

THE SPIRITUALITY OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN—INTEREST GROUP

Topic: The Spirituality of John Henry Newman
Conveners: John R. Connolly, Loyola Marymount University
Brian W. Hughes, University of Saint Mary, Kansas
Moderator: Danielle Nussberger, Marquette University
Presenters: Theodore J. Whapham, St. Thomas University, Miami
Ryan Marr, St. Louis University
Kevin Mongrain, Ryan Chair of Newman Studies, Duquesne
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This interest group is dedicated to the study of the spirituality of John Henry Newman and its significance for contemporary theology, for understanding of the mission of the Catholic Church today, and for the life of Catholic believers in the twenty-first century.

Theodore Whapham's paper, "Trinity, Belief, and Imagination in the Spirituality of John Henry Newman," examined Newman's treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity as it is developed in chapter five of *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. After a brief summary of Newman's terminology of assent, the paper focuses on Newman's contention that it is possible for the believer to make a real assent to the doctrine of the Trinity. The significance of this claim of Newman, according to Whapham, is that Newman maintains that the Trinity can be a real religious/spiritual experience in the life of Christians. Whapham views this approach as an improvement over traditional notional approaches to the Trinity. The author then brings Newman's approach into conversation with contemporary approaches that also focus on the personal and spiritual aspects of the Trinity, in particular with the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg. Finally, the paper points out the significance of Newman's contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity by drawing out some of the implications of Newman's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity for contemporary theology and spirituality.

Ryan Marr began his paper, entitled "Mary as the Pattern of Faith: Newman's Mariology and the Vocation of the Theologian," with a brief analysis of the ambiguous reception of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council in the contemporary church. In the main body of the paper Marr examines Newman's description of Mary as "our pattern of faith," which is found in Newman's last University Sermon. As one who "ponders" the truths of faith, Mary's reception is one of acceptance in faith and reflection. As such, Mary provides a model for a reception of faithful reflection and a hermeneutical principle for theologians today in the continuing process of interpreting the Second Vatican Council. Marr then unpacks the significance of this particular Marian reflection for our own day, bringing Newman's developed Mariology into conversation with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1990 instruction *Donum Veritatis: On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*. The paper concludes with an analysis of how Newman's Mariological framework can be an instructive image for thinking about the theological reception of the Second Vatican Council.

Kevin Mongrain's Paper was entitled "Newman and the Spirituality of the Oratory: Identity and Institution Against Abstraction." His presentation on Newman's lesser known Oratory papers show how they illuminate Newman's Alexandrian theological influences and spiritual discipline of the Oratory. Mongrain stresses Newman's desire for an authentic model of religious and Christian life that allows God's indwelling Spirit priority to form the human personality more than human structures. Newman's view of religious life emphasizes personal autonomy, gradual instruction from God, and openness to the mystical that contrasted strongly from other religious styles of the day—especially the Jesuits. For Newman, the Jesuits epitomize rule, system, rigidity—the suppression of personal freedom. Oratorians, as Newman interprets St. Philip Neri, are supposed to cultivate the gentle workings of the Spirit within far more than adherence to external rules or "mechanical obedience." The logic (if unfair in his characterization of Jesuits) of Newman's view is his understanding that St. Philip recovers an Eastern view of salvation as personal *theosis* or deification. Salvation, then, hinges on one's interior life with and sensitivity to the mystical indwelling of the Trinity (really, the *Disciplina Arcani* of the primitive church) within the human heart that defines Oratorian spirituality. Holiness and sanctification work gradually, almost imperceptibly to catch the Oratorian up into the Triune life of God.

This was the final session of this interest group. The quality of the papers this year was exceptional in that they were all very well written scholarly works and overlapped in interesting ways. This facilitated a lively discussion. The overwhelming success of this interest group is demonstrated by the fact the results of our research will be published by Fortress Press in a book to be published in the Fall, 2013.

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