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# Solitude and Journey: Two Central Themes in the Spirituality of John Henry Newman

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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ANGLICAN  
 VIA MEDIA OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN: SOME  
 IMPLICATIONS FOR ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

WULSTAN PETERBURS OSB  
 AMPLEFORTH ABBEY

INTRODUCTION

John Henry Newman, who was born on 21 February 1801 at 80 Old Broad Street in the City of London and died on 11 August 1890 at the Oratory in Birmingham, is arguably the greatest English Catholic theologian of the modern period. His work as a Catholic theologian, however, has its origins in his religious and theological development as an Anglican: as Henry Edward Manning famously complained, 'I see much danger of an English Catholicism of which Newman is the highest type. It is the old Anglican, patristic, literary, Oxford tone transplanted into the Church';<sup>1</sup> and thus it is that the American Jesuit scholar Avery Dulles can note that Newman's Anglican *Lectures on the Propheical Office of the Church* of 1837, though updated and with a Preface added forty years later by the Catholic Newman, remains his 'most thematic treatment of the Church'.<sup>2</sup> These lectures delivered in the Adam de Brome chapel of the University Church of St Mary in Oxford in 1836, during Newman's incumbency, were his attempt to give substance to his developing view, and that of the Tractarians, of the Anglican Church as a *via media*, the reformed Catholic Church in this country, which avoided the excesses of Protestantism on the one hand and those of the Church of Rome on the other.

Received into the Catholic Church at Littlemore, his retreat outside Oxford, on 9 October 1845 by Blessed Dominic Barberi, Newman spent practically one half of his life as an Anglican and the other as a Catholic; and when in later life he enumerated those '(good or bad) 5 constructive books' that he had written,

Wales, Ireland and Scotland, *Daily Prayer from The Divine Office: The Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman Rite*. The first line of the original Latin hymn in the *Liturgia Horarum* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971) is 'Christe, redemptor omnium'.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> John Polkinghorne, 'The Laws of Nature and the Laws of Physics', in *Quantum Cosmology and the Limits of Nature: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy, and C. J. Isham (eds.) (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications / Berkeley, California: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1993), pp. 442-4.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Mabey, *Nature Cure* (London: Pimlico, 2006), p. 174.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g. Mariano Artigas, *The Mind of the Universe: Understanding Science and Religion* (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000), pp. 90f., 120f. and 130; and Stephen Harding, *Animata Earth: Science, Intuition and Gaia* (Foxhole, Devon: Green Books, 2006), pp. 87-90.

<sup>49</sup> Similarly *Lumen gentium* (Vatican II, 1964), par. 36.

<sup>50</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *The World as Sacrament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965), 16 and (Wojtyła), John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Vittorio Messori (ed.), Jenny McPhee and Martha McPhee (tr.) (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 16f.

<sup>51</sup> *Lumen gentium* 48.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g. Ps.-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 4.10-16; PG 3, 708B-13C; John of Scythopolis or Maximus, *Scholion in libro De divinis nominibus*, in cap. 4.14; PG 4, 265C; Maximus, *Thal.* 60; PG 90, 625A or CCSG 22, 79, 124 - 81, 130 and *Opuscula theologica et polemica* 3; PG 91, 49AB. See also Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 71-6, 85, 138, 239 and 253f.

<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Ps.-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 4.7; PG 3, 704A; Eng. tr.: Colm Luibheid, Pseudo-Dionysius: *The Complete Works*, (The Classics of Western Spirituality) (Mahwah, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 77: 'it is the longing for beauty which actually brings [all things] into being.'

## SOLITUDE AND JOURNEY: TWO CENTRAL THEMES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

by

ONO PAUL EKEH

John Henry Newman is widely known for his ideas on doctrinal development, education, conscience, and his reflections on faith and reason. However, it is important to remember that, among the many hats Newman wore, he was mostly a preacher and spiritual director. So in his role as a preacher, pastor, and spiritual leader, did he have a distinct spirituality? If so, what features or ideas would define Newman's spirituality? This paper will explore two prominent and pervasive themes in his spirituality looking primarily at his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* from his Anglican period and also at some of his Catholic sermon notes from the later period of his life.

The first theme is solitude with God—the fact that at a deep core within, a Christian finds herself alone with God. In this core she is constantly in the presence of God and consequently develops a personal and original sense of the Divine. This life in God's presence is defined by an inward contemplation and communion with God, which results in visible external fruit.

The second theme is the spiritual life as a journey or pilgrimage. Newman views the Christian spiritual life as a journey in two ways—first, from darkness and shadows to a world of light and substance, and second, as chronological progress and development. In this journey, the inward contemplation and worship of God finds its outward expression and is the impetus and energy behind one's progress towards God.

SOLITUDE WITH GOD:  
“TWO LUMINOUS BEINGS”

In his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, John Henry Newman speaks

about an "inward conversion" he experienced in his youth. This conversion experience led him to a sense of fundamental trust in a primary relationship between two beings—God and "myself":

I retained it [the feeling of this inward conversion] till the age of twenty-one, when it gradually faded away; but I believe that it had some influence on my opinions, in the direction of those childish imaginations which I have already mentioned, viz. in isolating me from the objects which surrounded me, in confirming me in my mistrust of the reality of material phenomena, and making me rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator;—for while I considered myself predestined to salvation, my mind did not dwell upon others, as fancying them simply passed over, not predestined to eternal death. I only thought of the mercy to myself.<sup>1</sup>

The change in his spiritual orientation caused by his conversion moved him from trust in material phenomena to locating spiritual stability in the "thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings." This transformational moment highlights one central theme of Newman's spiritual life, which is a recognition of an interior divine presence that is no less a part of his core identity than his own soul.

The authentic self is only truly revealed in a solitary and primary relation to God. The indubitable truth about the reality of one's existence includes a similar truth and affirmation of God's presence within. An honest self-reflective act does not simply reveal the soul, but the soul and God within.

This authentic self within is, hidden and "difficult of access." There is a "real state," a region of self possession that Newman calls a Christian's "true life." As Newman stated in an 1859 sermon—a quarter century prior to his *Apologia*:

For, as I have said, the Christian has a deep, silent, hidden peace, which the world sees not,—like some well in a retired and shady place, difficult of access. He is the greater part of his time by himself and when he is in solitude, that is his real state. What he is when left to himself and to his God, that is his true life. He can bear himself; he can (as it were) joy in himself; for it is the grace of God

within him, it is the presence of the Eternal Comforter, in which he joys. He can bear, he finds it pleasant, to be with himself at all times,—"never less alone than when alone." He can lay his head on his pillow at night, and own in God's sight, with overflowing heart, that he wants nothing,—that he "is full and abounds,"—that God has been all things to him, and that nothing is not his which God could give him.<sup>2</sup>

The authentic self, "true life," is a state of being "left to himself and to his God." This authentic solitude does not accommodate God's presence as though God is an intruder, but in its essence includes God's presence, it is a life lived "in God's sight." This authentic solitude in God's presence is a luminous experience that Newman calls "living in sunshine" or "the inward light of God's presence."<sup>3</sup>

This presence of God is not static but interactive, as we will see. God's presence within provides comfort, joy, and sufficiency. In this presence God is "all things to" the soul and nothing is withheld from it. This solitude with God manifests itself in various ways. This discussion will now explore these different modes of Newman's solitude with God.

#### SOLITUDE WITH GOD: COMMUNION WITH GOD AS PRAYER

This co-existing of the deep presence of God and the soul is a form of prayer called "communion with God." The phrase, "living in God's sight," a reference to God's presence that provides joy and sufficiency, is how Newman describes this form of prayer.

There are two modes of praying mentioned in Scripture; the one is prayer at set times and places, and in set forms; the other is what the text speaks of,—continual or habitual prayer. The former of these is what is commonly called prayer, whether it be public or private. The other kind of praying may also be called holding communion with God, or living in God's sight, and this may be done all through the day; wherever we are, and is commanded us as the duty, or rather the characteristic, of those who are really servants and friends of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

The "continual and habitual" prayer is the internal correlate of external forms of prayer. The locus of external prayer forms occurs in the context of community, "at set times and places, and in set forms." In the interior continual and habitual prayer, the focus is no longer on times, places, and forms set by a religious community for worship. The focus is now on a lived experience in the sight of God. This continuous and habitual prayer is defined by living a life in the presence of God and experiencing constant communion with God.

We also see this form of prayer in a sermon in 1876 on *Quinquagesima* called "Communion with God."<sup>5</sup> Newman begins by stating that "God [is] the creator of all—all things *depend* on Him." However, this dependence is fulfilled in us through a "union" with God. Newman goes on to say, "This union shows itself in communion—that is, a fellowship—intercourse of thought or a spiritual conversation." This spiritual conversation is similar to the "communal or habitual prayer," of his previously quoted 1829 sermon. In addition, Newman explains that God comes to this communion experience with "love and grace," and for our part, "this communion requires . . . faith and prayer on the part of man." The scriptural examples of such communion with God are Enoch and Abraham. Enoch "walked" with God and Newman notes that when friends walk, they talk, which is what is signified in that text of scripture. As for Abraham, he was a friend of God which meant, as with all friends, they "were in possession of each other's confidence."

#### SOLITUDE WITH GOD: SELF-DENIAL AND CONTEMPLATION

Being alone with God is living in his presence in joyful submission and willing self-denial.<sup>6</sup> The soul is made for the contemplation of God, because it is in God that the soul discovers authentic happiness,<sup>7</sup> thus the need to pursue this habitual prayer of solitude with God. For all other things that may excite or impress, nothing moves the soul to awe, reverence, love or worship like the contemplation of God.<sup>8</sup>

Now the doctrine which these passages contain is often truly expressed thus: that the soul of man is made for the contemplation of its Maker; and that nothing short of that high contemplation is its happiness; that, whatever it may possess besides, it is unsatisfied till it is vouchsafed God's presence, and lives in the light of it.<sup>9</sup>

The soul thus remains unfulfilled until it achieves the raw awareness of the "two luminous beings," self and God. This primal awareness is contemplation of the soul's creator and is a lived presence and communion with God. It is a joyful experience of solitude in the presence of God.<sup>10</sup>

Living in God's presence is surrender, total surrender in order to attain salvation. It is a realization of one's insufficiency and the total sufficiency of God. Authentic faith that leads to salvation sees the soul only in relation to God and "looks off from self to God."

They wish to be saved, but in their own way; they wish (as it were) to capitulate upon terms, to carry off their goods with them; whereas, the true spirit of faith leads a man to look off from self to God, to think nothing of his own wishes, his present habits, his importance or dignity, his rights, his opinions, but to say, "I put myself into Thy hands, O Lord; make Thou what Thou wilt; I forget myself; I divorce myself from myself; I am dead to myself; I will follow Thee."<sup>11</sup>

This notion of total self-surrender and denial, divorcing and dying to oneself, is characteristic of Newman's view of the spiritual life.<sup>12</sup> Though the soul lives in a primal relationship with God, for a successful partnership between the soul and God, a relinquishment of one's wishes, habits, "dignity," "rights," and "opinions," is necessary.

Newman believed that every Christian should strive for self-denial and submission to God. The opposing tendency is to "shut ourselves up in our hearts," a solipsistic self-possession that excludes the recognition of one's primal relationship with God.

Gloom is no Christian temper; that repentance is not real, which has not love in it; that self-chastisement is not acceptable, which is

not sweetened by faith and cheerfulness. We must live in sunshine, even when we sorrow; we must live in God's presence, we must not shut ourselves up in our own hearts, even when we are reckoning up our past sins.<sup>13</sup>

Shutting one's self in one's heart is an attempt to block out the presence of God. Living in God's presence is to "live in sunshine." Living in God's sight is then the source of the soul's sufficiency.

This manifestation of full authenticity, when one is "left to himself and God," requires self-sacrifice which serves the function of exposing the soul to God and healing the heart and mind. Self-sacrifice is a spiritual union that empties the soul of its selfish interests. This retreat is akin to a self-denial and renewal of the soul. It is a process of unlearning things we have always done and overcoming ourselves.

Self-denial of some kind or other is involved, as is evident, in the very notion of renewal and holy obedience. To change our hearts is to learn to love things which we do not naturally love—to unlearn the love of this world; but this involves, of course, a thwarting of our natural wishes and tastes. To be righteous and obedient implies self-command; but to possess power we must have gained it; nor can we gain it without a vigorous struggle, a persevering warfare against ourselves. The very notion of being religious implies self-denial, because by nature we do not love religion.<sup>14</sup>

To learn to love God, to gain the strength necessary for the struggle against our present natural desires, we need to "fix our eyes upon Christ" and "consider" or reflect or meditate on his glory and then "try to love it." In the process of struggling and striving to unlearn our present dispositions, the Christian uncovers her true self—if she is successful.

#### SOLITUDE WITH GOD: AUTHENTIC GROUNDING OF WORSHIP

Since the soul should be guided by the knowledge that it lives in the constant presence of God,<sup>15</sup> reverence and fear of God are

essential to the relationship between the soul and its creator. In fact, Newman believed that the awe of God is essential to any true and authentic knowledge of God in contrast to a religious praxis inspired by fear of one's sinfulness. The intensity and wonder of angels in the act of worship, who worship in awe of God's majesty, should provide inspiration for us; we should emulate "holy and humble men of heart, who like the Cherubim, see God and worship."<sup>16</sup>

Authentic knowledge of God begins with this internal turn, a self-reflection that uncovers the presence of God within and demonstrably implies an external infinite judge, a God. External spiritual developmental aids, such as homilies, studies, and the like, are only effective to the extent that the soil of the heart is readied by self-reflection.

External worship and true reverence, then, find their roots in authentic self reflection because self reflection leads the Christian to an intense awareness of his limitations against God's omnipotence and infinite being.<sup>17</sup>

Now it must be observed that the existence of fear in religion does not depend on the circumstance of our being sinners; it is short of that. Were we pure as the Angels, yet in His sight, one should think, we could not but fear, before whom the heavens are not clean, nor are the Angels free from folly. The Seraphim themselves veiled their faces while they cried, Glory! Even then were it true that sin was not a great evil, or was no great evil in us, nevertheless the mere circumstance that God is infinite and all-perfect is an overwhelming thought to creatures and mortal men, and ought to lead all persons who profess religion to profess also religious fear; however natural it is for irreligious men to disclaim the feeling.<sup>18</sup>

Solitude with God, leads to authentic and true self-knowledge which "is the root of religious knowledge." Authentic religious praxis and precepts have roots in the truths that come from inward contemplation. The truth thus derived from interior contemplation provides the context for an authentic religious praxis and an authentic response to religious prescriptions.

Thus self-knowledge is at the root of all real religious knowledge;

and it is in vain—worse than vain—, it is a deceit and a mischief, to think to understand the Christian doctrine as a matter of course, merely by being taught by books, or by attending sermons, or by any outward means, however excellent, taken by themselves. For it is in proportion as we search our own hearts and understand our own nature, that we understand what is meant by an Infinite Governor and Judge; in proportion as we comprehend the nature of disobedience and our actual sinfulness, that we feel what is the blessing of the removal of sin, redemption, pardon, sanctification, which otherwise are mere words. God speaks to us primarily in our hearts. Self-knowledge is the key to the precepts and doctrines of Scripture. The very most any outward notices of religion can do, is to startle us and make us turn inward and search our hearts; and then, when we have experienced what it is to read ourselves, we shall profit by the doctrines of the Church and the Bible.<sup>19</sup>

Religion achieves its purpose when it “startles” us and stimulates reflection. To profit the Christian, religion must be rooted in the individual’s self-reflection. We must “read ourselves” first if we are to gain anything from our external precepts and proscriptions.

#### SOLITUDE WITH GOD: NATURE OF CONTEMPLATION

There is a two-pronged aspect to our internal contemplation of God. There is the fact of God’s presence deep within each person even prior to one’s realization of such a presence. Recognizing and reflecting on that presence is one aspect of this contemplation. The other aspect is a more active meditation that calls to mind the lessons of God that one finds in scripture and revelation. This is an active meditation that becomes habitual and thus constant.<sup>20</sup> As Newman notes:

What is meditating on Christ? It is simply this, thinking habitually and constantly of Him and of His deeds and sufferings. It is to have Him before our minds as One whom we may contemplate, worship and address when we rise up, when we lie down, when we eat and drink, when we are at home and abroad, when we are working, or walking, or at rest, when we are alone, and again when we are in company; this is meditating.<sup>21</sup>

Meditation is prayerful and essentially associated with “worship” and addressing God. Meditation is an absorption in Christ and his precepts in all our waking hours.

Newman resisted any association of contemplation with withdrawal from daily activity. Contemplation does not require inactivity since it is a process of living our lives in the presence of God.

For though the contemplation of God’s glory may in certain times and persons allowably interfere with the active employments of life, as in the case of the Apostles when our Saviour ascended, and though such contemplation is even freely allowed or commanded us at certain times of each day; yet that is not a real and true meditation on Christ, but some counterfeit which makes us dream away our time, or become habitually indolent, or which withdraws us from our existing duties, or unsettles us.<sup>22</sup>

Contemplation is less than genuine if it makes us “habitually indolent” or prevents us from doing or completing “our existing duties.” The contemplative lifestyle should not interfere with one’s daily life. In fact, it is in daily living that we are able to live out our Christianity most fully. A retreat from daily employments is not the avenue by which one attains the full benefits of contemplative living.

They are apt to wish to spend the time of their sojourning here in a positive separation from active and social duties; yet it should be recollected that the employments of this world, though not themselves heavenly, are, after all, the way to heaven—though not the fruit, are the seed of immortality—and are valuable, though not in themselves, yet for that to which they lead: but it is difficult to realize this.<sup>23</sup>

Our life situations provide the avenue through which we may display the Christian virtues—self-denial and constraint—that develop us spiritually.



### SOLITUDE WITH GOD: THE ROLE OF GRACE IN CONTEMPLATION

Contemplation requires both grace and individual effort. Newman provides us with an example in a Lenten sermon. Here, Newman asks his listeners to suffer with Christ through meditation. While it requires grace to achieve absolute union with the passion of Christ, it is well within our power to choose to meditate.

You will ask, *how* are we to learn to feel pain and anguish at the thought of Christ's sufferings? I answer, *by* thinking of them, that is, by *dwelling* on the thought. This, through God's mercy, is in the power of every one. No one who will but solemnly think over the history of those sufferings, as drawn out for us in the Gospels, but will gradually gain, through God's grace, a sense of them, will in a measure realize them, will in a measure be as if he saw them, will feel towards them as being not merely a tale written in a book, but as a true history, as a series of events which took place. It is indeed a great mercy that this duty which I speak of, though so high, is notwithstanding so level with the powers of all classes of persons, learned and unlearned, if they wish to perform it. Any one can think of Christ's sufferings, if he will; and knows well what to think about.<sup>24</sup>

Christians possess a God-given innate ability, to reflect and to "realize" the truth of Christ's life and sufferings. The Christian simply has to commit herself to such reflection and meditation. Our initial action leads us to a gradual union with the passion of Christ in meditation and contemplation.

Newman, however, believed that God ultimately *can* control our feelings and permits the Christian, for instance, to feel the sorrow of Christ's sufferings only after one has taken the appropriate actions:

One thing I will add: if there be persons here present who are conscious to themselves that they do not feel the grief which this season should cause them, who feel now as they do at other times, let them consider with themselves whether perhaps this defect does not arise from their having neglected to come to church, whether during this season or at other times, as often as they might. Our

feelings are not in our power; God alone can rule our feelings; God alone can make us sorrow, when we would but cannot sorrow, but *will* He, if we have not diligently sought Him according to our opportunities in this house of grace?<sup>25</sup>

Grace is an integral part of this contemplation. The soul is certainly made for the contemplation of God and by God's grace one can make the things contemplated real in a personal way. Nonetheless, each person bears a primary responsibility in contemplation by directing his actions and mind—by directing his actions to seek God diligently and by directing his mind in reflection and contemplation.

Besides the role of grace in leading us to authentic sympathy with Christ, grace serves another function in our path to holiness. Newman notes that constantly living in God's presence would naturally make holy things too familiar, and may lead to irreverence. Thus if union with Christ was solely in our power, then the wonder of contemplation is diminished. To this potential problem, Newman's response is that grace creates the opposing effect of making us more reverent.<sup>26</sup> So instead of losing sight of the wondrous vision because of familiarity, through grace, the soul develops an acquaintance with God that leads to "greater" awe.

### SOLITUDE WITH GOD: GOD'S CONTEMPLATION OF US

The contemplation of God is not a one-way street. While the Christian lives in the enduring presence of God and contemplates God, the converse is also happening. God contemplates the Christian. Contemplation is true communion. This reverse contemplation is also worthy of meditation.

It is, I say, the characteristic of St. Paul, as manifested to us in his Epistles, to live in the sight of Him who "searcheth the reins and the heart," to love to place himself before Him, and, while contemplating God, to dwell on the thought of God's contemplating him.<sup>27</sup>

God's searching of "the reins and the heart" is action best

understood in the context of love. God's searching of the heart, his contemplation of us, is not meant to inspire fear or concern, but love. In contemplation, one reflects in love on the fact that God's contemplative action is directed towards us.

The contemplative communion that occurs between the soul and God prefigures a future "intercourse" in which the Christian shall behold her Maker and God shall behold the Christian:

We have to stand before his righteous Presence, and that one by one. One by one we shall have to endure his holy and searching eye. At present we are in a world of shadows. What we see is not substantial. Suddenly it will be rent in twain and vanish away, and our Maker will appear. And then, I say that first appearance will be nothing less than a personal intercourse between the Creator and every creature. He will look on us, while we look on Him.<sup>28</sup>

The soul's looking on Christ is not simply a gaze as one would look at something beautiful—the looking on Christ is a response to Christ looking at us. The presence of God within is a call to action. In addition to being a response, it is "intercourse," with him, a communion—worship.

#### FRUIT OF SOLITUDE WITH GOD: CAPACITY TO SEE BEYOND THE SHADOWS

Even though God's glory is present and can be viewed in the present world, and even though we have this privilege of contemplating God deep within, we must realize the limitations of our existence. For Newman, this means that "at present we are in a world of shadows." And just as those who live in shadows must acclimate to the presence of light, one must understand that the Christian is simply not prepared for the glory to be revealed—rather one must develop the capability with time.<sup>29</sup> As worship is the context in which glory will be revealed to us, it is in worship that we gain the requisite capability to engage in the post-shadow worship of the unencumbered view of God. Newman stated:

But, whether or not this be safe reasoning, Scripture precludes the necessity of it, by telling us that the Gospel Covenant is intended,

among its other purposes, to prepare us for this future glorious and wonderful destiny, the sight of God, a destiny which, if not most glorious, will be most terrible. And in the worship and service of Almighty God, which Christ and His Apostles have left to us, we are vouchsafed means, both moral and mystical, of approaching God, and gradually learning to bear the sight of Him.<sup>30</sup>

Worship, for Newman, along with service, is the way that we prepare ourselves and develop the necessary capacity to approach God. Newman provides an example from our human situation.

When men in this world have to undergo any great thing, they prepare themselves before hand, by thinking often of it, and they call this making up their mind. Any unusual trial they thus make familiar to them.<sup>31</sup>

Newman observed that this preparation consists in an intensive meditation which leads to a familiarization with the event. Similarly worship prepares our souls to endure the glory of God's presence. Worship must stem, not from cold formality, but must be rooted in reverence and wonder.<sup>32</sup>

Worship is the way to prepare the soul to meet God. One may contend that subjecting oneself to moral laws and engaging in godly practices should be sufficient. Newman does not dispute the importance of moral laws and godly practices, but his conviction was that worship is the best and most effective way to prepare the soul to peer behind the shadows.

But, when we come steadily to consider the matter, appearing before God, and dwelling in His presence, is a very different thing from being merely subjected to a system of moral laws, and would seem to require another preparation, a special preparation of thought and affection, such as will enable us to endure His thought and countenance, and to hold communion with Him as we ought. Nay, and, it may be, a preparation of the soul itself for His presence, just as the bodily eye must be exercised in order to bear full light of day, or the bodily frame in order to bear exposure to air.<sup>33</sup>

Subjection to a system of moral laws may be good preparation, but something special is needed to prepare us for the glory

behind the shadows. That special preparation—worship—is similar to exercising the body in preparation for a unique environment. The encounter with Christ through faith and in anticipation of a face-to-face meeting inspires religious fear.<sup>34</sup> Worship prepares the soul to absorb the intensity and radiance of God's glory.

We can summarize Newman's spirituality of solitude with God with the following quote:

The question is not whether we should go, but whether He will receive. And we trust, that, in spite of our sins, He will receive us still, every one of us, if we seek His face in love unfeigned, and holy fear. Let us say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."<sup>35</sup>

The Christian life is lived in God's presence. There is an external sense of this presence but there is an internal presence of God in which one finds oneself alone with him. Turning inwards and reflecting on this presence reveals the individual's true self and purifies her. It can also appear intimidating if Christians focus on their faults—combined with the fact that nothing is hidden from God's contemplative gaze. However, if one engages in loving contemplation, one approaches this inward presence with holy fear and increased love as one realizes that the soul's self-sufficiency is in God. To be truly human is to realize the dual inward polarity between God and the soul, a contemplative relationship that inspires an appreciation and love for God.

From Newman's view of God and soul as a dual polarity within which the true self is revealed, one can see that the intent is for a contemplative relationship between God and the soul. The soul's contemplation, however, is not simply a beholding but worship. It is a looking that inspires love, awe, reverence and action. The soul's inward contemplation of God is worship. However, just as there is an internal presence and contemplation, there is a similar Divine presence and contemplation required in a Christian community and in theater of history. This idea—which is the second core theme of Newman's spirituality, the Christian life as a journey or pilgrimage—will next be examined.

### SECOND CENTRAL THEME: THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AS A JOURNEY

The second core idea in Newman's spirituality is the idea of progress and pilgrimage:<sup>36</sup> the notion that life is a journey or pilgrimage that entails change—sometimes, profound change.<sup>37</sup> Newman described life as being "put on our journey heavenward," from "our infancy." This journey is a turning from the things of this world "to God."

Let us, then, rouse ourselves, and turn from man to God; what have we to do with the world, who from our infancy have been put on our journey heavenward? Take up your cross and follow Christ.<sup>38</sup>

The Christian journey is summarized in the idea of taking up our crosses and following Christ. The cross signifies the difficulties involved and the sacrifices required on this journey.

In Newman's sermon notes for August 5, 1877, for a sermon called "The End of Man,"<sup>39</sup> he cast the same issue, bearing one's cross as the theme of the Christian pilgrimage, in slightly different terms. He began his sermon by asking: "Why are we placed here on earth?" His response was that we are "put here to prepare for a higher and eternal state." However, due to our fallen, disordered nature, we are unable to achieve this end on our own. Thus, our lives are a process of molding and shaping our souls, through everyday trials, to make them acceptable vessels for the Lord's house.

In his sermon "Endurance the Christian's Portion," preached on 3 March 1839, Newman considered "Jacob's life to be a pilgrimage" and noted that it was Jacob's "calling to be in the storm."

Thus was it with Jacob: the storm muttered around him, and heavy drops fell while he was in his father's house; it drove him abroad. It did not therefore cease because he was out in it: it did not end because it had begun; its beginning marked its presence; it began upon a law, which was extended over him in manhood also and old age, as in early youth. It was his calling to be in the storm: it was his very life to be a pilgrimage; it was the very thread of the days of his years to be few and evil.<sup>40</sup>

Jacob's life journey is emblematic of the Christian life. The Christian life is a journey of development, a pilgrimage, in which Christians encounter new challenges and lessons as they make progress. The Christian life is a process of sanctification, in which Christians work out their salvation with "fear and trembling," and prepare to meet God.<sup>41</sup> There are two aspects of the spiritual life as a journey, the journey from shadow to light and the diachronic journey of life.

#### THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY FROM SHADOWS TO LIGHT

There is the long-term view of pilgrimage that manifests itself in changes in one's life as chronological time passes. The other aspect of the spiritual pilgrimage is the journey from shadow to substance. Newman's view of this world was Platonic.<sup>42</sup> He viewed this world as a shadow of the real world, "substance answers to shadow."<sup>43</sup> Newman referred to the present world as a world of shadows behind which a world of glory is hidden.<sup>44</sup> The present world is a veil behind which we have to look to encounter the real and authentic world.<sup>45</sup>

The process by which we move from shadows to reality is a journey.<sup>46</sup> Another term Newman used to describe this journey from shadow to substance is the word "realize." To realize is to make something personally real and meaningful, that is, it must "impress" or be apprehended as real as perceived things are understood to us to be real.<sup>47</sup>

This spiritual journey of realizing, or moving from shadow to substance, is a spiritual evolution. Newman likened the process to that of waking up and taking time to collect one's thoughts. In this spiritual evolution, truths dawn on the Christian gradually until "we give up shadows and find substance."

We begin our Catechism by confessing that we are risen, but it takes a long life to apprehend what we confess. We are like people waking from sleep, who cannot collect their thoughts at once, or understand where they are. By little and little the truth breaks upon us. Such are we in the present world; sons of light, gradually waking to a knowledge of themselves. For this let us meditate, let

us pray, let us work,—gradually to attain to a real apprehension of what we are. Thus, as time goes on, we shall gain first one thing, then another. By little and little we shall give up shadows and find the substance. Waiting on God day by day, we shall make progress day by day, and approach to the true and clear view of what He has made us to be in Christ. Year by year we shall gain somethings, and each Easter, as it comes, will enable us more to rejoice with heart and understanding in that great salvation which Christ then accomplished.<sup>48</sup>

Here one sees the interplay with moments of realization which propel a lifetime journey of spiritual growth. There is a realization that is measured by moments. There is a pilgrimage of realization measured by days and a pilgrimage that is measured by years. The realization, the spiritual awakening is a gradual cumulative process that mirrors our natural growth. In life we learn things on the micro level—little things each passing second and we also learn things on the macro level—greater things as the years go by. However, this chronological growth is correlated to the growth we experience in moving from shadows to substance.

Newman also used the growth of plants as an example of growth. Just as the development of plants takes time but happens surely, so also with our spiritual lives, we make incremental progress until such a time as when we see tangible fruit.

This we see in the growth of plants, for instance; it is slow, gradual, continual; yet one day by chance they grow more than another, they make a shoot, or at least we are attracted to their growth on that day by some accidental circumstances, and it remains on our memory. So with our souls: we all, by nature, are far from God; nay, and we have all characters to form, which is a work of time.<sup>49</sup>

The development of one's character is a "work of time." This is the journey which must be undertaken and does not end until one has attained the heavenly goal.

### THE ROLE OF SELF-DENIAL AND OBEDIENCE IN OUR PILGRIMAGE

Another term that describes "realization" is "enlightenment." For Newman enlightenment is not simply something imparted to us—it does not passively happen to us—the Christian has an important role to play in enlightenment. In earlier sections of this paper, self-denial was presented as an important aspect of the inward contemplation required of the believer. Self-denial and obedience also play an important role in the pilgrimage of life. Through self-denial, the soul increases its devotion and purity because one is "weaned from this world."

This we shall find to be one great providential benefit arising from those duties which He exacts from us. Our duties to God and man are not only duties done to Him, but they are means of enlightening our eyes and making our faith apprehensive. Every act of obedience has a tendency to strengthen our convictions about heaven. Every sacrifice makes us more zealous; every self-denial makes us more devoted. This is a use, too, of the observance of sacred seasons; they wean us from this world, they impress upon us the reality of the world which we see not. We trust, if we thus proceed, we shall understand more and more where we are. We humbly trust that, as we cleanse ourselves from this world, our eyes will be enlightened to see the things which are only spiritually discerned.<sup>50</sup>

Obedience and fulfilling one's duties to both God and one's fellow humans are means of enlightenment. Obedient actions and duties strengthen one's heavenly convictions and "impress upon us the reality of the world which we see not." As a result one proceeds towards the heavenly goal, the substance to which the earthly shadow answers.

The journey from shadow to substance is a journey from the earthly realm to the Christian's rightful place in the heavens that has been secured for us by Christ's resurrection. To rise to one's rightful place in the heavens, the soul must become and remain untethered to the earth by means of devotion and self-denial.

Far otherwise, alas! is it with the many: they are hindered, nay possessed and absorbed by this world, and they cannot rise

because they have no wings. Prayer and fasting have been called the wings of the soul, and they who neither fast nor pray, cannot follow Christ. They cannot lift up their hearts to Him. They have no treasure above, but their treasure, and their heart, and their faculties are all upon the earth; the earth is their portion, and not heaven.<sup>51</sup>

Heaven must become the "portion" for the Christian and his eyes must be fixed on the heavenly goal. Through self-denial, the Christian must resist being absorbed "by this world," and "follow Christ." Those who neglect devotion and self-denial are simply unable to proceed toward the heavenly goal.

Self-denial is not antithetical to the soul's constitution. The soul was made for God and the worship of God, so it is fulfilled by "religious employments and pleasures."

It is, in a word, because the soul was made for religious employments and pleasures; and hence, that no temporal blessings, however exalted or refined, can satisfy it . . . Much intercourse with the world, which eminence and station render a duty, has a tendency to draw off the mind from God, and deaden it to the force of religious motives and considerations.<sup>52</sup>

"Much intercourse with the world," turns the Christian away from the heavenly treasures and interferes with the pilgrimage or journey heavenward. As discussed earlier, Newman did not present contemplation, devotion or religion as an excuse for indolence or neglect of one's duty. As long as one properly appreciates the transitory nature of our earthly existence, one is able to achieve the proper balance.

### THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AS CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

As previously indicated, contemplation is living in God's continual presence. This steady intercourse and communion helps a Christian "to see God in all things by faith" and "prompts us to seek God." One journeys from darkness to light as the years go on. The Christian's chronological pilgrim's progress is spurred by the spiritual process of "realization."

For the new birth of the Holy Spirit sets the soul in motion in a heavenly way: it gives us good thoughts and desires, enlightens and purifies us, and prompts us to seek God. In a word (as I have said), it gives a spiritual *life*; it opens the eyes of our mind, so that we begin to see God in all things by faith, and hold continual intercourse with Him by prayer; and if we cherish these gracious influences, we shall become holier and wiser and more heavenly, year by year, our hearts being ever in a course of change from darkness to light, from the ways and works of Satan to the perfection of Divine obedience.<sup>53</sup>

The contemplation of God, the constant living in his presence brings the Christian towards the goal of perfection of "divine obedience." The internal journey of realizing God's presence manifests itself externally as we become "holier and wiser and more heavenly year by year."

"This contemplative intercourse with God ends with a tangible change and development in the Christian life. It ends "in durable fruit."

But we are always with ourselves and our God; and that silent inward confession in His presence may be sustained and continual, and will end in durable fruit.<sup>54</sup>

The inwards contemplation of the presence of God within, though a spiritual process, is affected by chronological time. The results are manifest in a time-based chronological progression. The inward contemplation must be "sustained and continual" and will end in "durable fruit." This journey is thus the external correlate and reflection of one's internal contemplation.

The Christian journey or pilgrimage begins with a call—a call that is repeated often in the course of the Christian life. If one "strives" to fulfill God's call, then one is rewarded with the grace to move to higher levels of the Christian journey.

For in truth we are not called once only, but many times; all through our life Christ is calling us. He called us first in Baptism; but afterwards also; whether we obey His voice or not, He graciously calls us still. If we fall from our Baptism, He calls us to repent; if we are striving to fulfill our calling, He calls us on from grace to grace, and from holiness to holiness, while life is given us. Abraham was called from his home, Peter from his nets, Matthew from his

office, Elisha from his farm, Nathaniel from his retreat; we are all in course of calling, on and on, from one thing to another, having no resting-place, but mounting towards our eternal rest, and obeying one command only to have another put upon us. He calls us again and again, in order to justify us again and again,—and again and again, and more and more, to sanctify and glorify us.<sup>55</sup>

In this journey, one is cognizant of the fact that one's rest is in heaven, "our eternal rest." There is "no resting-place" here on earth. The demands of God's call for the journey are continuous but they are for the purpose of purifying the Christian as he ascends higher and higher in his journey.

The journey towards eternal rest is one in which one is called and led. Although there is grace throughout the process, human cooperation is necessary in one's striving and obedience. Not cooperating or not striving causes a Christian to "lose place and fall behind," in this journey of faith.

Only one is the truth and the perfect truth; and which that is, none know but those who are in possession of it, if even they. But God knows which it is; and towards that one and only Truth He is leading us forward. He is leading forward His redeemed, He is training His elect, one and all, to the one perfect knowledge and obedience of Christ; not, however, without their co-operation, by means of calls which they are to obey, and which if they do not obey, they lose place, and fall behind in their heavenly course. He leads them forward from strength to strength, and from glory to glory, up the steps of the ladder whose top reacheth to heaven. We pass from one state of knowledge to another; we are introduced into a higher region from a lower, by listening to Christ's call and obeying it.<sup>56</sup>

As one strives and cooperates, one is led from "strength to strength, and from glory to glory." As mentioned earlier, Jacob's life serves as an analogy. God leads the faithful "up the steps of the ladder whose top reacheth to heaven." The Christian journey is from strength to strength, glory to glory, from earth to heaven, lower to higher, and from knowledge to knowledge. Thus with God's help, one strives in a journey towards the substantive world of God's light.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has presented two central aspects or poles of Newman's spirituality. On the one hand, there is the aspect of solitude with God, the notion that in a deep secret place, we perceive God's presence is as much a part of our being as we are. On the other hand, there is the aspect of the spiritual life as a journey or pilgrimage. This pilgrimage manifests itself in two ways, first, as a journey from shadows to light and second, as a chronological development in holiness by self-denial and obedience.

John Henry Newman was as complicated a writer as he was deep and his works are not always accessible. On the one hand, Newman was an extremely contextual writer whose works reflected very specific circumstances and it always behooves his readers to understand the context of any one of his writings. On the other hand, there are principles and themes at work in Newman's compositions that guided his thoughts. Access to Newman's guiding themes can help approach our contemporary situations with a similar perspective and resolve displayed by Newman in his time. The two themes discussed in this paper, I believe, will aid in providing a measure of traction and fruitful engagement when delving into Newman's spiritual writings.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua being a History of His Religious Opinions* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1908), 4. All Newman works quoted in this paper are available online at [www.newmanreader.org](http://www.newmanreader.org), a website maintained by the National Institute for Newman Studies in Pittsburgh.

<sup>2</sup> "Equanimity," Sermon 5, *Parochial and Plain Sermons in Eight Volumes* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1907) 5: 58-71, at 69-70; preached by Newman on 22 December 1839. Hereafter referred to as PPS.

<sup>3</sup> "When Adam fell, his soul lost its true strength; he forfeited the inward light of God's presence . . ." "The Thought of God, The Stay of the Soul," Sermon 22, PPS 5: 313 (Emphasis added). "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," was preached by Newman on 9 June 1839. "[T]hat, whatever it may possess besides, it is unsatisfied till it is vouchsafed God's presence and *lives in the light of it*." Ibid., 315 (emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> "Mental Prayer," Sermon 15, PPS 7: 204-16, at 204; preached by Newman on 13 December 1829. The "text" Newman refers to is 1 Thessalonians 5:17 which says, "Pray without ceasing."

<sup>5</sup> *Sermon Notes*, 266-7. "Communion with God," preached by Newman on 27 February 1876, is available at: <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/sermon/notes/file8.html#sermon7>.

<sup>6</sup> "And, it may be, this is something of the Apostle's meaning when he speaks of the witness of the Spirit. Perhaps he is speaking of that satisfaction and rest which the soul experiences in proportion as it is able to surrender itself wholly to God, and to have no desire, no aim but to please Him." "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," PPS 5: 321.

<sup>7</sup> "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," Sermon 22, PPS 5: 313-26, at 317-8; "But there is another reason why God alone is the happiness of our souls to which I wish rather to direct attention:—the contemplation of Him, and nothing but it is fully able to open and relieve the mind, to unlock, occupy, and fix our affections." See also, "It is this feeling of simple and absolute confidence and communion, which soothes and satisfies those to whom it is vouchsafed. We know that even our nearest friends enter into us but partially, and hold intercourse with us only at times: whereas the consciousness of a perfect and enduring Presence, and it alone, keeps the heart open" (ibid., 318). "We do not know, perhaps, what or where our pain is; we are so used to it that we do not call it pain. Still so it is; we need a relief to our hearts, that they may be dark and sullen no longer, or that they may no go on feeding upon themselves; we need to escape from ourselves to something beyond; and much as we may wish it otherwise, and may try to make idols to ourselves, nothing short of God's presence is our true refuge; everything else is either a mockery, or but an expedient useful for its season or in its measure." (ibid., 324-5).

<sup>8</sup> "Now, if this be so, here is at once a reason for saying that the thought of God, and nothing short of it, is the happiness of man; for though there is much besides to serve as subject of knowledge, or motive for action, or means of excitement, yet the affections require something more vast and more enduring than anything created. What is novel and sudden excites, but does not influence; what is pleasurable or useful raises no awe; self moves no reverence, and mere knowledge kindles no love. He alone is sufficient for the heart who made it." "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," PPS 5: 316. "There is a reason for this;—in truth, we must do nothing except with Him in our eye. As He it is, through whom alone we have the power to do any good thing, so unless we do it for Him it is not good. From Him, our obedience comes, towards Him it must look. He stated, "Without me ye can do nothing." No work is good without grace and without love" "Fasting a Source of Trial," Sermon 1, PPS 6: 1-14, at 2: "Fasting a Source of Trial" was preached on 4 March 1838.

<sup>9</sup> "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," PPS 5: 315.

<sup>10</sup> "I have been saying that our happiness consists in the contemplation of God;—such a contemplation is alone capable of accompanying the mind always and everywhere present;—and that what is said about the happiness of a good conscience, confirms this; for what is it to have a good conscience, when we examine the force of our words, but to be ever reminded of God by our own hearts, to have our hearts in such a state as to be led thereby to look up to Him, and to desire His eye to be upon us through the day? It is in the

case of holy men the feeling attendant on the contemplation of the Almighty God," "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," *PPS* 5: 322.

<sup>11</sup> "The Testimony of Conscience," Sermon 17, *PPS* 5: 237-53, at 242: "The Testimony of Conscience," was preached on 9 December 1838. "They" is described in the first part of the paragraph. "It is this principle of self-seeking, so to express myself, this influence of self upon us, which is our ruin. I repeat, I am speaking of those who make a *profession* of religion. Others, of course, avowedly follow self altogether; they indulge the flesh, or pursue the world. But when a man comes to God to be saved, then, I say, the essence of true conversion is a *surrender* of himself, an unreserved, unconditional surrender; and this is a saying which most men who come to God cannot receive."

<sup>12</sup> "But thus much we are able to see, that the great duty of the Gospel is love to God and man; and that this love is quenched and extinguished by self-indulgence, and cherished by self-denial. They who enjoy this life freely, make it or self their idol; they are gross-hearted and have no eyes to see God withal. Hence it is said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'" "Apostolic Abstinence: A Pattern for Christians," Sermon 3, *PPS* 6: 26-33, at 29; preached 21 March 1841.

"Let us set it down then, as a first principle in religion, that all of us must come to Christ, in some sense or other, through things naturally unpleasant to us; it may be even through bodily suffering, such as the Apostles endured, or it may be nothing more than the subduing of our natural infirmities and the sacrifice of our natural wishes;" "The Yoke of Christ," Sermon 8, *PPS* 7: 102-17, at 105-6: "The Yoke of Christ," was preached 24 February 1839.

<sup>13</sup> "Present Blessings," Sermon 19, *PPS* 5: 270-83, at 271: "Present Blessings," was preached on 10 March 1839.

<sup>14</sup> "The Duty of Self-Denial," Sermon 7, *PPS* 7: 86-101, at 86; "The Duty of Self Denial," was preached on 28 March 1830. Later in this sermon (99-100), Newman stated, "If we would be followers of the great Apostle, first let us with him fix our eyes upon Christ our Saviour; consider the splendour and glory of His holiness, and try to love it. Let us strive and pray that the love of holiness may be created within our hearts; and then acts will follow, such as befit us and our circumstances, in due time, without our distressing ourselves to find what they should be."

<sup>15</sup> "Thus all we do in Church is done on a principle of *reversure*; it is done with the thought that we are in God's presence." "Reverence in Worship," Sermon 1, *PPS* 8: 1-16, at 9-10: "Reverence in Worship" was preached 30 October 1836.

<sup>16</sup> "The State of Innocence," Sermon 8, *PPS* 5: 49-115, at 110: "The State of Innocence," was preached 11 February 1838.

<sup>17</sup> "But though he might not know the depth of God's counsels, he knew himself so far as to know that he was worthy of no good thing at all, and he knew also that Almighty God had shown him great mercies and great truth: mercies, in that He had done for him good things, whereas he had deserved evil; and truth, in that He had made him promises and had been faithful to them. In consequence, he overflowed with gratitude when he looked back

upon the past; marveling at the contrast between what he was in himself and what God had been to him." "Remembrance of Past Mercies," Sermon 6, *PPS* 5: 72-85, at 72: "Remembrance of Past Mercies" was preached 22 September 1838.

<sup>18</sup> "Reverence, A Belief in God's Presence," Sermon 2, *PPS* 5: 13-28, at 15-16; preached November 4, 1838.

<sup>19</sup> "Secret Faults," Sermon 4, *PPS* 1: 41-56, at 43: "Secret Faults" was preached 12 June 1825.

<sup>20</sup> "But any how, show that your heart and your desires, show that your life is with your God. Set aside everyday times for seeking Him." "Rising with Christ," Sermon 15, *PPS* 6: 208-20, at 220: "Rising with Christ," was preached on Ascension Sunday, either in 1836 or 1837.

<sup>21</sup> "Christ's Privations A Meditation for Christians," Sermon 4, *PPS* 6: 39-52, at 41; preached 12 April 1840.

Also, "Christ is gone away; He is not seen; we never saw Him, we only read and hear of Him. It is an old saying, 'Out of sight, out of mind.' Be sure, so it *will* be, so it *must* be with us, as regards our blessed Saviour, unless we make continual efforts all through the day to think of Him, His love, His precepts, His gifts, and His promises. We must recall to mind what we read in the Gospels and in holy books about Him; we must bring before us what we have heard in Church; we must pray God to enable us to do so, to bless the doing so, and to make us do so in a simple-minded, sincere, and reverential spirit. In a word, we must meditate, for all this is meditation; and this even the most unlearned person can do, and will do, if he has a will to do it." "Christ's Privations A Meditation for Christians," Sermon 4, *PPS* 6: 42.

"We may meditate upon Christ's sufferings; and by this meditation we *shall* gradually, as time goes on, be brought to these deep feelings. We may pray God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, to *make* us feel; to give us the spirit of gratitude, love, reverence, self-abasement, godly fear, repentance, holiness, and lively faith." Christ's Privations A Meditation for Christians," Sermon 4, *PPS* 6: 52.

<sup>22</sup> "Doing Glory to God in Pursuits of the World," Sermon 11, *PPS* 8: 154-71, at 155: "Doing Glory to God in Pursuits of the World," was preached 01 November 1836.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>24</sup> "The Crucifixion," Sermon 10, *PPS* 7: 133-45, at 135: "The Crucifixion," was preached on 25 March 1842.

<sup>25</sup> Newman, "Sermon 10: The Crucifixion," *PPS* 7: 143.

<sup>26</sup> "Such a constant abode in God's house would make common minds only familiar with holy things, and irreverent; but where God's grace is present in the heart, the effect is the reverse; which we might be sure would happen in the case of Samuel. The Lord was with him, we are told; and therefore the more the outward signs of that Lord met his eye, the more reverent he became, not the more presuming. The more he acquainted himself with God, the greater would be his awe and hold fear." "Reverence in Worship," Sermon 1, *PPS* 8: 2.



- <sup>27</sup> "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," *PPS* 5: 320-1.
- <sup>28</sup> "Worship, a Preparation for Christ's Coming," Sermon 1, *PPS* 5: 1-12, at 4.
- <sup>29</sup> "Worship a Preparation for Christ's Coming," was preached 2 December 1838.
- <sup>30</sup> *LD* xxvii, 233, letter to Miss Holmes, 24 February 1875: "You are quite right that we may thankfully entertain a humble belief that we are now in God's grace and favour, and shall remain so till death, but this neither excludes the 'working out our salvation with fear and trembling' nor the sense that tho' we leave this life in God's grace we are not yet prepared at once for His holy Presence, or pass without interval from grace to glory."
- <sup>31</sup> "Worship, a Preparation for Christ's Coming," Sermon 1, *PPS* 5: 7.
- <sup>32</sup> "Nor let us be of those, who come in a formal, mechanical way, as a mere matter of obligation, without reverence, without awe, without wonder, without love." "The Gospel Feast," Sermon 12, *PPS* 7: 160-78, at 178: "The Gospel Feast," was preached 10 & 27 May 1838.
- <sup>33</sup> "Worship, a Preparation for Christ's Coming," Sermon 1, *PPS* 5: 6-7.
- <sup>34</sup> "In other parts of Scripture the prospect of Christ's coming is made a reason for solemn fear and awe and a call for watching and prayer . . . Now this is the view of the Christian character definite and complete enough to admit of commenting on,—and it may be useful to show that the thought of Christ's coming not only leads to fear, but to a calm and cheerful frame of mind," "Equanimity," Sermon 5, *PPS* 5: 58.

<sup>35</sup> "The Thought of God, the Stay of the Soul," *PPS* 5: 326. Psalm referenced is Ps. 73:25.

<sup>36</sup> "That is our *home*; here we are but on pilgrimage, and Christ is calling us home. He calls us to His many mansions, which He has prepared." "Warfare the Condition of Victory," Sermon 16, *PPS* 6: 221-33, at 233: "Warfare the Condition of Victory," was preached on 24 May 1838.

Newman saw the human person as developing and growing intellectually with time. "The intellect admits of an education; man is a being of progress; he has to learn how to fulfill his end, and to be what facts show that he is intended to be. His mind is in the first instance in disorder, and runs wild; his faculties have their rudimental and inchoate state, and are gradually carried on by practice and experience to their perfection" John Henry Newman, *An Essay in the Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1903) 233. Hereafter referred to as *G4*.

"Here it must be recollected that the nature of man differs in this from every other nature, of which we have experience, that it has in it in a special sense a principle of internal progress and perfection. . . . But again:—it has been shown above that by the nature of man is to be understood not merely what he has with him on his birth, but what he arrives at with its developed capacities: this being the case, with this enlarged view of his nature and intuitions, we must admit a corresponding largeness in our view of the things which are their object" ("Assent and Intuition [1860]," in *The Theological Papers*

of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty, edited by J. Derek Holmes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 72, 76.

<sup>37</sup> Newman expounded at length on the issue of human beings and progress in the chapter on the Illative sense in his *Grammar*. Man differs from all other creatures in that "he is a being a progress." By use of his facilities, "he gradually advances to the fullness of his destiny." *G4*, 273-5.

See also; "They [Keble and Newman] both use poetry as a means of professing faith; indeed they both believed that the one true purpose of poetry is as a means of expressing religious feelings. . . . Perhaps most striking of all, the poems reveal the importance to both poets of the ideas of Reserve and of the veil; God is often hidden from us and it is for us to find him and that process may not be one of sudden dramatic revelation but a life-long search." Jane M. C. James and Michael F. James, "Keble and Newman: Tractarian Poets," *Downside Review* 123/432 (July, 2005): 157-69.

<sup>38</sup> "The Praise of Men," Sermon 4, *PPS* 7: 41-57, at 56: "The Praise of Men," was preached on 15 March 1829. Newman also used the term, "the King's highway," as a metaphor for the Christian life in *G4*, 218.

<sup>39</sup> "The End of Man," *Sermon Notes*, 284-5; "The End of Man," was preached on 5 August 1877.

<sup>40</sup> "Endurance the Christian's Portion," Sermon 20, *PPS* 5: 284-99, at 285: "Endurance the Christian's Portion," was preached on 3 March 1839.

<sup>41</sup> "I am not at this moment asking whether such indulgences are in themselves allowable or not, but whether the life which centres in them does not imply the absence of any deep views of sanctification as a process, a change, a painful toil, of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, of preparing to meet our God, and waiting for the judgment?" "The Duty of Self-Denial," Sermon 7, *PPS* 7: 87-8.

<sup>42</sup> See J.-H. Walgrave, O.P., *Newman the Theologian: The Nature of Belief and Doctrine as Exemplified in His Life and Works* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960) 17-9, for a discussion of Newman's Christian Platonism. Walgrave observed that Platonism appears in Newman through English poetry, the New Testament, the Early Church Fathers and his own introverted personality burdened by fear and foreboding who was thus "bound to feel himself solitary and alien in this life." Walgrave, *Newman*, 21.

The use of Platonist language was not without intent for Newman. In his *Autobiography of the Fourth Century* (89-95), he spent a great deal of time on the Platonism of the Alexandrian Church and displayed a good understanding of Platonism in its different incarnations beginning with Plato himself and others like Philo, Proclus, Plotinus, and Iamblichus. In addition, Newman was not unsympathetic to the use of Platonist language by the Alexandrian Fathers, which provided a good conceptual framework for apologetic uses and for theological explorations.

<sup>43</sup> "Christ, The Son of God Made Man," Sermon 5, *PPS* 6: 53-68, at 53: "Christ, The Son of God Made Man," was preached 26 April 1836.

<sup>44</sup> "The Prophet tells us, that under the Gospel covenant God's servants will

have the privilege of seeing those heavenly sights which were but shadowed out in the Law. Before Christ came was the time of shadows; but when He came, He brought truth as well as grace." "Unreal Words," Sermon 3, PPS 5: 29-45, at 29. Cf., "All things that we see are but shadows to us and delusions, unless we enter into what they really mean" (*ibid.*, 44).

<sup>45</sup> Newman retained this view of the world as veil late in life. In 1875, his sermon, "The Seen and the Unseen Worlds," *Sermon Notes*, 257-8, at 257, he stated: "And so now—the political world, commercial, scientific; telescopes, calculations, ships, etc., etc.—but another world going on *too*. This world a veil." "The Seen and the Unseen Worlds," was preached on 28 March 1875.

<sup>46</sup> "Thus did Almighty God, by the instance of the patriarchs of His ancient people, remind that people themselves that this world was not their rest; thus did he foreshadow that condition of life, which is not only a lesson but a pattern to us of our very state of life, if we live godly in Christ Jesus [2 Tim. 3:12]." "Endurance the Christian's Portion," Sermon 20, PPS 5: 284-99, at 285-6: "Endurance the Christian's Portion," was preached on 03 March 1839.

<sup>47</sup> "Serious men may know indeed, if it so be, what their excellences are, whether religious, or moral, or any other, but they do not feel them in that vivid way which we call realizing." "Subjection of the Reason and Feelings to the Divine Word," Sermon 18, PPS 6: 255-69, at 263: "Subjection of the Reason and Feelings to the Divine Word," was preached on 13 December 1840.

<sup>48</sup> "Difficulty of Realizing Sacred Privileges," Sermon 8, PPS 6: 94-104, at 99-100: "Difficulty of Realizing Sacred Privileges," was preached on 31 March 1839.

<sup>49</sup> "Sudden Conversions," Sermon 15, PPS 8: 217-229, at 225-6: "Sudden Conversions," was preached 25 January 1832.

<sup>50</sup> "Difficulty of Realizing Sacred Privileges," Sermon 8, PPS 6: 100.

<sup>51</sup> "Rising With Christ," Sermon 15, PPS 6: 208-9.

<sup>52</sup> "Temporal Advantages," Sermon 5, PPS 7: 58-73, at 62: "Temporal Advantages," was preached on 23 January 1825.

<sup>53</sup> "Mental Prayer," Sermon 15, PPS 7: 204-16, at 210: "Mental Prayer," was preached 13 December 1829.

<sup>54</sup> "Mental Prayer," Sermon 15, PPS 7: 213.

<sup>55</sup> "Divine Calls," Sermon 2, PPS 8: 17-32, at 23-4: "Divine Calls," was preached on 27 October 1839.

<sup>56</sup> "Divine Calls," Sermon 2, PPS 8: 27-8.

## SPIRITUAL FATHERHOOD AND GENERATIVITY

by

PERRY J. CAHALL

### INTRODUCTION

Every man is called to spiritual generativity through a gift of self, thereby realizing himself as a spiritual father. This article focuses on four ways in which a man becomes spiritually generative: through love of his bride, through teaching and guiding, through extending mercy, and through self-sacrifice. In the process of elaborating each of these aspects of spiritual generativity St. Joseph, as the model spiritual father, will be presented as the model of each of these aspects of spiritual generativity. Finally, it will be illustrated how the priest is called to be spiritually generative in each of these ways.

### SPIRITUAL GENERATIVITY: A CALL TO EVERY MAN

Before discussing spiritual generativity it must be noted that every man is called to be a spouse and a father, giving life through a loving gift of self. Yet, before he can be a spouse and a father a man must first appropriate his identity as son and brother. He cannot leap over one stage of development to get to another. This needs to be stated as a prefatory remark to a discussion of any aspect of spiritual fatherhood. It is crucially important for a man to appropriate his identity as son and brother, before he can be a mature spouse and father. This will entail him examining his relationship with God the Father, Christ his Lord and brother, and his relationships within his own human family of origin. It is important for every man to work through wounds in his own experiences of being fathered to grow into a healthy, holy man.

Once he appropriates his identity as son and brother, every man is then called to realize himself as a spouse and spiritual