

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

# John Henry Newman on the Human Person and the Gift of Faith

MICHAEL A TESTA

*Most Anglicans are aware that John Henry Newman left the Church of England for Rome at least partly because he could not accept Martin Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. That Newman failed to understand Luther's true position is now generally accepted, but it is not always clear what he wanted to put in its place. In an illuminating article, Dr Michael Testa, a contemporary Roman Catholic theologian, sets out for us part of what Newman believed about faith. Many Anglicans will find this a little surprising, but given Newman's great influence among modern Roman Catholics, it is important that we understand what he had to say on the subject. Newman's views have not figured as prominently in Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue as they ought to have done, and Dr Testa's article offers us a way in to this fascinating, if sometimes infuriating, Anglican turned Catholic.*

In his article *Faith* John O'Donnell offers an anthropological starting point for faith.<sup>1</sup> He bases it on Vatican II which affirms that Christ reveals the mystery of human beings to themselves. The human person is puzzled by his own existence and searches for meaning. O'Donnell believes that the twentieth century is marked by a restlessness of the heart. He sees that philosophical reflection opens up space for biblical and historical revelation. Such revelation is critical to the human person and necessary for faith.<sup>2</sup>

Human beings are dialogical and need another to disclose their innermost self. The human person is also a source of ineffable freedom whose questions can be met only by the free response of another. Thus the human search leads one to history to discover if God the ultimate source of freedom has entered dialogue with human beings. Faith is the affirmation and response to God's history with humanity.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 John O'Donnell 'Faith' *New Dictionary of Theology* Joseph A Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot Lane edd (Wilmington: Michael Glazier 1987) pp 375–86
- 2 Avery Dulles 'Faith and Revelation' *Systematic Theology* Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John Galvin edd (Minneapolis: Fortress 1991) p 101
- 3 John O'Donnell 'Faith' *New Dictionary of Theology* Joseph A Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot Lane edd (Wilmington: Michael Glazier 1987) pp 375–6

Enda McDonagh's article *Love* reveals that Christians have always insisted on the centrality of love in the teachings of Christ, but serious theological treatment of it as a central feature has been lacking.<sup>4</sup> He claims that most major theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas address the theme but none give it the central position he would expect. God's love for human beings is the creative energy which maintains all of creation including human beings. His love initially bestows value rather than responds to it. Yet God also responds to the goodness of creation with love and establishes a relationship with human beings. Human beings respond with a human love for God. His divine initiative invites a human response. This response reaches its fullest expression in the person of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

O'Donnell and McDonagh both offer contemporary insight which correlates with John Henry Newman's theology. O'Donnell highlights the fact that human beings need the gift of faith not only to learn of God but to learn about themselves. Newman was aware that faith offered a vision of reality which could not be obtained by unaided human efforts, though it was not the sole source of justification which he once held as an Evangelical. He shared this faith through his books, sermons and letters. He realized that human beings were truly human only in the context of a loving relationship with God which recognized dependence on him. Thus he saw it as his duty to work against progressive unbelief.<sup>6</sup> Love, for Newman, is the motion, the energy of the Spirit within us. Newman manifested such a love not only for his contemporaries but also for the saints such as St Philip Neri.<sup>7</sup> McDonagh stresses the creative nature of God's love which bestows value rather than responds to it. Newman realized that God's love, through Christ and with the Spirit, regenerates the human being and serves as the safeguard of faith.

Newman views faith as a type of spiritual sight by which we see beyond the worldliness which floods in on us. With faith we are able to give up the world. Faith does not run contrary to reason. Newman is balanced in this area and understands faith as the reasoning of a spiritually inspired mind. He argues forcefully on this topic as a result of his brother's abandoning Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

4 Enda McDonagh 'Love' *New Dictionary of Theology* Joseph A Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot Lane edd (Wilmington: Michael Glazier 1987) pp 602-16

5 McDonagh p 605

6 John K Ryan 'Maker and Thinker' *American Essays for the Newman Centennial* John K Ryan and Edmond Darvil Benard edd (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press 1947) p 79

7 Jonathan Robinson 'Newman and St Philip: the Quest for Sanctity' *Priest* 38 1982 p 15

8 Ian Ker *Newman on Being A Christian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1990) p 1

## John Henry Newman on the Human Person and the Gift of Faith

For Newman, faith is the unique experience of the supernatural, the hidden world of grace. It holds a special dignity among the works of grace. Faith for Newman is the chosen instrument for understanding God and human beings. It offers old truths new significance.<sup>9</sup> Yet the operation of faith is not abstract or metaphysical but practical and concrete, issuing from life's experiences.<sup>10</sup> Nor is faith illogical because it proceeds from things unseen. Faith acts on presumption rather than on evidence. It has a unique role which other graces do not have.<sup>11</sup>

Newman rarely speaks of faith without discussing reason. In this article, however, I will focus on the distinction Newman makes between justifying and implicit faith. Justifying faith is religious faith or the faith of a loving heart as opposed to the faith of those who believe in God but do not act on that belief. Implicit faith refers to the acceptance of the whole of revelation even though it might not be totally a part of consciousness at any given time. The second half of the article will then explore Newman's correlation between faith and love.

### **The Nature of Faith: Justifying Faith**

In his work *Lectures on Justification* published in 1838, Newman offers his exposition on justifying faith. He sets forth his definition as follows: 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'.<sup>12</sup> It is also the ground of proof, through which the unseen is accepted as really existing. Our senses inform us of things surrounding us. Faith alerts us to present realities which we do not see, and future things which we cannot predict.<sup>13</sup>

The divine word is the token and criterion of truth for faith. Divine faith is adherence to a revealed truth.<sup>14</sup> Newman observes that the mind trusts sense and reason by a natural instinct which it freely uses prior to experience. Likewise, a moral instinct, independent of experience, is its impelling and assuring principle in assenting to revelation as divine.<sup>15</sup>

By faith is meant the mind's perception or apprehension of heavenly things, arising from an instinctive trust in the divinity or truth of the external word, informing it concerning them.<sup>16</sup>

- 9 Vincent Ferrer Blehl ed *The Essential Newman* (New York: Mentor-Omega 1963) p v
- 10 Edward Müller *John Henry Newman on the Church* (Shepherdstown: Patmos Press 1987) p 9
- 11 Thomas L Sheridan SJ *Newman on Justification* (Staten Island: Alba House 1967) p 262
- 12 John Henry Newman *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* (London: Longmans Green 1924) p 252. Further references are abbreviated to LDJ.
- 13 LDJ p 252
- 14 Sylvester P Jurgens *Newman on the Psychology of Faith in the Individual* (New York: The Macmillan Company 1928) p 108
- 15 LDJ p 253
- 16 LDJ p 253

Newman claims that, as such, faith is not a practical principle or peculiar to religious persons. He observes that in matters of the world, human beings believe, but are not influenced, unless the issue concerns them. However, if they are interested in it, they believe what they would not otherwise believe. Newman argues that faith exists apart from religious faith. Unreligious men and women may accept God's word about future and unseen realities.<sup>17</sup> But he defines justifying faith as follows:

Justifying faith, strictly speaking, is not trust, or adherence, or devotedness, though in familiar language it allowably be so called, but faith, – the faith of trusting, adhering, devoted minds.<sup>18</sup>

Newman also holds that faith is not a virtue or grace in its abstract nature. It is so only under circumstances or in a concrete case. 'Faith is but an instrument acceptable when its possessor is acceptable'.<sup>19</sup> In this regard it differs from the other virtues. Faith is not a perfection unless it is grafted into a heart which possesses grace.<sup>20</sup> Evil human beings cannot have love, humility, meekness, purity, or compassion, but they can have faith. However, when faith is united with a loving and upright heart, it then makes progress. It attaches its positive influence to the soul which is exercising it.<sup>21</sup>

Newman further develops his theology of faith by pointing out that faith never exists in a void. It always exists in some person, as Newman learned from the Church Fathers.<sup>22</sup> Though as an abstract principle faith is not a grace, he reminds us that it exists in the abstract only as a conception of our minds. Faith, in fact, is a concrete reality. Corrupt human beings believe and Christians believe.<sup>23</sup> Both contain the outline of faith. They both recognize the unseen and future on God's word. Yet this faith never exists by itself; it exists in a concrete human being.

One person is said to be the same as another person, when the mind contemplates them as human beings. Yet the mind can only contemplate. It cannot create something external to it.<sup>24</sup> Despite mental abstractions, each person exists as an individual, complete and independent of all others. Each person differs from all others. 'No one thing can be another thing;

17 LDJ p 254

18 LDJ p 254

19 LDJ p 254

20 Paul D L Avis 'The Shaking of the Seven Hills' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 1979 p 447

21 LDJ p 255

22 Richard W Pfaff 'The Library of the Fathers: The Tractarians as Patristic Translators' *Studies in Philology* 70 1973 p 344

23 LDJ p 255

24 LDJ p 255

faith in this man is not faith in that'.<sup>25</sup> Newman argues that an animal in the abstract is neither human nor brute, but no animal exists in the abstract. Every human being must be an animal or a brute. Thus, faith, in the concrete, either is an excellence or it is not 'though considered in its abstract nature it has no positive character'.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Nature of Faith: Implicit Faith**

In the *Grammar* Newman develops a section, 'Belief in Dogmatic Theology'. Here he introduces the notion of implicit faith. He begins by pointing out that the 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church' is an article of the Creed. All human beings can master and accept this with a real and operative assent.<sup>27</sup> To believe in the Church is to believe virtually in all her propositions. Even what Catholics cannot understand they can at least believe to be true because they believe in the Church.<sup>28</sup> For Newman revelation can be divided into three main groups, the content, the process and the expression of revelation.<sup>29</sup>

Newman expands on this provision for uneducated devotion. He claims that all of us, educated and uneducated, are bound to believe the whole revealed doctrine in all its parts. Likewise, everything it implies which develops in our consciousness constitutes part of our belief.<sup>30</sup> Newman comments that a doctrine so profound and so complex as the revealed deposit of faith cannot be brought home to us and made our own all at once.<sup>31</sup> No individual however gifted can totally understand any one truth, regardless of how simple.<sup>32</sup>

Newman develops his point with a reference to the Catholic Creed. He holds that if we truly believe that our Lord is God we believe all the ramifications of that belief. If not, we are not sincere when we claim to believe this proposition. Our first act of belief bears with it acceptance of truths we do not yet believe because we have never been conscious of them.<sup>33</sup> Yet what is implicitly believed becomes explicitly expressed.<sup>34</sup> The Arians, says Newman, said they believed in Christ's divinity, but when questioned on his eternity they denied it. This indicated that they never

25 LDJ p 255

26 LDJ p 256

27 John Henry Newman *An Essay in Aid of Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans Green 1914) p 150. Further references are abbreviated to GA.

28 GA p 150

29 Nicholas Lash *Newman on Development* (Shepherdstown: Patmos 1975) p 98

30 GA p 151

31 Vincent F Blehl 'Newman, the Father, and Education' *Thought* 45 1970 p 198

32 GA p 151

33 GA p 151

34 Ian Ker *The Achievement of John Henry Newman* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame 1990) p 118

## Churchman

truly believed in his divinity. One who upholds his divinity implicitly believes in his eternity.<sup>35</sup>

Likewise, if we claim to believe in revelation, then we believe in all that is revealed. The person who believes in the deposit of the faith believes in all the doctrines of the deposit.<sup>36</sup> Since individuals cannot know all doctrines at once, they know some and do not know others. They may know only a portion of the creed but they have the intention of believing all there is to believe as soon as it comes to light. Newman writes:

This virtual, interpretative, or prospective belief is called a believing *implicitite*; ... every Catholic, in accepting the *depositum*, does *implicitite* accept those dogmatic decisions.<sup>37</sup>

Thus anything contained in the deposit of faith or revealed word is accepted by every Catholic who claims belief in revelation.

Newman says that various propositions are contained in the doctrines and the Church declares that they are really a part of it. The Church is responsible for the care and interpretation of revelation.<sup>38</sup> Catholicism holds the Church as the infallible organ of truth. By believing the word of the Church implicitly, every Catholic takes on from the first the whole truth of revelation.

In his work *Newman: Pioneer for the Layman*, Webster T Patterson develops a useful chapter for unfolding Newman's meaning of faith.<sup>39</sup> Patterson reports that all Newman had to say concerning the laity and the teaching Church is tied to what he termed the *sensus fidelium*. This is linked to Newman's understanding of the deposit of faith. The deposit for Newman is not a dead, inanimate object. What we have received from the apostles is a living witness to the apostolic mind. Patterson reminds us that the apostles did not merely know a series of theological propositions. They lived a truth which far surpassed the intellectual expression of them. Newman's view of the apostolic mind understood the apostles as intimately involved in the richness of the Word.

Newman has a parallel understanding of the deposit of faith. It is a living body of truth partly explicit, partly implicit, whose depth is not fully conscious to a believer at every moment. This is the apostolic community;

35 GA p 151

36 GA p 152

37 GA p 152

38 GA p 153

39 Webster T Patterson *Newman: Pioneer for the Layman* (Cleveland: Corpus 1988) pp 144-69

## John Henry Newman on the Human Person and the Gift of Faith

not every apostle was consciously aware of every implication and application of revelation at every instant. Rather, they grew in awareness of such knowledge as the situation dictated.

The question arises: where does the deposit of faith reside? Newman's solution is that the Church as the people of God has its authority under the direction of the Holy Spirit to discern the fullness of the Holy Spirit to discuss the fullness of the word, and determine its boundaries. Newman believed the deposit of faith to be maintained continually by the Church. For Newman, says Patterson, the Church is able to interpret, define and relate one doctrine to another by virtue of having grasped the whole. Thus the Church in teaching new dogmas always acts consistently with apostolic principles. Her deposit of faith is a cohesive unit not always expressed in its entirety but always existing as the deposit of belief.

Jan Walgrave's exposition on Newman's psychology of faith sheds light on Newman's text and Patterson's work.<sup>40</sup> Walgrave identifies six different meanings of the word faith.<sup>41</sup> The two chief senses of the word were contained in my examination of Newman's justifying faith. Newman's description offers both a psychological and religious understanding of the term. Psychologically, it refers to the fact that any human being, good or evil, can possess faith that simply implies the acceptance of God's reality. Religious or justifying faith demands a loving individual who apprehends true doctrine based on the instinctive trust in the divinity or truth of God's revealed message.

Newman's exposition of implicit faith and Patterson's dialogue on the deposit of faith presume a religious understanding of faith. Before implicit faith in the deposit can exist, there must first exist an assent and acceptance of the whole of revelation based on the confidence in its diverse origin. Newman, and Patterson, also understand another sense of the word 'faith' in this discussion. Here Newman also refers to the faith as the object or content of belief.<sup>42</sup> Thus faith has various shades of meaning ranging from the instrument of belief to the substance of belief. This faith Newman shared for he recognized his influence through his writings.<sup>43</sup> The next section will illustrate the relationship between religious or right faith and love which gives faith its justifying quality.

40 Jan H Walgrave *Newman the Theologian* (New York: Sheed & Ward 1960) pp 124-30

41 Walgrave p 124

42 For a discussion of Newman's understanding of faith as the content of belief see Terrence Merrigan 'Newman on the Practice of Theology' *Louvain Studies* 14 1989 pp 260-84.

43 Brian Martin *John Henry Newman His Life and Work* (New York: Paulist Press 1990) p 117

### **Faith and Love: Love as the Root of Faith**

In his sermon *Faith and Love*, preached on 25 February 1838, Newman offers his theology of the relationship between faith and love. Faith, says Newman, is the instrument or expression of love. Faith will cease to exist when we see God but love will last for all eternity.<sup>44</sup> In his discussion Newman asks in what sense faith is the beginning of love and in what sense love is the origin of faith.<sup>45</sup> Does love spring from faith or faith from love? What comes first, and what comes last? Newman responds:

Faith is the first element of *religion*, and love, of *holiness*; and as holiness and religion are distinct, yet united, so are love and faith.<sup>46</sup>

Holiness, says Newman, can exist without religion, but religion cannot exist without holiness. Baptized infants, prior to understanding, are holy but they are not religious.<sup>47</sup> 'Love then is the motion within us of the new spirit, the holy and renewed heart which God the Holy Ghost gives us.'<sup>48</sup> Faith is necessary because God has chosen to speak not only in our hearts, but also in the sensible world. God permeates the world of sense and uses it to aid the voice in our hearts. Love hears the voice within us and faith hears the voice that is outside us. Love worships God within our hearts. Faith discerns him in the world. Love sustains the soul; faith sustains love in affairs of the world. 'While faith ministers to love, love is that which imparts to faith its praise and excellence.'<sup>49</sup>

For Newman, faith is to love as religion is to holiness; religion addresses the external: holiness addresses the internal. Love is meditative, tranquil and pure: faith is strenuous and argumentative. It steers the mind toward love and strengthens it with obedience.<sup>50</sup> Newman expands on this comparison:

Moreover it is plain, that, while love is the root out of which faith grows, faith by receiving the wonderful tidings of the Gospel, and presenting before the soul its sacred Objects ... raises it to a perfection which otherwise it could never reach.<sup>51</sup>

Our duty lies in faith working by love. They are not distinct from each other except in our way of viewing them. This is Newman's answer

44 John Henry Newman *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (Longmans Green 1899-1910) iv p 309. Further references are abbreviated to PPS.

45 PPS iv p 312

46 PPS iv p 312

47 PPS iv p 312

48 PPS iv p 313

49 PPS iv p 314

50 PPS iv p 314

51 PPS iv pp 314-15

## John Henry Newman on the Human Person and the Gift of Faith

concerning the connection between faith and love. 'Love is the condition of faith, and faith is the cherisher and maturer of love.'<sup>52</sup> Faith brings out works into love. Love is the substance of the works. Faith is the structure and direction of the works.<sup>53</sup>

Love, then, is the guiding principle of the regenerate soul and faith ministers to it. 'Love is the end, faith is the means.'<sup>54</sup> Faith without love is empty. Through faith we are able to give up this world. With love we pass into the next. It often occurs that human beings are able to turn their back on this world, but have not the love to reach into the next.<sup>55</sup> The vital principle of love protects faith and prevents it from deteriorating into prejudice and superstition.

### **Faith and Love: Love the Safeguard of Faith**

In one of his *University Sermons* 'Love the Safeguard of Faith Against Superstition' preached on 21 May 1839, Newman offers additional insight on the relationship between faith and love. He begins the sermon by comparing and contrasting faith and reason. Faith, says Newman, is an act of presumptive reasoning or reason proceeding on antecedent grounds.<sup>56</sup> This is the fact of the situation. If revelation has always been offered to human beings in one way, it is pointless to say that it ought to come in some other. Newman observes that if children, the poor and the uneducated can have true faith, yet cannot evaluate evidence, then evidence is not the simple foundation on which faith is built. If educated individuals believe, not because of the evidence, but because they are disposed to eternal life, then this must be God's plan.<sup>57</sup>

Newman recognizes that there is a major difficulty with this view of faith. Such a view is open to the possibility of all types of prejudice and bigotry, and results in credulity and superstition. For unbelievers it provides an excuse for unyielding atheism.<sup>58</sup> Newman realizes that antecedent probabilities may exist for what is true and what pretends to be true. Such probabilities seem to supply no intelligible rule for what is to be believed. How is one to pass from a false belief to a true one? Newman writes:

This is the difficulty. It is plain that some safeguard of Faith is needed, some corrective principle which will secure it from running

52 PPS iv p 315

53 PPS iv p 315

54 PPS iv p 315

55 PPS iv p 315

56 John Henry Newman *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford* (London: Longmans Green 1908) p 231. Further references are abbreviated to US.

57 US p 232

58 US p 232

(as it were) to seed, and becoming superstition or fanaticism.<sup>59</sup>

Most individuals would agree that some corrective is necessary. However, the liberal school is quick to suggest that reason is the safeguard of faith.<sup>60</sup> The Liberals claim that if you cultivate reason you lead individuals to the acknowledgment and practice of the Gospel.<sup>61</sup> Religion will then be rational and it will prevent enthusiasm and superstition, and control infidelity.

Newman predictably rejects such argument. Reason is not the safeguard of faith. He contends that a right state of heart is the true safeguard of faith. Such a state gives birth to faith and disciplines it.<sup>62</sup> It protects faith from bigotry, credulity and fanaticism. He describes the illuminating principle of true faith as holiness, dutifulness, the new creation or the spiritual mind. He writes: 'It is Love which forms it out of the rude chaos into an image of Christ'.<sup>63</sup>

Right faith, says Newman, is the faith of a right mind. Right faith is an intellectual act done under a certain moral disposition. Right faith is a reasoning upon holy, devote and enlightened presumptions. Whenever this faith is lacking in love it becomes excessive and perverted.<sup>64</sup> Faith animated by love and purity recognizes the need for revelation and all that flows from it. Faith working by love in these revelations leads to a real apprehension of divine truth without those technical processes which are commonly referred to as reasoning.<sup>65</sup>

Real faith, says Newman, works on presumption but it is no chance conjecture. It slips into superstition, fanaticism and bigotry only when it separates itself from the counsel of divine love.<sup>66</sup> Faith is an intellectual activity which derives its disposition from the moral state of its agent. It is perfected by obedience and does not change its nature of function when perfected. It remains an initial principle of action, but takes on a spiritual quality. It remains a presumption, but the presumption of a devout mind.<sup>67</sup> Newman concludes:

It acts, because it is Faith; but the direction, firmness, consistency,

59 US pp 232-3

60 See Michael Davies ed *Newman Against the Liberals* (New Rochelle: Arlington House 1978) p 19.

61 US p 233

62 US p 234

63 US p 234

64 US p 239

65 US p 240

66 US p 249

67 US p 250

and precision of its acts, it gains from Love.<sup>68</sup>

Thus Newman finds reason an inadequate corrective against bias and prejudice to which faith is prone. A pure heart protects faith against such abuse. In this way, the uneducated and the educated, the slow as well as the brilliant, can be assured a true and unwavering faith. However, some modern scholars disagree over the validity of Newman's claim.

In his article *Newman on Love as the Safeguard of Faith* Jay Newman discusses Newman's *University Sermon* which I have just examined.<sup>69</sup> He first considers its merits for students of the epistemology of religion and then considers why Newman's position is unsound. I shall focus on Jay Newman's critique of J H Newman's thought.

Jay Newman asks whether J H Newman was wrong in rejecting the rationalist's promotion of reason as the proper safeguard for faith. J H Newman does not see how reason, which lies at the foundation of faith, can also be its corrective. Reason is abandoned after it plays its initial role. Why resort to logical proofs and demonstrations once reason has completed its task? Jay Newman responds that reason cannot be discarded for it does offer a corrective. An individual can rationally conclude that certain data support a case. Later, with compelling evidence, he can conclude his original opinion, though once reasonable, is not acceptable. He does not accept J H Newman's contention that only a gift of supernatural grace can offer a corrective to implicit reason which stands at the ground of faith. He does not see that J H Newman resolved the vulnerable aspect of faith which opens it to prejudice and superstition. As a result, he argues that J H Newman produced a seriously flawed apologetic.<sup>70</sup>

In his article *Faith, Reason, Love: A Reply on Behalf of Cardinal Newman* Leslie Armour responds to Jay Newman's article.<sup>71</sup> A salient point that Armour argues is that love does play a part in the maintenance of a sound faith albeit a subordinate one. The function of love as a corrective to faith is to constitute part of the framework of intelligibility. Love is central to the human experience and it escapes reduction to a phenomenon of biology or psychology. It is the object of a demand for integrity which grows from the exercise of reason.

68 US p 250

69 Jay Newman 'Newman On Love as the Safeguard of Faith' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 1979 pp 139-50

70 Jay Newman pp 146-7

71 Leslie Armour 'Faith, Reason, Love: A Reply on Behalf of Cardinal Newman' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 1981 pp 437-46

The experience of love is part of the identity of human beings and is intertwined with reason. Human experience is a legitimate source of concrete themes of religion. It is reasonable to rely on the testimony of others whose experience has been informed by faith, that is, the historical revelations of God's love.<sup>72</sup>

These two articles highlight an important aspect of J H Newman's religious epistemology, the interrelationship between faith and reason. He was determined not to allow reason to replace faith. Jay Armour argues that reason, however, does offer a corrective principle to faith. Armour supports J H Newman's contention that love shields faith from bigotry and superstition. If one tries to explain away experiences of love one is denying a phenomenon which ordinary human beings have found to be a source of motivation.

Karl Rahner tells us that the reality of faith is not simply a world to itself alone, separate from the world of secular experience.<sup>73</sup> Faith raises quite concrete claims and demands which must be fulfilled in the concrete world of secular experience and activity, in moral life, in the ecclesial society, and in the experience of human love which is a very concrete reality of everyday existence.

Newman claims that one can believe without having love, thus holding articles of faith as mere propositions to which one can assent. However, this is not a transforming faith which is necessary for salvation and justification. True faith is not simply an intellectual activity but a movement of both heart and mind. The gradual assimilation of the objects of faith is for Newman implicit faith. This is the faith that operates at the unconscious level and accepts those elements of faith which are not totally expressed or else unknown to the believer.

Newman's theology of faith was a stern response to the logical positivism of his day which exalted the role of explicit reason.<sup>74</sup> He refused to yield to the Liberals and their rational approach to faith. Newman recognised religious faith as a unique phenomenon which could not be reduced to a type of crude reasoning. Justifying faith is another term for religious or right faith. It is religious assent.<sup>75</sup> Newman distinguishes this faith from faith not animated by love. Faith in the abstract is not a virtue. Good and bad individuals can believe in God. Love

72 Leslie Armour 'Faith, Reason, Love: A Reply on Behalf of Cardinal Newman' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 1981 pp 445-6

73 Karl Rahner *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon 1961) v 20 14

74 Zeno John Henry Newman *His Inner Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius 1987) p 52

75 Avery Dulles 'From Images to Truth: Newman on Revelation and Faith' *Theological Studies* 51 1990 p 261

## John Henry Newman on the Human Person and the Gift of Faith

serves as the corrective of a right faith. Simple believers have an implicit rationality to their faith.<sup>76</sup>

Newman was a voice who challenged the prevailing thought of his time. Truth in the abstract was the accepted norm. Newman had no desire for a metaphysical truth. He sought truth in the concrete. Newman restores the notion that human beings can have a real faith. More importantly, they can have real and true knowledge of God as well as faith in him. Newman describes faith as the first fruit of grace. He suggests that faith sheds light on the other types of knowledge. It offers a true vision of reality which a world without faith does not have.

**MICHAEL TESTA** is Adjunct Professor, Maryville University, St Louis.

76 Hugo Meynell 'Newman's Vindication of Faith in *The Grammar of Assent*' Newman *After A Hundred Years* Ian Ker and Alan G Hill edd (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990) p 247