

“DANCING ON THE TIGHT ROPE”: NEWMAN’S VIEW OF THEOLOGY

Newman was master of the appropriate aphorism, the succinct statement, the clever capsulizing of an idea. Among the numerous examples of this talent is a characterization of the tensions inherent in theology—expressed in a letter to Emily Bowles on April 16, 1866:

Recollect, to write theology is like dancing on the tight rope some hundred feet above the ground. It is hard to keep from falling, and the fall is great. . . . The questions are so subtle, the distinctions so fine, and critical jealous eyes so many.¹

Newman left no doubt whose “critical jealous eyes” he feared:

Such critics would be worth nothing, if they had not the power of writing to Rome, now that communication is made so easy—and you may get into hot water, before you know where you are. The necessity of defending myself at Rome would almost kill me with the fidget. You don’t know me, when you suppose I “take heed of the motley flock of fools.”² No—it is *authority* that I fear.²

At the time Newman wrote Emily Bowles, he was in his mid-sixties and had had ample experience of being “in hot water” with “authority”—both Anglican

¹*The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (hereafter cited as LD) 22:215 (Newman to Bowles, April 16, 1866); the occasion for the letter was the appearance of his *Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., on his recent Eirenicon* (originally published in London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866; later published in the second volume of *Certain difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic teaching considered*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1885 and subsequently). In an earlier letter to Miss Bowles (1818-1904?) Newman acknowledged the limitations of his reply to Pusey: “Don’t expect much from my Pamphlet, which is at last through the Press. Pusey’s work is on too many subjects, not to allow of a dozen answers—and since I am only giving one, every reader will be expecting one or other of the eleven which I don’t give. Mine is only upon our belief concerning the Blessed Virgin.” LD 22:128 (Newman to Bowles, January 18, 1866).

²LD 22:215 (Newman to Bowles, April 16, 1866); the quotation [a] is from *As You Like It*, II, vii. In this letter, Newman pressed further the analogy of tight-rope walking—which was certainly a hazardous, and thus presumably for Victorians, an unlady-like occupation: “Ladies can’t be in the position to try”; apparently the eloquent defender of the laity in “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine” can not be considered an early proponent of feminist theology. “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine” was originally published in *The Rambler* I, new series, Part II (July, 1859), pp. 198-230, and then in an abbreviated form as note V in the third and subsequent editions of *The Arians*, and has been reproduced with an informative introduction by John Coulson in *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine by John Henry Newman* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961); hereafter cited as *On Consulting*.

and Roman Catholic; in an autobiographical appraisal that he shared with his Oratorian confrère, Ambrose St. John, Newman highlighted the disappointments that he had experienced, decade by decade:

When I was 20 I was cut off from the rising talent of the University by my failure in the Schools, as, when 30, I was cut off from distinction in the governing body by being deprived of my Tutorship, as, when 40, I was virtually cast out of the Church of England, by the affair of Number 90, as when 50 I was cast out of what may be called society by the disgrace of the Achilli sentence, so, when I should arrive at 60 years, I should be cast out of the good books of Catholics, and especially of ecclesiastical authorities.³

Newman's problems with Roman Catholic Church authorities have not escaped negative comment; on occasion, he has been severely criticized for "the personal rancor he showed against ecclesiastical authorities in general, against certain individual prelates, against many of his brother priests, and against the Catholic population of England in general."⁴

Eventually, Newman was able to place his difficulties in a spiritual perspective; after a decade marked with an almost unbelievable sequence of disagreeable experiences in dealing with Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authorities—the separation of the Birmingham and London Oratories, the Achilli Trial, his rectorship of the Catholic University in Dublin, the Scripture-translation project, the *Rambler* affair—Newman observed to Lord Acton, who also knew at first hand "the natural inclination of men in power to tyrannize":⁵

The poet calls fame "the last infirmity" [a]—but I think for my part that the last infirmity is the wish to be praised by our superiors, and intimate friends, and good men—and that we must set out by believing that God's highest tribunals on earth, whether ecclesiastical or moral, will be, for the time, or till we are gone, unfavorable in their view of those deeds of ours which God Himself most approves.⁶

In Newman's problems with those in charge of church "tribunals," the issue was not fleeting fame, nor ecclesiastical preferment, but "his perception that God's mission was being hindered when so many opportunities for good were not being

³LD 20:328 (Newman to St. John, October 25, 1862). Ambrose St. John (1815-1875), an Oratorian and close friend of Newman, was the translator of Fessler's *Die wahre und die falsche Unfehlbarkeit der Päpste* (*The True and the False Infallibility of the Pope*, 1875); Joseph Fessler (1813-1872), Bishop of Sankt Pölten (Austria), was secretary general of the First Vatican Council.

⁴J. Fenton, "Newman's Complaints Examined in the Light of Priestly Spirituality," *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 138 (1958), 58.

⁵Acton to Simpson, September, 1858, in J. Coulson, *On Consulting*, p. 5. John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton (1834-1902), member of Parliament (1859-1865), raised to the peerage in 1869 and named regius professor of modern history at Cambridge in 1895, has been described as "the most far-sighted Catholic historical thinker of his generation" (H. MacDougall, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1:102).

⁶LD 19:505 (Newman to Acton, June 7, 1861); the reference [a] is to Milton, *Lycidas*, l. 71.

utilized."⁷ Indeed, Newman's life could be described as one long series of frustrated opportunities. Yet, given Newman's "habit, or even nature, of not writing & publishing without a call,"⁸ these frustrations provided Newman with repeated incentives for thinking and writing.

From a rather long list of such incidents in Newman's life, it is difficult to select one as the most indicative of Newman's understanding of theology; indeed, Newman utilized most of such opportunities to advantage. Nonetheless, one of these incidents that came late in his life seems to epitomize the tight-rope predicament of a theologian trying "hard to keep from falling" while watched by the "critical jealous eyes" of church authorities: Newman's discussion of the "teaching and believing church" in *A Letter addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk*.

LETTER TO NORFOLK

In 1870, while Vatican I was in session and the question of infallibility still a topic of debate, Newman's reservations about the projected definition became public, when a letter which was intended to be "one of the most confidential I ever wrote in my life,"⁹ was inexplicably leaked to the press:

When we are all at rest, and have no doubts, and at least practically, not to say doctrinally, hold the Holy Father to be infallible, suddenly there is thunder in the clear sky, and we are told to prepare for something we know not what to try our faith we know not how. No impending danger is to be averted, but a great difficulty is to be created. Is this the proper work for an Ecumenical Council? As to myself personally, please God, I do not expect any trial at all; but I cannot help suffering with the various souls which are suffering, and I look with anxiety at the prospect of having to defend decisions which may be not difficult to my private judgment, but may be most difficult to maintain logically in the face of historical facts.¹⁰

⁷T. Ivory, "Newman's Sensitivity: an Obstacle to Holiness?" *John Henry Newman, Theologian and Cardinal*, Studia Urbaniana 10 (Rome/Brescia: Urbaniana University Press/Paideia, 1981), p. 240; for example, see Newman's statement concerning the failure to establish a Catholic Mission in Oxford: "is it not heart-piercing that such an opportunity should be lost?" (LD 30:143, Newman to Braye, November 2, 1882; Alfred Wyatt Edgell [1849-1928], fifth Baron Braye [1879], was greatly interested in Catholic education).

⁸*John Henry Newman, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. H. Tristram (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), p. 272.

⁹*A Letter addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk* (London: Pickering, 1875) has been republished in *Certain difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* (London: Longmans, Green, 1885ff) and in A. Ryan, *Newman and Gladstone: The Vatican Decrees* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1962). The passage cited is found in *Difficulties* 2:300/Ryan, p. 168.

¹⁰LD 25:18 (Newman to Ullathorne, January 28, 1870). Another English Bishop, James Chadwick of Hexham and Newcastle, wrote to Monsignor Robert Tate, President of Ushaw College, on March 19, 1870: "I read Newman's letter on the subject but I must say it did not please me" (in D. Milburn, "Impressions of an English Bishop at the First Vatican Council," *The Wiseman Review* 493 [Autumn, 1962], 228). For a reconstruction of the press leak, cf. G. Swisshelm, "Newman and the Vatican Definition of Papal Infallibility," *St. Meinrad Essays* 13/3 (May, 1960), 70-88.

Newman's anxiety about the definition was relieved when he read the actual text of *Pastor Aeternus*. After receiving a copy of the conciliar document, Newman found little difficulty in accepting the doctrine and encouraged his correspondents to 'do the same: "nothing has been passed of consequence."¹¹ Nonetheless, while accepting the teaching of Vatican I, Newman felt that the definition was "done with an imperiousness and overbearing wilfulness, which has been a great scandal—and I cannot think thunder and lightning a mark of approbation, as some persons wish to make out, and the sudden destruction of the Pope's temporal power does not seem a sign of approval either."¹²

Although quite sympathetic toward those who had problems accepting the definition, Newman was obviously reticent about openly challenging Manning and other ultramontane interpreters. Accordingly, Newman restricted the expression of his views about the newly proclaimed doctrine to his private correspondence, much of which was with people who were disturbed by the ultramontanes' maximalist interpretations. However, the publication in 1874 of Gladstone's "political expostulation" on *The Vatican Decrees in their bearing on Civil Allegiance*—which maintained that "Catholics, if they act consistently with their principles, cannot be loyal subjects"¹³—provided Newman with the "call" that he had been awaiting, the opportunity "of breaking a long silence on subjects deeply interesting to me, and to the demands of my own honour."¹⁴

For Newman, this providentially provided "call" was a chance not only to refute Gladstone's accusations, but also to reject Manning's interpretation of Vatican I. Newman made the most of the opportunity; for example, the dedication of his essay as a "letter" to the Duke of Norfolk was a masterful stroke, reminding Gladstone that among the persons whose loyalty was being impugned was the ranking peer of the realm and simultaneously silencing Manning, who could hardly criticize a letter dedicated to the foremost Roman Catholic layman in the king-

¹¹LD 25:224 (Newman to Lady Simeon, November 1, 1870). The solemn session on July 18, 1870, when *Pastor Aeternus* was solemnly proclaimed, was accompanied by "thunder and lightning"; see the graphic description of Newman's brother-in-law, T. Mozely, *Letters from Rome on the Occasion of the Oecumenical Council, 1869-1870* 2 (London: Longmans, Green, 1891; Westmead: Gregg International, 1969), pp. 445-46; the "destruction of the Pope's temporal power" came with the occupation of Rome by troops of the Kingdom of Italy on September 20, 1870.

¹²LD 25:262 (Newman to Mrs. William Froude, January 2, 1871).

¹³*Difficulties* 2:180/Ryan p. 79; William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1897), four times prime minister, was attracted to Tractarianism as an Oxford undergraduate and maintained a lifelong interest in religious matters; Gladstone's book (London: John Murray, 1874) has been republished by A. Ryan in *Newman and Gladstone: the Vatican Decrees*. On the background to this controversy, see J. Altholz, "The Vatican Decrees Controversy, 1874-1875," *The Catholic Historical Review* 57 (1972), 593-605; J. Holmes, "Liberal Catholicism and Newman's Letter to the Duke of Norfolk," *The Clergy Review* 60 (1975), 498-511; H. Jenkins, "The Irish Dimension of the British *Kulturkampf*: Vaticanism and Civil Allegiance, 1870-1875," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 30 (1979), 353-77; J. Bastable, "Gladstone's *Expostulation* and Newman," in *Newman and Gladstone, Centennial Essays*, ed. J. Bastable (Dublin: Veritas, 1978), pp. 9-25.

¹⁴*Difficulties* 2:341/Ryan, p. 199.

dom. Newman's contemporaries were accordingly delighted at, or dismayed by, this *Letter* which was effectively a double-edged sword that polemically devastated both popular Protestant prejudice and ultramontane absolutism. For example, after describing Gladstone's account as "neither trustworthy nor charitable,"¹⁵ Newman immediately disowned the heavy-handed interpretation of infallibility championed by ultramontane interpreters:

There are those among us, as it must be confessed, who for years past have conducted themselves, as if no responsibility attached to wild words and overbearing deeds; who have stated truths in the most paradoxical form, and stretched principles till they were close upon snapping; and who at length, having done their best to set the house on fire, leave to others the task of putting out the flame. The English people are sufficiently sensitive of the claims of the Pope, without having them, as if in defiance, flourished in their faces.¹⁶

For the first stage of his refutation, Newman turned to the evidence of the "ancient church," and utilized an apologetic argument derived from his experience in the Oxford Movement, thus an argument familiar to Gladstone and other Anglo-Catholics: Rome's "fidelity to the ancient Christian system" was "the luminous fact which more than any other turned men's minds" to look to Rome "with reverence, interest, and love"; indeed, "no one could read the Fathers, and determine to be their disciple, without feeling that Rome, like a faithful steward, had kept in fulness and in vigour what his own communion had let drop."¹⁷

Moreover, just as the Roman Church is the Church where the patristic writers would presently feel at home, similarly, "the Pope is the heir of the Ecumenical Hierarchy of the fourth century, as being what I may call, heir by default"; consequently, "we must either give up the belief in the Church as a divine institution altogether, or we must recognize it at this day in that communion of which the Pope is the head."¹⁸ Yet, while insisting on the necessity of the papacy, Newman also insisted:

I am far from saying that Popes are never in the wrong, and are never to be resisted; or that their excommunications always avail. I am not bound to defend the policy or the acts of particular Popes . . . and I do not contend, for instance that they at all times have understood our own people, our national character and resources, and our position in Europe; or that they have never suffered from bad counsellors or misinformation.¹⁹

¹⁵*Difficulties* 2:176/Ryan, p. 76.

¹⁶*Difficulties* 2:176-77/Ryan, p. 76.

¹⁷*Difficulties* 2:198/Ryan, p. 92; W. Bonner, *A Thematic Comparison of the Apologetical Writings of John Milner and the Anglican Writings of John Henry Newman* (Washington: Catholic University of America S.T.D. dissertation, 1984), pp. 460-63, has shown that this apologetic argument from the patristic church was frequently used by Newman.

¹⁸*Difficulties* 2:207-208/Ryan, pp. 98-99; Ryan (p. 99) omits the words "at this day." Newman's description of the pope as "heir by default" caused comment, to which he replied in a subsequent "postscript" (*Difficulties* 2:357/Ryan, p. 213).

¹⁹*Difficulties* 2:216-17/Ryan, pp. 105-106.

Newman then readily acknowledged "that collisions can take place between the Holy See and national governments,"²⁰ but denied Gladstone's contention that "Catholics are moral and mental slaves, and 'every convert and member of the Pope's Church places his loyalty and civil duty at the mercy of another.'" ²¹ Rather, Newman asserted, "there are cases in which we should obey the Pope and disobey the State" and even admitted, at least hypothetically, that there could be cases when one "should act with the Civil Power, and not with the Pope."²²

In case "the commands of the two authorities may clash"—a dilemma that had frequently confronted British Roman Catholics in the period from Queen Elizabeth to "Catholic Emancipation" in 1829—Newman counseled:

If either the Pope or the Queen demanded of me an "Absolute Obedience," he or she would be transgressing the laws of human nature and human society. I give an absolute obedience to neither. Further, if ever this double allegiance pulled me in contrary ways . . . , then I should decide according to the particular case, which is beyond all rule, and must be decided on its own merits.²³

While Newman was willing to acknowledge "that there are extreme cases in which Conscience may come into collision with the word of a Pope, and is to be followed in spite of that word,"²⁴ he reminded Gladstone, and indirectly Manning as well, of the limitations on papal power:

But a Pope is not infallible in his laws, nor in his commands, nor in his acts of state, nor in administration, nor in his public policy. Let it be observed that the Vatican Council has left him just as he found him here.²⁵

Newman, following common theological teaching, acknowledged that "obedience to the Pope is what is called 'in possession,'" so that "unless a man is able to say to himself, as in the Presence of God, that he must not, and dare not, act upon the Papal injunction, he is bound to obey it, and would commit a great

²⁰*Difficulties* 2:237/Ryan, p. 120.

²¹*Difficulties* 2:224/Ryan, p. 111.

²²*Difficulties* 2:240-41/Ryan, p. 123.

²³*Difficulties* 2:243/Ryan, p. 125. The choice between pope and queen recalled the painful dilemma created by Pius V's excommunication of Elizabeth I in 1570, a choice that frequently recurred until the Emancipation Act of 1829; cf. E. Reynolds, *The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales* (Wheatthampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1973), pp. 229, 317-26.

²⁴*Difficulties* 2:246/Ryan, p. 127.

²⁵*Difficulties* 2:256/Ryan, p. 134. In his "conclusion," Newman reiterated his denial that there was an "increase made by the Vatican definition in the Pope's authority. But there is no real increase; he has for centuries upon centuries had and used that authority, which the Definition now declares ever to have belonged to him" (*Difficulties* 2:256/Ryan, pp. 199-200). Newman's restrictive interpretation of the extent of infallibility contrasted notably with Manning's "wide and general" interpretation, which included not only "the whole revealed Word of God" but also "whatsoever is necessary for exposition or defense"; under the later heading, Manning included a wide variety of teachings, including censures less than heresy (cf. H. Manning, *The Vatican Council and Its Definitions* [London: Longmans, Green, 1870], pp. 66-74).

sin in disobeying it"; nonetheless, Newman insisted emphatically "on the duty of obeying our conscience at all hazards."²⁶ To illustrate this point, Newman once again came up with a memorable expression, this time in the form of a toast:

Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, (which indeed does not seem quite the thing) I shall drink,—to the Pope, if you please,—still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards.²⁷

Newman discussed the meaning of such "obedience to the Pope" in the highly controversial case of *Quanta cura*, the papal encyclical of 1864, and its companion-piece, the *Syllabus of Errors*, "which has been exclaimed against in England as such a singular enormity, and especially by Mr. Gladstone."²⁸ While asserting that the *Syllabus* "is to be received with profound submission, as having been sent by the Pope's authority to the Bishops of the world," Newman, in contrast to his ultramontane contemporaries who wished to elevate its propositions to the status of dogmatic teaching, characterized the *Syllabus*:

Intrinsically, and viewed in itself, it is nothing more than a digest of certain Errors made by an anonymous writer. There would be nothing on the face of it, to show that the Pope had ever seen it, page by page, unless the "Imprimatur" implied in the Cardinal's letter had been an evidence of this.²⁹

Consequently, the *Syllabus* "has no dogmatic force" and so "is to be received from the Pope by an act of obedience, not of faith."³⁰

While rejecting Gladstone's adversarial interpretation of various propositions taken from the *Syllabus*, Newman simultaneously disowned the maximalizing generalizations advocated by ultramontane theologians: "Another circumstance, which I am not theologian enough to account for, is this,—that the wording of many of the erroneous propositions, as they are drawn up in the *Syllabus*, gives an apparent breadth to the matter condemned which is not found in the Pope's own words in his Allocutions and Encyclicals."³¹ Newman's self-depreciation seems based on the premise "that theology is a science, and a science of a special kind; its reasoning, its method, its modes of expression, and its language are all its own";

²⁶*Difficulties* 2:258-59/Ryan, p. 136.

²⁷*Difficulties* 2:261/Ryan, p. 138; incidentally, Newman's toast, "Conscience and Pope," stood in contrast to the toast, "Church and King," representative of "Church-of-Englandism" (cf. *Difficulties* 2:264/Ryan, p. 140).

²⁸*Difficulties* 2:276/Ryan, p. 150; (Ryan omits "a" before "singular"); on the outburst in England in response to the *Syllabus*, cf. D. McElrath, *The 'Syllabus' of Pius IX: Some Reactions in England* (Louvain: Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 39, 1964); R. Aubert, "Religious Liberty from 'Mirari Vos' to the 'Syllabus.'" *Concilium* 7:89-105; J. Holmes, *The Triumph of the Holy See* (London: Burns & Oates/Shepherdstown: Patmos, 1978), pp. 145-51.

²⁹*Difficulties* 2:277/Ryan, p. 151; Newman reaffirmed this need for "profound submission" to the *Syllabus* in a later "postscript" (*Difficulties* 2:364/Ryan, p. 218). Giacomo Cardinal Antonelli (1806-1876), papal secretary of state (from 1852), signed the letter that accompanied the *Syllabus*.

³⁰*Difficulties* 2:281/Ryan, pp. 153-54.

³¹*Difficulties* 2:293/Ryan, p. 163.

just as technical competence in any field is scarce, "indeed a really first-rate theologian is rarely to be found."³²

Consequently, "young theologians, and still more those who are none, are sure to mistake in matters of detail";³³ such mistaken interpretations of the *Syllabus* were partially to blame for "the commotion which accompanied its publication."³⁴ But the fault was not only that of the popular press; in Rome, "circles of light-minded men" helped "make a row in Europe"—a situation which Newman described in provocative terms: "Now, the Rock of St. Peter on its summit enjoys a pure and serene atmosphere, but there is a great deal of Roman *malaria* at the foot of it."³⁵

Newman then turned his attention to the (First) Vatican Council, whose proclamation of "the infallible magisterium of the pope" had provoked Gladstone. Newman noted that "the most unfounded and erroneous assertions have publicly been made about my sentiments towards it, and as confidently as they are unfounded."³⁶ Perhaps it was to undercut such rumors that Newman asserted in seemingly peremptory fashion: "there is nothing of course that can be reversed in the Vatican definitions; but the series of its acts was cut short by the great war, and, should the need arise, (which is not likely), to set right a false interpretation, another Leo will be given us for the occasion; 'in monte Dominus videbit.'"³⁷ Unlikelihood of revision notwithstanding, there is historical precedent for modifying conciliar teaching; under Pope Leo the Great, for example, the Council of Chalcedon "trimmed the balance of doctrine by completing" the teaching of the Council of Ephesus.³⁸ In effect, "the definitions of Later Councils are wont to be more luminous, fuller, more accurate and exact than those of the earlier."³⁹

Underlying Newman's interpretation of the teaching of Vatican I was a view of history that differed in some notable respects from the views of many of his contemporaries. First of all, Newman acknowledged that Catholics have "views

³²*Difficulties* 2:294/Ryan, p. 164.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Difficulties* 2:297/Ryan, p. 166.

³⁵*Difficulties* 2:297-98/Ryan, p. 166.

³⁶*Difficulties* 2:299/Ryan, p. 167.

³⁷*Difficulties* 2:307/Ryan, p. 173 (Ryan omits the following phrase: "the series of its acts was cut short by the great war, and,"); the "great war" was the Franco-Prussian war, which broke out on July 19, 1870, the day after the solemn proclamation of *Pastor Aeternus* at Vatican I.

³⁸*Difficulties* 2:307/Ryan, p. 173; in his correspondence, Newman was less restrained about the possible revision of Vatican I: "Let us be patient, let us have faith, and a new Pope, and a re-assembled Council may trim the boat" (LD 25:310; Newman to Plummer, April 3, 1871); Alfred Plummer (1841-1926), Master of University College, Durham, translated several of Dollinger's works; cf. J. Hughes, "Trimming the Boat on Infallibility," *Bucknell Review* 19 (1971), 101-18.

³⁹*Difficulties* 2:308/Ryan, p. 174.

on the relation of History to Dogma different from those which Protestants maintain."⁴⁰ What is the relation between History and Dogma?

For myself, I would simply confess that no doctrine of the Church can be rigorously proved by historical evidence; but at the same time that no doctrine can be simply disproved by it. Historical evidence reaches a certain way, more or less, towards a proof of the Catholic doctrines; often nearly the whole way; sometimes it goes only so far as to point in their direction; sometimes there is only an absence of evidence for a conclusion contrary to them; nay, sometimes there is an apparent leaning of the evidence to a contrary conclusion, which has to be explained;—in all cases there is a margin left for the exercise of faith in the word of the Church.⁴¹

Whether historical evidence for dogma is quantitatively large or small, qualitatively it is always illative, never demonstrative, always suggestive, never conclusive. In other words, historical evidence can never displace the need for faith: "He who believes the dogmas of the Church only because he has reasoned them out of History, is scarcely a Catholic."⁴²

Newman's description of the relation of history to dogma seems directed primarily against the "evidentialistic" mentality of "the educated, the high-minded Victorian agnostics and rationalists" who "were taught, in matters of importance, only to assent after proof, and to regard it as an offence against the truth, to accept more than was demonstrated."⁴³ But his view of history also runs counter to the ultramontane claim that "dogma must conquer history," i.e., that a dogmatic position does not have to take into account any apparent historical exceptions—in particular, the ultramontane assumption that the various instances in which popes have made mistakes can be explained away by the dogma of infallibility: if a pope acted erroneously, then he obviously was not exercising infallibility. Lord Acton, among others, feared that such a circular argument would be tantamount to both a white-washing of past papal abuses and a *carte blanche* for future papal absolutism.⁴⁴

Thirdly, Newman's view of doctrine developing within history—a view which allowed for the future correction, even a future trimming, of contemporary developments—placed him at odds with another famous church historian of the day, Döllinger, who maintained that historical investigation should authenticate every doctrine; thus, for Döllinger, the new doctrine of papal infallibility proposed by Vatican I—with no proof in its favor, indeed, with a great number of ecclesiastical

⁴⁰*Difficulties* 2:310/Ryan, p. 175.

⁴¹*Difficulties* 2:312/Ryan, p. 177.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³C. Dessain, *John Henry Newman* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), p. 151; Newman had earlier responded to the basic problem of "evidentialism" in the second part of his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1870), by showing "that you can believe what you cannot absolutely prove."

⁴⁴Cf. Acton to Döllinger in V. Conzemius, "Lord Acton and the First Vatican Council," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 20 (1969), 286, 289; cf. V. Conzemius, "Acton, Döllinger and Gladstone: a strange variety of anti-infallibilists," in *Newman and Gladstone: Centennial Essays* (edited by J. Bastable), pp. 27-55.

errors in evidence against it—simply could not be historically defended and thus must be repudiated.⁴⁵

Although Newman was balancing his view of history against (at least) three other positions, there were areas of agreement. For example, both Newman and Döllinger, agreed in rejecting the dehistoricized approach of the younger Roman-trained systematic theologians of that day. In another respect, however, Newman differed with Döllinger and agreed with a basic premise of Roman theology in conceding to the *magisterium* a decisive role in enunciating revelation: “the immediate motive in the mind of a Catholic for his reception of them [doctrines] is, not that they are proved to him by Reason or by History, but because Revelation has declared them by means of that high ecclesiastical *Magisterium* which is their legitimate exponent.”⁴⁶

Nonetheless, there is also a sense in which Newman may have conceded too much to the Roman theologians; for example, in his discussion of the case of Pope Honorius—which was one of the instances of papal malpractice most debated at Vatican I—Newman reduced the issue to “the simple question . . . whether the heretical documents proceeded from him as an infallible authority or as a private Bishop.”⁴⁷ By stating the question in those terms, Newman seemed to accept the premise current in Roman theology that the criteria established by Vatican I for ascertaining a papal exercise of infallibility can be applied retroactively. It seems difficult to align a retroactive application of Vatican I with Newman’s apparently developmental view of “the long history of the contest for and against the Pope’s infallibility” as “a growing insight through centuries into the meaning” of the Petrine texts.⁴⁸ While the contest was in progress, how could one legitimately apply criteria that emerged only at the end, and which might be further changed in the future?

In regard to the definition itself, Newman was clearly opposed to the maximalist interpretations of ultramontane theologians:

She [the Church] only speaks when it is necessary to speak; but hardly has she spoken out magisterially some great general principle, when she sets her theologians to work to explain her meaning in the concrete, by strict interpretation of its wording, by the illustration of its circumstances, and by the recognition of exceptions, in order to make it as tolerable as possible, and the least of a temptation, to self-willed, independent, or wrongly educated minds.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Johann Josef Ignaz von Döllinger (1799-1890), professor of church history at the University of Munich, was one of the most outspoken opponents of the proposed dogma of infallibility at the time of Vatican I; cf. W. Klausnitzer, *Päpstliche Unfehlbarkeit bei Newman und Döllinger. Ein historisch-systematischer Vergleich* (Innsbruck/Vienna/Munich: Tyrolia, 1980).

⁴⁶*Difficulties* 2:313/Ryan p. 178.

⁴⁷*Difficulties* 2:315/Ryan, p. 179. For a comprehensive (albeit one-sided) discussion of the historical cases debated at Vatican I, see A. Hasler, *Pius IX (1846-1878), päpstliche Unfehlbarkeit und I. Vatikanisches Konzil: Dogmatisierung und Durchsetzung einer Ideologie* (Stuttgart: Heirsemann, 1977), pp. 216-316.

⁴⁸*Difficulties* 2:318/Ryan, p. 182.

⁴⁹*Difficulties* 2:321/Ryan, p. 183.

Newman's minimalism is evident first of all, in his assumption that dogmatic definitions should be made only "when it is necessary"; secondly, once a dogma has been defined, it becomes the task of theologians to interpret it strictly, to illustrate it aptly, and to point out the limits of its applicability—all in order to make the new dogma as pastorally "tolerable as possible." In defense of "this rule of the Church" against further ultramontane attack, Newman expressed his hope that the "day of tyrannous *ipse-dixits* . . . is over."⁵⁰

Newman's minimalism is again evident in his detailed explanation of the meaning of "the Pope's infallibility, as the Vatican Fathers have defined it";⁵¹ for example, Newman acknowledged that "in those circumstances and surroundings of formal definitions . . . whether on the part of a Council or a Pope, there may be not only no exercise of an infallible voice but actual error."⁵² Similarly, "since the process of defining truth is human, it is open to the chance of error"; consequently, "what Providence has guaranteed is only this, that there should be no error in the final step, in the resulting definition or dogma."⁵³

Newman's judgment that the "principle of minimizing" is essential "for a wise and cautious theology" is accompanied by a technical, even reductionistic, view of the work of theologians:⁵⁴

Theologians employ themselves in determining what precisely it is that is condemned in that thesis or treatise; and doubtless in most cases they do so with success; but that determination is not *de fide*; all that is of faith is that there is in that thesis itself, which is noted, heresy or error, or other like peccant matter, as the case may be, such, that the censure is a peremptory command to theologians, preachers, students, and all other whom it concerns, to keep clear of it.⁵⁵

Given the delicate work of theological interpretation, Newman urged that "caution is to be observed, on the part of private and unauthorized persons, in imposing upon the consciences of others any interpretation of dogmatic enunciations which is beyond the legitimate sense of the words, inconsistent with the principle

⁵⁰*Difficulties* 2:321/Ryan, p. 184.

⁵¹*Difficulties* 2:324/Ryan, p. 186; Newman could and perhaps should have been stricter in his terminology; *Pastor Aeternus* did not speak of "the Pope's Infallibility" but of the "infallible magisterium of the Roman Pontiff."

⁵²*Difficulties* 2:327/Ryan, p. 188 (Ryan omits "on the part").

⁵³*Difficulties* 2:328/Ryan, p. 189; *Pastor Aeternus* stated that "such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves and not from the consent of the church" rather than free from error; there has been considerable debate over the meaning of "irreformable" with some giving it a philosophical meaning (such as "permanently unchangeable"); others would understand "irreformable" in a juridical sense that such definitions are "final and not subject to a further ratification process, either by a council or regional churches." Cf. G. Dejaifve, "Ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae," *Salesianum* 24 (1962), 283-95, translated in *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 14 (1962), 360-78.

⁵⁴*Difficulties* 2:332/Ryan, p. 192.

⁵⁵*Difficulties* 2:333/Ryan, p. 193.

that all general rules have exceptions, and unrecognized by the Theological *Schola*.⁵⁶

Given the "rare occurrence" of "Papal and Synodal definitions, obligatory on our faith," such a restrictive hermeneutic, the product of "a wise and gentle *minimism*," should go far in correcting the "fierce and intolerant temper abroad, which scorns and virtually tramples on the little ones of Christ."⁵⁷

REFLECTIONS

Newman is not an author whose thought can be easily summarized; in particular, his view of theology is highly complex and highly interconnected: one aspect always relates to others; thus, any statement about Newman's thought must always be complemented or modified by some further statement; such balances and counterbalances within Newman's own theological thought readily justify his description of the writing of theology as "dancing on the tight rope."⁵⁸

This image seems particularly appropriate as a description of the challenge that Newman faced in composing his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*; his rejection of Gladstone's anti-Romanism was adroitly balanced with his repudiation of Manning's ultramontanism; for every stroke directed against popular Protestant prejudice, there is a counter-stroke against Roman authoritarianism; for every concession to the privileges of Rome, there is an insistence on the limitations of papal prerogatives.

In the event, the *Letter to Norfolk* was produced on short notice; however, like the well rehearsed high-wire performer, Newman had long been preparing himself for the "call" that he hoped would come. For half a decade before the conciliar definition, Newman had been at work collecting and organizing material on infallibility, as well as sharing his findings and shaping his thoughts in his private correspondence.⁵⁹ Once that call came, in the form of Gladstone's *Expostulation*, Newman was ready to appear before the "critical jealous eyes" with a presentation which was theologically sound and rhetorically persuasive.

The rhetorical challenge was formidable. Newman was, on the one hand, contesting a highly respected and articulate political figure whose debating skills had been practiced at Oxford and perfected in Parliament. On the other hand, Newman was confronting a highly influential and outspoken ecclesiastic whose administrative finesse had been engendered as an Anglican archdeacon and enhanced as

⁵⁶*Difficulties* 2:337-38/Ryan, p. 196.

⁵⁷*Difficulties* 2:338, 339/Ryan, p. 196, 197.

⁵⁸For a historical survey of reductionist attempts to judge Newman's thought according to arbitrary parameters, cf. J. Powell, *Three Uses of Christian Discourse in John Henry Newman* (Missoula MT: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 11-65.

⁵⁹The drafts that Newman made prior to Vatican I have been published in *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Biblical Inspiration and on Infallibility*, selected, edited, and introduced by J. D. Holmes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 101-60; for a helpful survey of Newman's letters on infallibility, see R. Strange, "Newman on Infallibility: 1870 and 1970," *Ampleforth Journal* 80 (Spring, 1975), 61-70, and F. Cwiekowski, *The English Bishops and the First Vatican Council* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1971), pp. 308-12.

a Roman Catholic prelate. Accordingly, Newman had to try to balance the style of debate customary at the Oxford Union with the form of discourse acceptable, or at least intelligible, to theologians trained in the Roman universities.

With a combination of forensic artistry and theological acumen, Newman's *Letter to Norfolk* confronted the three-pronged tension between personal conscience, civil allegiance, and ecclesial commitment. On the political level, Newman's resolution of these tensions seems, more or less, to have followed the pattern of that cherished British practice of "loyal opposition": a citizen could be politically loyal without agreeing with the government and without subscribing to the established church.⁶⁰

"Loyal opposition" was an approach which his Protestant readers understood and respected, for who could deny a sincere Christian the right to follow his conscience. Simultaneously, "loyal opposition" implicitly renewed the attack on the Erastian identification of state and Church, that had been at issue both in the Oxford Movement and in Manning's conversion to Roman Catholicism.⁶¹ "Loyal opposition" was also an argument that Newman's Roman Catholic adversaries could not publicly repudiate without automatically convicting themselves of Gladstone's charges. In effect, "loyal opposition" was a position that Newman's ultramontane contemporaries accepted politically but rejected theologically. At a time when the Roman Catholic Church, both in England and elsewhere, was the object of prejudice and persecution, both the English hierarchy and the Roman authorities tended to see any dissent to the least of their decisions as disloyalty at best, if not outright heresy; however understandable in the historical circumstances of that time, it is unfortunate that the Church in the nineteenth century frequently equated unity of faith with ecclesiastical subservience.⁶²

Yet in Newman's perspective, the theological equivalent of "loyal opposition" presupposed an essential ecclesiological premise, namely, the church as a communion of interacting hierarchy and laity, of magisterium and theologians in dialogue. While such a communio-ecclesiology may seem commonplace today, in Newman's time, the attitude of the hierarchy was all too graphically summa-

⁶⁰For a more detailed discussion of their views on "liberty," cf. D. Nicholls, "Gladstone, Newman and the Politics of Pluralism," in *Newman and Gladstone: Centennial Essays* (ed. J. Bastable), pp. 27-38. In contrast was Acton's "defense" of the Vatican Council as summarized by E. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), p. 99: "The Papacy had made extreme claims long before 1870, and these had produced no bad effects on English Catholics, for they had just ignored them. The Vatican Decrees would therefore make no difference."

⁶¹Cf. J. Griffin, "The Anglican Politics of Cardinal Newman," *Anglican Theological Review* 55 (1973), 434-43, and "The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 44 (1975), 155-65; on Manning's conversion, cf. Leslie Shane, *Henry Edward Manning: His Life and Labours* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1921), pp. 81-102.

⁶²For a discussion of the perceived interconnection between the Church's *Einheit*, *Freiheit*, and *Geschlossenheit*, cf. H. Pottmeyer, *Unfehlbarkeit und Souveränität: die päpstliche Unfehlbarkeit im System der ultramontanen Ekklesiologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1975).

alized by the representative of the English bishops in Rome, Monsignor George Talbot:

What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all.⁶³

In a similar but more systemic vein, ultramontane theology tended to identify the Church with the hierarchy, or at least to aggrandize the *ecclesia docens* to the practical negation of the *ecclesia discens*.

What Newman found most dismaying about this attitude was that "a layman seemed, spiritually, to be a kind of 'boy eternal', rather than a responsible adult partner, whose right it was to be consulted on matters within his competence."⁶⁴ In contrast, though with obvious discretion, Newman maintained: "Though the laity be but the reflection or echo of the clergy in matters of faith, yet there is something in the 'pastorum and fidelium conspiratio', which is not in the pastors alone."⁶⁵

Newman's convictions about the role of the laity in the Church (admittedly more evident in "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine") surfaced in various ways in his *Letter to Norfolk*. Perhaps most obvious is the very dedication of this "letter" to the ranking Roman Catholic layman of the realm. Less obvious, but more important, is Newman's concern about the reception of conciliar doctrine not as a matter of authoritarian imposition, but because the members of the Church need to recognize conciliar teaching as "the Word of God, declared through His Church."⁶⁶ Consequently, Newman emphasized that the faithful realistically needed time to "receive" a new doctrine, rather than having its acceptance forced upon them. But Newman went further and insisted that people also had a right to know and to choose among different legitimate interpretations of doctrine, rather than be forced to accept the particular interpretation of a particular school. The *ecclesia discens* needs to recognize its own belief in the definitions of the *ecclesia docens*.

For Newman, the Church's "reception" of conciliar teaching is a process that relies upon the theological interpretations provided by the *Schola Theologorum*. While Newman emphatically defended the right and duty of the magisterium to define doctrine, he was equally emphatic in assigning to theologians the duty of interpreting doctrines once they were defined. In spite of the tyranny of those who failed to respect the integrity of this process by presuming that conciliar decrees are self-explanatory "ipse-dixits," Newman's efforts were ultimately successful: "There was after all more than one admissible opinion regarding the interpretation of the Vatican decrees current in the Catholic communion, and in the end a moderate view, hedged around with lawyer-like clauses, would prevail."⁶⁷

⁶³*On Consulting*, p. 41. Talbot (1816-1886), a convert, was a papal chamberlain and confidant of Pius IX.

⁶⁴Coulson, *On Consulting*, p. 21.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

⁶⁶*Difficulties* 2:345/Ryan, p. 202.

⁶⁷P. Misner, *Papacy and Development*, p. 161.

Yet, while clearly balancing magisterial teaching with both the need for reception and the necessity of interpretation, Newman's view of theology, as it emerges in his *Letter to Norfolk*, displays a certain amount of ambivalence. As a theological "classic," the *Letter to Norfolk* has something of the literary flourish of the *Apologia pro vita sua* but also some of the systematic tediousness of the *Grammar of Assent* (particularly the latter's first three chapters). In effect, Newman's *Letter to Norfolk* seems to have combined two rather different theological styles.

For example, in paragraph after paragraph, Newman cited one theological authority after another, as if to convince ultramontane theologians of the legitimacy of his interpretations, or at least to counteract their objections in advance.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, even when Newman was apparently trying to imitate the style of Roman theologizing, he simultaneously insisted on the need to apply systematic principles to concrete cases, and emphasized that comprehensive rules admit of individual exceptions. For Roman theologians, the guardedly acknowledged exceptions verified the rule; for Newman, the same exceptions seem to indicate the limitations inherent in every attempt to speak systematically about revelation.⁶⁹ Thus, Newman's use of theologians approved at Rome seems something of a marriage of convenience; his heart does not seem really committed to the systematic type of theologizing then in vogue in Rome.

Newman's own theological style was, of course, related to his other talents. As a rhetorician, Newman was quite aware that arguments directed to the heart are more effective than those directed to the head. As a litterateur, Newman was at his best in describing the beautiful and in expressing the psychological, but less effective, when he became too formal and philosophical.⁷⁰ As a historian, Newman was more interested in the developing drama of history than in its details, or at least in the details for their own sake.⁷¹ Similar qualities characterized much of Newman's more creative and original theologizing; specifically, his personal theological style tended to be inductive and synthetic, in contrast to the deductive and systemic orientation customary in the Roman theological schools.

So different was Newman's conatural theological mind-set (in contrast to his occasional but deliberate borrowings from Roman theologians) that he sometimes minimized or even denied that he was a theologian.⁷² Perhaps such a denial was a defensive measure, to disarm in advance the ultramontanes who were displeased with his theological positions. Yet Newman's difficulties with the ultramontanes

⁶⁸Newman's use of traditional theological writers is particularly evident in his chapter (9) on "the Vatican definition"; in fact, prior to writing *Norfolk*, he had made extensive background notes on infallibility (see *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Biblical Inspiration and on Infallibility*, pp. 101-50).

⁶⁹Cf. J. Powell, *Three Uses of Christian Discourses in John Henry Newman*, p. 93.

⁷⁰On "Newman as Literary Artist," cf. C. Harrold, *John Henry Newman* (London/New York/Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1945/Hamden CT: Archon, 1966), pp. 267-99.

⁷¹Cf. T. Bokenkotter, *Cardinal Newman as an Historian* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1959).

⁷²Cf. N. Lash, "Was Newman a Theologian?" *Heythrop Journal* 17 (1976), 322-25.

ran much deeper than a conflict of personalities or a disagreement over particular ecclesiastical policies. "Above all, the conflict was between a patient, deeply inquiring mind that wanted undecided questions left open and an impatient, intolerant spirit that regarded open questions as untidy, to be turned as soon as possible into static formulas that could be imposed as matters of faith."⁷³

In other words, the primary disadvantage of ultramontane theology was its demand for a completely self-consistent system; in contrast, the primary advantage of Newman's personal way of theologizing was its comprehensive *view*: a "synthetic, personal grasp of concrete reality which was his educational and intellectual ideal."⁷⁴ Qualitatively considered, "taking a view," whether in theology or in other fields, suggests the Victorian gentleman in his study leisurely investigating, reflecting, discussing and hypothesizing. The resulting view "incorporates and synthesizes data laboriously gathered while, at the same time, it 'breaks through' the techniques of 'technical history and historical research.'" ⁷⁵ Taking a view demands that the viewer weigh a variety of evidence and then form, not a deductive conclusion, but more a kind of wholistic projection, based on the directional inferences of discreet data.

Like tight-rope walking, taking a theological view tries to maintain a dialectical balance among contending, even apparently contradictory, claims while advancing new theological insights with appropriate caution. In Newman's *Letter to Norfolk*, there seems to be an undergirding balance between three responsibilities exercised by three different groups within the Church: the teaching office of the bishops, the corroborative consultation of the laity, and the critical explanation of theologians. In other words, there appears to be a "triangular balance" between the hierarchical function of definition, the laic function of reception, and the theological function of interpretation. All three are necessary; and all three must be in balance. Whenever one function is stressed to the detriment of the others, the Church risks losing its balance by "falling" into error.

Newman's *Letter to Norfolk* thus includes a series of theological insights as carefully balanced as his double-edged attack against Gladstone and Manning. Just as it is easy to overlook the finesse of the skilled aerialist, it is easy to miss the "balancing" in Newman's theology. For example, Newman's theology occasionally appears to be as monolithic as that of the ultramontanes, as in his assertion that the Word of God, as expressed in Scripture and taught by the magisterium, is absolute and demands absolute assent. Yet if Newman and the ultramontanes agreed on the absoluteness of revelation and on the correspondingly absolute response of faith, their explanations quickly went in different directions. Where the ultramontanes tended to identify the "absoluteness" of faith with the "absoluteness" of revelation (and thus treated "revealed truths" as absolutes), Newman perceived that the expressions of a believer's absolute assent were not themselves absolute and so must always, short of the eschaton, be counterbalanced by three

⁷³J. Holmes and R. Murray, eds., *On the Inspiration of Scripture* by John Henry Newman (Washington: Corpus, 1967), p. 40.

⁷⁴N. Lash, *Newman on Development* (Shepherdstown WV: Patmos, 1975), p. 35.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

interrelated factors: historical, heuristic, and hermeneutical.⁷⁶

The first need for balance arises from the tension between dogmatic teaching and the logic of historical facts. When the Word of God is expressed by the Church's magisterium, the resulting dogma is an ecclesial perception of revelation, appropriate to a specific moment of the Church's history; to the extent that this perception is accurate, to the extent that this perception is ageless, even the very expression is irreformable or irreversible.⁷⁷

In fact, such is only apparently the case, for ecclesial perception can never be complete and final; in attempting to express the divine, there is always something unsaid or something overstated; there is always the possibility of error either by default or by excess; thus, dogma has a heuristic quality insofar as it admits of further development, sometimes by addition or enrichment, sometimes by minimizing or trimming.

Thus, in spite of its apparent absoluteness, it is crucial that dogma be accurately interpreted. For Newman, interpretation was the responsibility of the *Schola Theologorum*: those theologians professionally trained to weigh the meaning of dogma, to determine its applicability, and consequently to delineate its limitations. It is in relation to this hermeneutical task that Newman's differences with ultramontane theology emerge most decisively. First, for Newman, interpretation of dogma is the responsibility of professional theologians, not magisterium-incumbents. Secondly, in performing this responsibility, theologians should be as soundly minimalistic as possible, reducing, not extending, obligations of belief. Thirdly, insofar as dogma may be considered a "principle of belief," theologians need to emphasize that every principle has a limit. Fourthly, while dogma, as the Word of God addressed to the believer, demands an absolute assent, nonetheless, dogma can be received only personally and conscientiously; that is, only in accord with, not against, one's conscience. Fifthly, while one can ordinarily presume that a sincere believer will accept a given dogma, as the Word of God proclaimed by the Church, there is always the possibility that a sincere believer may have to refuse in conscience, at least for the present, to accept a particular church teaching.

In conclusion, one might venture to suggest that the reason why some of the participants at Vatican II were attracted to Newman as their theological mentor was his theological balance between the objective and the subjective, between the heritage of tradition and the exigencies of modern thought, between ecclesial loyalty and liberty of conscience. Yet in crediting Newman for his contributions to modern theology, it is all too easy to apotheosize Newman's theological balance

⁷⁶As John Coulson has pointed out in *Newman and the Common Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), an important tension in Newman's theology was his use of analogical or fiduciary language in opposition to the positivistic language of the utilitarianism then coming into vogue; there seems to be a parallel between Newman's rejection of positivistic/utilitarian language and his confrontation with the fundamentalistic language of ultramontaniam.

⁷⁷It was precisely because Newman took dogma seriously that he rejected both the dogmatism of the ultramontanes and the relativism of religious liberals; cf. J. Crosby, "Newman's Witness against the Spirit of Liberalism in Religion," *John Henry Newman, Theologian and Cardinal*, pp. 99-105.

in a dehistoricized way; one must always remember that Newman as a practicing theologian took the risks of the tight-rope walker. If his *Letter to Norfolk* defended the teachings of Vatican I, it also criticized the "Roman malaria" of curial theologians; if his *Letter to Norfolk* defended the prerogatives of the papacy, it also toasted conscience before the pope. One might conclude by wondering how many theologians today who criticized the Roman curia or who asserted the right of conscience in the interpretation of papal teaching would be elevated to the cardinalate?

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