

Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine*

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Our readers do not need to be informed that the distinguished author of this work on the development of Christian doctrine, has, within the last year, been admitted to the communion of the holy Catholic Church; for who has not heard of the event, and what Catholic heart has it not filled with devout joy and gratitude? Mr. Newman has stood for several years before the public as a man of rare gifts and acquirements. He was at the head of a very influential party in the Anglican communion, and appears to have enjoyed a personal esteem, and exerted a personal influence, which seldom fall to the lot of any but the master minds of their age or country. We may well, then, look upon his conversion with more than ordinary gratitude to the great Head of the Church, and as an event of more than ordinary significance.

Mr. Newman appears, from all we know of his history, to have commenced his career with sincere attachment to the schismatical communion in which he was born and reared, and to have felt that he owed it all his genius, talents, attainments, labors, and affections; but almost from the first it was seen by close observers that he cherished aspirations and tendencies which, if faithfully followed, must ultimately lead him out of that communion, or destroy the communion itself by absorbing it in the Catholic Church. Hence the great importance which has been attached to his movements, and the lively interest with which his various publications have been read. Some almost flattered themselves that he and his friends would so far *catholicize* the establishment as to render its restoration to Catholic unity feasible and certain; others, looking upon this as improbable, since it would find an insuperable obstacle in English politics, thought it more likely that his movement would end in his own individual conversion, and that of a considerable number of his friends and followers; others, again, among whom were we ourselves, thought it still more likely that he would stop short in his course, and make up his mind to live and die an Anglican. We felt, on reading the famous Tract 90, that the man who could write such a tract would never want ingenious reasons to justify to himself any course he might choose to adopt. But we did not take sufficiently into the account the difficulties of the position of one standing, like Mr. Newman, outside of the Church, nor make sufficient allowance for the dimness and indistinctness with which Catholic truth ordinarily at first dawns on the Protestant mind, and for the length of time it usually requires to ascertain how much of our past life we may retain, and how much we must give up, in order to place the several parts of our new belief in harmony with each other. We humbly and devoutly thank Almighty God that we were wrong; that we relied too little on the power of divine grace; and that, contrary to our expectations, Mr. Newman, and a large number of his friends, have already been permitted to enter that communion, out of which it is madness to suppose we can please God, or secure the salvation of our souls.

We have no disposition to speculate on the probable effect of the recent conversions in England. It may be that Almighty God is about to visit, in the riches of his mercy, the deeply sinning land of our forefathers, and, for his own greater glory, to restore her, contrary to her deserts, to the bosom of Catholic unity. Appearances everywhere indicate that our good God is at present interposing in a special manner in behalf of his Church, and by a thousand ways preparing the

return of the misguided children of the so-called reformation to their allegiance, to the love and embrace of their holy mother, who has never ceased to weep over their folly and madness, and to beseech her heavenly Spouse to save them from themselves. But, whatever may be the ulterior purposes of Him who orders all things well, the conversion of even one soul is sufficient to warrant the fullest joy and gratitude the heart of man can entertain; and we have superabundant cause of devout thanksgiving in what he has already effected. It is enough for us to trust ourselves, and all, lovingly to him, and to pray unceasingly that his will may be done in all and in each.

The book before us [Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine*] appears to have been designed to indicate, to some extent, the process by which its gifted author passed in his own mind from Anglicanism to Catholicity, and to remove the principal objections to the Catholic Church, which he himself had raised in his previous publications. As the production of a strong, active, acute, and cultivated mind, enriched with various but not always well digested erudition, brought up in the bosom of heresy and schism, nurtured with false learning, false philosophy, vague and empty theories, gradually, under divine grace, working its way to the truth which gleams from afar, but which the intervening darkness renders fitful and uncertain; it is a work of more than ordinary interest, and one which the enlightened and philosophic few, fond of psychological researches, and of tracing the operations of sectarian or individual idiosyncrasies, may read perhaps with profit. A Protestant, ignorant, as Protestants usually are, of Catholicity, may even fancy the work substantially Catholic, and regard its theory as a convenient one for the Church, and one which she may, without prejudice to any of her claims, if not accept, at least tolerate. It is evident, from the first page of the work, that the author has made up his mind; that he is writing under the full conviction that he must seek admission into the Roman Catholic communion; and that, in his judgment, the theory he is putting forth in justification of the step he has resolved to take is, to say the least, perfectly compatible with Catholic authority and infallibility. He frankly accepts, and in some instances elaborately defends, the principal dogmas and usages of the Catholic Church, and especially those which are in general the most offensive to Protestants; and so little suspicion has he of the unsoundness of his work, so orthodox does he hold it, that he does not scruple, even after his conversion, to publish it to the world. And yet we presume he himself is now prepared to concede, that, when he was writing this book, he was still in the bonds of Protestantism; that he had not as yet set his foot on Catholic ground; that he had not crossed the Jordan, had not even surveyed the promised land from the top of Mount Pisgah, and that he knew it only by vague rumor and uncertain report. All, to his vision, is dim and confused. He stumbles at every step and stammers at every word. He puts forth a giant's strength, but only to wrestle with phantoms; and gives us learned and elaborate theories to explain facts which he himself shows are no facts, -- ingenious and subtle speculations, where all that is needed, or is admissible, is a plain yes or no. From first to last, he labors with a genius, a talent, a learning, a sincerity, an earnestness, which no one can refuse to admire, to develop Protestantism into Catholicity. Vain effort! As well attempt to develop the poisonous *sumach* into the cedar of Lebanon.

Whatever may have been Mr. Newman's estimation of his work when writing or consenting to publish it, we cannot doubt that he now judges it as we do. He has now a practical and a filial acquaintance with the Church. He has been permitted to approach her holy sacraments; he has eaten the "**food of angels**"; his heart has been elevated and his vision purged. He is now not an alien, but a son, and a son who can have no will but that of his holy mother. No foolish pride of

opinion, or mistaken notions of self-respect, can make him cling now to past utterances, because they were his, and labor to defend views which he could have entertained only while yet in ignorance, or, at best, seeing “**men only as trees walking.**” His glory is in getting rid of the old Protestant leaven, and in receiving on the authority of God in the Church, all the sacred truths which she believes and teaches, and as she believes and teaches them. He cannot feel that it derogates from true dignity and consistency of character to give up falsehood for truth, or to abandon a once cherished theory, when once seen to be both unnecessary and inadmissible. It implies no reproach to him that he was not able, at the time and under the circumstances, from the position in which his Protestantism had placed him, with the training he had received, and the little recourse he had had to the authorized living teacher, to produce a work less unCatholic, and less open to grave objections. The work is all that he could have reasonably expected it to be; and in refusing to accept it as Catholic, we imply no distrust of the sincerity of his conversion, or of his present orthodoxy.

It is but simple justice to Mr. Newman to say, that it is not for his sake that we are about to point out some objections to his theory of developments. The circumstances under which he wrote, his acknowledged learning and ability, the presumption that he had thoroughly surveyed his ground, and the *apparent* favor with which his essay has been received by the Catholic press in England, are not unlikely to convey to Protestant, and perhaps to some partially instructed and speculative Catholic minds, the impression, that, if the theory set forth is not exactly Catholic, it at least contains nothing which a Catholic may not accept. The fact, that the author – whether legitimately or not – comes to Catholic conclusions, that he ends by entering the Catholic communion, that he puts forth his theory expressly for the purpose of removing the obstacles which others may find in following his example, and with this view publishes it to the world even after his conversion, can hardly fail to produce in many minds the conviction that the theory and conclusions are necessarily or at least legitimately connected. And several Protestant reviewers seem actually to entertain this conviction; and they, therefore, hold the theory up to condemnation as the “**Romanist**” theory; or, as they express themselves, “as the ground on which modern Rome seeks to defend her manifest corruptions of Christian doctrine.” It is therefore due both to the Church and to Protestants to say, expressly, – and we do so with the highest respect for Mr. Newman, and with warm admiration for the truth, beauty, and force of many of the details of his work, – that his peculiar theory is essentially anti-Catholic and Protestant. It not only is not necessary to the defence of the Church, but is utterly repugnant to her claims to be the authoritative and infallible Church of God. A brief examination of some of the principal features of the theory will justify this strong and apparently severe assertion.

Mr. Newman so mixes up in the same category Christian doctrine, theology, and discipline, -- matters in their nature distinct, and never confounded by Catholic doctors, -- that it is difficult by express quotations to determine his exact meaning, and those of our readers, who have not read his book must rely somewhat on our judgment and fidelity in representing it. But we are familiar with his subject; we have traveled, under circumstances similar to his own, over the greater part of the ground he brings to view; we embraced, and for years publicly advocated, a theory substantially identical with his own; we have studied his book thoroughly and conscientiously; we have, and, as Catholics, can have, no motive for misrepresenting it; and we think the statements we are about to give are such as Mr. Newman himself will concede to be strictly just. As we understand Mr. Newman, the problem he has written his book to solve is, How to explain, in accordance with Christian truth, the variations or differences of doctrine and discipline which

the Roman Catholic Church presents today, from the doctrine and discipline presented by the primitive Church. He does not anywhere draw up a list or give us a formal statement of these variations and differences; but important variations, not only in discipline, but also in doctrine, he takes it for granted, there have been. Some hypothesis for their explanation, he thinks, is necessary; and the hypothesis he suggests he calls “**the Theory of Developments.**” It is the purpose of his essay,

1. To explain this theory;
2. To furnish the tests by which development may be distinguished from corruption;
3. To establish the probability, *a priori*, of developments in Christianity; and
4. By an elaborate historical application of the theory to the successive ages of the Church, to show that it meets and explains the principal facts in the case.

Such is the general design of his work.

We waive, here, all considerations of this theory so far as it is intended to apply to Christian discipline and theology, and confine ourselves to it solely as applied to Christian doctrine. Under this last point of view, we object to the theory that it is a theory, and not a revealed fact. The truth of an hypothesis can never be inferred from the fact that it meets and explains the facts it is invented to meet and explain; and therefore the admission of any hypothesis into Christian doctrine would vitiate the doctrine itself. Mr. Newman begins his work by telling us that

Christianity has been long enough in the world to justify us in dealing with it as a fact in the world's history. *It may legitimately be made the subject-matter of theories: what is its moral and political excellence, what its place in the range of ideas or of facts which we possess, whether it be divine or human, whether it be original or eclectic or both at once, how far favorable to civilization or to literature, whether a religion for all ages or for a particular state of society, — these are questions upon the fact or professed solutions of the fact, and belong to the province of opinion.*

But in this he must be mistaken. Whether Christianity be divine or human is not a question of opinion, but a question of fact, and so is it with all the questions he enumerates. Christianity is a fact in the world's history; this is a fact. But is Christianity what it professes to be? Is this a question of opinion, to be answered only by a theory? or is it a question of fact, to be taken up and settled, one way or the other, as a fact? If it is a matter of opinion, and if it is answerable only by a theory, what foundation is there or can there be for faith! Christianity is a fact, not only in the world's history, but in itself, or it is not. If it is, it cannot legitimately be made the subject-matter of theories, any more than may be the fact that it is a fact in the world's history. Christianity, if received at all, must be received, not as a theory, but as a revealed fact; and when we have established it as a revealed fact, no theory is needed or admissible, for we must then believe the fact precisely as it proposes itself.

But even if a theory might be introduced, Mr. Newman's would not satisfy us. We are not satisfied with his tests of a true development. He gives seven tests:

1. Preservation of type or idea;
2. Continuity of principles;
3. Power of assimilation;
4. Early anticipation;
5. Logical sequence;
6. Preservative additions;

7. Chronic continuance.

The sixth, second, and first are all resolvable into one, the simple preservation of the original type or idea. The third, which implies development by assimilation or accretion, is fatal to the sufficiency of the original revelation, by necessarily implying that the developed idea contains what was not in the idea as originally given. The fifth, logical sequence, in itself is no proof of development. The fourth, early anticipation, as far as it goes, is proof positive against development. And the seventh, chronic continuance, is as applicable to corruptions as to true developments; for Mr. Newman fails entirely to show that corruptions are short-lived and transitory, as he alleges. Some writers date the origin of the Pelagian heresy, which is as rife as ever it was, as far back as the garden of Eden; and Mr. Newman himself admits that it remains to be seen “whether Mahometanism external to Christendom and the Greek Church within it” are not yet living, and capable of chronic continuance and activity.

Furthermore, before we can proceed to apply tests to determine whether this or that is a development or a corruption of Christian doctrine, we must have a clear, distinct, and adequate knowledge of Christian doctrine itself; for how can we say the original type or idea is preserved, if we do not know what it is? If we do know what it is, what is the use of the tests or their application? The whole process of the historical application of the tests is, then, at best, regarded as an argument, a mere paralogism. We need all the knowledge of Christian doctrine as the condition of concluding any thing from the application of the tests, which their successful application can give us; for there can be nothing in the conclusion not previously in the premises. Mr. Newman, like professors of natural science, has been misled by what in these times is called “Inductive Philosophy,” – a philosophy which had never had “**a local habitation or a name,**” more than other “**airy nothings,**” if it had been borne in mind that we have no logic by which we can conclude the unknown from the known. When your conclusions go beyond what you have established in the premises, they may, sometimes be a guide to observation, but they have in themselves no scientific validity.

But, waiving these considerations, we object to Mr. Newman's theory, that it is an hypothesis brought forward to explain facts which are not facts. His problem is no problem; for it presupposes what no Catholic can concede, and what there is no warrant in the facts of the case for conceding. Mr. Newman proceeds on the assumption, that there have been real variations in Christian doctrine. “On various grounds, then, it is certain,” he says,

... that portions of the Church system were held back in primitive times; and of course this fact goes some way to account for that apparent variation and *growth* of doctrine, which embarrasses us when we would consult history for the true idea of Christianity; yet it is not the key to the whole difficulty, for the obvious reason, that the variations continue beyond the time when it is conceivable the discipline (*disciplina arcani*) was in force.

And the view on which his book is written, he adds is,--

That the *increase* and expansion of the Christian *Creed* and Ritual, and the *variations* which have attended the process in the case of individuals and Churches, are *necessary* attendants on any philosophy or policy which takes possession of the intellect and heart, and has had any wide or extended dominion; that, from the nature of the human mind, *time* is necessary for the full comprehension and *perfection* of great ideas; and that the highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated once for all to the world by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but, as received by minds not inspired, and through *media* which were human, have required only the longer time and the deeper thought for their full elucidation. This

may be called the *Theory of Developments*.

We shall find ourselves unable," he says again, "to fix an historical point at which the *growth of doctrine* ceased. Not on the day of Pentecost, for St. Peter had still to learn at Joppa about the baptism of Cornelius; not at Joppa and Caesarea, for St. Paul had to write his Epistles; not on the death of the last apostle, for St. Ignatius *had to establish the doctrine of Episcopacy*, not then, nor for many years after, for the canon of the New Testament was still undetermined; *not in the Creed*, which is no collection of definitions, but a summary of certain *credenda*, an incomplete summary, and, like the Lord's Prayer or the Decalogue, *a mere sample* of divine truths, especially of the more elementary. No one doctrine can be named which starts *omnibus numeris*, at first, and gains nothing from the investigations of faith and the attacks of heresy. The Church went forth from the world *in haste*, as the Israelites from Egypt, 'with their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.'" "Butler of course was not contemplating the case of *new articles of faith*, or developments imperative on our acceptance, but he surely bears witness to the probability of developments in Christian doctrine considered in themselves, which is at present the point in question.

Thus we see how, as time went on, the doctrine of Purgatory *was opened upon the apprehension of the Church*, as a portion or form of penance due for sins committed after baptism: and thus the *belief* in this doctrine and the *practice* of infant baptism would *grow* into general reception together.

These passages do not appear in their full strength, detached, as they are, from the context; but we think there is no mistaking the doctrine they inculcate. They prove clearly that Mr. Newman does not mean simply that there has been a growth in theological *science*, a variation or expansion of outward discipline, but that there have been in the teachings of the Church herself real variations of *doctrine*, an increase and expansion of the Christian creed, — a real progress of the Church in her own apprehension and understanding of the sacred deposit of faith committed to her charge, and which she received the command to teach all nations even unto the consummation of the world. She went forth in haste, her **"dough unleavened,"** her creed incomplete, her understanding of her faith imperfect, ignorant, in part at least, in regard to every article of faith, of the precise truth she was authorized to teach. New definitions are new developments, and indicate that more of Christian truth is opened upon the apprehension of the Church. Before she defines the article, she herself does not clearly and distinctly apprehend what, on the point defined, is the revelation she originally received. As if she had only a confused notion, an intense feeling, and no distinct apprehension of the consubstantiality of the Son to the Father when she drew up the symbol, and not till she defined it against Arius at Nicaea; and when she defined the **"two natures in one person"** against Nestorius, she had not yet fully learned the **"one person in two distinct natures,"** which she asserted shortly after against Eutyches. All may have been implied in the original revelation, but she knew it not; and it is only as time goes on, as mind acts on mind, as controversies arise, as urgent necessities press, that she gradually develops it, and fixes it in her definitions. Thus in her understanding there is a perpetual growth, or a continued increase and expansion of Christian doctrine. The decision of the rule of faith, he tells us, **"has been left to time, to the influence of mind upon mind, the issues of controversy and the growth of opinion,"** and remains, he supposes, even to this day, "more or less undeveloped, or at least undefined by the Church." Infant baptism was **"unprovided for by the revelation, as originally given."** It is left undecided, **"unless by development or growth"** of revelation, what is the resource of those who sin after Baptism, and the doctrine of Purgatory appears to have been a late development. [We cannot resist, here, the temptation to quote a passage from a recent Protestant work published in this country, --*The Principle of Protestantism in its relation to the Present State of the Church*, by Professor Schaff, of the German Reform Theological Seminary, Mercersburg, Pa., — a German, lately from Berlin,

and in part attached, we believe, to the school of Neander. He is a young man of very superior abilities. His work has many remarkable affinities with Mr. Newman's. Both works adopt very nearly the same fundamental principles; but one concludes in favor of Protestantism, the other Catholicity. The passage we quote seems to us a clear and distinct statement of Mr. Newman's leading doctrine, and a much better statement than Mr. Newman himself has anywhere formally given.

“It must be remarked, that, when we speak of advance or progress, we do so with reference only to the *previous apprehension* of Christianity in the *Church*, and not to *Christianity* itself, as exhibited in its original, and for all times absolutely normal character, in the writings of the *New Testament*....In its own nature, as a new order of life, Christianity has been complete from the beginning; and there is no room to conceive that any more perfect order can take its place, or that it may be so improved as, in the end, to outgrow entirely its own original sphere. But notwithstanding this, we are authorized to speak of advance or progress in the case of the Church itself, and on the part of the Christianized world; and of this not merely as extensive, in the spread of the Gospel among pagans, Mohammedans, and Jews, but as intensive, also, *in the continually growing cultivation and improvement* of those four great interests of the Church, doctrine, life, constitution, and worship. The Church, not less than every one of its members, has its periods of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. This involves no contradiction to the absolute character of Christianity; for the progress of the Church, outward or inward, is never in the strict sense creative, but in the way only of reception, organic assimilation, and expansion. In other words, all historical development in the Church, theoretical and practical, consists in an *apprehension, always more and more profound, of the life and doctrine of Christ and his apostles: an appropriation, more full and transforming always, of their distinctive spirit, both as to its contents and its form*. Only so far as a doctrine or ordinance of the Church bears this character may it be allowed to have formative and enduring force.”

This is bold, manly, and consistent in a Protestant; it is something else in a Catholic.

Now, in regard to all this, we simply ask, Does the Church herself take this view? Does she teach that she at first received no formal revelation, — that the revelation was given as **“unleavened dough,”** to be leavened, kneaded, made up into loaves of convenient size, baked and prepared for use by her, after her mission began, and she had commenced the work of evangelizing the nations? Does she admit her original creed was incomplete, that it has increased and expanded, that there have been variation and progress in her understanding of the revelation she originally received, and that she now understands it better, and can more readily define what it is than she could at first? Most assuredly not. She asserts that there has been no progress, no increase, no variation of faith; that what she believes and teaches now is precisely what she has always and everywhere believed and taught from the first. She denies that she has ever added a new article to the primitive creed; and affirms, as Mr. Newman himself proves in his account of the *Council of Chalcedon*, that the new definition is not a new development, a better understanding of the faith, but simply a new definition, against the **“novel expressions”** invented by the enemies of religion, of what, on the point defined, had always and everywhere been her precise faith. In this she is right, or she is wrong. If right you must abandon your theory of developments; if wrong, she is a false witness for God, and your theory of developments cannot make her worthy of confidence. If you believe her you cannot assert developments in your sense of the term; if you do not believe her, you are no Catholic. This is sufficient to show that Mr. Newman cannot urge his theory as a Catholic, whatever he might do as a Protestant.

Mr. Newman proceeds on the assumption, that the revelation committed to the charge of the Church was not a distinct, formal revelation, but a vague, loose, obscure revelation, which she at first only imperfectly apprehended. This evident from the extracts we have made, and also from

what he says when pointing out an error in a passage which he quotes from one of his previous publications. **“The writer considers the growth of the doctrine [of Purgatory] an instance of the action of private judgment; whereas I should now call it an instance of the mind of the Church working out dogmatic truth from implicit feelings, under secret supernatural guidance.”** This is a pregnant passage, and may be regarded as a key to Mr. Newman's doctrine of development, and also to his view of the teaching authority of the Church. The development, as is evident from the context, is not the formal definition of the faith against a novel error, but is a slow, painful, and laborious working out, by the Church herself, of dogmatic truth from implicit feelings, -- though what kind of feeling an *implicit* feeling is, we are unable to say. “Thus St. Justin or St. Irenaeus might be without any digested idea of Purgatory, or Original Sin, yet have an *intense feeling*, which they had not defined or located, both of the fault of our first nature and of the liabilities of our nature regenerate.” It is obvious from the whole course of Mr. Newman's reasoning, that he would predicate of the Church, in their time, what he here predicates of St. Justin and St. Irenaeus. The Church had a vague yet intense feeling of the truth, but had not digested it into formal propositions or definite articles. She had a blind instinct, which, under secret supernatural guidance, enabled her to avoid error and to pursue the regular course of development. She had a secret feeling of the truth, as one may say, a natural taste for it, and a distaste for error; yet not that clear and distinct understanding which would have enable her at any moment, on any given point, to define her faith. She only knew enough of truth to preserve the original idea, and to elaborate from her intense feelings, slowly and painfully as time went on, now one dogma and now another. What in one age is feeling in a succeeding age becomes opinion, and an article of faith in a still later age. This new article gives rise to a new intense feeling, which, in its turn, in a subsequent age becomes opinion, to be finally, in a later age yet, imposed as dogmatic truth. This is, so far as we can understand it, Mr. Newman's doctrine of development, and what he means by **“working out dogmatic truth from implicit feelings.”**

By the “mind” of the Church which works out this dogmatic truth, Mr. Newman does not mean, strictly speaking, the constituted authority of the Church, but the internal sense, very nearly what Moehler calls the “internal tradition,” of the collective body of the faithful. When he speaks of the recipients of the revelation, he seems always to have in his mind the *ecclesia credens*, and to forget the *ecclesia docens*. He does not appear to have ever heard that Almighty God gave his revelation to pastors and teachers qualified from the first to teach it in its purity and integrity, clearly and distinctly, but that he threw it upon the great concourse of believers for them to receive and make the most of. “The time at length came when these recipients ceased to be inspired; and on these recipients the revealed truths would fall at first vaguely and generally, and would afterwards be completed by developments.” This view, if followed out, would suppress entirely the proper teaching authority of the Church, competent at any moment to declare infallibly what is the precise truth revealed; or, at least, would raise the *ecclesia credens* above the *ecclesia docens*, and reduce the office of the Church teaching to that of defining, from time to time, the dogmatic truth which the Church believing has gradually and slowly worked out from her implicit feelings. The secret supernatural assistance would then attach to the Church believing, and superintend the elaboration, rather than to the Church teaching; and if to the Church teaching at all, only so far as to enable it faithfully to collect and truly define what the Church believing elaborates; the very doctrine we ourselves set forth in the first number of this *Review* [*The Church Question, Brownson's Works*, Vol. IV., p. 461.], and insisted on, not as a reason for going into the Roman Catholic Church, but as a reason for *not* going into it, and for staying where we were.

Mr. Newman evidently proceeds on the assumption, that Christianity can be abstracted from the Church, and considered apart from the institution which concretes it, as if the Church were accidental and not essential in our holy religion. **“Christianity,”** he says, **“though spoken of in prophecy as a kingdom, came into the world as an *idea* rather than an institution, and has had to wrap itself in clothing, and fit itself with armor of its own providing, and form the instruments and methods of its own prosperity and warfare.”** If he does not so consider it, all he says on the development of ideas in general has and can have no relation to his subject. **“The more claim,”** he says, **“an idea has to be considered living, the more various will be its aspects; and the more social and political is its nature, the more complicated and subtile will be its developments, and the larger and the more eventful will be its course. Such is Christianity; and whatever has been said about the development of ideas generally becomes, of course, an antecedent argument for its progressive development.”** Its divine Author then sent Christianity into the world a naked and unarmed idea. By its action on us, and ours on it, it gradually develops itself into an institution, which, feeble at first, as time and events roll on, strengthens and fortifies itself, now on this side, and now on that, pushes deep its roots into the heart of humanity, sends out its branches, now in one direction and now in another, till at length it grows up and expands into that all-embracing authority, those profound and comprehensive dogmas, those pure and sublime precepts, and that rich and touching ritual, which together make up what we today call the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. Hence the significance of what the author told us in his introduction: **“Christianity has, from the first,... thrown itself upon the great concourse of men. Its home is in the world; and to know what it is we must seek it in the world, and hear the world's witness of it.”** [“He was in the world, and the world knew him not.” – *St. John* i. 10.]

We meet here an old, familiar acquaintance, -- a doctrine which we embraced for years before we became a Catholic, and which for years kept us out of the Catholic Church, as it now keeps out the greater part of our former friends and associates. Assuming that Christianity came into the world originally as an idea, and not as an institution, that it was thrown upon the great concourse of men, to be developed and embodied by the action of their minds, stimulated and directed by it, we held that, by seizing it anew, abstracting it from the institutions with which it has thus far clothed itself, and proclaiming it as eighteen hundred years of intense moral and intellectual activity have developed it, we might organize through it a new institution, a new Church, in advance of the old by all the developments which these eighteen hundred years have effected; and we see not, even now, wherein we were wrong, if it be assumed that Christianity was originally given us as a naked and unarmed idea.

This doctrine rests on the assumption, that ideas, in themselves considered, are active and potent, and that they may, as our old friend, the author of *Orphic Sayings*, would express himself, “take unto themselves hands, build the temple, erect the altar, and instaurate the worship of God.” This is not only bad theology, but false philosophy, as we attempted to show in an article entitled *No Church, No Reform*, published in April, 1844 [*Brownson's Works*, Vol. IV., p. 496.] Ideas, not concentered, not instituted, are not potencies, are not active, but are really to us as if they were not. The ideal must become actual, before it can be operative. If Christianity had come into the world as an idea, it would have left the world as it found it. Moreover, if you assume it to have come as an idea, and to have been developed only by the action of the human mind on it, the institutions with which it is subsequently clothed, the authorities established in its name, the dogmas imposed, the precepts enjoined, and the rites prescribed are all really the products of the human

mind; and instead of governing the mind, may be governed, modified, enlarged, or contracted by it at its pleasure. The Church would be divine only in the sense philosophy or civil government is divine. If Mr. Newman had not been so preoccupied with the solution of the problem which his Anglicanism proposed, it seems to us he must have seen its, and shrunk from advancing his theory of developments. [Yet Mr. Newman seems to have had some suspicion of this conclusion. “Nor can it fairly be made a difficulty, that thus to treat Christianity is to level it in some sort to sects and doctrines of the world, and to impute to it the imperfections which characterize the productions of man. Certainly it is a degradation of a divine work to consider it under an earthly form; but it is no irreverence, since the Lord himself, its author and owner, bore one also. Christianity differs from other religions and philosophies in what it has in addition to them; not in kind, but in origin; not in its nature, but in its personal characteristics; being informed and quickened by what is more than intellect, by a divine Spirit. It is externally what the apostle calls an 'earthly vessel,' *being the religion of men*. And considered as such, it grows 'in wisdom and stature'; but the powers which it wields, and the words which proceed out of its mouth, attest its miraculous nativity.” Mr. Newman mistakes the analogy on which he relies. Undoubtedly the Church has its human side as well as its divine side; but it is not a correct view of Christianity to assume that its whole body, including its doctrines and institutions, is human, is a production of man, simply quickened and informed by the divine Spirit. In Christianity, doctrine represents the divine, not the human, -- is not the “earthly vessel,” but that which was deposited in the vessel; for nothing can be regarded as Christian doctrine but what was originally revealed. Christian doctrine is the revelation itself, not the view which men take of that revelation. Hence the necessity of the infallible *ecclesia docens* to keep and propound it. And here is the grand error Mr. Newman commits. He is still, while writing, a decided Protestant, mistaking our notions of Christianity for Christianity itself.]

A little reflection on a somewhat popular German theory, of which Neander is perhaps the best living exponent, might have led Mr. Newman to suspect the soundness of his own, which is very nearly identical with it. Neander assumes that Christianity came into the world as a life, or the principle of a new and higher life; which, it strikes us, is only another form of words for saying it came as an idea. The German, assuming it to be life, or the principle of life, or a living “idea,” placed by its author in the world uninstituted, concludes that Christianity needs no formal institution, was never intended to be clothed with a formal institution, and that it can subsist, diffuse and propagate itself, and fulfil its mission, without any other association or organization than that of general society. This also was Schleiermacher's view, as set forth in his *Ueber die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Veruchtern*. The Englishman, from virtually the same premises, argues, it is true, to a better conclusion, but not, it seems to us, with a better nor even with so good a logic. Certain it is, we ourselves could never obtain his Catholic conclusions from his premises; and it was not till we had been forced to abandon them that we presented ourselves at the door of the Church, and begged permission to enter.

Our difficulties do not diminish when we take up Mr. Newman's definition of *idea*. An idea, according to him, is the habitual judgment which the mind forms of that which comes before it; and in this sense, he tells us, the term is used in his *Essay*. Christianity came into the world as an idea, therefore as an habitual judgment formed by the mind. This, if construed strictly, makes Christianity purely human; for, if it be an habitual judgment formed by the human mind, it has no existence out of the mind, and could have had none before being formed in it. This is a conclusion from which every believer must recoil with horror. But, at any rate we must say,

according to the author, that Christianity came into the world as an habitual judgment, for it came as an idea. Then it is nothing but an habitual judgment which the world forms. This must be admitted, because he says expressly, "To know what it is, we must seek it in the world, and hear the world's witness of it." But it is an habitual judgment which the world forms of -- what? Of Christian doctrine, of the revelation supernaturally made and committed to the Church? Mr. Newman cannot say this, because this would make Christianity the *object* of the judgment, whereas he tells us that it is the judgment itself. Of what, then, is Christianity the habitual judgment which the world forms? We can conceive no answer Mr. Newman can give which will not involve naked deism, or, at best, mere Quakerism.

Mr. Newman tells us again that ideas sometimes represent facts, and sometimes do not. Does Christianity represent facts, or does it not? Does Christianity represent a fact, or does it not? He doubtless intends to teach that it does. But what is the evidence? What is the criterion by which to distinguish an idea which represents a fact from one which does not? He answers: --

When one and the same idea is held by persons who are independent of each other, and variously circumstanced, and have possessed themselves of it by different ways under very different aspects, without losing its substantial unity and its identity, and when it is thus variously presented, and yet recommended to persons similarly circumstanced; and when it is presented to persons variously circumstanced, under aspects discordant at first sight, but reconcilable after such explanations as their respective states of mind require; then it seems to have a claim to be considered the representative of objective truth.

This is pure *Lamennaisism* which makes the *consensus hominum* the criterion of truth. It would also authorize us to infer, that, if Christianity, as at its first promulgation, be embraced only by a few, and these mutually connected and similarly circumstanced, and if, at the same time these all receive it by the same way and under the same aspect, or agree among themselves in their views of it, it would have no "claim to be considered the representative of objective truth." The faith of the Blessed Virgin, the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, must, then, have labored under very serious disadvantages. Moreover, if all the world should be converted, all gathered into the same communion, become of "one mind," as well as of "one heart," there would be room to question whether Christianity represents a fact or a no-fact. Is this Catholic teaching?

Nor are we better satisfied with what Mr. Newman says of the process of development. Christianity came into the world as an idea, an habitual judgment; and we may say of it in particular all he says of development in ideas in general. Ideas, we are told, "are not ordinarily brought home to the mind, except through the medium of a variety of aspects; like bodily substances, which are not seen except under the clothing of their properties and influences, and can be walked round and surveyed on opposite sides, and in different perspectives, and in contrary lights." Let an idea get possession of the popular mind, or the mind of any particular set of persons, and it is not difficult to understand the effects which will ensue.

There will be a general agitation of thought, and an action of mind, both upon itself and upon other minds. New lights will be brought to bear upon the original idea, aspects will multiply, and judgments will accumulate. There will be a time of confusion, when conceptions and misconceptions are in conflict; and it is uncertain whether any thing is to come of the idea at all, or which view of it is to get the start of the others. After a while, some definite form of doctrine emerges; and, as time proceeds, one view of it will be modified or expanded by another, and then combined with a third, till the idea in which they centre will be to each mind separately what at first it was only to all together. It will be surveyed, too, in its relation to other doctrines or facts, to other natural laws or established rules, to the varying circumstances of times and places, to other religions, polities, philosophies, as the case may be. How it stands affected towards other systems, how it

affects them, how far it coalesces with them, how far it tolerates when it interferes with them, will be gradually wrought out. It will be questioned and criticised by enemies, and explained by well-wishers. The multitude of opinions formed concerning it, in these respects and many others, will be collected, compared, sorted, sifted, selected, or rejected, and gradually attached to it or separated from it, in the minds of individuals and of the community... Thus, in time, it has grown into an ethical code, or into a system of government, or into a theology, or into a ritual, according to its capabilities; and this system or body of thought, theoretical and practical, thus laboriously gained, will, after all, be only the adequate representation of the original idea, being nothing else than what the very idea *meant* from the first, -- its exact image as seen in a combination of the most diversified aspects; with the suggestions and corrections of many minds, and the illustrations of many trials. This process of thought is called the development of an idea.

That this is intended to be a description of the process of development, which takes place in *Christian doctrine*, is evident from the title of the book, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and from what he says expressly.

If Christianity be a fact, and can be made the subject-matter of exercises of the reason, and impress an idea of itself on our minds, that idea will, in the course of time, develop in a series of ideas... It is the peculiarity of the human mind that it cannot take an object in, which is presented to it, simply and integrally. It conceives by means of definition or description; whole objects do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are, to use a mathematical phrase, thrown into series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, and, with more or less exactness, approximating, as they accumulate, to a perfect image. There is no other way of learning or of teaching. *We cannot teach, except by aspects or views which are not identical with the thing itself we are teaching...* And the more claim an idea has to be considered as living, the more various will be its aspects; and the more social and political its nature, the more complicated and subtle will be its developments, and the longer and more eventful will be its course. Such is Christianity; and whatever has been said... about the development of ideas generally becomes, of course, an antecedent argument for its progressive development... Nor is the case altered by supposing that inspiration did for the first recipients of the revelation what the divine fiat did for herbs and plants in the beginning, which were created in maturity. Still, the time at length came when its recipients ceased to be inspired; and on these recipients the revealed truths would fall, as in other cases, at first *vaguely* and *generally*, and would afterwards be completed by developments.

It is plain from this that Mr. Newman means to teach that the Church, in order to attain to an adequate expression of the Christian idea or of Christian doctrine, must institute and carry on the precise process of development which he has predicated of ideas generally; for he contends, and he told us as much in the beginning, that she is forced to do so by the nature of the human mind itself. The revelation is not and cannot be taken in all at once. The Church can neither learn nor teach it, except under particular aspects, none of which, he says, can go the depth of the idea, -- that is, we presume, of the fact or no-fact which the idea represents; for it is hardly to be supposed that a judgment cannot go the depth of itself; and it is only by collecting and adjusting these particular aspects, that she can attain to an adequate expression of Christian doctrine. This is naked eclecticism, not in philosophy only, but even in faith.

But this development is effected only gradually, and "after a sufficient time." Some centuries elapse, and the doctrine of purgatory is "opened upon the apprehension of the Church." She at first cannot take in all revealed truth. She has it all stowed away somewhere, but she only partially apprehends it. As time goes on, as individuals differently circumstanced view it under different particular aspects and from opposite poles, as new controversies arise, bold and obstinate heretics start up, some clamorous for one particular aspect, and some for another, she is able to enlarge her view, to augment the number of her dogmas, and tell us more truly what is the revelation she has received. And this we are to say of a Church we are defending as authoritative

and infallible, and which we hold has received the formal commission to teach all nations all things whatsoever our Lord commanded his apostles! In plain words, was the Church able to teach truly and infallibly in the age of Saints Clement and Polycarp, or of Saints Justin and Irenaeus, the whole Catholic faith, and the precise Catholic faith, on any and every point which could be made, -- or was she not? If she was, there can have been no development of doctrine; if she was not, she was not then competent to discharge the commission she received? Was what she then taught the faithful sufficient for salvation? Is not what was then sufficient all that is really necessary now? If so, and if she teaches doctrines now which she did not then or insists on our believing now what she did not then, how will you exonerate her from the charge brought by Protestants, that she has added to the primitive faith, and teaches as of necessity to salvation what is not necessary, and therefore imposes a burden on men's shoulders they ought not to be required to bear? Moreover, where are these developments to stop? Have we reached the end? Has the Church finally brought out the whole body of dogmatic truth, or are we, like the Puritan Robinson, "to look for new light" to break in upon her vision? Mr. Newman seems to think new developments are needed; for he mentions several fundamental matters, which he says he supposes "remain more or less undeveloped, or at least undefined, by the Church."

Mr. Newman, after Leibnitz, represents heresy as consisting in taking and following out a partial view of Christian truth. Will he permit us to ask him to tell us how, at that period, when the Church apprehended the truth only under particular aspects, heresy was distinguishable from orthodoxy? Moreover, if there ever was a time when the Church did not teach the whole faith, how he can maintain her catholicity; since to her catholicity, as we learn from the catechism, it is not only essential that she subsist through all ages, and teach all nations, but that she teach all truth?

Whoever glances at Mr. Newman's application of his "tests" cannot fail to perceive that he regards heresies as having been of essential service to the Church in enabling her to develop and fully understand the sacred deposit of faith; and that he sees no peculiar sin in them, but in their anticipating the Church, and bringing out and insisting upon a particular aspect of truth, before her hour has come, before she has reached it in the regular course of development. They are too impatient; they cannot wait the slow course of time, but would precipitate the growth of the Church.

... Montanism is a remarkable anticipation or presage of developments which soon began to show themselves in the Church, though they were not perfected for centuries after. ...

... The doctrinal determinations and ecclesiastical usages of the middle ages are only the true fulfilment of its self-willed and abortive attempts at precipitating the growth of the Church. ...

... While the prophets of the Montanists prefigure the Church's doctors, and their inspiration her infallibility, and their revelations her developments, and the heresiarch himself is the unsightly anticipation of St. Francis, in Novatian again we see the aspiration of nature after such creations of grace as St. Benedict or St. Bruno. ...

This requires no comment. But, if heretics go before the Church, and develop truth before she is ready for it, and yet a truth she subsequently accepts, we think she should treat them with a little more indulgence, and that we should rather lament her tardiness than censure their precipitancy. Mr. Newman, strange as it may seem, regards the heretic as generally in advance of the orthodox doctor, and appears to maintain that orthodoxy is formed out of the "raw material" supplied by

heretics. He tells us

The theology of the Church is the diligent, patient working out of one doctrine from many materials. The conduct of popes, councils, fathers, betokens the slow, painful, *anxious* taking up of *new elements* into an existing body of *belief*.

It is singular that it never occurred to Mr. Newman, that possibly the heretical views which he seems to admire so much were simply corruptions of doctrines which the Church had taught before them, and that heresy is the corruption of orthodoxy, and not its raw material. As a matter of fact, we suspect, in all cases of coincidence, the orthodox doctor is older than the heretical teacher, as the Church is older than any of the sects.

After all, it is clear that Mr. Newman's mother error, is in assuming that the Christian doctrine was given originally and exclusively through the medium of the written word. How far he assumes this absolutely for himself, or how far his assumption is intended to be a concession to his Anglican friends, it is impossible for us to say; and we confess, that, on reading and re-reading the book, we are at a loss to determine whether he is really putting forth a theory which he holds to be true, or only a theory which he thinks may remove, on Anglican premises, the difficulties which the Anglican finds in the way of Catholicity. But this much is certain, -- his theory is framed on the supposition, that the revelation was first given in the written word exclusively, and that the Church has herself had to learn it from written documents. Hence, as the doctrine in these is evidently not drawn out and stated in formal propositions or digested articles of faith, but is given only generally, vaguely, obscurely, in detached portions and loose hints, developments have been absolutely indispensable, and must have been foreseen and intended by the Author of our religion. This is what he labors to prove in the chapter entitled, *On the Development of Christian ideas antecedently considered*. But this is sheer Protestantism, not Catholicity, and is never to be assumed or conceded by a Catholic, in an argument for the Church. Catholicity teaches that the whole revelation was made to the Church, irrespective of written documents, and there never was a time when Christianity was confined to **“the letter of documents and the reasonings of individual minds,”** as Mr. Newman presupposes. The depository of the revelation is not the Holy Scriptures, plus tradition. The divine traditions cover the whole revelation, and not merely that portion of it not found in the Holy Scriptures; and it is because the Church has the whole faith in these divine traditions, which, by supernatural assistance, she faithfully keeps and transmits, and infallibly interprets, that she can establish the rule of Scriptural interpretation, and say what doctrines may and what may not be drawn from the written word. The greater part of her teachings are found in the Holy Scriptures, and she for the most part teaches through them, but was never under the necessity of learning her faith from them, as any one might infer from the very face of the sacred books themselves, which were all addressed to believers, and therefore necessarily imply that the faith had been revealed, propounded, and embraced before they were written. The Church must precede the Scriptures; for it is only on her authority that their inspiration can be affirmed. They are a part of her divine teaching, not the sources whence she learns what she is commanded to teach. If Mr. Newman had borne this in mind, he would hardly have insisted so strongly on his theory of developments, and would have spared himself the rather serious error of maintaining that the Church appeals to the mystical sense of Scripture in proof of her doctrines. The source of heresy is not in the literal interpretation of Scripture, as he imagines, but in attempting to deduce the faith from Scripture by private judgment, independently of the Church. The doctors of the Church are accustomed to

adduce the mystical sense of Scripture in illustration of Christian doctrine, but never in proof, except where the mystical sense is affirmed and defined by positive revelation.

We have been forcibly struck, in reading this essay, with the wisdom of the plan of instructing by the living teacher, which our Lord has adopted. If any man could have learned Catholicity from books or documentary teaching, we should have said that man was John Henry Newman. He had every qualification for the task which could be demanded, -- genius, talent, learning, acuteness, patience of research, and all the books necessary at his hand; and yet, with the best intentions, in a work designed expressly to justify his change of religion to the world, and to open an easy passage-way for others to follow him, he has mistaken Catholicity in its most essential points, and, in fact, written a book which will prove one of the hardest books for him, as a Catholic, to answer, he will be likely to find. If, instead of ransacking the libraries of all ages and nations, and amassing an erudition which he was not in the condition to digest, and for the interpretation of which he had no certain guide, he had gone to the first Catholic priest within his reach, and asked him to teach him the catechism, and to explain to him the creed of Pius IV., he would in one week have learned more of genuine Catholicity than he learned in the years he spent in the preparation of this work. No man should ever persuade himself that he knows anything really and truly of Catholicity, till he has listened patiently and reverently to the living teacher authorized by Almighty God to teach him. The faith is learned by hearing not by reading.

Mr. Newman says his theory **“has been recently illustrated by several distinguished writers on the continent, such as De Maistre and Moehler.”** We are not aware of any *Catholic* writer on the continent, or elsewhere, who has broached a theory bearing any resemblance to Mr. Newman's; and, so far as our own judgment goes, backed by high authority, he totally misapprehends both De Maistre and Moehler, if he supposes they in the least countenance his theory of development. Moehler's method, and some of his forms of expression, may lead, as at one moment they led us, to suppose he did, in some respects, favor a theory of development; but it was as we read him in the pages of his Protestant reviewers, rather than in his own pages, that we were led to do him so great injustice. A closer inspection of his work has satisfied us that it is not so. What Moehler really means is not historical developments, but logical sequence and coherence. His design was, in part, to show Protestants that they are illogical, and under the relation of logical sequence and coherence, to contrast their teachings with those of the Church. In Protestantism we find a given doctrine which logically implies another as its complement, but this other doctrine is wanting. In Catholicity, whenever we find a doctrine which logically implies another, we are sure to find the latter as an article of faith. All this is very true, and may well be said, without saying one word in favor of developments. De Maistre, so far as we understand him, allows development only in the exercise or application of the divine powers of the Church. If in the early ages less power was actually exercised by the sovereign pontiffs than in some subsequent ages, it was not because their authority was less, their rights less positive and divine, or because their authority was less clearly recognized as a substantive power in the Church, but because there was less occasion for its exercise; the external discipline of the Church, which may vary from age to age, and from place to place, bringing fewer cases immediately before them. The growth or expansion is never of the authority, but simply of its exercise. It is so we understand De Maistre, and Catholic writers generally. Mr. Newman will hardly find a Catholic writer of any note who will sustain his position, that the Church developed itself first as Catholic, and then as papal. This is doctrine for Oxford, not for Rome.

But enough. It is plain to the Catholic reader, that Mr. Newman errs in consequence of his neglect to distinguish in his own mind, — or, if not in his own mind, in his book, — on the one hand, between Christian doctrine, that is, divine revelation, and Christian theology and discipline; and, on the other, between what the Church teaches as of divine revelation, and the speculations of individual fathers and doctors. Take the whole history of the Christian world, so called, from the time of our blessed Lord down to the present moment, including the sects as well as the Church, and considering all that has been going on with all who have borne the Christian name, and in every department of life, there is no doubt but such developments and processes as Mr. Newman describes have to some extent taken place. But he seems to have studied his theory chiefly in the history of the sects, where it is unquestionably applicable, and to have concluded that the Church in its life in the world must be governed by a law analogous to the one by which they are governed, and that his theory may apply to her as well as to them. He forgets that she sprung into existence full grown, and armed at all points, as Minerva from the brain of Jupiter; and that she is withdrawn from the ordinary law of human systems and institutions by her supernatural origin, nature, character, and protection. If he had left out the Church, and entitled his book, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, when withdrawn from the Authority and Supervision of the Church*, he would have written, with slight modifications, a great and valuable book. It would then have been a sort of natural history of sectarism, and been substantially true. But applying his theory to the Church, and thus subjecting her to the law which presides over all human systems and institutions, he has, unintentionally, struck at her divine and supernatural character. The Church has no natural history, for she is not in the order of nature, but of grace. Or, if he had simply distinguished between Christian doctrine, in which there is no development, which is always and everywhere the same, and in which not the least shadow of a variation can be admitted, and confined his remarks to theology as a human science deduced from supernatural principles, to the variations of external discipline and worship, and to the greater or less predominance of this or that Christian principle in the practice of individual Christians in different ages of the Church, much that he has said might be accepted, and no very grave error would be taught.

From what we have said it is easy to infer that we do not think Mr. Newman judged wisely in sending this book forth to the public. He did well, on his conversion, to offer it to the proper authorities for revision; but he must pardon us for saying that we think he would also have done well, if, when they declined to revise, he had declined to publish. Until we know enough of Catholicity to know when and where to doubt the accuracy of our knowledge, it is a great hardship to be obliged to go to press on our own responsibility. For our own sakes, as well as for the sake of others, we should take every precaution in our power against error. There is error enough in the world, without our being in haste to augment the quantity.

The Church is not of yesterday, nor are we who live now the first enlightened defenders she has had. The best method of defence has hardly been reserved for us to discover; and perhaps it is a sufficient reason for distrusting any method, that it is new, that it is a discovery of our own. The Church is not here to follow the spirit of the age, but to control and direct it, often to struggle against it. They do her the greatest disservice who seek to disown her glorious past, and to modify her as far as possible, so as to adapt her to prevailing methods of thought and feeling. It is her zealous but mistaken friends, who, guided by a short-sighted policy, and taking counsel of the world around the, seek, as they express it, to *liberalize* her, to bring her more into harmony with

the spirit of the age, from whom we, as good Catholics, should always pray, *Libera nos, Domine!* The best service we can render the Church, in our age and country, is to surrender ourselves to her, all that we have and are, and pray Almighty God that we may always have the grace to do her bidding. She is the representative of God on earth; and we can never do wrong, if we do what, and only what, she bids us. O, it is blessed to feel that we have not to take care of the Church, but she is able and willing to take care of us!

Most of us who have been brought up Protestants, and have had some literary reputation, when we become converts, in the fervor of the moment, have an almost irresistible impulse to relate our experience, and detail the process by which we have been translated from death unto life. Nothing seems easier to us than to bridge over the gulf which divides the Protestant world from the Catholic, and open an easy passage-way for those whom we have reluctantly left behind. But, alas! few of us can detail the process of our conversion, if we try. We are led by a way we know not, by a hand we see not. *Spiritus ubi vult spirat; et vocem ejus audis, sed nescis unde veniat, aut quo vadat: sic est omnis, qui natus est ex Spiritu.* The most we can say is, "This one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, I now see." We believe before we reason, and are often carried onward not only without reasoning, but even in spite of it. The reasoning we should subsequently give would be as likely to mislead others as to aid them. The grounds of our faith are catholic, not individual, and the less use we make of what is individual or peculiar to ourselves in defending it, the better. We did not convert ourselves; God did it, and his be the praise and the glory.

But we say not this for Mr. Newman's sake. He is no longer outside of the Church, seeking to find reasons to justify him in asking admission into her communion. His doubts and misgivings, his advances and his retreats, have given way to firm faith and filial confidence. He does not now, as in his book, believe the Church because by private reason he has convinced himself of the truth of her teachings; but he believes what she teaches because he believes her, and he believes her because she has received the formal commission from Almighty God to teach all nations to observe whatsoever Christ commanded his apostles, and because he has received, through divine grace, the virtue of faith. He has broken with the past, and sees that his present is not a continuation of his former life; for he now understands that Catholicity is not Protestantism developed. His present and his past are separated by a gulf which grace alone can bridge over; and he needs not that we tell him he can more effectually serve those he has left behind by his prayers than by his hypotheses, however ingenious or elaborate. We take our leave of him with the assurance, that, if we have criticised his book somewhat severely, it has been with no improper feeling towards him; and that, when he shall be disposed to address the public again, and from his new position, he will find us among the most willing, the most eager, and the most respectful of his listeners. This elaborate essay belongs to his past life; let it go with all that Protestantism he abjured before he was permitted to put on the livery of Christ. It belongs not to his Catholic life, and is only accidentally connected with it, either in his own mind or in that of others. The essay he will write hereafter, out of the fullness of his Catholic heart, will breathe a different tone, and fetch another echo. It will refresh the Catholic soul, strengthen his faith, confirm his hope, and warm his charity. A noble career opens before him. May God give him grace to run it with success!