisely because it presupposes a single account of the divine purpose in salvation. If the purpose of the Incarnation is to communicate God's goodness to the creature, the obstacles to that end must be removed (sin, disobedience, and death), by divine power working through the agency of the creature. The appeal to the hearer is one of opposition and resolution, and it has a kind of aesthetic appeal, a sense of drawing together the personages of Scripture into the whole. A theological unity comes to light in the parallelism between Christ and Adam, through which Mary can stand in a similar relation to Eve because she is not only mother (of Jesus), but also spiritual spouse, as the creature, reconciled to God, through the trust in God that overturns fear. This is a familiar argument in support of Mary's significance, her "yes" contradicting Eve's "no." For Newman, the meaning of Eve's disobedience is coherent only in relation to Adam's own disobedience; likewise the creatureliness of Mary in contrast to Christ's divine aspect, does not weaken the parallel, but instead demonstrates the effectiveness of divine power in and through the creature.⁴⁰ The interpretation of Mary as both a counterbalance to Eve and the creature subject to salvation, corresponding to the grace of Christ in the Incarnation, makes the argument for the economy of salvation more thorough, more complete.⁴¹

Fitness of Cause and Effect: Christ's Mission, and Historical Witness

Newman embraces, as a Catholic, the term *theotokos*: Mary is the Mother of God, the bearer of the Christ.⁴² He avoided this term as an Anglican, because it implied for him a radical kind of identity between Mary and the

⁴⁰ For this reason, Newman emphasizes Eve's integrity in the act of disobedience: "in those primeval events, Eve had an integral share. . . . She listened to the Evil Angel; she offered the fruit to her husband, and he ate of it. She co-operated, not as an irresponsible instrument, but intimately and personally in the sin" (*Letter to Pusey* 3). Hence she has her own proper share in the punishment, which in turn affirms her distinctive "dignity." One might carefully contrast Augustine's more allegorizing approach to Eve's distinctness (*De Civitate Dei* 14.11; *De Trinitate* 12.13.20).

⁴¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1977), 32. Ratzinger points out that one cannot get a Catholic Mariology from proof-texting Scripture under the rubric of a modern kind of literalism: Patristic typology is essential for inter-testamental unity.

⁴² "The glories of Mary for the sake of her Son" (ed. Boyce), 137.

divinity of Christ, and thus a high Mariology. Newman counters his own reticence with Nicene Christology: she is not the mother of his body, or the mother of his humanity merely, but the mother of the *person* of the Word Incarnate.⁴³ If we are to take seriously both his divinity *and* the unity of his person, her relationship to Christ becomes significant in a new light. She truly guarantees and safeguards Christ's divinity: if she is the *theotokos*, Christ is "God-with-us" through an effective mediation. Current religious history, Newman argues, proves the truth of this. Among English evangelicals in the nineteenth century who criticize the veneration of Mary, Newman observes a tendency to a vague incarnational theology, and a spiritual reluctance to commit to the full implications of the divinity of Christ. This, he claims somewhat harshly, begins in the Reformation, and has its full fruition in what he calls "humanitarianism," a kind of veneration of one's fellow man.⁴⁴ This seems ironic to Newman, since those who challenge Mary's role as instrumental cause of Christ's mediation, in the end are complicit in a general idolatry of the creature.

In supporting Christ's divine nature as a matter of doctrine, Mary's role reveals "the harmonious consistency of revealed religion." She must have appropriate qualifications, and so Newman highlights her character as unusually tough: she has courage, fortitude, the ability to suffer, surrender her self, and above all, she possesses heroic purity summed up in the total consent of the heart to God's will.⁴⁵ Mary's particular holiness is therefore greater than her maternity alone. She receives particular grace from Christ as the fruit of his salvation; more than this, in the order of providence, her possession of these graces makes possible her role in relation to Christ's own work.⁴⁶ Christ doesn't pass through Mary's womb like a station on his way to Calvary: "the child is like the parent . . . and this likeness is manifested by her relationship to Him." Newman also refers to Romans 11:16: "if the root is holy, the branches grafted in will be holy." Mary is the earthly root of Christ's person. A key text for Anglican objectors is Luke 11:28, when Mary is praised in public, and Jesus seems to correct those who praise his mother by checking his mother, saying "rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." Rather than supposing that Christ hereby excludes his mother *qua* mother, Newman argues that he reinterprets for the crowd *her* significance in his own life—namely, as the one who receives the word and

⁴³ "On the fitness of the glories of Mary" (ed. Boyce), 150.

⁴⁴ "Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not obscure the divine glory of Christ"; quotation from the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (ed. Boyce), 289.

⁴⁵ "On the fitness of the glories of Mary" (ed. Boyce), 161.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 158.

keeps it perfectly. Her glory, again, is greater than her maternity: it is above all her faith and her obedience that are noteworthy, and she is thus included among the crowd of those who are close to Jesus. She stands as a historical witness to the life of faith as the following of Christ and conformity to the word of God, in obedience.

Newman, writing his greatest homilies on Mary three years before 1854, the year of the promulgation of *Ineffabilis Deus*, the solemn declaration of the Immaculate Conception, observes that Jesus Christ teaches something crucial in the manner of Mary's being honored. In Scripture, she is a quiet model of patient and suffering obedience: like John, she decreases, very quickly. Likewise in the history of the Church, she is quietly present in faithful devotion, waiting patiently for the whole Church to affirm her in her right relation to Christ. Newman's point is that the very way in which Marian doctrine develops over time is itself an illustration of her character: no trumpets and glory, but a quiet witness in the hearts of believers. The dogmatic declaration of the purity of Mary is thus not a victory of common piety over good sense, but rather one of humility over self-assertion.

So, even in the privilege of her holiness, Mary's glory is ordered to the glory of her Son, and the primacy of grace in creation and salvation. The language in the long quotation above is at first startling if one has *never considered* the relationship between Mary and Jesus Christ. To his Protestant fellows, Newman observes that Mary is nothing more than the first creature to participate fully in the work of salvation through the Cross. Her submission and her obedience: these are her glory, and the privilege of her maternity presupposes them. Hence Mary is honored with a fittingness appropriate to the significance of the work of salvation, in that she demonstrates the effectiveness of grace in her own, creaturely person.

Cause and Effect: Moral-Spiritual Likeness

The practical goal of veneration is imitation. Newman works to elicit the co-extensive purposes of creation and salvation. This final point concerns the incorporation of the individual believer into these purposes, through a participation in the holiness of the communion of the saints. Just as Mary is not a mere receptacle for the Word, so also is she not a mere instrument. For this argument to be compelling, Newman must prove her particular holiness from Scripture.

God uses many unworthy things for worthy ends. Hence, the worthiness of the priest does not alter the effectiveness of a sacrament. It is fine, Newman says, to go to a bad priest for absolution.⁴⁷ But should one go to

⁴⁷ "On the fitness of the glories of Mary," 158.

a bad priest for counsel? Newman contrasts an instrumental cause, for which personal sanctity might not be necessary, to the office of a teacher, or a prophet. St. Augustine and St. Thomas: these men proposed truth as a matter of investigation as well as personal devotion, and they were teachers with appropriate humility. Their effectiveness as *teachers* depends in great measure on the example of their lives, on their character. The prophets—Abraham, Enoch, Job, Isaiah—had a faith that justified them in God's eyes.⁴⁸ Angels, moreover, have a holiness due not only to their metaphysical quality but also to their distinctive office of praising God and serving his will in creation. Newman compares Mary to the angels and saints as a kind of singular teacher of the faith: hence the fitness of the Annunciation (as both St. Augustine and St. Thomas argue) requires that Mary first conceive the Word in her heart, before she can receive him in her body.⁴⁹ Her own total conversion is necessary as both a condition and an effect. The coincidence of these in Mary implicates all believers. Newman charges his Protestant objectors with the error of understanding the Incarnation in an overly carnal way, with the attendant danger of wrongly understanding the whole life of faith.⁵⁰ The imitation of Christ in discipleship is not a matter of membership, or even of credal identity. To hear the word and keep it requires the total indwelling of God in the soul.

Mary's distinctive holiness as a disciple of Christ argues for the fittingness of the Immaculate Conception, not as a matter of maternal privilege, but by virtue of her participation in the whole argument of salvation. "She is the type and image of the spiritual life and renovation in grace."⁵¹ If this is the origin of her holiness, Newman says, there are no "limits" to her sanctity except what can be maximally applied to the embodied creature. As an additional argument, he turns to Luke 1:41, where John the Baptist, filled by the Holy Spirit, leaps in the womb at the presence of the Lord; if he was made holy by the presence of the Lord, then surely it is fitting that the holiness of Mary be at least equal to his.⁵² One might respond to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 156.

⁴⁹ Cf. St. Augustine, *In Ioh. Evang.* 10.3.

⁵⁰ Ratzinger makes the same point: "[We tend to see these events as not only improbable, but impossible, both] for the world and also for God [because of our] . . . tacit cartesianism—in that philosophy of emancipation hostile to creation which would repress both body and birth from the human reality by declaring them merely biological; [and] . . . in a concept of God and the world that considers it inappropriate that God should be involved with *bios* and matter. In reality, precisely when we talk about corporeality . . . we are dualists" (*Daughter Zion*, 58–59).

⁵¹ "On the fitness of the glories of Mary," 166.

⁵² Ibid., 159. For Newman the Assumption simply flows from this, with little additional argumentation required: in the absence of the wounds of original sin,

Newman that “fittingness” does not require conferring such language and honor on Mary. But he demonstrates internal consistency of doctrine and, more significantly, a deeper insight into the nature of discipleship and the possibility of the total effectiveness of the grace of salvation, in the creature, in the earthly pilgrimage.

Conclusion

In *A Grammar of Consent*, Aidan Nichols criticizes Newman’s theological argumentation as overly epistemological, depending too heavily upon imagination and experience as integral to both practical reasoning and the nature of the assent that we give to theological truths. A quick look at Newman’s use of arguments from fittingness, all of which are amply present in the early Church, in order to defend a certain theological approach to Mary, might seem to support this. St. Thomas’s arguments (for example) refer so evidently back to the truths of natural theology, which are established through demonstrative argument. Newman, it is true, does not take this approach precisely, but it is evident that his own arguments, traditional as they are, presuppose a genuinely metaphysical anthropology. Nichols misses the mark here. Nothing in Newman’s manner of proceeding excludes seeing the foundation of Christ’s love in the goodness of God and creation.

Newman’s concerns are more contemporary, perhaps more epistemological, insofar as he is interested in what might or might not seem *reasonable*, in light of the Anglican commitment to the primacy of Scripture and the relative authority of the early Church Fathers. His concerns are truly more *pedagogical*. He avoids the flaws of a rationalist apologetics (as evidenced in contemporary “natural theology”) while addressing the reader’s need for a sense of the whole coherence of dogma. Newman’s arguments are based in Scripture, in the doctrinal tradition of the Church united, but he appeals to a metaphysics of creation which in turn makes the historical work of Christ intelligible. Newman does not appeal to piety as authoritative, and he incorporates the Anglican desire to see Scripture as self-sufficient for doctrine—with the help of Irenaeus, who bases the fittingness of Incarnation in the Johannine identity of creation and salvation in the Word. This approach appeals to the rationality of the average parishioner as much as to the doctor of divinity, and it speaks to the way in which human reason is moved *aesthetically*, attentive to harmony, parallel, and completeness, in order to consider

particularly the loss of immortality and self-mastery, bodily resurrection becomes not only a possibility, but a probability. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger follows precisely this line of argument in *Mary the Church at the Source* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).

a doctrine as first *possible*, and then even—by the complex and admittedly subjective process of assent—*reasonable*. Seen precisely as a pedagogy, with a practical and holistic anthropological sensibility, rational assent is clearly founded in the will as much as in the reason. Newman indeed writes as a modern man in a modern context, and in his appeal to imagination in religious assent, supposes that the imagination in turn is deeply rooted in human rationality. His appeal to conscience, and even experience, does not set experience at odds with the rationality of doctrine. Rather, the two sustain one another. For this reason, Marian piety and Marian doctrine, while not confused, must be grounded in one another. Newman was not happy with the promulgation of Marian dogma when it was perceived to be an act of ecclesial force over and against modern good sense. Hence his defense of these teachings attempts to excavate and honor a healthier sense of rationality. In seeing this, at a time of such controversy, Newman shows himself to be prophetic of truly modern anthropological concerns. **N-V**