Economy of Condescension: John Henry Newman's Trinitarian Theology

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

ECONOMY OF CONDESCENSION:
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN’S TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN THEOLOGY

BY
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CHICAGO, IL
AUGUST 2020
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Naturally, I could not have completed such a large undertaking as this without the help and support of a number of people. It is entirely possible that I have failed to mention one or more individuals that I should have, and if so, I beg their forgiveness.

First, I wish to thank the Theology Department at Loyola: the Faculty, my colleagues in the graduate programs, and our support staff, especially Joanne Brandstrader, who routinely fielded my questions pertaining to the policies and procedures side of the dissertation process.

Of course, the four Faculty members who served on my dissertation committee merit specific mention: the Rev. Dr. Peter Bernardi, SJ, who was so often supportive and encouraging; Dr. Emily Cain, who offered the helpful perspective of someone who had recently gone through this process herself, including some of the more detailed considerations in academic writing; Dr. Miguel Diaz, who gave extensive feedback and acted as a sounding board for sharpening my argument; and above all my director, the Rev. Dr. Mark McIntosh, who provided excellent direction, encouragement, and feedback at every stage of the process, even in the midst an increasingly challenging health condition.

I want to thank Loyola University Chicago for providing the funding needed to complete my degree, as well as the opportunity to teach undergraduates during the past couple of years. I also thank the Lumen Christi Institute and the Rev. Dr. Ian Ker for providing me with the opportunity to spend an intensive week studying Newman’s thought and writings at Merton College, Oxford during the summer of 2017. This experience provided an excellent basis from
which to pursue my own research. In a similar vein, I thank the Rev. Dr. Thomas Holtzen of Nashotah House Theological Seminary, who set me to work checking Newman quotations during my time as his student and faculty assistant. Not only did this begin my engagement with Newman’s texts, but I believe it sowed the seeds of some observations that led to the direction of my dissertation.

I also wish to thank the people of St. Paul’s Church by-the-Lake, where I served for four years as Curate, and then this past year as Priest-in-Charge during their Rector search: for their support and understanding of how much I had going on, and for providing both a spiritual home and a life outside of graduate school.

Finally, I thank my beloved wife Alethea, for her continued love, support, and encouragement, not to mention the immeasurable work and sacrifice that she put forth to make it possible for me to complete my degree; and also our four children, Theodora, Macrina, Josiah, and Ambrose, for keeping life interesting, and reminding me not to take my academic work too seriously.
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<tr>
<td>Apo.</td>
<td>Apologia Pro Vita Sua</td>
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<td>Ari.</td>
<td>The Arians of the Fourth Century</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ath.</td>
<td>Select Treatises of St. Athanasius in Controversy with the Arians, 2 vols.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cons.</td>
<td>On Consulting the Faithful in Matters Doctrine</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Catholic Sermons of Cardinal Newman</td>
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<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ess.</td>
<td>Essays Critical and Historical, 2 vols.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Historical Sketches, 3 vols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea</td>
<td>The Idea of a University</td>
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<td>MD</td>
<td>Meditations and Devotions of the Late Cardinal Newman</td>
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<td>Mir.</td>
<td>Two Essays on Biblical and Ecclesiastical Miracles</td>
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<td>Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations</td>
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<td>NO</td>
<td>Newman the Oratorian: His Unpublished Oratory Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>Sermons Preached on Various Occasions</td>
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<td>PS</td>
<td>Parochial and Plain Sermons, 8 vols.</td>
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SD  Sermons Bearing on the Subjects of the Day
SN  Sermon Notes of John Henry Cardinal Newman, 1849-1878
Tracts  Tracts for the Times
TT  Tracts Theological and Ecclesiastical
US  Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Between A.D. 1826 and 1843
VM  The Via Media of the Anglican Church, 2 vols.
INTRODUCTION

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was a prolific writer whose work varied greatly, both in genre and in content. The writings he produced include sermons, lectures, tracts, scholarly studies, poetry, and fiction. Likewise, he wrote on a wide array of topics, such as epistemology, dogmatics, theological method, ecclesiology, and the history of the church and Christian doctrine. Most of his writing was occasional, i.e. inspired by the perceived needs and contexts of the moment. Yet while his writing is rarely systematic, his works on the whole display a coherence and comprehensiveness in his thinking.

One area of Newman’s thought that exemplifies this trend is his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Newman did not write any systematic treatise on this topic, yet it consistently pervades his theological writings, from his historical and methodological studies to his sermons and devotional literature. Not only does he frequently treat the doctrine directly, but it also influences how he writes about other areas of theology. One could arguably speak of a Trinitarian “frame” around all of Newman’s thought. Yet despite this fact, which many scholars have acknowledged, there has been relatively little scholarship on Newman’s theology of the Trinity. This dearth of research is surprising, given recent scholarly interest in Newman on the one hand, and the prevalence of the doctrine in his writings on the other. Moreover, it is problematic because it leaves unexplored a major component of Newman’s thinking, one that seems essential to a fuller understanding of his theology.
In what follows, I provide a comprehensive systematic study of Newman’s Trinitarian theology. By drawing from his various writings that treat the topic both directly and indirectly, I construct a comprehensive “Newmanian theology of the Trinity” that synthesizes and clarifies his disparate writings on the topic.

There are a number of angles from which Newman’s Trinitarian theology could be approached, e.g. the impact of the Alexandrian Fathers on his thinking, the intellectual and pastoral context in which he produced his reflections, or the orientation toward piety and devotion as the telos of his theology. However, the goal of this project is to take a systematic or constructive approach, rather than a historical one. Thus I will argue as follows:

The key to grasping Newman’s Trinitarian thought is how he understands the economy of salvation—i.e. the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit—as divine condescension, which both reveals the inner life of the Triune God and draws humanity into that life.

While Newman’s Trinitarian theology cannot be reduced to the economy of salvation, taking it as the starting-point sheds light on various aspects of it. First, Newman’s understanding of the eternal/immanent relations within the Trinity is informed by how the Persons are revealed economically. For him there are real connections between how the Three relate eternally and how each Person is manifest vis-à-vis the others in salvation history. Secondly, Newman’s account of the economy of salvation provides the link for how the doctrine of the Trinity informs other aspects of his theology, e.g. Christology, Pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. Each of these bears certain Trinitarian features, which are directly rooted in the Triune God pro nobis and indirectly in the Trinity in se. Thirdly, the emphasis on the Trinitarian revelation
guides certain aspects of Newman’s theological method. The revealed data within the economy becomes the foundation for Newman’s attention to mystery, faith/assent, and the historical development of doctrine. Finally, the spiritual orientation of Newman’s thinking is partly founded on his very real understanding of the Trinity indwelling the justified soul. As we will see, Newman’s focus on God’s saving action as \textit{syncatabasis} or condescension runs though all of this as a persistent theme.

Such a project requires a wide reading of Newman’s writings, both in terms of genre and content and in terms of chronology. I take for my model Roderick Strange’s study, \textit{Newman and the Gospel of Christ}, which offers a similar construction of Newman’s Christology from his various works, including treatises, sermons, and letters.

However, certain of Newman’s writings are more overtly or directly pertinent here. Broadly speaking, the relevant works fall into three categories. The first is his sermons, especially his \textit{Parochial and Plain Sermons}, along with sermons and discourses published in other volumes (e.g. \textit{Discourses to Mixed Congregations, Sermons Preached on Various Occasions, Sermon Notes}). These sermons are a key resource not only because they occasionally address the doctrine of the Trinity directly, but also because they provide a comprehensive account of Newman’s theology, and in particular how he views the economy of salvation as the playing out of the Trinity in salvation history.

The second category consists of historical-theological studies that Newman wrote on the Arian controversy, namely his early work, \textit{The Arians of the Fourth Century}, as well as his later translations, with extensive notes, of \textit{Select Treatises of St. Athanasius} and his still later essay, “Causes of the Rise and Successes of Arianism.” These texts are in some ways the most
systematic of Newman’s Trinitarian writings, as he deals with the minutiae of theological terms and concepts. They also show his debt to the Church Fathers, especially to Athanasius and others of the Alexandrian “school.”

In the final category are those works that treat the doctrine of the Trinity tangentially. Some of these are treatises on theological method in which the Trinity provides a paradigmatic example of a larger argument, namely in the *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford* (especially Sermon 15), *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Other writings in this category include devotional and poetic works of which the Trinity is occasionally the subject. This third group shows several ways that the doctrine of the Trinity plays out in Newman’s thinking, method, and spiritual vision, ways that are not always obvious in the other two categories.

As a constructive approach, my method here largely consists of closely reading relevant texts on Trinitarian theology and synthesizing them in a systematic way centered on Newman’s account of the economy of salvation. However, such a careful reading also requires paying attention to the contexts in which Newman wrote each of the pieces under consideration. This raises a couple of methodological concerns. First, Newman’s thinking changed and developed over the course of his life, the biggest change perhaps coming with his conversion from the Church of England to the Roman Catholic Church in 1845. However, there is a deep continuity

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in the substance of Newman’s thinking on the Trinity, as there is with many other areas of his
theology, and this is evidenced by a careful reading of his corpus, as well as by his own account.\(^2\)

Thus it is still possible to speak of “Newman’s Trinitarian theology” as a unified whole, and on
this basis I will treat it as such. I will occasionally take note of developments and shifts in his
thinking, though many of these will prove to be further clarifications in Newman’s thinking as it
progressed throughout his career. The second related issue is that Newman edited and re-edited
many of his writings later in his career, so that later editions do not always represent what he
wrote originally.\(^3\) For the present purpose, priority will be given to the final editions of
Newman’s works, as these represent his most mature thinking.\(^4\)

This study contributes to theological scholarship in at least four ways. First, it helps to fill
in a major gap in scholarship on Newman’s thought. As noted above, it is safe to conclude that
Newman’s Trinitarian theology remains an area where there is more work to be done. While
there has been some scholarship exploring different aspects of it or related topics, to date there
has been no comprehensive, systematic treatment of Newman’s theology of the Trinity. Given
how much the doctrine pervades his writings, his treatment of it merits greater attention than it
has been given.

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\(^2\) With regard to core Christian dogmas like the Trinity, he writes, “What I held in 1816, I held in 1833, and
I hold in 1864. Please God, I shall hold it to the end.” So Apo., 164; cf. 128. For specific examples of such
continuity in Newman’s thought, see Leroux, *Inhabitation*, 68-71; Thomas L. Holtzen, “Union with God and the

\(^3\) See, for instance, Stephen Thomas, *Newman and Heresy: The Anglican Years* (New York: Cambridge
and Plain Sermons*: 1833-1843.” (doctoral dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2010), 4-5.

\(^4\) This is also Benard’s suggestion. See *Preface*, 55.
Secondly, this study aids in a deeper understanding of the inner logic of Newman’s theology as a whole. While Newman never presented his theology in a systematic fashion, scholars have long noted that his thinking displays coherence and consistency across his writings. It is my contention that part of this coherence derives from his Trinitarian framework, focused on the divine condescension in the economy of salvation. Thus a deeper exploration of his Trinitarian theology clarifies some of the inner logic of Newman’s thought.

Thirdly, while the focus here is not on historical theology per se, it also contributes to a more accurate understanding of nineteenth century theology. In particular, it aids in refuting the misperception that Western Christianity effectively forgot about the Trinity between the Enlightenment and the “revival” of Trinitarian theology in the twentieth century. While this myth has been challenged on other fronts,\(^5\) Newman presents a significant example, both because he is deeply rooted in patristic theology and because he anticipates some of the concerns raised later by twentieth-century theologians, such as the relation between the immanent and economic Trinity\(^6\) and the connection between the Trinity and other areas of theology.

Finally, because Newman anticipates some of these more recent questions, yet does not fall into the categories that have come to dominate them, his thinking may offer a fresh perspective on contemporary Trinitarian theology. In particular, Newman may offer insights on the relation between Trinity \textit{in se} and God’s actions in history, the tension between hierarchy and equality among the three Persons, and the nature of theological language.


\(^6\) Newman himself does not use these terms, which have become commonplace in contemporary Trinitarian theology.
It remains to give a brief summary of the structure of the argument that follows. The first chapter provides some background by analyzing the contexts in which Newman developed his Trinitarian theology: historical, personal, pastoral, etc. As he largely developed his mature understanding of the Trinity through engaging the Church Fathers and studying the Arian controversy, much of this chapter covers how these studies, and patristic literature in general and the Alexandrian Fathers in particular, most of all Athanasius, left their mark on Newman’s thinking, as will be evident throughout the remainder of the study.

The second chapter treats two interconnected areas of Newman’s thought which frame how he approaches mysteries like the Trinity. The first of these is spirituality and its relation to theology. I take this as a sort of entry-point into Newman’s Trinitarian theology, as he focuses on the mystery of the Trinity as an asset for devotion, as well as a very real understanding of the Trinity indwelling the human soul. The second theme treated here is theological methodology, with specific emphasis on the relation between doctrine and mystery, theological language, and faith and assent in relation to the Trinity.

The third chapter summarizes Newman’s understanding of the actions of the Trinity in the economy of salvation, both in general and as it pertains to each Person. This is perhaps the center-point of the argument, as it is here that the priority of the economy comes to the fore, as well as Newman’s emphasis on divine condescension as a constitutive aspect of it.

The fourth chapter treats Newman’s understanding of the Trinity in its eternal and internal relations, what contemporary theology often refers to as the immanent Trinity. Here I show how, in Newman’s conception, the way that the three Persons are involved in the economy reveals their eternal relations within the Godhead. For instance, he insists that it is because the
Son is eternally begotten of the Father that the Son alone could be born in time in the Incarnation. More specifically, this chapter explicates how Newman conceives of the Trinitarian relations in terms of the *principatus or monarchia* of the Father, consubstantiality of the Son and Spirit with the Father, and the coinherence of the three Persons.

The fifth and final chapter demonstrates how the Trinity undergirds Newman’s understanding of the entire scope of God’s revelation and redemption. This involves a certain revisiting of themes explored in Chapter 3 regarding the economy of salvation, but this time to show the Trinitarian connections of other aspects of his thought, namely Christology, Pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. All of this comes to be seen as various expressions of the divine condescension in salvation history.

Note: I have retained the original formatting in all direct quotations, including spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, even where these differ from the conventions I have adopted in my own prose.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO NEWMAN’S TRINITARIAN THOUGHT

The focus here is more synthetic and systematic, rather than historical. However, as with any writer, a basic understanding of Newman’s context is necessary for comprehending and appreciating his thought. The purpose of this first chapter is to provide such a background, especially with regard to the development of Newman’s theology of the Trinity. In particular, we will highlight the polemical and pastoral contexts in which he developed his Trinitarian thinking, his engagement with the Church Fathers in general, and his focused scholarship on the Arian controversy, Alexandrian theology, and Athanasius in particular. This will allow us to draw some general conclusions for approaching Newman’s Trinitarian theology in the chapters that follow. More specifically, we will see how the doctrine of the Trinity is a persistent theme in Newman’s thinking, and that he comes to it in ways that are consciously practical, pastoral, and historically minded.

Newman’s Contexts

Newman’s life spanned almost the entire nineteenth century, and thus saw the numerous changes in church and society during that time. He was born in 1801 in London, the oldest of six children. In 1816 he experienced an evangelical conversion, just before beginning his studies at Trinity College, Oxford. He remained at Oxford for the nearly thirty years, and was elected a fellow of Oriel College in 1822. Newman was ordained a deacon in the Church of England in 1824, and a priest on Trinity Sunday of the following year. In 1828 he became vicar of the
University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, where he would deliver some of his most celebrated sermons and lectures.

In 1833 Newman became a primary leader in what was known as the Tractarian or Oxford Movement. This movement began in response to state incursions on the Church’s operations and sought to reform the Church of England according to historic catholic principles, largely through the publication of the *Tracts for the Times*. Newman was somewhat unusual among his colleagues in this movement, as he came from an evangelical and Calvinist background, but had since adopted a more catholic or “high church” theology. Most of the other Tractarians had been brought up in the high church tradition of Anglicanism.¹ In time, due in part to numerous indications that the movement was not having much effect on the larger church, as well as Newman’s ongoing study of the Church Fathers, he became convinced that the established Church of England was not in fact the apostolic church in the British Isles, and he eventually joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1845.

After his conversion, Newman went to Rome to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood. He was ordained in 1847, and also received a Doctor of Divinity. He became a member of the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and upon returning to England he founded more than one Oratory, including one in Birmingham, where he lived most of the remainder of his life. Many in the Catholic hierarchy, including Henry Cardinal Manning (a fellow convert from Anglicanism) and even Pope Pius IX, were suspicious of some of Newman’s ideas. However,

Pope Leo XIII created him a Cardinal in 1879, and his influence only increased after his death at Birmingham in 1890.

Newman largely worked out his Trinitarian theology during his period as an Anglican, i.e. prior to 1845. During much of this time, Newman was deeply engaged in the work of the Oxford Movement, which he took as an opportunity to criticize what he called “liberalism” in religion. By this he meant a modern trend of bringing scientific or rationalistic standards into theology, with the result that the revealed character of Christianity, and the dogmatic truths such revelation entailed, were significantly diminished. Toward the end of his life, Newman himself described liberalism in these terms:

Liberalism is the development of Rationalism. It views faith as a mere natural gift, the like and the consequence of reason and the moral sense; and by reason and the moral sense he estimates it and measures its objects. A man soon comes to be satisfied with other men, though they ignore faith and its objects, provided they recognise reason and the moral sense. This is Liberalism.

Günter Biemer identifies several features of this trajectory that Newman opposed, including preferring “intellectual brilliance to moral excellence,” privileging private judgment over antiquity and ecclesial authority, anti-dogmatism, utilitarianism, indifference to religious matters, and even a tendency toward apostasy. Thomas Norris explains how Newman saw all of this as arising from the fact that “a method of positive science, valid in its own field, had been erected

2 Douglas Woodruff remarks that “Newman was the greatest enemy modern liberalism has ever had to meet. He was the enemy of liberalism because liberalism was the enemy of revelation.” Quoted in Edmond Darvil Benard, Preface to Newman’s Theology (St. Louis: Herder, 1946), 28.

3 LD 31.198.

into a philosophical theory of mind and then applied inordinately to Christianity.”⁵ Newman’s concern in this regard was likely a driving force in much of theological thinking during this period. Indeed, Thomas Sheridan suggests that Newman’s stress on the supernatural came, at least in part, as a reaction to the “utter naturalism of Liberal thought” at the time.⁶

It should be noted that Newman had some liberal leanings himself in the 1820s. In his autobiographical *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, he largely credits Richard Whately, his mentor at Oriel and later Archbishop of Dublin, for influencing him in this way. Eventually Newman and Whately had a falling out, and in retrospect Newman saw some fundamental intellectual differences between them. Still, he admits that he “was drifting in the direction of liberalism” during this period.⁷ As Newman moved away from the liberal trajectory, however, he saw former friends like Whately and Joseph Blanco White continue in it, eventually moving outside the bounds of historic Christian orthodoxy. Newman’s battle against liberalism would have had a rather personal dimension.

It is not difficult to see how such intellectual trends might play out regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Newman laments the “disparagement of doctrinal statements, and in particular of those relating to the Holy Trinity and Incarnation” that was “especially prevalent” in his time.⁸ Nor was this a purely theoretical concern. Various forms of neo-Arianism, Socinianism, and

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⁷ Apo. 133-36.

⁸ US 319.
Unitarianism had become live options, and Newman’s own brother Francis, as well as his former Oriel colleague and friend Blanco White, moved toward Unitarianism. By the 1830s Newman had become consciously concerned with heterodox positions on the Trinity and Christology. Moreover, he cites, at various points, Latitudinarianism, a certain “spirit” of evangelical schools of thought, and even Protestantism more broadly as being at the logical center of such anti-Trinitarian thinking.

Of course, much of this predates Newman by over a century. As Philip Dixon has noted in a thorough study, the doctrine of the Trinity began to be marginalized by the end of the seventeenth century, especially in England, due to a number of intellectual and cultural factors. Among these were a lack of support for the historic dogma from a hard-lined sola scriptura reading of the Bible, and a rise in appealing to reason in interpretive and theological matters.

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10 Newman seeks to answer his brother’s Unitarian arguments in LD 7.413-14.

11 In response, Newman suggests a tract on “Socinianism at Oxford” to Henry Wilberforce in 1835. See LD 5.50-51. Several years later he comments that Blanco White’s more recent drift into pantheism is the logical consequence of his earlier thinking. See LD 10.639-42, 700-01.


13 See VM 2.221; LD 5.32, 166.

14 Dixon criticizes the tendency to pass over this period by those who make sweeping historical claims about the “loss” and “recovery” of the doctrine of the Trinity. See *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), xi-xii, 208. He also notes that, even at the time, England was regarded as the “forcing house for anti-trinitarian sentiments and arguments.” So ibid., viii.

15 Ibid., 213-14.
To make matters worse, even those who defended the doctrine often did so in arid, speculative terms, lacking what Dixon calls a “trinitarian imagination.”

All of this had come to a head by Newman’s time, and it is for this reason that we see him, especially during his Tractarian period, defending dogmas like the Trinity, attacking religious liberalism, and rebuking what he calls “popular Protestantism,” practically all in the same breath. The premier example of this may be number 73 of the Tracts for the Times, “On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Religion.” Here Newman takes two contemporary authors, Thomas Erskine and Jacob Abbott, as exemplifying a larger rationalizing trend in Christian theology. Newman identifies this trend as “Sabellian,” but as Stephen Thomas observes, “Newman consequently broadened the terms ‘Sabellian’, ‘Sabellianism’, to apply not only to a defective trinitarianism, but also to an inadequate, and ultimately infidel, theology of revelation.” Specifically, Newman had in mind “those which presented revelation as an expression of human states and aspirations, rather than as a breakthrough of the divine into the empirical structure of human understanding.” Thus on more than one level, Newman saw the doctrine of the Trinity as deeply intertwined with his battle against rationalism and liberalism in religion.

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16 Ibid., 212-13.


18 Later in life, even after joining the Roman Catholic Church, Newman was distressed by the prospect of the Church of England dropping the Athanasian Creed. See LD 26.36-37, 72-74, 78-80.
Yet it was not primarily in tracts and disputations that Newman developed his Trinitarian theology. Rather, it is in his sermons that key themes in his thinking emerge, some of which he would later expand elsewhere. Not only was Newman’s preaching known to be impactful; the Trinity is a topic to which he refers frequently in his preaching, both as an Anglican and a Roman Catholic.19 As Vinh Bao Luu-Quang has pointed out, Newman’s sermons largely have been under-analyzed for their theological (rather than spiritual and pastoral) content. Such an analysis, he claims, would show how pervasive the mystery of the Trinity is in Newman’s theology.20

Newman’s early Trinitarian theology is perhaps seen best in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, published between 1833 and 1843.21 Here Luu-Quang has provided a thorough study of the Trinitarian themes in these sermons, and has argued persuasively that they contain a coherent theology, despite the general impression that Newman is unsystematic.22 Luu-Quang divides the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* into three chronological periods. During the first period (1833-34), which coincides with his early Tractarian battle against liberalism, Newman focuses on the dogmatic aspect of the Trinity *in se*, or what more recent theology has named the “immanent Trinity.” In the second period (1835-38) the focus shifts to the Triune God at work in

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20 Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 2, 46.

21 These well-known published sermons only constitute about a third of the sermons he wrote as an Anglican. See Ian Ker, *The Achievement of John Henry Newman* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 74.

22 Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 327 ff.
salvation, or what would now be called the “economic Trinity.” The third and final period (1839-43) deals more with various themes surrounding the idea of the Trinity within us. Newman’s shifting in these Trinitarian themes carries a strong continuity, as he develops a full-fledged theology around the doctrine.

Two specific sermons from this early period merit some mention. Newman preached his first Trinity Sunday sermon in 1825, while serving as a curate of St. Clement’s parish, just outside Oxford, and he preached the same sermon elsewhere in 1827. In this sermon, Newman gives a brief summary of the doctrine, followed by a discussion of the wrong and right ways of responding to it. Albert Kirk rightly observes that this early sermon sets the trajectory for much of Newman’s later thinking on the Trinity. A number of themes are present in this text that he goes on to develop elsewhere, such as the idea that our minds can grasp individual propositions regarding the Trinity but not their combination, the focus on our knowledge of God only through divine works in the economy of salvation, and the overall orientation toward the practical and spiritual outcomes of the doctrine.

In 1831, Newman preached another Trinity Sunday sermon titled “The Mystery of the Holy Trinity,” later published in Volume 6 of the Parochial and Plain Sermons. This sermon somewhat stands out within Newman’s corpus for its focus on the Trinity in se and its distinctly 23 Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 215-24. Kirk sets up a different categorization, dividing Newman’s Trinitarian sermons between those that treat the dogma itself, and those which discuss the dynamic role(s) of the Trinity in the Christian life. See “Spirituality,” 174-75, cf. 202-03.

24 JHNS 3.279-87.

“western” articulation of the doctrine, largely following the pattern of the so-called Athanasian Creed. As we will see in the chapters that follow, this is not representative of the dominant approach in Newman’s Trinitarian thinking, which tends to be much more rooted in the economy of salvation and have a more “Eastern” patristic character. Donald Graham has argued that Newman wrote this sermon as he did in order to refute his former mentor Whately, whom he regarded as a crypto-Sabellian.26 Thus Newman denies as heretical any claim that the doctrine entails “an obscurity of mere words, with none existing in fact,”27 and he stresses the distinct personality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit respectively.28 While the sermon makes no mention of Whately or his school of thought, Graham argues persuasively that this is what Newman has in mind in the sermon, which explains why his emphases here are so different than much of his other work.29 Indeed, Newman attests to some disagreements with Whately and other Oriel colleagues on Trinitarian theology as early as 1827.30

All of this shows that the doctrine of the Trinity is, for Newman, not some intellectual abstraction. His concern on this point is practical, pastoral, even personal. It is deeply connected to his larger theological and ecclesiastical project, it is primarily worked out in his preaching,

26 Years later, Newman comments in a letter that Whately made some implicitly Sabellian statements, but he is reluctant to accuse him of the heresy outright. See LD 15.177.

27 PS 6.346.

28 PS 6.357-59.


30 In a later gloss written on an 1830 letter to Richard Hurrell Froude, Newman states, “One of my first declared departures from Whately’s teaching, who, among other views, leant to Sabellianism, was in a Sermon I preached in College Chapel on Easter Day 1827. Hawkins, Whately, and Blanco White, all asked to read it afterwards and none liked it. I have it still with their pencil comments upon it.” So LD 2.185 n. 4.
and he is quite conscious of opposition that the doctrine was facing in his day. We will now move on to how his Trinitarian theology took shape during the early years of his academic and pastoral career, prior to his patristic studies.

**Early Trinitarian Thinking**

Newman in fact had a sense of the centrality of Trinitarian doctrine from very early on. Indeed, even his evangelical conversion in 1816 had a distinctly dogmatic and Trinitarian character to it. Newman later describes it in these terms: “I fell under the influences of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God’s mercy, have never been effaced or obscured.”

Moreover, as C. S. Dessain, as well as Kirk, have pointed out, it was an undeniably Trinitarian experience, an encounter with God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This divine indwelling, which would become such a central piece of both theology and spirituality for Newman, was present from the beginning of his conscious religious life.

In the wake of this conversion, Newman began reading theology, and he took a particular interest in the doctrine of the Trinity. Some of the Protestant writers in which he immersed himself had noteworthy Trinitarian emphases. Foremost of these was Thomas Scott (1747-1821), who was himself a convert from Unitarianism. Newman credits him as follows:

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31 Apo. 127.


It was he who first planted deep in my mind that fundamental Truth of religion [i.e. the Trinity]. With the assistance of Scott’s essays, and the admirable work of [William] Jones of Nyland, I made a collection of Scripture texts in proof of the doctrine, with remarks (I think) of my own upon them, before I was sixteen; and a few months later I drew up a series of texts in support of each verse of the Athanasian Creed. These papers I have still.\textsuperscript{34}

Aside from Newman’s own attestation, Kirk and Sheridan have both noted several similar themes between how Scott and Newman approach the Trinity, such as the practical and pastoral development of their thinking, their concern with the concrete soteriological actions of the Triune God, and their understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of believers.\textsuperscript{35} All of this suggests that Scott had a long-lasting influence on Newman’s Trinitarian theology.

Newman became familiar with two other noteworthy writers around this time who stress concerns he would later echo in his own work. One of these was William Jones (1726-1800), whom he mentions in the above quotation. While Newman does not name which of Jones’ work he read, Kirk argues that it is likely his book \textit{The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity}, in which the author stresses the importance of the revealed dogma, against those who would subject it to human reason, in an effort to reduce Christianity to its simplest expression.\textsuperscript{36} The other writer was William Beveridge (1637-1708), whose \textit{Private Thoughts} Newman read in 1817 at the suggestion of a mentor. Beveridge stresses the mystery of the Trinity, the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, and the appropriateness of the Son (rather than the Father or Spirit) becoming

\textsuperscript{34} Apo. 128.


\textsuperscript{36} Kirk, “Spirituality,” 58-60.
incarnate. As we will see, these themes figure prominently in Newman’s thought as well. Kirk argues that Scott, Jones, and Beveridge were instrumental in shaping Newman’s early thinking, including the centrality of the Trinity in Christian doctrine.

It is worth noting here two other works that Newman credits for their impact on his thought in general, though not his Trinitarian theology specifically. The first was *The Analogy of Religion* by Joseph Butler (1692-1752), which Newman read around 1823. One of the major ideas he claims he gained from this book is “the very idea of an analogy between the separate works of God [which] leads to the conclusion that the system which is of less importance is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous system.” The second work that impacted Newman was *The Christian Year*, a collection of poems written by his friend and colleague John Keble and published in 1827. Newman states that these poems further confirmed what he learned from Butler, namely

what may be called, in a large sense of the word, the Sacramental system; that is, the doctrine that material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen,—a doctrine, which embraces, not only what Anglicans, as well as Catholics, believe about Sacraments properly so called; but also the article of “the Communion of Saints” in its fullness; and likewise the Mysteries of the faith.

Newman thus credits Butler and Keble with introducing him the sacramental tradition of Christian theology, which had been largely absent in his earlier intellectual formation. As we will

37 Ibid., 61-65.
38 Ibid., 65-66, 68.
39 Thomas Parker offers a longer list in “Rediscovery,” 41.
40 Apo. 132.
41 Apo. 139.
see in the next chapter, this plays into how he understands such matters as faith, mystery, and theological language.42

One group of theologians whom the early Newman notably did not read were the high church Anglican divines of the seventeenth century. These writers had seriously engaged the Church Fathers in their theology, and the Tractarians largely looked to them for inspiration. However, as Thomas Parker has shown, Newman only became familiar with these “Anglican divines of the patristic tradition” after the Oxford Movement began, and thus after his own patristic studies were well underway. What this means is that Newman approached the Fathers directly, rather than reading them through the high church Anglican tradition.43 Thus Parker concludes, “To speak of Newman’s debt to the Anglican patristic tradition is therefore meaningful only…if one realises that this at most added, from about 1834 onwards, to a patristic tradition discovered for himself and already operative.”44

**Newman and the Church Fathers**

This brings us to Newman’s own engagement with the patristic writers, who arguably shaped his Trinitarian theology most definitively. As Kirk sums up, “Newman’s reflections on the doctrine of the Trinity were never speculative nor were they simply a re-phrasing of the

42 Mark McIntosh has noted some resonances in this regard between Newman and earlier Christian Platonists like George Berkeley, despite that fact that Newman had not read them. See Mark Allen McIntosh, “Newman and Christian Platonism in Britain,” *The Journal of Religion* 91 no. 3 (Jul. 2011), 344-64. Cf. Newman’s statement on Berkeley in Apo. 139.

43 Parker, “Rediscovery,” 41.

44 Ibid., 45.
Anglican commentators; they emerged from his contact with the Fathers of the early Church.”

Indeed, he immersed himself in the Church Fathers from fairly early in his scholarly career, and this clearly had an impact on his thought, deepening his existing concerns and developing the contours of his thinking.

Newman states that even as a teenager, he became “enamored of” patristic texts as expressing “the religion of the primitive Christians.” He began reading systematically through the Fathers in the late 1820s, an ambition he first states to his sister Jemima in a letter in 1826. Other letters during this period show his ongoing study and fascination with patristic writers and texts, which would continue to undergird his theology for the rest of his career.

Patristic themes, and even a certain patristic ethos, show through in Newman’s sermons, lectures, and other writings. As Roderick Strange has observed, “Newman was never shy of incorporating patristic thought into his own preaching.”

Brian Daley likewise cites a few examples in this regard, including Newman’s understanding of theological method and language

45 Kirk, “Spirituality,” 120.
46 Apo. 129.
48 E.g. LD 2.150, 369.
49 For a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding Newman’s early patristic studies in the 1820s and 30s, see King, Alexandrian Fathers, 5-19.
as hearkening back to that of Gregory of Nazianzus and other figures from the fourth and fifth centuries.\textsuperscript{51}

Of course, Newman’s interpretation of the Fathers underwent some changes over his long career. Kirk argues, based on Newman’s own account, that his earliest reading was largely through Protestant eyes, and his second engagement, in the early 1830s, was influenced primarily by George Bull’s (1634-1710) \textit{Defensio Fidei Nicaenae}. Eventually, however, he came to appreciate the patristic writers on their own terms.\textsuperscript{52} Benjamin King divides the progress of his engagement with the Alexandrian Fathers in particular into three periods: prior to 1841, 1841-59, and after 1859. Specifics of this evolution will be explained in the next section. King notably does not see his conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism as governing this delineation.\textsuperscript{53}

In spite of certain shifts in interpretation and emphasis, there are still some persistent themes in how Newman approaches the Church Fathers. One of these is his strong affinity for the Eastern tradition, especially during the formative years of the 1830s. In some ways this was


\textsuperscript{53} King, \textit{Alexandrian Fathers}, 4. King explains his rationale for this division thus: “Any way of dividing history up into periods is artificial, because of continuities across periods. Yet Newman’s own history provides two clear divisions in his interpretation of the Alexandrian Fathers rather than just the one division of his conversion: the first came after the publication of Tract 90 in February 1841, which left him feeling increasingly alienated from the Anglican hierarchy, and the second came when the reaction to an article in the \textit{Rambler} in July 1859, ‘On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,’ left him feeling increasingly alienated from the Catholic hierarchy. In the periods of isolation that followed, Newman reassessed his own theology by turning to the Fathers, and in so doing reinterpreted the Alexandrians.”
not unique, as high church Anglicans had favored the Greek Fathers since the seventeenth century. However, as we have already noted, Newman approached the patristic writers directly and only later became familiar with how these Anglican divines had read them. As several scholars have shown, Newman so imbibed the thought of the Greek Fathers that his own thought resembled theirs on many points. Dessain goes as far as to describe him as “an embodiment of the Eastern Tradition…an upholder in the West of the theology of the Eastern Fathers.” Dessain notes how Newman immersed himself in the Eastern patristic tradition from the early days of the Oxford Movement, especially Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Clement of Alexandria. As a result, Newman’s theology “was sometimes felt to be ungenial in the Latin West.” Among other examples, Dessain cites Newman’s distrust of speculation and his regard for tradition and mystery as resonating with a more Eastern than Western approach. Along similar lines, Daley argues that Newman often “thought, argued, read and interpreted Scripture, more like a Greek Christian of the fourth century than like a Westerner of the nineteenth.” Louis Bouyer also observes a mystical element in Newman that exhibits a debt to the Greek Fathers and a uniqueness among Western theologians.

54 Ibid., 5.


56 Ibid., 87-89.


The Eastern patristic character in Newman’s theology extends beyond a general ethos into a number of specific doctrines.\(^{59}\) According to Dessain, the influence of the Greek patristic tradition is arguably most evident in Newman’s Trinitarian theology.\(^{60}\) Susanne Calhoun and Keith Beaumont make similar observations, noting that Newman’s recovery of certain Eastern themes makes his Trinitarian thought unique among Western theologians of his time.\(^{61}\) One example of this is his emphasis on the *monarchia* or *principatus* of the Father as source of divine unity, a point we will explore in depth in Chapter 4. As a few scholars have pointed out, this concept receives far greater treatment in Eastern theology and is often obscured in Western thought. Thus, on this point among others, Newman’s thinking shows a noteworthy affinity to the Greek patristic tradition.\(^{62}\)

However, there is an important caveat that must be mentioned here. As Kirk has noted, Newman’s affinity for the Greek approach to Trinitarian theology over the Latin is not exclusive.\(^{63}\) King goes further by pointing out that a strict East/West dichotomy in Trinitarian thinking is more of a twentieth century construct, which Newman predates, and so categorizing


him accordingly is anachronistic and misleading.\textsuperscript{64} Or as Luu-Quang puts it, “There was no gap between the Greek Fathers and Augustine in Newman’s mind…His theology is very Athanasian and Cappadocian, but simultaneously Augustinian.”\textsuperscript{65} Newman himself attests that, while he has read the Greek Fathers more than the Latin, he sees the Greeks as implicitly holding doctrines that became explicit in the Latin tradition.\textsuperscript{66} This fact has both advantages and disadvantages in how Newman reads the Fathers on the Trinity. At its best, it refreshingly avoids a common but overly simplistic paradigm for approaching patristic texts. But at its worst, it leads Newman to gloss over real differences, including a tendency to “Latinize” Athanasius and others.

\textbf{Athenasius, the Arian Controversy, and the Alexandrian School}

With this general background, we can further narrow the focus of Newman’s engagement with the Church Fathers to a subject that he spent a great deal of time studying, the Arian controversy. His first book, in fact, was titled \textit{The Arians of the Fourth Century}. Originally conceived as a history of ancient and medieval church councils,\textsuperscript{67} Newman’s research and writing became exclusively focused on the First Council of Nicaea and the theological debates that precipitated it.

As a piece of historical research, \textit{Arians} is seriously flawed. For one thing, Newman gives an inaccurate and exaggerated account of the early church’s practice of \textit{disciplina arcani} or

\textsuperscript{64} King, \textit{Alexandrian Fathers}, 22.

\textsuperscript{65} Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 102-03.

\textsuperscript{66} LD 21.187.

\textsuperscript{67} See LD 2.340, 352-53.
secret tradition, something he himself rejects later. The book also suffers from a strong anti-Jewish sentiment, albeit one typical of the time. Above all, Newman relies far too much on overgeneralizations and pre-determined categories.68 Perhaps the most infamous example is his unsubstantiated claims that Arius and the Arians trace their theological origins to the church of Antioch rather than Alexandria.69

However, as numerous scholars have explained, Newman’s concern here is not merely historical research as such, but has to do with a larger theological, and even political, project.70 Published in 1833, the same year that the Oxford Movement began in earnest, Newman’s work looks to the Arian controversy as a paradigm for making sense of his own battle against religious liberalism—complete with undue interference from the state, heterodox and weak-willed bishops, a misguided emphasis on scriptural literalism, and a lone figure standing for orthodoxy “against the world.” Thus, King describes the book as “a play of mirrors” that invites comparison between the fourth century and the nineteenth.71 James Crile sums up Newman’s aim in these terms: “Because of the way Newman blended his own theological opponents with the heretics of the fourth century, the ultimate result is that the Arian controversy transcended the borders of the


69 Ari. 7, 23.


71 King, Alexandrian Fathers, 76. This is somewhat characteristic of a Tractarian approach to history as a “sense of unity with bygone aspirations and endeavours.” See H. V. Routh, Towards the Twentieth Century: Essays in the Spiritual History of the Nineteenth (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1977), 50.
Heretics were not characters of yore; they were all around Newman and he challenged his readers to come to a verdict and choose sides.”

Viewed from this perspective, *Arians* has value as a glimpse into Newman’s theology, including, though not limited to, his Trinitarian thought. This is the conclusion that Rowan Williams draws, in spite of being rather critical of Newman’s historical scholarship. Indeed, Ian Ker argues that Newman’s “most characteristic theological themes” can be found, at least in an early form, within the pages of this book. Norris and Crile likewise note how this early work shapes Newman’s understanding of doctrine, heresy, and church authority. Jaroslav Pelikan goes further, commending the work as Newman’s “vindication of Tradition, by using history to transcend antitheses” like Bible vs. church. In sum, *Arians* is an important piece in understanding Newman’s theology, not only for its focus on Trinitarian doctrine, but also for its place in shaping and interpreting his larger intellectual project.

*The Arians of the Fourth Century* was also not Newman’s only foray into this period of church history. He would return to it at numerous times in his career: among other instances, he later translated key polemical treatises of Athanasius, wrote in-depth annotations to these, and wrote an essay in 1872 titled, “Causes of the Rise and Successes of Arianism.” It is in these latter

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72 Crile, “Embarrassment,” 56.

73 Williams, introduction, XXXV-XXXVI, XLIV-XLVII.


two works that he delves the most into the more technical points of the doctrine of the Trinity. “Causes” is especially noteworthy, as it gives us Newman’s mature reflections on the Arian controversy and the Trinitarian dogma that arose from it.\(^7\) Having long moved on from his contention in *Arians* that Nicaea simply made public a previously secret doctrinal tradition, he concedes that there was much in ante-Nicene theology that made Arianism (or more accurately, various forms of Semi-Arianism)\(^7\) seem plausible to fourth-century Christians.\(^7\) Among other things, he cites two themes that play largely in his own Trinitarian reflections: the *principatus* or *monarchia* of the Father,\(^8\) and the *syncatabasis* or condescension of the Son in the economy of redemption.\(^8\) We will discuss Newman’s understanding of these concepts in Chapters 3 and 4, but it is interesting here to see his acknowledgement that these patristic themes, which clearly impacted his own thinking, were easily coopted by the Arian heretics he so deplored.\(^8\)

In addition to the close study of the development of Trinitarian doctrine, another result of Newman’s engagement with the Arian controversy was a fondness for what he regarded as the “Alexandrian School,” i.e. the tradition of such writers as Clement, Origen, Dionysius, 

\(^7\) For the context of Newman’s historical aims in this essay, see King, *Alexandrian Fathers*, 109, and Strange, *Gospel of Christ*, 17-19.

\(^8\) TT 164.

\(^7\) TT 165, 209-10, 265.

\(^8\) TT 167 ff.

\(^8\) TT 192 ff.

\(^8\) Donald Graham, following Nicholas Lash, takes issue with Newman’s historical method, even in this later text. In particular he argues that Newman fails to distinguish between ante-Nicene and post-Nicene discussions of the principatus. See *From Eastertide to Ecclesia: John Henry Newman, the Holy Spirit, and the Church* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), 57.
Athanasius, and Cyril. One of Newman’s purposes in *Arians* is in fact to exonerate the Alexandrian theologians from the accusation that their Platonizing tendencies were responsible for Arianism’s rise.\(^{83}\) Newman here presents the Alexandrian school over and against the Antiochene school, which he interprets as the real culprit that allowed Arianism to succeed. Again, this contrast is historically problematic;\(^{84}\) but as Williams has noted, “Alexandria” and “Antioch” are, for Newman, more ideal types than historical realities, ideal types that would carry implications for the church of his own time.\(^{85}\)

But why was Newman drawn to the Alexandrian school? Above all it seems to be an attraction to their theological method. While the Antiochene theologians (like the nineteenth-century Protestants) focused on a literal reading of Scripture, the Alexandrians took a deeper approach, rooted in a mystical and sacramental vision. By Newman’s own account, the Alexandrian Fathers further solidified the way of thinking he had picked up from Butler and Keble.\(^{86}\) Daley summarizes Newman’s attraction to Alexandrian method in these terms:

> It was the “mystical or sacramental” approach of the great Alexandrian theologians…to the discovery of truth in Scripture and history—a hermeneutic rooted in a Christology whose heart was always a clear vision of the divine person of the Son of God, as Truth itself revealed in the midst of human reality—that gave

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\(^{83}\) Ari. 39, 130. This was in fact contrary to the consensus in Newman’s time. See Williams, introduction, XXXVI-XXXVII.

\(^{84}\) For a more detailed discussion on this point, see Williams, introduction, XXXVII-XXXIX.


\(^{86}\) Apo. 146. Cf. Williams, “Arians,” 266.
their exegesis and theological polemics both its coherence and its normative theological value.  

Newman naturally saw a great benefit in recovering the Alexandrian method in the face of the rationalism and liberalism that he opposed. As we will see in the next chapter, Newman had a great concern for dogma, mystery, and reverence in theology, and he found in the Alexandrian tradition a historical ally, and even a methodological paradigm. Indeed, this is a key feature in his patristic studies in general. As Kota Kanno points out, Newman’s primary interest is actually less in the particulars of patristic Trinitarian theology as “the manner in which the Fathers conceived the mystery and their manner of reasoning.”

Still, Alexandrian influence on Newman did not stop at the level of method. His Christology and soteriology demonstrate distinct similarities with the Alexandrian Fathers, as several scholars have noted. Yet he is perhaps most explicit in his allegiance to this school when it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity. As already noted, Newman goes to great lengths in Arians to cast the Alexandrians as the real promoters of orthodoxy. He somewhat surprisingly credits Origen with both anticipating and refuting Arianism decades beforehand.


88 See Norris, Theological Method, 51-52. Norris also notes that, after his conversion, Newman essentially reintroduced Alexandrian method into mainstream Roman Catholic thought. See ibid., xx.


91 Ari. 97, 131. As King notes, Newman’s defense of Origen echoes what William Cave (1637-1713) had argued earlier. See Alexandrian Fathers, 114-15.
As King has argued, however, Newman took a somewhat more sober, less romanticized, view of the Alexandrian school in the 1840s, when he was first working on his translations of Athanasius. King suggests, in fact, that Newman probably knew little of Origen himself when he wrote *Arians*.\(^92\) Only afterward, then, did he discover that Origen made a distinction between the being of the Logos and God as beyond being. Newman now saw Origen’s thought as more congenial to Arianizing than in his earlier reading of him.\(^93\) Moreover, as Newman drifted toward Roman Catholicism and its dominant tradition of Latin theology, he became more critical of the Alexandrians.\(^94\)

Yet by the time he wrote “Causes,” King argues, Newman had returned to a positive, albeit modified, appraisal of the Alexandrian school. He in fact came to see the Alexandrians as the forebears of the fuller truth of Latin theology, with Athanasius still the great guarantor of orthodoxy. Newman had even rehabilitated Origen by stressing the controversial theologian’s understanding of the Son’s co-eternity with the Father.\(^95\) Of course, even Newman’s mature reading of the Alexandrian Fathers is not without problems, as he arguably continues to deal in generalized types that gloss over real differences.\(^96\) The point here is that, even through changes

\(^{92}\) King, *Alexandrian Fathers*, 78.

\(^{93}\) Newman cites Origen’s *Contra Celsum* 6.64 in Ath. (1844) 166. See King, *Alexandrian Fathers*, 105-06.


\(^{95}\) Ibid., 225-29. Cf. TT 233.

\(^{96}\) See Strange, *Gospel of Christ*, 27.
in how he interpreted and evaluated them, Newman maintained a strong affinity for the
Alexandrian theologians and their approach to the Trinity throughout his career.\textsuperscript{97}

Above all, it was one particular Alexandrian, namely Athanasius, who held the most
sway for Newman. As already mentioned, Newman translated several of his treatises into
English, which required a close engagement with these texts.\textsuperscript{98} Numerous scholars have noted
the place of primacy that Newman accorded Athanasius, even among other Church Fathers.\textsuperscript{99} As
King points out, however, Newman did not so much see himself as an “Athanasion,” as he saw
the ancient bishop as the great standard-bearer of orthodoxy for the ages, and thus, during his
Anglican period, the paradigm for theology in nineteenth century England.\textsuperscript{100} In an unpublished
poem on Athanasius from 1832, Newman muses,

When shall our northern Church her champion see,
Raised by high heaven’s decree,
To shield the ancient faith at his own harm?
Like him who stayed the arm
Of tyrannous power, and learning’s sophist tone,
Keen-visioned Seer, alone.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{97} He writes of “Causes” in a letter in 1874, “The Alexandrian School comes out first rate, as in my
‘Arians.’” So LD 27.21.

\textsuperscript{98} He claims that he at times worked up to twelve hours each day on these translations. See LD 8.327.


\textsuperscript{100} King, \textit{Alexandrian Fathers}, 111.

\textsuperscript{101} LD 3.156.
Later in his career, King argues, Newman came to see Athanasius as a sort of “composite figure” who bridged Greek and Latin theology. Thus his high regard for the Alexandrian bishop continued, even if the particular value he saw in him evolved.

This raises a question, however, of how accurately Newman interpreted—and represented—Athanasius, given his tendency to romanticize, categorize, and re-appropriate ancient authors. While Daley refers to Newman’s “masterful annotated translation of Athanasius’s main controversial writings” from the 1840s, King argues that Newman’s work was driven by an idealized, and anachronistic, view of the ancient theologian: “The Athanasius that Newman depicted therefore had to be a strange composite of Greek and Latin post-Nicene orthodoxy.” Even in his own day, John Kaye criticized Newman for “Lateranizing” Athanasius in his annotations, i.e. reading the Trinitarian theology of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 back into the fourth-century bishop. Newman revised his translations later in his career, producing the third edition in 1881, which is aptly described on the title page as “freely translated.” King argues that Newman’s dealings with Roman Catholic scholastic theology made its mark on this edition, and that Athanasius is sometimes presented in neo-Thomist

102 King, _Alexandrian Fathers_, 3, 211.
103 Daley, “Alexandrian Tradition,” 162. It is not clear whether Daley’s description as “masterful” refers to Newman’s translations themselves, his annotations, or both.
104 King, _Alexandrian Fathers_, 181.
105 See ibid., 200.
terms. Overall, then, Newman’s interpretation of Athanasius seems to have suffered from anachronistic syntheses with later tradition, perhaps driven by his desire to appropriate the Alexandrian theologian for his own time. King explains why this is a problem: “While Athanasius’s writings may not have been contrary to later church teaching, they were undoubtedly framed in different theological terms from those of Newman.” While Newman is not unaware of such differences in historical mindsets, he seems to have little concern for them in how he constructs his own theology.

In spite of some interpretive distortions, Athanasius clearly left his mark on much of Newman’s thinking. Daley speaks of numerous “Athanasian strains in Newman’s preaching and theological wring,” and Kirk notes “many parallels in the theological styles of Athanasius and Newman.” At the level of method, Newman speaks approvingly of Athanasius’ use of Scripture, vis-à-vis the tradition of the church, during the Arian controversy. In terms of content, several scholars have noted instances where Newman echoes Athanasius on such points

107 King, *Alexandrian Fathers*, 218, 224, 246-47.

108 Ibid., 237.

109 See, for instance, his reasoning on the dating of the Athanasian Creed, with which modern scholars largely agree, in LD 26.37, 72-74; 27.96, 131, 282.


112 Ath. 2.250, 261, 264. There is a clear contrast here with the Protestant emphases on both *sola scriptura* and the use of private judgment.
as the relationality of God, the unity of creation and redemption, and salvation as divinization. Even Newman’s terminology at times seems to be indebted to Athanasius, such as how he understands Christ as arche, and his use of the term “instrument” regarding Christ’s flesh.

Moreover, Newman’s later interpretation and appropriation of Athanasius should be seen in the context of his concept of doctrinal development, which he espoused from the mid-1840s onward. Indeed, his crafting of this theory was crucial in his move from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. We will explore this aspect of Newman’s thinking in greater detail in Chapter 5, but for now it is worth noting that Newman sees the history of dogma as a process of growth in the church’s understanding of its faith, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. From this perspective, it would be quite natural to see a line of continuity, however implicit, from the ante-Nicene Alexandrians through Athanasius all the way to medieval and modern articulations of Trinitarian doctrine. For Newman, then, the theology of Athanasius and other Church Fathers have a meaning that transcends their own contexts, insofar as they anticipate and further the church’s deepening theological reflection.


114 Strange, Gospel of Christ, 116-17.


117 PS 3.165. Luu-Quang argues that his use of the term follows Athanasius as distinct from Apollinaris. See “Trinitarian Theology,” 108-10.
In sum, the amount of time and effort that Newman put into studying the Arian controversy, the Alexandrian Fathers, and especially Athanasius was a major factor in how he developed his own thought on the doctrine of the Trinity. While his work in this regard sometimes raises some historical and interpretive questions, Newman’s concern was less about accurate historical representation as it was in discerning the lessons from this period in church history for his own time. As a result, these studies reveal a great deal about his theological goals, method, and Trinitarian thought, as we will see in subsequent chapters.

**Conclusions for Approaching Newman on the Trinity**

In this chapter, we have looked at some significant contextual factors for approaching Newman’s Trinitarian theology, namely (1) his critique of religious liberalism, (2) his pastoral and occasional approach to doing theology, and (3) his engagement with the Church Fathers, especially those of the Greek, and specifically Alexandrian, tradition, and Athanasius most of all. These themes have brought forth a few noteworthy features of Newman’s thinking on the Trinity, and it is worthwhile to lay these out explicitly, as they carry important implications for approaching his writings.

First of all, we see that the Trinity was a persistent theme across Newman’s career, for both his scholarship and his spirituality. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this is not simply one doctrine among many in his mind; it is rather a foundation and framework for the whole of Christian belief and practice. Newman’s preaching and writing, across different modes and contexts, carry a specifically Trinitarian character.

Secondly, and related to this, it is clear that Newman’s approach to the Trinity is very practical. He is not at all interested in abstract speculation, or even dogma for dogma’s sake.
Rather, his concern is pastoral and personal: to preserve the mystery of God and the truth of revealed religion because they constitute the reality for which we are made. Even in the face of widespread skepticism, rationalism, and outright apostasy, Newman sees doctrines like the Trinity as having infinite value in the lives of everyday Christians.

Thirdly, the function of history in Newman’s theology is noteworthy. If nothing else, his ongoing study of patristic sources shows the high regard he holds toward the early church as having a certain normative authority on doctrinal matters. While his later theory of doctrinal development adds a great deal of nuance to this, he never abandons it as a basic principle, and he continually looks back to the early centuries of Christianity as offering a sort of “mirror” for the concerns of the present. At the same time, however, this very approach at times leads him to take a view of the past that is romanticized, simplistically categorized, and even anachronistic, as he tries to fit later concerns into the paradigms of past centuries.

In addition to all of this, there are two questions looming in the background that should be addressed directly here. The first is that of Newman’s uniqueness in his time as a Trinitarian theologian. As we have noted, there are aspects of his explicit Trinitarianism and patristic ethos that seem almost out of place for a nineteenth-century English theologian. Indeed, Newman even recovers the sort of “trinitarian imagination” to which Dixon refers. A few scholars have argued that it is Newman’s particular way of approaching the biblical and patristic texts that allow his theology to transcend his immediate historical context in this regard. While there is much to support this claim, it should not be pressed too far, as to imply that Newman was the only

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theologian of his time with such a Trinitarian vision. As Luu-Quang points out, Newman’s theology of the Trinity bears striking similarities with three of his contemporaries in Germany: Isaac Augustine Dorner, Julius Kaftan, and J. C. K. Hofman.\textsuperscript{119} Other recent scholars have called attention to distinctly Trinitarian dimension of certain German idealists like G. W. F. Hegel and even Friedrich Schleiermacher, which arguably set the stage for the so-called twentieth century Trinitarian revival.\textsuperscript{120} While Newman’s emphasis and approach to the Trinity is striking for his time and place, he should not be seen as a sole exception that proves the rule that western Christianity more or less “forgot” about the doctrine of the Trinity until the twentieth century.

The second issue is the precise nature of Newman’s own theological method. Newman did not see himself as a systematic theologian, but as more of a pastor and a controversialist. For this reason all of his writings are defined by the specific occasion that inspired them.\textsuperscript{121} Indeed, after 1845, Newman denied being a theologian at all, largely because of his ignorance of the various “schools” in Roman Catholic theology of the time.\textsuperscript{122}

However, the fact that he did not present his thought in a systematic fashion does not mean that it lacks either method or coherence. As a matter of fact, Newman had considered

\textsuperscript{119} Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 142-44.


\textsuperscript{122} Ker, Achievement, 96; cf. King, Alexandrian Fathers, 53-54.
writing a more systematic account of the Trinity and other dogmas before his research interests led him to write *The Arians of the Fourth Century* instead.\(^{123}\) Bernard Dive points out that, in Newman’s own understanding, an “image” or impression of an idea can precede, and even transcend, an explicit system.\(^{124}\) Why should this principle not be operative in Newman’s own method? Strange even makes the case that Newman’s occasional approach to theology is intentional, arising from a respect for the transcendent complexity of the revealed mystery.\(^{125}\) As will become evident in the following chapters, Newman’s theology is quite consistent, both in method and in content, even as some elements changed over the course of his career.

Newman’s method in fact resembles that of Church Fathers he read and loved so deeply. He immersed himself in the biblical texts and the tradition of the church, and he thought and wrote out of his intense familiarity with these sources.\(^{126}\) He clearly prefers this patristic method to a scholastic one,\(^{127}\) and has little to no interest in abstract speculation or elaborate dialectic.\(^{128}\)

\(^{123}\) LD 2.322, 353. Cf. Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 240. Years later Newman jokes, “Why then do I not write more on subjects of the day? Simply, because I have not the gift of writing to orders. One of my first attempts thirty years ago was to write to order a History of the Councils; but it turned out to be a very different thing, a history of the Arians of the 4th century. This will serve as an illustration. If I attempted a work on the Pope’s Temporal Power, it might turn out in the result of a History of Charlemagne.” So LD 22.61.


\(^{126}\) See Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 343-47; Strange, Gospel of Christ, 156; Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 221-22.


\(^{128}\) See Benard, *Preface*, 30-33. For a more detailed analysis of Newman’s method as a dynamic process, see Norris, *Theological Method*, 75-76.
From this perspective, we must reject Newman’s own claim that he was not a theologian. As Daley puts it,

Much as he denied it, he was also a theologian: not in the scholastic or nineteenth century German vein, but still a theologian of comprehensive vision and surprisingly consistent convictions, whose thought always remained concrete and concerned for Christian practice, anchored in Biblical texts, focused on God’s primordial reality, and rooted in prayerful contemplation of the Jesus of the New Testament.\(^{129}\)

Newman may not have been a *systematic* theologian as the term was understood at the time, but he was a theologian nonetheless.\(^{130}\) Avery Dulles likewise notes that much of Newman’s work would now be categorized as fundamental theology.\(^{131}\) We might add other qualifiers like practical, pastoral, or spiritual theology to describe other aspects of Newman’s work.

As we now have a clearer perception of what sort of theologian Newman was, as well as his place both within his time and in the larger scope of Christian tradition, we will now proceed to investigate his Trinitarian theology, beginning with how he relates the doctrine to both Christian spirituality and theological method more broadly.


\(^{130}\) For an extended discussion on this point, see Benard, *Preface*, 6-23.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRINITY, SPIRITUALITY, AND THEOLOGICAL METHOD

Before going into the content of Newman’s Trinitarian theology, it is helpful to contextualize it further within the broader scope of his thinking. In particular, there are two interconnected areas of his thought that frame how he approaches mysteries like the Trinity, though the doctrine itself guides his thinking here as well. The first of these is spirituality and its relation to theology. The second is theological method, or perhaps more accurately, methodology, i.e. Newman’s reflection on method.

In this chapter we will begin with the Trinitarian character of Newman’s spirituality as a point of entrance into his theology. Next, we will look at how he conceives the relationship between spirituality and theology, and the ways that they mutually inform each other. We will then shift to the importance he gives to both dogma and mystery and how these undergird his methodology. After exploring how he addresses the problem of theological language, we will finally look at how he conceives of faith and assent, particularly as it pertains to the doctrine of the Trinity. This chapter will accomplish two things. First, it will lay some further groundwork for a fruitful exploration of the content of Newman’s Trinitarian theology. Secondly, it will begin to demonstrate the centrality of the economy of salvation in Newman’s thinking, especially in showing how, in his mind, the purpose of theology is the encounter with the Triune God revealed in salvation history.
Newman’s Trinitarian Spirituality

If we are accustomed to the modern bias toward compartmentalizing theology and spirituality, it may seem odd to begin a constructive or systematic treatment of Newman’s Trinitarian theology by looking at the spiritual dimension of his writings. To what extent is this relevant at all? Or at the very least, should not the systematic come first, as the dogmatic foundation for any spiritual theology?

Such an objection fails to understand what Newman’s theology fundamentally is. For one thing, the occasional and pastoral dimension of most of his works must be kept in mind. By his own account, he is concerned with “what is relative to us and practical” about the doctrine of the Trinity.\(^1\) What can be more practical than the lived encounter with the Triune God? As will soon become clear, such an encounter is, for Newman, the very telos of theology.\(^2\)

Moreover, in Newman’s thinking, devotion precedes doctrine, both logically and temporally. Doctrine is nothing more than the church’s explicit articulation of the spiritual transformation it experiences in Christ and by the Holy Spirit. This means that the spiritual encounter with the Trinity is itself a concrete expression of the divine condescension within the economy of salvation. What Newman’s Trinitarian spirituality offers, then, is a participation in the economy by being drawn into the life of the Trinity.

Numerous scholars have noted how Newman’s treatment of the Trinity is inherently spiritual, while his approach to Christian spirituality is deeply Trinitarian. Theodore Whapham, for instance, summarizes Newman’s presentation of the doctrine in these terms: “This Trinitarian

\(^{1}\) LD 2.16.

faith engages the whole life of the believer—one’s affective, rational, and volitional dimensions. In fact, this faith is most powerful and practical because of its capacity to enliven the emotions and motivate people to take actions in their everyday lives.”\(^3\) More specifically, as Kevin Mongrain describes it, Newman’s “teachings on spirituality are fundamentally about how to participate in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, which necessarily means learning from the Holy Spirit how to incarnate the Trinity in the Church.”\(^4\) Louis Bouyer, in turn, seeks to capture Newman’s spiritual vision, that

the whole of Christianity is, finally, only a discovery of what it means to say that God is personal and that we are to become personal after His own image. This means that we shall be what we have been made for only by entering with the Divine Persons—and first of all with God the Father as the source of all, in God as well as in man—into the relation of grace, as a participation, through the Spirit, in the eternal relation in which the Father and the Son are one in their very distinction.\(^5\)

Finally, Albert Kirk states succinctly, “For Newman…to be a believer is to live a Trinitarian life. There is no question of merely applying the doctrine to the spiritual life; the Trinity is less a doctrine than the very milieu in which we live and move and have our being.”\(^6\)

Indeed, Newman holds that the doctrine of the Trinity, “though so difficult for the reason, it is not difficult for devotion.” This is because devotion allows for treating each Person as the


one God, even if we cannot comprehend how the three can be one. Yet this does not amount to a downplaying of divine unity, nor a sort of functional tri-theism. Rather,

it is impossible to worship One of the Divine Persons, without worshipping the Others also. In praying to the Father, we only arrive at His mysterious presence through His Son and Spirit; and in praying to the Son and Spirit, we are necessarily carried on beyond them to the source of Godhead from which They are derived. We see this in the very form of many of the received addresses to the Blessed Trinity; in which, without intended reference to the mediatorial scheme, the Son and Spirit seem, even in the view of the Divine Unity, to take a place in our thoughts between the Father and His creatures; as in the ordinary doxologies “to the Father through the Son and by the Spirit,” or “to the Father and Son in the unity of the Holy Ghost.”

The worship of the Triune God is, for Newman, an end in itself, as “forgetting ourselves, and looking only upon Him, we reverently and awfully, yet joyfully, extol the wonders, not of His works, but of His own Nature…we directly contemplate a mystery, the unfathomable mystery of the Trinity in Unity.”

Related to this, Newman regards the Creeds less as statements of propositional truth and more as devotional acts, since “the Creeds have a place in the Ritual.” In other words, the Creeds direct the minds and hearts of believers in worshiping God revealed as Trinity. Even the

[SN 158-59; cf. Ath. 2.317. Elsewhere he states that the Trinity is above reason yet fits with “common sense.” See LD 21.496.]

[Ari. 177. Philip Dixon credits common liturgical texts as indispensable in the “survival” of Trinitarian belief during its neglect in the early modern period. See Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 215-16.]

[PS 6.327-28. Elsewhere Newman speaks of faith, fear, and love as the “three devotional sentiments” appropriate to contemplating the Trinity. See SD 282.]

[GA 117.]

[Newman gives a similar rationale for the value of celebrating Trinity Sunday as part of the liturgical year in SN 281-82.]
so-called Athanasian Creed,\textsuperscript{12} which seems to contain the most propositional statements, “is occupied in glorifying Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in declaring Their infinite perfections; so much so, that it has sometimes been considered what it really is in form, a Psalm or Hymn of Praise to the Blessed Trinity, as the Te Deum is, rather than a Creed.”\textsuperscript{13}

At the heart of Newman’s spirituality is the indwelling of God in the soul, which John Connolly calls both “the central doctrine in Newman’s theology” and “the foundation of his notion of Christian spirituality.”\textsuperscript{14} While we will more fully explore this concept theologically in later chapters, it is worth noting here how essential it is to Newman’s spiritual vision. Indeed, Kirk calls it “the pinnacle of Newman’s Trinitarian spirituality.”\textsuperscript{15} This was the case even in his early days as an evangelical, perhaps due to his reading of Thomas Scott.\textsuperscript{16} He only developed it further as his career progressed. “A true Christian,” he writes, “may almost be defined as one who has a ruling sense of God’s presence within him. As none but justified persons have that privilege, so none but the justified have that practical perception of it.”\textsuperscript{17} For Newman, the presence of God within is the very purpose for which we were created: “Man is not sufficient for

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\textsuperscript{12} Newman not only rejected Athanasian authorship of the text otherwise known as the Quicumque Vult; he posited its origin as Gaul in the fifth century, a conclusion with which more recent scholarship largely agrees. See LD 26.37, 72-74; 27.96, 131, 282. Cf. Donald Graham, “Newman’s Sermon on ‘The Mystery of the Holy Trinity: A Response to Richard Whately?’” \textit{Newman Studies Journal} 5 no. 1 (2008), 65.

\textsuperscript{13} Jfc. 315-16. Cf. LD 27.281-82. Elsewhere he calls the Athanasian Creed “the most simple and sublime, the most devotional formulary to which Christianity has given birth.” So GA 117-18.


\textsuperscript{15} Kirk, “Spirituality,” 318.


\textsuperscript{17} PS 5.225-26.
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his own happiness; he is not happy except the Presence of God be with him.” This of course assumes a soteriological foundation, which will be addressed more fully in Chapters 3 and 5.

It is important to remember that this is a *Trinitarian* indwelling: through the indwelling Spirit in justification, the Father and the Son are also present in equal measure. To be a Christian, then is to be brought into the intimate bond of the Trinity itself, as the same Triune God is found *within* the believing soul. As Vinh Bao Luu-Quang points out, in Newman’s thinking, God is not only the Alpha Point and Omega Point for humankind, but also the “*Within Point*.”

Luu-Quang goes on to summarize, “Newman was picturing a relationship of the soul with God the Father, in and through Christ, with the witness of the Holy Spirit. It is a relationship of the soul with the Triune God. This could be seen as a distinguishing and particular point of Newman. In his discussions, Newman attempted to view everything in a Trinitarian light.” In other words, Newman’s understanding of Christian spirituality is one of intimate participation in the life of the Triune God. The Trinity is not only *pro nobis*, but also *in nobis* as the spiritual manifestation of the saving economy.

In practical terms, this leads to a spirituality centered on surrendering oneself to God. As Keith Beaumont puts it, “The *trinitarian theology* of Newman leads also to this spirituality of surrender. In fact, accepting the presence of Christ in them, thanks to the ‘inhabitation’ of his Spirit, invites Christians to cultivate a state of ‘receptivity,’ which also consists of a surrender.”

18 SD 312.


20 Ibid., 200.

The key here, as Beaumont points out, is the need for the human agent to surrender willingly, that is, cooperate with the indwelling God. Indeed, Newman’s sermons often stress human resistance to the Holy Spirit. Or as Mongrain describes it, “For Newman…the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity connotes first of all a spiritual discipline…A true Christian learns to become receptive to the indwelling of the triune God in the depth of the heart.”

Such a spiritual vision could rightly be described as mysticism. C. S. Dessain notes that this term held a largely negative connotation in Newman’s time. This explains the defensiveness with which Newman answers such a charge:

If this notion of the literal indwelling of God within us, whether in the way of nature or of grace, be decried as a sort of mysticism, I ask in reply whether it is not a necessary truth that He is with and in us, if He is everywhere? And if He is everywhere and dwells in all, there is no antecedent objection against taking Scripture literally, no difficulty in supposing that the truth is as Scripture says,—that as He dwells in us in one mode in the way of nature, so He is in us in another in the way of grace…And those who without any antecedent difficulty still refuse to accept the literal interpretation of Scripture, should be reminded, that, since the promise expressly runs that we shall be made one as the Father and the Son are one, we are necessarily led either to think highly of the union of the Christian with God, or to disparage that of the Father and the Son; and that such schools of religion as maintain that the former is but figurative, will certainly be led at length to deny the real union of our Lord with His Father, and from avoiding mysticism, will fall into what is called Unitarianism.

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24 See ibid., 195.


26 Jfc. 145-46.
Thus he goes as far as to argue that a denial of divine indwelling logically leads to a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity itself. As this example demonstrates, Newman’s Trinitarian spirituality, centered on the indwelling of the Triune God, is intricately connected to the doctrinal side of the matter.

Before exploring this connection further, one more point must be made. It should not be thought that Newman’s “mysticism” is a sort of flight from an embodied Christian life in the world. In fact, Newman draws the opposite conclusion, that “we must live as in [Christ’s] presence, daily pleading His cross and passion, thinking of His holy commandments, imitating His sinless pattern, and depending on the gracious aids of His Spirit; that we may really and truly be servants of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in whose name we were baptized.”

Newman’s mysticism is nothing else than the grace-filled life to which all Christians are called. Elsewhere he notes the tension laden in this spiritual vision, since

it is true that the Father and the Son are invisible, that They have an ineffable union with each other, and are not in any dependence upon the mortal concerns of this world; and so we, in our finite measure, must live after Their Divine pattern, holding communion with Them, as if we were at the top of the Mount, while we perform our duties towards that sinful and irreligious world which lies at the foot of it.

Thus the challenge of Newman’s Trinitarian spirituality is to live both in communion with the indwelling Trinity and within a world that is apathetic, even hostile, to that divine presence.

27 PS 1.80.

28 PS 6. 210-11.
The Relation between Spirituality and Theology

For Newman, doctrine serves devotion as its ultimate purpose. Beliefs like the Trinity and the Incarnation, says Newman, are revealed “to give us reason for loving God.” As Kirk summarizes, “Doctrines are given in order that man may be drawn to worship and obedience.” For this reason, the line between theology and spirituality is fairly porous in Newman’s thinking, as doctrine and piety are intricately connected. In one sermon he states, “Devotion is not a sort of finish given to the sciences; nor is science a sort of feather in the cap…an ornament and set-off to devotion. I want the intellectual layman to be religious, and the devout ecclesiastic to be intellectual.” Kirk notes how Newman anticipates twentieth century concerns for “that integration of dogma, theology and spirituality – as well as of the interpenetration of the institutional and the charismatic – which is essential to a balanced spirituality.”

How does this integration in Newman play out in practice? On the one hand, true piety informs right doctrine. Newman is critical of the lack of reverence in “the bold and unscrupulous way in which men speak of the Holy Trinity and the Mystery of the Divine Nature.” As Roderick Strange notes, reverence was a common concern in Tractarian preaching, and in

29 SN 209.
31 OS 13.
33 PS 5.19.
Newman specifically, this is a reaction to anti-dogmatic tendencies in both liberalism and evangelicalism.34 Thus it is no surprise to see such statements as this:

> The practical inference to be drawn from this view is, first, that we should be very reverent in dealing with Revealed Truth; next, that we should avoid all rash theorizing and systematizing as relates to it, which is pretty much what looking into the Ark was under the Law: further, that we should be solicitous to hold it safely and entirely; moreover, that we should be zealous and pertinacious in guarding it; and lastly, which is implied in all these, that we should religiously adhere to the form of words and the ordinances under which it comes to us, through which it is revealed to us, and apart from which the Revelation does not exist, there being nothing else given us by which to ascertain or enter into it.35

In Newman’s mind, it was reverence that was at stake, both in the early church’s controversies around the Trinity and in the religious liberalism that questioned the dogma in his own day.36

Yet for Newman, the role of piety in shaping theology is not strictly negative, i.e. the avoidance of irreverence. He also sees a positive dimension to this relationship, to the point that “the systematic doctrine of the Trinity may be considered as the shadow, projected for the contemplation of the intellect, of the Object of scripturally-informed piety.”37 Several scholars have highlighted different ways that devotion guides theology for Newman. Ono Ekeh notes how “liturgical celebrations such as the celebration of Trinity Sunday were important as pre-theological encounters with the Trinity.”38 This is because it is worship that provides the proper context for appreciating Trinitarian doctrine, as the experience of reverence and joy precedes

35 Ess. 1.47.
37 Ari. 145.
38 Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 223.
discursive speech or theological concepts. Thomas Norris likewise argues that “for Newman, the basis of all theology and of ‘personal Christianity’, is interior, personal and dynamic.” He goes on to explain how conversion in its various and interrelated forms—religious, moral, and intellectual—provides “the methodological foundations of theology” in Newman’s thinking. In a similar manner, Kirk sees reverence as essential to Newman’s conception of faith: “One’s stance before the mystery of the Trinity conditions the very possibility of the life of faith.” Likewise, a Trinitarian spirituality “constitutes a crucial dimension of his catechesis” as displayed in his preaching. Mark McIntosh takes this further by noting how Newman sees even epistemological capacity as “shaped most definitively within the trinitarian framework of the church’s life” in order to “discern what is true and know what is right.” Bernard Dive even highlights a connection that Newman draws between speculative error and bad ethos, such that a heretic is morally inferior to an orthodox Trinitarian.

39 Ibid., 155-56, 159-60, 197.
42 Ibid., 172.
In a similar vein, Newman preached one of his *University Sermons* on “Love the Safeguard of Faith against Superstition.” Here he rejects the idea that reason must guide and govern faith from excess. Rather,

The safeguard of Faith is a right state of heart. This it is that gives it birth; it also disciplines it. This is what protects it from bigotry, credulity, and fanaticism. It is holiness, or dutifulness, or the new creation, or the spiritual mind, however we word it, which is the quickening and illuminating principle of true faith, giving it eyes, hands, and feet. It is Love which forms it out of the rude chaos into an image of Christ; or, in scholastic language, justifying Faith, whether in Pagan, Jew, or Christian, is *fides formata charitate*.\(^{45}\)

Thus it is a right state of heart, a moral and spiritual quality rather than a strictly intellectual one, that must guide sound theology. In an early sermon, Newman identifies three “erroneous ways” that people approach the Trinity, but they are fundamentally tempers of mind (rationalism, pride, abstraction) rather than incorrect doctrine per se.\(^{46}\) In a similar vein, Newman argues that the best remedy for doubts regarding doctrines like the Trinity is to increase one’s religious obedience.\(^{47}\)

But this is still not the whole story. Not only does Newman see reverence and devotion as necessary to appreciate doctrine; he also sees correct doctrine as informing genuine piety: “The intellectual expression of theological truth not only excludes heresy, but directly assists the acts of religious worship and obedience.”\(^{48}\) Indeed, Ekeh notes that for Newman, “contemplation of

\(^{45}\) US 234.

\(^{46}\) Serm. 3.281-83.

\(^{47}\) He writes, “suppose we have any perplexing, indescribable doubts about the Divine power of our Blessed Lord, or concerning the doctrine of the Trinity; well, let us leave the subject and turn to do God’s will.” So PS 1.236-37.

\(^{48}\) Ari. 146.
the Creed and meditation on the Trinity can provide a shadow-like substitute for the truth that will be fully revealed in the beatific vision.”

As Newman sees it, dogma and theology are necessary to sustain a vital and robust Christian spirituality. Distinguishing “religion” as spiritual piety from “theology” as an intellectual endeavor, Newman makes this bold claim:

Theology may stand as a substantive science, though it be without the life of religion; but religion cannot maintain its ground at all without theology. Sentiment, whether imaginative or emotional, falls back upon the intellect for its stay, when sense cannot be called into exercise; and it is in this way that devotion falls back upon dogma.

Doctrine provides an indispensable foundation for attaining a deeper piety, even if the doctrinal side is only implicit. Thus:

Before the mind has been roused to reflection and inquisitiveness about its own acts and impressions, it acquiesces, if religiously trained, in the practical devotion to the Blessed Trinity, and implicit acknowledgement of the divinity of Son and Spirit, which holy Scripture at once teaches and exemplifies. This is the faith of uneducated men, which is not the less philosophically correct, nor less acceptable to God, because it does not happen to be conceived in those precise statements which presuppose the action of the mind on its own sentiments and notions.

Again, the Trinity, “though so difficult for the reason, it is not difficult for devotion,” and so a person can hold a religious commitment to the doctrine without articulating it with theological precision. But this does not mean that such a commitment lacks a doctrinal foundation.

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50 GA 109. One must assume, given what was said above, that in Newman’s mind such a theology without religion would not be very good theology.
51 Ari. 143.
Newman’s concern is that a true Christian spirituality be grounded in God’s self-revelation in the economy of redemption. Kirk notes such a pattern in his sermons, which tend to focus more on the “proper” actions of each divine Person, rather than abstract speculation about the Trinity in se.\textsuperscript{53} McIntosh likewise sees this playing into Newman’s understanding of knowledge and formation, such that “the power and wisdom that come to shape the believer’s mind are shaped very concretely by the historical pattern, the earthly formation process, so to speak, of Jesus’ own mission.”\textsuperscript{54} For instance, in another of his University Sermons, Newman explores the idea that truth is largely propagated through “the personal influence, direct and indirect, of those who are commissioned to teach it,” and envisions what sort of person the ideal “Teacher of the Truth” would be, presumably a reference to Christ himself.\textsuperscript{55} Knowledge of God must be grounded in the revealed reality of who God is, and this necessarily entails some form of dogmatic theology.

Thus for Newman, Trinitarian doctrine is fundamentally practical.\textsuperscript{56} In one of his Trinity Sunday sermons he states, “The grace promised to us is given, not that we may know more, but that we may do better.”\textsuperscript{57} Later in the same sermon he says that revelation “brings us practical


\textsuperscript{54} McIntosh, Discernment and Truth: The Spiritual and Theology of Knowledge (New York: Crossroad, 2004),180-81.

\textsuperscript{55} US 97-81.

\textsuperscript{56} In an early sermon he states, “It is almost a fundamental truth in religion, that all doctrines are practical, all have a reference to our moral state. The end of the gospel, is holiness – and the doctrines are to be received by faith, in order to make us humble, grateful, obedient, submissive, heavenly minded, pure in heart…the doctrines must be always before us – they must support and animate us – they are our spiritual sustenance.” So JHNS 3.283.

\textsuperscript{57} PS 1.203.
and useful knowledge about our souls.”58 This is not an isolated instance; the practical, rather than speculative, dimension of Newman’s Trinitarian theology pervades his sermons of various styles and subjects.59 As Bouyer puts it, for Newman, “the loftiest visions of faith, if they are authentic, have a direct bearing on the most humble realities of our daily experience.”60

Moreover, the practical side of Trinitarian doctrine connects once again to worship as the context and goal of theology. Citing Newman’s fifteenth University Sermon, Ekeh states, “The mystery contained in this doctrine [of the Trinity] finds its relevance in ultimately safeguarding the truth for Christian worship.”61

This is especially evident in his tract “On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Religion” (Tract 73). Responding to the charge that doctrines like the Trinity have no practical effect on one’s character, Newman contends that “the doctrine of the Trinity…does ‘make a moral impression on our minds;’ for does not the notion of a Mystery lead to awe and wonder? and are these not moral impressions?”62 Elsewhere he argues that such a doctrine “expands our love, and raises it to a perfection which otherwise it could never reach.”63

It is on this basis that McIntosh can speak of a “practice of personal formation, with its underlying ground in trinitarian apophasis” in Newman’s thinking.64 McIntosh goes on to argue

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58 PS 1.208. Cf. Dive, Imagination, 143.
60 Bouyer, Faith, 65.
63 PS 4.315; cf. JHNS 3.285.
64 McIntosh, “Trinity and Understanding,” 143.
that “the personal formation of mind envisioned by Newman has a fundamentally trinitarian matrix. The deepest kind of knowing and understanding of reality consists, for Newman, in being drawn by the Holy Spirit into the mission of the Incarnate Word and in coming to share in this relationship with the Father.”

Not only does the mystery of the Trinity demand reverence in thought, but the revelation of the Trinity in the economy of salvation provides the structure of how human beings can know God—which is itself a soteriological act.

For Newman, therefore, theology and spirituality are intricately connected and inform one another. This relationship can be observed throughout his thinking, but it is particularly highlighted in his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity. Now that we have elucidated this relationship, we may move from our entry point of spirituality to discuss the doctrinal and methodological aspects of Newman’s Trinitarian theology.

**Doctrine and Mystery**

As already indicated, the importance of doctrine in Newman’s understanding of Christianity must not be underestimated. He writes in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, “From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion: I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion.” Thus he criticizes those who seek a “religion of the heart” that gives little esteem for doctrine. He also defends doctrines like the Trinity and the Atonement against the charge that they are “scholastic,” by pointing out that they

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65 McIntosh, “Trinity and Understanding,” 149.

66 While Newman does not draw it out as such, one cannot help but think of the connection between salvation and revelation as presented by Athanasius as the two reasons for the Incarnation. See *De Incarnatione* 6-18.

67 Apo. 163.

68 PS 2.165; cf. *Idea* 27.
are also apostolic.\textsuperscript{69} It should be noted here that Newman uses the terms “doctrine” and “dogma” interchangeably.\textsuperscript{70}

Numerous scholars have commented on the centrality of this “dogmatic principle” and its necessity for genuine religion and faith.\textsuperscript{71} Newman himself defines the principle of dogma as “supernatural truths irrevocably committed to human language, imperfect because it is human, but definitive and necessary because given from above.”\textsuperscript{72} At this point it is worth spelling out the distinction that Newman draws between principles and doctrines:

The life of doctrines may be said to consist in the law or principle which they embody. Principles are abstract and general, doctrines relate to facts; doctrines develop, and principles at first sight do not; doctrines grow and are enlarged, principles are permanent; doctrines are intellectual, and principles are more immediately ethical and practical…Doctrines stand to principles, as the definitions to the axioms and postulates of mathematics.\textsuperscript{73}

Thus when Newman speaks of the principle of dogma, he does not mean the sum of all doctrines, but the underlying fundamental basis for them—namely the reality that God has revealed certain truths to humankind that are indispensable to the Christian religion as such.

Yet for Newman, the doctrines of revealed religion do constitute a cohesive whole: “The great truths of Revelation are all connected together and form a whole,”\textsuperscript{74} such that “to reject one

\textsuperscript{69} Tracts 361.


\textsuperscript{72} Dev. 325. Cf. DA 128-29, 132, 134.

\textsuperscript{73} Dev. 178-79.

\textsuperscript{74} Mix. 343.
is to disparage the rest.”

For this reason he is critical of those who would reduce Christianity to a single “leading idea.” He does call the Incarnation of Christ “the central truth of the gospel” and “the article of a standing or a falling Church,” but he does not mean that Christianity can be reduced to this one doctrine, rather that it is the unifying center of the whole system.

This is also why Newman is so insistent on creedal and dogmatic statements regarding the Trinity, along with other doctrines. To Newman’s thinking, the creeds are essential for unifying the church in the truth of revelation. Thus he defends the Athanasian Creed against its contemporary critics, asking, “is there not...an extreme danger of countenancing the false liberality of the age, which would fain have it believed that differences of opinion are of slight consequence? and is it not our duty to give warning to our brethren of fatal errors in charity to them?” Elsewhere Newman is careful to explain what he means by fatal or damnable errors: “We say, for instance, that they who hold anti-Trinitarian doctrines will perish everlastingly; but we dare not apply this anathema to this or that person; the utmost we say is that he holds damnable errors, leaving his person to God.”

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75 Dev. 99.
77 Dev. 324.
78 US 35.
79 “If, indeed, it is only thereby meant to use one or other of these as a central idea for convenience, in order to group others around it, no fault can be found with such a proceeding: and in this sense I should myself call the Incarnation the central aspect of Christianity, out of which the three main aspects of its teaching take their rise, the sacramental, the hierarchical, and the ascetic.” So Dev. 36.
80 See Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 283-85.
81 LD 2.191.
82 Tracts 359; cf. VM 1.216. In a letter he notes that the Athanasian Creed condemns heresy specifically as a willful act. See LD 25.42.
It is worth commenting briefly on what constitutes error or heresy for Newman, as well as how it relates to religious truth. In one place he writes, “Heresies are partial views of the truth, starting from some truth which they exaggerate, and disowning and protesting against other truth, which they fancy inconsistent with it. All heresies are partial views of the truth, and are wrong, not so much in what they directly say as in what they deny.”  

This is why Newman is suspicious of any theology that tries to reduce Christianity to a single point, as it damages the cohesive whole that is revealed truth. But Newman also sees heresy as inherently weaker than orthodoxy. Later in the same passage he claims that “the Truth only is a real doctrine, and therefore stable; everything false is of a transitory nature and has no stay, like reflections in a stream, one opinion continually passing into another, and creations being but the first stages of dissolution.”

Newman naturally applies his dogmatic principle to the Trinity in particular. He calls it “a very great mercy” that the church throughout the world is united on the doctrine of the Trinity, with the exception of the filioque controversy. He is likewise critical of those who scrutinize and seek to “improve” the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, no such improvement is possible because the revealed doctrine steers clear of the opposite errors of Tri-theism and

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83 Ath. 2.143. Likewise, “the Catholic Creed is for the most part the combination of separate truths, which heretics have divided among themselves, and err in dividing.” So Dev. 200.

84 At the same time, Newman claims that heresies tend to connect to one another, as they all stand in opposition to the truth. See TT 304, 316; cf. Strange, Gospel of Christ, 47-49.

85 Ath. 2.144. As Stephen Thomas notes, Newman was far more concerned with the issue of heresy as an Anglican than as a Roman Catholic. See Newman and Heresy: The Anglican Years, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4-5.

86 Tracts 171. Cf. VM 1.44, 162.

87 PS 2.260-61.
Unitarianism.\(^88\) For Newman, defective forms of Christianity in fact result from “insufficiently trinitarian” theology.\(^89\) For instance, he sees Unitarianism, if followed consistently, as logically leading to pantheism.\(^90\)

While Newman has a high view of doctrine, he also has serious regard for mystery in religion. By “mystery” Newman means things “too deep for human reason, or inconsistent with their self-devised notions.”\(^91\) He points out, however, that “as a mystery implies in part what is incomprehensible or at least unknown, so does it in part imply what is not so; it implies a partial manifestation, or a representation by economy.”\(^92\) As it pertains to God, mystery has both a negative and a positive aspect for Newman. His focus is certainly on the negative side: that revealed truths about God transcend human understanding. But he also speaks of God’s “incommunicable nature” as a positive attribute of transcendence.\(^93\)

Not only does the Christian faith include mysteries like the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement,\(^94\) such mysteries are an integral part of it. Newman holds that “mystery is the

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\(^{88}\) Ari. 366.

\(^{89}\) See Beaumont, *Dieu Intérieur*, 189.

\(^{90}\) “On the other hand, we learn besides, the shallowness of the objection to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, grounded on its involving a plurality of Persons in the Godhead; since, if it be inconceivable, as it surely is, how Personality can in any way be an attribute of the infinite, incommunicable Essence of the Deity, or in what particular sense it is ascribed to Him, Unitarians, so called (to be consistent), should find a difficulty in the doctrine of an Unity of Person, as well as of a Trinity; and, having ceased to be Athanasians, should not stop till they become Pantheists.” So US 32.

\(^{91}\) PS 2.205.

\(^{92}\) Dev. 59.


\(^{94}\) PS 5.173; LD 30.204.
necessary note of divine revelation, that is, mystery subjectively to the human mind."\(^{95}\) This is simply because the church and its teachings come “from Him, who is Himself Mystery, in the most simple and elementary ideas which we have of Him, whom we cannot contemplate at all except as One who is absolutely greater than our reason, and utterly strange to our imagination.”\(^{96}\) Elsewhere he states bluntly, “I would not believe in a God who had no mysteries.”\(^{97}\) If God transcends human understanding, then any divine revelation must include some level of mystery. Thus Newman describes revealed truth in these terms:

Religious Truth is neither light nor darkness, but both together; it is like the dim view of a country seen in twilight, with forms half extricated from the darkness, with broken lines, and isolated masses. Revelation, in this way of considering it, is not a revealed system, but consists of a number of detached and incomplete truths belonging to a vast system unrevealed, of doctrines and injunctions mysteriously connected together; that is, connected by unknown media, and bearing upon unknown portions of the system.\(^{98}\)

The mysteriousness of Christian belief is, for Newman, an argument in its favor. Mystery is appropriate for true religion.\(^{99}\)

This emphasis on mystery may seem to be in tension with his concern for dogma, but Newman sees these as complementary. This is most clearly seen in his criticisms of liberalism and rationalism in religion. By his own account, defending dogma, especially that of the Trinity, was a key principle in his battle against liberalism.\(^{100}\) At the same time, as Luu-Quang points out,

\(^{95}\) Ath. 2.92.
\(^{96}\) Mix. 264.
\(^{97}\) SN 282.
\(^{98}\) Ess. 1.42.
\(^{99}\) See Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 205-06.
\(^{100}\) Apo. 120; cf. Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 47.
much of Newman’s focus on mystery and faith comes as a gradual reaction to the rationalism of his former mentor, Richard Whately.\textsuperscript{101}

For Newman, the religious rationalist is skeptical of both dogma and mystery. Thus he criticizes a common human tendency to question the infinitude of God’s attributes based on the limits of one’s own understanding. Such people, he argues,

restrain and limit them [i.e. the divine attributes] to their own comprehension, they measure them by their own standard, they fashion them by their own model; and when they discern aught of the unfathomable depth, the immensity, of any single excellence or perfection of the Divine Nature, His love or His justice, or His power, they are at once offended, and turn away, and refuse to believe.\textsuperscript{102}

Newman sees such a reductionist mentality as a pervasive problem among his contemporaries, one which can have far-reaching consequences. Those who object to the mysteriousness of sacraments, for instance, “naturally proceed to object to the doctrine of the Trinity as obstructing and obscuring the simplicity (as they conceive it) of the Gospel.”\textsuperscript{103} Moreover, the attempt to explain a mystery will inevitably lead to heresy.\textsuperscript{104}

In contrast, Newman advocates caution and reserve in handling the content of the Christian faith. The gospel “is not a matter of mere argument,” even in the heat of controversy.\textsuperscript{105} Moreover, special care must be taken when discussing doctrines like the Trinity and the

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\textsuperscript{102} Mix. 309-10.

\textsuperscript{103} PS 2.317. Cf. NO 149-50.

\textsuperscript{104} “A mystery is but a mark of infinity…We may be sure that every apparent \textit{explanation} is a mistake, a heresy. We must begin by confessing it unintelligible.” So SN 298.

\textsuperscript{105} Tracts 140.
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Incarnation, lest one fall into irreverence or rationalism.\(^\text{106}\) There are limits to how much revealed truths can be analyzed and systematized. In particular,

the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity is a mere juxtaposition of separate truths, which to our minds involves inconsistency, when viewed together; nothing more being attempted by theologians, for nothing more is told us. Arrange and contrast them we may and do; systematize (that is, reduce them into an intelligible dependence on each other, or harmony with each other) we may not; unless indeed any such oversight of Revelation, such right of subjecting it to our understandings, is committed to us by Revelation itself.\(^\text{107}\)

Specifically pertaining to the doctrine of the Trinity, Newman sees the “rationalistic principle” as leading to, or at least allowing for, heretical views like Socinianism and Sabellianism.\(^\text{108}\)

Thus when Newman speaks of “the Catholic, that is the anti-rationalistic notion” of doctrines like the Trinity,\(^\text{109}\) he means an approach to doctrine as revealed truth about mystery, and thus demanding humility. Once again, his concern is reverence, springing from a desire to overcome what McIntosh calls “an obtuse and clumsy insensibility to the reality of mystery.”\(^\text{110}\)

It is no surprise that Newman also finds a lack of appreciation for mystery among the faults of the Arians.\(^\text{111}\)

Indeed, the doctrine of the Trinity is a perfect example of such mystery:

That the sacred doctrine…of the Trinity in Unity is mysterious, is no objection to it, but rather the contrary; the only objection that can plausibly be urged is, why, if

\(^{106}\) “The doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, form a most distressing subject of discussion, for two reasons; first, as one should wish to bow the head and be silent; next as leading to arguments, about things possible and impossible with GOD, that is (practically) to a rationalistic line of thought.” So Tracts 149.

\(^{107}\) Ess. 1.52-53.

\(^{108}\) Ess. 1.55, 57, 69, 79-80, 85, 93, 95. This is also his assessment of Schleiermacher’s Trinitarian theology; see Ess. 1.96-99.

\(^{109}\) Ess. 1.45.

\(^{110}\) McIntosh, Discernment and Truth, 170.

\(^{111}\) Ath. 2.44, 454.
so, should it be revealed? Why should we be told any thing about God’s Adorable Nature, if incomprehensible He is, and mysterious the doctrine about Him must be?112

The revelation of the Trinity, of course, has a soteriological orientation, as we will see in the next chapter. But Newman’s point here is that the mystery should surprise us far less than its revelation. As a mystery, it requires a spiritual knowledge beyond natural reason, i.e. “not a light accorded to the reason, the gifts of the intellect; inasmuch as the Gospel has its mysteries, its difficulties, and secret things, which the Holy Spirit does not remove.”113 Moreover, this mystery is unique because it arises in eternity, whereas the other Christian mysteries all arise in time.114

Newman notes, however, what the mysteriousness of the Trinity does and does not mean, namely that “this is simply incomprehensible to us, but at least, so far as this, it involves no self-contradiction, because God is not Three and One in the same sense, but He is Three in one sense and One in another.”115 This touches on an important point of how Newman understands mystery. The Trinity is a mystery not in itself—God is not a mystery to God—but in our limited ability to comprehend it because of its utter transcendence.116 Even when he speaks of God’s “incommunicable attribute,” he seems to mean incommunicable to creatures.117 Indeed, our normal categories of thought are “foreign and inapplicable to a sphere of existence of which we

112 PS 6.333.
113 PS 1.203.
114 SN 158.
115 Mix. 265.
117 “We are accustomed, indeed, and rightly, to speak of the Creator Himself as incomprehensible; and, indeed, He is so by an incommunicable attribute; but in a certain sense each of His creatures is incomprehensible to us also, in the sense that no one has a perfect understanding of them but He.” So GA 226.
have no experience whatever.”118 As Newman points out, the very concept of divine personality lies beyond our grasp; how much more the idea that there are three Persons in the Godhead.119 Nevertheless, a certain religious apprehension of the Trinity is possible:

Accordingly the mysteriousness of the doctrine is not, strictly speaking, intrinsical to it, as it is proposed to the religious apprehension, though in matter of fact a devotional mind, on perceiving that mysteriousness, will lovingly appropriate it, as involved in the divine revelation; and, as such a mind turns all thoughts which come before it to a sacred use, so will it dwell on upon the Mystery of the Trinity with awe and veneration, as a truth befitting, so to say, the Immensity and Incomprehensibility of the Supreme Being.120

As Ekeh summarizes this point, “The truth of the Trinity is ultimately a gift which theology has neither the depth nor range to capture. Theology signifies a restlessness of mind to solve the mysteries encountered in the Christian faith. However, there is a place beyond that restlessness, a religious state in which the truth of the Trinity and divine essence are revealed.”121

**Talking about the Mystery**

If the Trinity is indeed a mystery, how can we talk about it, dogmatically or otherwise?

Newman is not unaware of the problem, as he states:

All this, put into words, seems a contradiction in terms; men have urged it as such; then Christians, lest they should seem to be unduly and harshly insisting upon words which clash with each other, and so should dishonour the truth of God, and

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118 Ath. 2.317. Indeed, even “the widest experience of life would not tend to remove the mysteriousness of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.” So US 299.

119 “It seems to me that we cannot form an idea of Personality except as viewed in action, passion, relation etc – ideas inconsistent with the true notion of the Supreme Being – An infinite immutable Mind cannot be realized as a Person – My conclusion is, that it is as difficult to conceive God one Person as Three, the difficulty being deeper than people suppose. The Personality of God, in our notion of personality, is a mystery. And, in my own mind, I think it clear that the whole is an Economy – every one grants that much of the Scripture account is such – e.g. His being angry, repenting – or resting – etc. etc. – for these, and such like, make up the idea of a Personal God, as distinct from a mere System or Anima Mundi.” So LD 3.78.

120 GA 114.

cause hearers to stumble, have guarded their words, and explained them; and then
for doing this they have been accused of speculating and theorizing.\(^{122}\)

On the one hand, human language is attempting to describe a reality that transcends human
experience: “No words of man can explain it. Three are one…But no illustration of earth can
give the faintest shadow of the truth.”\(^{123}\) Yet on the other hand, Newman points out that language
is inadequate to describe many earthly things as well.\(^{124}\)

Just because something transcends our ability to describe it does not invalidate our
experience of it, to Newman’s mind.\(^{125}\) He is careful to note that mystery is not the same as
grammatical nonsense.\(^{126}\) This is because we are dealing with “mysteries of fact, not of words.
[Scripture’s] dark sayings or Ænigmata are such, because in the nature of things they cannot be
expressed clearly.”\(^{127}\) In this regard Newman’s stress is on the negative aspect of mystery, i.e.
our inability to articulate it.\(^{128}\) Ekeh argues that the difference, for Newman, between mystery
and nonsense can be discerned by the criterion of consistency. Even if the articulation of a
mystery involves seemingly incompatible statements, such as that God is both Three and One,

\(^{122}\) PS 4.286-87.

\(^{123}\) SN 158; cf. PS 4.286, 294.

\(^{124}\) In his sermon “The Mysteriousness of our Present Being” he states that “the difficulty which human
words have in expressing it, is no greater than we meet with when we would express in human words even those
earthly things of which we actually have experience, and which we cannot deny to exist, because we witness
them…Mysteries in religion are measured by the proud according to the power of God; the humble glorify God for
them, the proud exalt themselves against them.” So PS 2.283.

\(^{125}\) See Ono Paul Ekeh, “John Henry Newman on Mystery as a Hermeneutical Problem,” New Blackfriars,
96 no. 1061 (2014), 80.

\(^{126}\) GA 55.

\(^{127}\) Ath. 2.94.

\(^{128}\) Ekeh argues that this makes mystery a hermeneutical problem for Newman. See “Hermeneutical,” 76-77.
there can still be a “fundamental consistency” between the statements and the apprehension that there is a mystery.\textsuperscript{129} Such consistency does not take away from the mystery. As Newman points out, to show that a mystery is not self-contradictory is not the same as being able to explain it.\textsuperscript{130}

All of this raises the question of to what extent Newman’s approach can be described as apophatic, i.e. speaking of God primarily by way of negation. McIntosh argues that Newman does have a certain “apophatic tendency,” but that it is tempered by the actions of the Trinity in salvation history: “It is not a bare or contentless apophasis, but an apophasis which is itself the super-expressivity of the infinite relations of the divine Persons, and the incarnation of that relationality in the broken and distorted languages of a fallen world.”\textsuperscript{131} In some ways Newman echoes the Eastern Fathers with the “dialectical paradox of cataphatic and apophatic, word and silence” that he would have learned from them.\textsuperscript{132}

For Newman, we cannot but attempt to talk about the mystery: “No human words indeed are worthy of the Supreme Being, none are adequate; but we have no other words to use but human, and those in question are among the simplest and most intelligible that are to be found in language.”\textsuperscript{133} In particular, Newman insists on the necessity for doctrinal formulae, as “there is no such inward view of these doctrines, distinct from the dogmatic language used to express them.”\textsuperscript{134} Clearly articulated doctrines regulate against erroneous speculation and heresies, and

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 82-85.

\textsuperscript{130} Ath. 2.444-45.

\textsuperscript{131} McIntosh, “Trinity and Understanding,” 140.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 149.

\textsuperscript{133} GA 113.

\textsuperscript{134} US 338.
can also have a positive role in aiding devotion.\textsuperscript{135} Thus for Newman, there is a real tension between the limitation and inevitability of theological language. As Ian Ker sums this up, “On the one hand, the inherent inadequacy of religious language is readily recognized, as well as the drawback of attempting to describe the ineffable. On the other hand, not only is the necessity of some kind of verbal formulation acknowledged, but its virtue for religious practice is also admitted.”\textsuperscript{136}

The language of Scripture and doctrinal formulae\textsuperscript{137} is necessarily what Newman calls “economical.” This means that the terms and phrases are in themselves imperfect, yet legitimately use images and analogies from human experience to express what is beyond our experience.\textsuperscript{138} Such “economical expedients” are crucial for teaching revealed mysteries by “separating them into parts, viewing them in aspects, adumbrating them by analogies, and so approximating to them by means of words which say too much or too little.”\textsuperscript{139} Newman explains how economical language must be utilized:

About such economies in the statement of revealed truths, two rules must be observed. First, while aware of their imperfection as informations, still we must keep strictly to what is told us in them, because we cannot know more exactly what is told us in them than they tell us…Secondly, it must be recollected that we cannot

\textsuperscript{135} Ari. 36-37, 145-46.


\textsuperscript{137} While Newman does not equate the language of the creeds with that of Scripture, he holds it in very high regard as the church’s best effort in expressing its faith. See VM 1.225-26. Elsewhere he admits that, historically, the church has not always used its terminology precisely or consistently, but this does not mean that it has lacked a concern for the doctrinal truths it conveys. See TT 335-36, 339.

\textsuperscript{138} “However, in the difficulty of finding terms, which will serve as a common measure of theological thought for the expression of ideas as to which there is no experimental knowledge or power of conception, and in the necessary use of economical language, both these terms, likeness and equality, have been received in orthodox teaching concerning the Supreme Being.” So Ath. 2.432. Cf. LD 19.335.

\textsuperscript{139} Ath. 2.318.
argue and deduce freely from economical language as if it were adequate and complete, and that in revealed matters we may fall into serious error, if we argue and deduce except under the *magisterium* of the Church.¹⁴⁰

According to Newman, then, economical language about mysteries like the Trinity is both normative and limited. Moreover, it assumes an ecclesial context in which the mysteries can be explicated. McIntosh notes Newman’s impatience with “the kind of self-satisfied, short-circuited way of thinking about religion that fails to recognize this ‘economic’ or regulative or analogical character of our language.”¹⁴¹ This is because such nuance in theological language is important for legitimately discussing religious mystery while respecting it as mystery.

This further touches on how Newman understands analogy. The expression of “heavenly things under earthly images, which are infinitely below the reality,”¹⁴² is not merely a human invention for the sake of convenience. Rather, our experience in this world can be “a Divine economy suited to our need, and the token of realities distinct from themselves, and such as might be revealed to us, nay, more perfectly, by other senses, different from our existing ones as they from each other.”¹⁴³ In other words, the physical world provides genuine means of apprehending spiritual things, for the simple reason that God is the author of both creation and redemption, of both nature and grace. This is the analogical or sacramental view of the world that Newman picks up from the Alexandrian Fathers, from Joseph Butler’s *Analogy of Religion*, and

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¹⁴⁰ Ath. 2.91-92.

¹⁴¹ McIntosh, “Trinity and Understanding,” 141.

¹⁴² US 269.

¹⁴³ US 347.
from John Keble’s *Christian Year*. To be sure, our terms and ideas about the Trinity, however lofty, remain earthly in character, and the great danger of utilizing such images for the Trinity is that, if taken too far, they can lead to misconception and even heresy. But for Newman there is more going on in our theological language than simply inventing metaphors out of thin air. True analogy arises from how God has constituted the world as a means of revelation, which Newman calls “the mystical or sacramental principle…that the exterior world, physical and historical, was but the manifestation of realities greater than itself.” This further grounds the legitimate use of economical language, as the church’s “mysteries are but the expressions in human language of truths to which the human mind is unequal.”

**Believing the Mystery: Faith and Assent**

All of this raises questions, however, of what it means to believe in a revealed mystery. To what extent is understanding necessary for belief? And how can we profess belief in something that transcends our comprehension? These are some of the questions that Newman takes up in his 1870 *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. It is worthwhile to consider this work for two reasons. First, it fills out Newman’s methodology with regard to mystery and faith. Secondly, he uses the doctrine of the Trinity as one of his primary test cases, so he is explicit in how he applies his principles to this mystery in particular.

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144 For a brief discussion of how Newman appropriates analogy as a means of argument, with both positive and negative aspects, see Norris, *Theological Method*, 133-35. Norris goes on to discuss how analogy is used by Newman, the Alexandrians, and Butler, as contrasted with Aquinas, in ibid., 177-79.

145 US 339.

146 Ari. 170-71.

147 Apo. 145-46. This awareness informs such prayers as this: “My God, I do not understand these heavenly things. I use words which I cannot master; but I believe, O God, that to be true, which I thus feebly express in human language.” So Med. 375.
By “assent,” Newman means the unconditional acceptance of a statement as true, grammatically analogous to an unqualified assertion. He insists that assent assumes some level of intellectual understanding.\(^{148}\) Yet Newman claims that one can in fact assent to religious truth as mystery in this way:

A mystery is a proposition conveying incompatible notions, or is a statement of the inconceivable. Now we can assent to propositions (and a mystery is a proposition), provided we can apprehend them; therefore we can assent to a mystery, for unless we in some sense apprehended it, we should not recognize it to be a mystery, that is, a statement uniting incompatible notions.\(^{149}\)

Thus a mystery, though beyond our comprehension, is intelligible as a mystery, to the extent that we can recognize it as such. On this basis, Newman holds that genuine belief is possible despite the limits of our understanding. He goes on to use the doctrine of the Trinity as a case study for exploring this further.

In order to understand Newman’s argument, a brief outline of his epistemology is in order. He draws a key distinction between two epistemological categories, which he calls notional and real. Both categories apply to propositions (grammatical statements of truth claims), apprehension (recognition of a proposition, even without complete understanding), and assent (positive belief in a proposition). The notional deals with terms “as standing for what is abstract, general, and non-existing.” The real, on the other hand, has to do with terms that “stand for things external to us, unit and individual.”\(^{150}\) Or put simply, the notional refers to the abstract and conceptual, while the real refers to the concrete and experiential.

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\(^{148}\) GA 26, 28. He contrasts assent with inference, defined as a conclusion conditioned on certain premises and not necessarily needing apprehension.

\(^{149}\) GA 55.

\(^{150}\) GA 29.
Newman explains why both categories are necessary for human knowing:

To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter is the conservative principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement. Without the apprehension of notions, we should for ever pace round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations.\(^{151}\)

There is, however, a sense in which real apprehension and assent are “stronger” or “more vivid and forcible” than notional because human nature prefers the concrete to the abstract. Nevertheless, both forms of assent are legitimate and genuine.\(^{152}\)

These two categories also correlate with Newman’s distinction between theology and religion: “To give a real assent to [a dogma] is an act of religion; to give a notional, is a theological act.”\(^{153}\) This is because theology, as an intellectual pursuit, must inevitably deal with abstract concepts and formulae, which can only be grasped notionally. Religion or devotion, on the other hand, is concerned with the lived encounter with God, and thus touches on the particular and experiential. Newman is careful to note, however, that the two are not unrelated to one another, as “every religious man is to a certain extent a theologian, and no theology can start or thrive without the initiative and abiding presence of religion.”\(^{154}\) These distinctions become key to how Newman approaches the issue of assenting to the Trinity.

\(^{151}\) GA 47.

\(^{152}\) GA 31, 50.

\(^{153}\) GA 93, cf. 108.

\(^{154}\) GA 93.
Newman argues in the *Grammar*, and several other places, that the doctrine of the Trinity can be broken down into a set of nine propositions:

1. There are Three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit. 2. From the Father is, and ever has been, the Son. 3. From the Father and Son is, and ever has been, the Spirit.

4. The Father is the One Eternal Personal God. 5. The Son is the One Eternal Personal God. 6. The Spirit is the One Eternal Personal God.

7. The Father is not the Son. 8. The Son is not the Holy Ghost. 9. The Holy Ghost is not the Father.

Each of these statements, taken individually, is neither mysterious nor abstract, and thus can be an object of real apprehension and assent. Indeed, the terms used are concrete, not abstract. When the propositions are combined, however, they can only be the object of notional apprehension and assent.

This is why Newman sees the Trinity as “easier” for religion than theology, as “theology has to do with the Dogma of the Holy Trinity as a whole made up of many propositions; but Religion has to do with each of those separate propositions which compose it, and lives and thrives in the contemplation of them.” One can believe in the Trinity by assenting to each proposition, not by fully comprehending their combination, much less the mysterious reality that

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155 E.g. PS 6.347; Ath. 2.316-17; SN 158.

156 GA 119. For some variations on Newman’s formulation, see Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 229-30.

157 GA 113.

158 GA 115. As Dive points out, Newman earlier (in Tract 73) claims that no single “system” of the Trinity is possible, whereas in the *Grammar* he states that no single “image” is possible. See *Imagination*, 444. Dixon notes that shifts in early modern epistemology (e.g. Hobbes and Locke) reduced language to the succession of mental pictures, which made it difficult to “picture” something like the Trinity. See *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 210-11. Newman’s scheme seems to offer a way out of this problem.

159 GA 122.
they describe.\textsuperscript{160} Ekeh describes Newman’s account as “phenomenological,”\textsuperscript{161} and Theodore Whapham notes the importance of the imagination as the basis for real assent to the Trinity, which “secures its value for the spirituality of ordinary Christians, underscores the practical import of the doctrine of the Trinity, and emphasizes the need for believers to draw upon multiple images of the divine.”\textsuperscript{162}

However, this does not mean that the Trinity, taken as a whole, is merely an abstract concept, but only that its full articulation transcends human understanding. Colin Gunton has criticized Newman’s approach as rendering the doctrine of the Trinity incoherent, reducing faith to blind acceptance of the church’s teaching, and divorcing dogma from the Christian life.\textsuperscript{163} But as Terrence Merrigan persuasively argues, this is a misunderstanding of Newman’s point in the Grammar. Real assent to the particular propositions of the doctrine is precisely what makes possible a genuine faith and spirituality in relation to the Trinity, while still preserving the mystery. According to Merrigan, “what the believer comes to know is a Trinity of ‘persons’, with whom he or she stands in relation. And this knowledge is ‘real’, which is to say that it is, in some sense, ‘experiential’.”\textsuperscript{164} Indeed, Newman acknowledges that pious people, “according to their measure, have an idea or vision of the Blessed Trinity in Unity…not as the subject of a number of propositions, but as one, and individual, and independent of words, as an impression

\textsuperscript{160} See Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 151; cf. Dive, Imagination, 47.

\textsuperscript{161} Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 321-34.

\textsuperscript{162} Whapham, “Trinity, Imagination, and Belief,” 104.


conveyed through the senses.”\(^{165}\) Or as Merrigan sums up Newman’s thinking, “As a ‘religious’ reality, that is to say, as the object of Christian faith and devotion, the Trinity is not, in the first place, a mystery. It is the source and goal of the Christian’s life. The mystery emerges only when we seek to order our experience of the triune God.”\(^{166}\) Once again, the doctrine, “though so difficult for the reason…is not difficult for devotion.” Both real and notional assent are ways of articulating belief that grows out of the encounter with the Trinity.

**Conclusion**

Over the course of this chapter, we have ended where we started: Newman’s understanding of the spiritual encounter with the Triune God as the basis and telos of theology. As is now clear, Newman’s spirituality and methodology are closely connected to the doctrine of the Trinity. While this doctrine informs how Newman engages these endeavors, they also provide an essential framework for how he treats Trinitarian theology.

To summarize: (1) Piety and devotion are the ultimate purpose of theology for Newman. (2) As a result, spirituality and theology are intricately connected and inform each other. (3) Newman is keenly attentive to both the dogmatic and mysterious character of Christianity and the Triune God revealed in it. (4) This impacts how he approaches theological language as “economical,” which he views as both limited and normative. (5) While theologically we can only assent to the whole mystery of the Trinity notionally, we are able, in a religious sense, to attain real assent to different aspects of the doctrine.

\(^{165}\) US 331.

\(^{166}\) Merrigan, “Faith,” 111.
It is now clear that Newman’s spirituality and methodology are both grounded in the economy of salvation, as the lived encounter with the Triune God revealed though the Incarnation of Christ and all the events that go with it, “for us and for our salvation.” It is to that Trinitarian economy that we will now turn.
CHAPTER THREE
THE TRINITY IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

Now that we have covered both the historical and spiritual/methodological contexts of Newman’s Trinitarian theology, we can look more closely at its content. In some ways, this chapter is not particularly ambitious, as it will merely explicate what Newman says about the work of the Triune God in the events of salvation history. At the same time, this is really the crux of the larger argument. Here we will examine how Newman views the economy of salvation in explicitly and consistently Trinitarian terms. More specifically, the theme of divine condescension within that economy will come to the fore. This will in turn lay the groundwork for the next two chapters, which will discuss, first, how our knowledge of the Trinity in se is rooted in God’s self-revelation pro nobis, and secondly, how the economically-revealed Trinity suffuses Newman’s theology more broadly.

It might be objected here that starting with the economic, rather than eternal or immanent, dimension of Newman’s Trinitarian thought is contrary to the development of his own thinking. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Vinh Bao Luu-Quang has shown that Newman’s earlier sermons focus on the eternal being and relations of the Trinity, and only later does he turn to the economic roles of each Person.

However, there may be an important contextual reason for this. Related to his insistence on both doctrine and mystery, Newman thought poorly of Enlightenment era tendencies to simplify Christianity to something rational or strictly moral. Such reductions invariably called
for a denial, or at least a minimization, of anything mysterious in religion. It may well be that Newman’s early focus on the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation was a deliberate push back against this anti-mysterious approach to theology.

Furthermore, in approaching Newman’s thought as a coherent whole, the logical relation between different aspects is not necessarily the same as their chronological development. In other words, Newman intuited the centrality of the economic aspect before he explicated it more fully. Not only can this be shown from the overarching continuity in his thought as it develops, but his frequent insistence that the Incarnation—an event in the economy—is a unifying center of Christian doctrine supports giving priority to the economic over the immanent aspects of his Trinitarian theology.¹

Moreover, this approach accords with Newman’s own understanding of theological method. In his thirteenth University Sermon he states that “all men have a reason, but not all men can give a reason. We may denote, then, these two exercises of mind as reasoning and arguing, or as conscious and unconscious reasoning, or as Implicit Reason and Explicit Reason.”² This distinction leads him to conclude that “the reasonings and opinions which are involved in the act of Faith are latent and implicit; that the mind reflecting on itself is able to bring them out into some definite and methodical form.”³ Thus I am arguing that Newman had an implicit apprehension of the centrality of the economic dimension of Trinitarian doctrine, even before he

¹ See US 35, Dev. 36, 324.
² US 259.
³ US 277.
had worked it out explicitly. This will become more evident as we explore the inner logic of his thinking.

**Trinitarian Economy**

Before proceeding, it is worth pausing to clarify what is meant by the term “economy.” We have already encountered one way that Newman uses the word in the previous chapter. When referring to economical language, he means that revelation is accommodated to the limits of human understanding through the use of words and images from the realm of experience. But Newman also speaks of an “economy of redemption,” referring to God’s saving actions within history, specifically the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, along with the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is in this sense that we are treating the term in Newman’s thought, both here and in the chapters that follow.

It is also helpful to note the legacy of the term within Trinitarian theology more broadly. As Albert Kirk observes, Tertullian and Hippolytus both use “economy” to refer to the inner relations of the Godhead, but subsequent theologians redefined it to refer to the mystery of the Incarnation. Kirk speculates that if the earlier meaning had endured, “it perhaps could have helped to prevent the subsequent intellectual separation between the immanent life of the Trinity and the role of the divine Persons in the redemption of man.”

This is indeed a major concern of twentieth century theologians in restoring the relationship between the immanent and economic

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Trinity.⁵ As we will see in this chapter and the next, Newman anticipates this concern in his own thinking.

Newman frequently speaks of the economy of salvation in explicitly Trinitarian terms. For instance, he states concisely, “Adam fell from his Creator’s favour to be a bond-servant; and Christ has come to set us free again, to impart to us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we become God’s children, and again approach Him as our Father.”⁶ Elsewhere he spells out this Trinitarian structure of salvation in greater detail:

And most especially, when He sent His Only-begotten Son into the world, and that most Gracious and All-pitiful Son, our Lord, condescended to come to us, both He and His Father wrought with a mighty hand; and They vouchsafed the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and He also wrought wonderfully, and works hitherto. Certainly the whole economy of redemption is a series of great and continued works; but still they all tend to rest and peace, as at the first...The Son was from eternity in the bosom of the Father, as His dearly beloved and Only-begotten...He was ‘the Brightness of God’s glory and the express Image of His Person;’ and in this unspeakable Unity of Father and Son, was the Spirit also, as being the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son; the Spirit of Both at once, not separate from them, yet distinct, so that they were Three Persons, One God, from everlasting.⁷

He goes on to explain that the Trinity is not only the beginning, but also the consummation of the saving economy, namely

the return of the everlasting reign of God, the infinite peace and blissful perfection of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, differing indeed from what it once was by the fruits of creation and redemption, but not differing in the supreme blessedness, the ineffable mutual love, the abyss of holiness in which the Three Persons of the Eternal Trinity dwell.⁸

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⁶ PS 5.314.

⁷ PS 6.363-64.

⁸ PS 6.367-68.
It is worth noting that Newman’s stress on the *Trinitarian* character of redemption, especially regarding the divinity of the Son and its implications, is unique in his time. As Socinian and Unitarian versions of Christianity were gaining ground in some quarters, some who explicitly affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity would downplay its importance and neglect to draw out the connections between it and the rest of Christian belief.⁹

Likewise, Newman views the entire human situation, both its fall and its redemption, within this Trinitarian structure:

Such is human nature in its fallen state; but at length its Redeemer came. He left His Father’s courts, He was manifested, He spake; and His voice went out into all lands. He has taken to Himself His great power and reigned; and whereas an enemy is the god and tyrant of this world, as Adam made it, so as far as He occupies it, does He restore it to His Father…The Church, before His manifestation, offered to Him material elements ‘which perish with the using;’ but now He has sent His Spirit to fill such elements with Himself, and to make them living and availing sacrifices to the Father…Hands raised in blessing, the accents of the voice of man, which before could but symbolize the yearnings of human nature, or avail for lower benefits, have now become the “unutterable intercessions” of the Spirit, and the touch and the breath of the Incarnate Son.¹⁰

Note how Newman here stresses the corporate dimension of human redemption. Elsewhere he draws a connection between God’s love for humanity and the Trinitarian character of salvation history: “None…can know the race of man so well, none can so truly love it for its own sake, as He who sent His Co-Equal Son, as he who came from the Eternal Father, to save it.”¹¹

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¹⁰ Jfc. 195-96.

¹¹ OS 107. Elsewhere, Newman notes the connection between the Trinitarian structure of salvation and the liturgical year: “On Christmas day we commemorated the love of the Father in sending the Son; on good Friday the love of the Son in dying for us; and on Whit Sunday the love of the Spirit in condescending to dwell with us and prepare us for our purchased inheritance. And now [Trinity Sunday] we celebrate together the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the One God of our hope and worship, the One and only Worker of our salvation.” So JHNS 3.279.
The Trinitarian Narrative of Salvation

In addition to these summary statements, Newman often stresses the involvement of all three Persons of the Trinity in the various events of the narrative of salvation. We will go through a brief catalogue of such examples before exploring how Newman understands the Trinity as operative in the world. The purpose here is to show how Newman sees salvation history and the doctrine of the Trinity as intricately, even inseparably, connected.

Even before the fall of humanity, Newman sees God’s actions in creation as distinctly Trinitarian.\(^\text{12}\) While he associates the act of creation itself with the Father,\(^\text{13}\) he also sees the Son’s role as a direct extension of being begotten of the Father.\(^\text{14}\) Likewise, he sees the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as part of humankind’s pre-lapsarian condition: “When he was created, then his Maker breathed into him the supernatural life of the Holy Spirit, which is his true happiness; when he fell, he forfeited the divine gift, and with it his happiness also.”\(^\text{15}\)

Turning to the Incarnation of the Son, Newman often speaks of the role of the other two Persons, both in the initial event itself and in the life of Christ. For instance, he notes the role of the Holy Spirit in preserving the incarnate Christ from sin and mortality.\(^\text{16}\) He also describes the presence of the whole Trinity revealed at the Transfiguration: “He was transfigured, and talked

\(^{12}\) “Creation implies ministration, and is the beginning of mysteries. It passes the line, and other mysteries are but its continuation.” So SN 306.

\(^{13}\) PS 6.304.

\(^{14}\) Ath. 2.400.

\(^{15}\) OS 51.

\(^{16}\) “Not one human being comes into existence without God’s discerning evidences of sin attendant on his birth. But when the Word of Life was manifested in our flesh, the Holy Ghost displayed that creative hand by which, in the beginning, Eve was formed; and the Holy Child, thus conceived by the power of the Highest, was (as the history shows) immortal even in His mortal nature, clear from all infection of the forbidden fruit, so far as to be sinless and incorruptible.” So PS 2.140.
with Moses and Elias; and you will see where He really was, and with whom, while He sojourned upon earth,—with Saints and Angels, with His Father, who announced Him as His beloved Son, and with the Holy Ghost, who descended upon Him.”

Newman is especially attentive to the interrelatedness of Christ’s Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit, as well as the role of the Spirit in these events. He notes, for instance, the inherently Trinitarian framework of the Ascension: the incarnate Son goes to the Father to make intercession, and subsequently sends the Spirit to dwell among us. As to the purpose of sending the Spirit, Newman states that “the Spirit came to finish in us, what Christ had finished in Himself, but left unfinished as regards us. To Him it is committed to apply to us severally all that Christ had done for us.” Part of this is the creation of the church on Pentecost. Thus Donald Graham argues that Newman locates the origin of the church in the ascension of Christ, which is in turn an extension of the mystery of his resurrection.

So closely are these events interrelated, for Newman, that there is a sense in which the coming of the Holy Spirit extends Christ’s presence in the world. In one passage he goes as far as to say that Christ’s “going to the Father was, in fact, the same thing as His coming to us spiritually. I mean there is some mysterious unknown connection between His departing in His own Person, and His returning in the Person of His Spirit.”

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17 PS 6.215.
19 PS 5.138; cf. 8.216.
20 Graham, Eastertide to Ecclesia, 140-42.
is, of course, different from Christ’s presence in the Incarnation; it is in fact internal, rather than external.\textsuperscript{22}

This of course touches on a recurring theme in Newman’s thought, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But it must be borne in mind that through the Spirit the Trinity in its totality is present in the justified soul, according to Newman’s scheme.\textsuperscript{23} For this reason, Luu-Quang states that Newman might think in terms of God \textit{in nobis} as well as God \textit{pro nobis}—indeed, they are one and the same.\textsuperscript{24}

For Newman, the Trinitarian structure of the salvation narrative extends to its very end. He offers this poignant description of the role of each Person on the day of judgment:

Lastly, let me say more distinctly what I have already alluded to, that in that solemn hour we shall have, if we be His, the inward support of His Spirit too, carrying us on toward Him, and “witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.” God is mysteriously threefold; and while He remains in the highest heaven, He comes to judge the world;—and while He judges the world, He is in us also, bearing us up and going forth in us to meet Himself. God the Son is without, but God the Spirit is within,—and when the Son asks, the Spirit will answer. That Spirit is vouchsafed to us here; and if we yield ourselves to His gracious influences, so that He draws up our thoughts and wills to heavenly things, and becomes one with us, He will assuredly be still in us and give us confidence at the Day of Judgment.\textsuperscript{25}

Likewise, Newman sees the heavenly vision of God in starkly Trinitarian terms. He concludes his 1839 Trinity Sunday sermon, “Peace in Believing,” with these words:

\textit{After restlessness comes rest, peace, joy;—our eternal portion, if we be worthy;—the sight of the Blessed Three, the Holy One; the Three that bear witness to heaven; in light unapproachable; in glory without spot or blemish; in power without}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} See PS 4.168, 170, 248-49; Jfc. 205.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Vinh Bao Luu-Quang, “The Trinitarian Theology of John Henry Newman’s \textit{Parochial and Plain Sermons: 1833-1843}” (doctoral dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2010), 338.
\item \textsuperscript{25} PS 5.57.
\end{itemize}
“varibleness, or shadow of turning.”...And when at length the inevitable hour comes, we shall be able meekly to surrender our souls, our sinful yet redeemed souls, in much weakness and trembling, with much self-reproach and deep confession, yet in firm faith, and in cheerful hope, and in calm love, to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; the Blessed Three, the Holy One; Three Persons, One God; our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our Judge.26

Thus from beginning to end, Newman insists on a characteristically Trinitarian structure to the narrative of salvation. While the point of greatest interest is the Incarnation and what flows from it, he sees the whole process as expressing the Triune God in concrete ways.27

For Newman, then, there is no economy of redemption, no salvation history, apart from the Trinitarian revelation of God. Far from being reducible to some rational, sentimental, or moral “leading idea,” Christianity is ultimately about the saving actions of God in the world, and this necessarily entails the mystery of the Trinity so revealed. But as will become clear, it works both ways in Newman’s thinking: the Trinity is the basis for the economy, but it is the economy that provides us with knowledge of—and participation in—the Triune God.

**Triune Divine Operations**

For this reason, it is worth looking more closely at how Newman understands the relations between each Person’s activity within the economy of salvation. It is on the basis of that activity that we have knowledge of the Trinity. On the one hand, Newman stresses the unity of divine operations resulting from the unity of the Godhead: “Whatever the Father does or is, that the Son does or is—not as two, but as One.” He goes on to add that “they divide offices in

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26 PS 6.369-71.

27 Luu-Quang lists three issues that Newman could have explored further in his sermons from 1835-38, which focused primarily on the economic dimension of the Trinity. These issues are the wrath of God, the Resurrection, and the pre-lapsarian state of humanity. See Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 177.
mercy to our infirmity,”28 as if to imply that the three Persons could act in less differentiated ways. Indeed, “God the Son and God the Holy Ghost have so acted together in their separate Persons, as to make it difficult for us creatures always to discriminate what belongs to each respectively.”29

Yet while the continuity in the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit is a recurrent theme in his theology,30 Newman does differentiate between the respective roles of each Person. He notes, for instance, that “there was a difference between the Spirit’s office, and that which [Christ] Himself graciously fulfilled towards His disciples in the days of His flesh; for their wants were not the same as before.”31 Newman is conscious of the need to hold onto both sides of this equation, i.e. the divine unity and the distinction of Persons, as they play out economically.32

To see this more clearly, we will now take a closer look at the role that Newman accords to each of the Persons. Again, Newman insists that the Trinity is united in the divine works; nevertheless, appropriate distinctions can be made between the Roles, based on the data of revelation.

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28 SN 158.

29 Jfc. 208. This is reminiscent of the Augustinian principle that the divine acts ad extra are united, arguably an instance of Newman’s tendency to synthesize Latin and Greek patristic theology.


32 “What one Person of the Everblessed Trinity does, all do – their act is one; but in Scripture different operations are assigned to each, which we receive without understanding. Thus the Eternal Father is called Creator emphatically – and the Holy Ghost Preserver – though we believe in the ‘Creator Spirit,’ etc.” So LD 17.436. Cf. SN 300; JHNS 3.284; LD 2.15-16.
The Father

Newman says very little about the role of the Father in the economy of salvation. This is somewhat to be expected, as the Father is usually understood as the one who sends the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are more directly at work in the world. In at least one instance, Newman calls attention to this fact: “I adore Thee, O Father, for sending the Son and the Holy Ghost! I adore Thee, O Son, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, for vouchsafing to be sent to us!”

Newman does specifically connect creation with the First Person of the Trinity: “The Creator of this world is none other than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He also refers to God as “our first Father” before sin entered into the world. Moreover, the Father is certainly included when Newman speaks of the Trinity indwelling the justified soul, though as Kirk notes, he rarely speaks of the Father’s indwelling apart from the entire Trinity.

The Son

It is a different matter with the Person of the Son. As Ono Ekeh puts it, “For Newman, God, in the broadest sense, is experienced fully in the person of Jesus as it is in each of the divine persons…the incarnation (life, death and resurrection) of the Son is the proper context within which to approach the doctrine of the Trinity.” Newman himself states the centrality of the Son in the economy of redemption in these words: “God, the Origin and Cause of all things, acts by

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33 MD 382.
34 PS 6.304.
35 PS 7.119.
the mediation, ministration, or operation of His Son, as signified by the Son’s names of Word and Wisdom.”

But how does Newman understand this in concrete terms? The operative concept is condescension, or as he often prefers, the Greek word *syncatabasis*. This theme is, in many ways, the center of how he understands the Trinitarian economy. He speaks of it frequently in his writings, often in poignant terms such as these:

“He made Himself void or empty,” as the earth had been “void and empty” at the beginning; He seemed to be unbinding and letting loose the assemblage of attributes which made Him God, and to be destroying the idea which He Himself had implanted in our minds. The God of miracles did the most awful of signs and wonders, by revoking and contradicting, as it were, all His perfections, though He remained the while one and the same.

Newman notes that the idea of divine self-abasement is difficult, even offensive, to human logic:

The world judges of God’s condescension as it judges of His bounty. We know from Scripture that “the teaching of the Cross” was in the beginning “foolishness” to it; grave, thinking men scoffed at it as impossible, that God, who is so high, should humble Himself so low, and that One who died a malefactor’s death should be worshipped on the very instrument of His punishment. Voluntary humiliation they did not understand then, nor do they now.

Newman points out, however, that such condescension does not limit God or undermine the Son’s divinity. On the contrary, it is a profound expression of what only God can do: “His is an Omnipotence which can at the same time swathe Itself in infirmity and can become the captive

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38 Ath. 2.216.

39 Mix. 315. In a different context, he defines it as follows: “Humility or condescension, viewed as a virtue of conduct, may be said to consist...so in placing ourselves in our thoughts on a level with our inferiors; it is not only a voluntary relinquishment of the privileges of our own station, but an actual participation or assumption of the condition of those to whom we stoop. This is true humility, to feel and to behave as if we were so low; not, to cherish a notion of our importance, while we affect a low position.” So Idea 205.

40 Mix. 312.
of Its own creatures. He has, if I may so speak, the incomprehensible power of even making Himself weak.”

The obvious instance of the Son’s condescension in the saving economy would be the Incarnation, along with the Passion and Crucifixion as part of it. But Newman stresses that this is not the first instance, that “this Syncatabasis, or economy of condescension, on the part of the Son and Spirit, took place, not from the era of redemption merely, but…from the beginning of all things.”

More specifically,

Creation was the beginning of this condescension; but creation was but an inchoate act if without conservation accompanying it…This conservation lay in a gift over and above nature, a gift of grace, a presence of God throughout the vast universe, as a principle of life and strength; and that Presence is in truth the indwelling in it of the Divine Word and Son.

Newman notes how the Son’s eternal generation from the Father is intimately connected to his role in creation. Moreover, he holds that it is through the Son that creatures partake of divine attributes. He also interprets Athanasius as claiming that any revelation of God in creation happens through the Son. For Newman, then, the Incarnation is the culmination of a series of condescensions by the Son in the saving economy, beginning with the initial act of creation, and

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41 OS 88. Cf. SN 141; MD 347; NO 273-74. Elsewhere Newman exclaims, “Thy adorable attributes are not dimmed, but increased to us as we gaze on Thy humiliation. Thou art more beautiful to us than before.” So MD 342.

42 TT 193.


44 Ath. 2.400.

45 “To all creatures in different ways or degrees is it given to participate in the Divine attributes…And the All-abounding Son is He through whom this exuberance of blessing comes to them severally. They are partakers, in their measure, of what He possesses in fullness.” So Ath. 2.424.

46 Ath. 2.138.
continuing through God’s preservation, providence, revelation, and intervention throughout salvation history.\textsuperscript{47}

This is not to take away from the uniqueness and profundity of the Incarnation: “Once, and once only, for thirty-three years, has He condescended to become one of the beings which are seen, when He, the second Person of the Ever-blessed Trinity, was, by an unspeakable mercy, born of the Virgin Mary into this sensible world.”\textsuperscript{48} Newman is, of course, careful to speak of it within the terms of orthodox Christology:

He became what He was not before, that He took into His own Infinite Essence man’s nature itself in all its completeness, creating a soul and body, and, at the moment of creation, making them His own, so that they never were other than His, never existed by themselves or except as in Him, being properties or attributes of Him (to use defective words) as really as His divine goodness, or His eternal Sonship, or His perfect likeness to the Father. And, while thus adding a new nature to Himself, He did not in any respect cease to be what He was before.\textsuperscript{49}

Yet the fact that the Son does not literally relinquish the divine nature does not make the Incarnation any less of a condescension, even humiliation, in Newman’s mind. In one sermon for Christmas Day he states, “Christ altogether dishonoured what the world esteems, when He took on Himself a rank and station which the world despises. No lot could be more humble and more

\textsuperscript{47} Newman notes the irony of Christ’s suffering at the hands of his creatures: “Yet, if it be so, that the Son of God came down from heaven, put aside His glory, and submitted to be despised, cruelly treated, and put to death by His own creatures,—by whom He had made, and whom He had preserved up to that day, and was then upholding in life and being,—is it reasonable that so great an event should not move us?” So PS 6.40.

\textsuperscript{48} PS 4.202-03.

\textsuperscript{49} PS 3.164. This and the preceding quotation are but two examples of passages where Newman seeks to capture the mystery of the Incarnation in vivid, even poetic language. See also, e.g., PS 2.109-10, 130, 152-53; 3.165-66, 172; 4.212; 6.71-72, 81; Mix, 284, 300; OS 76.
ordinary than that which the Son of God chose for Himself.” Indeed, the humiliation is all the
greater when viewed from the perspective of Christ’s divinity.51

As Luu-Quang points out, Newman sees the Son’s humiliation, especially in temptation
and suffering, as the pinnacle of the revelation of the Trinity.52 This is perhaps most clearly seen
in his 1835 sermon, “The Humiliation of the Eternal Son,” which Louis Bouyer calls “the heart
of all his preaching.”53 However, the theme can be found throughout his preaching and writing.
In one instance, he argues that Christ could have become human immediately as an adult, but
instead chose the humbler path of being conceived and born as an infant.54 Elsewhere he notes
the meekness that Jesus displayed in his earthly existence:

    We know what His character was; how grave and subdued His speech, His manner,
    His acts; what calmness, self-possession, tenderness, and endurance; how He
    resisted evil; how He turned His cheek to the smiter; how He blessed when
    persecuted; how He resigned Himself to His God and Father, how He suffered
    silently, and opened not His mouth, when accused maliciously.55

Newman sees humiliation or condescension as the hallmark of the entire process of the
Incarnation, beginning with Christ’s conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary and his humble

50 PS 8.245, cf. 251.

51 Newman says that “the higher He is, and the more mysterious, so much the more glorious and the more
subduing is the history of His humiliation. I own it, my brethren, I love to dwell on Him as the Only-begotten Word;
nor is it any forgetfulness of His sacred humanity to contemplate His Eternal Person. It is the very idea, that He is
God, which gives a meaning to His sufferings…The Word and Wisdom of the Father, who dwelt in His bosom in
bliss ineffable from all eternity, whose very smile has shed radiance and grace over the whole creation, whose traces
I see in the starry heavens and on the green earth, this glorious living God, it is He who looks at me so piteously, so
tenderly from the Cross.” So Mix. 320-21.

52 Luu-Quang, “Economic,” 76.

53 Louis Bouyer, Newman’s Vision of Faith: A Theology for Times of General Apostasy (San Francisco:
Ignatius, 1986), 128.

54 OS 81-82.

55 PS 7.111.
birth, and continuing through his meek character, his temptation, and culminating in his suffering and death.

Yet even in this condescension, the incarnate Christ remains the Eternal Son of God.

Newman notes some interesting ways that this tension plays out. For example,

when He prayed to His Father, it was not the prayer of a man supplicating God, but of the Eternal Son of God who had ever shared the glory of the Father, addressing Him, as before, but under far other circumstances, and in a new way, not according to those most intimate and ineffable relations which belonged to Him who was in the bosom of the Father, but in the economy of redemption, and in a lower world, viz. through the feelings and thoughts of human nature.\(^{56}\)

Even more striking is the way that Newman makes sense of the incarnate Son’s obedience to the Father:

In His eternal union with God there was no distinction of will and work between Him and His Father; as the Father’s life was the Son’s life, and the Father’s glory the Son’s also, so the Son was the very Word and Wisdom of the Father, His Power and Co-equal Minister in all things, the same and not the same as He Himself. But in the days of His flesh, when He had humbled Himself to “the form of a servant,” taking on Himself a separate will and a separate work, and the toil and sufferings incident to a creature, then what had been mere concurrence became obedience.\(^{57}\)

So rather than presenting a problem for the unity and equality of the Father and the Son, Newman interprets Christ’s obedience simply as the incarnate expression of the unity of will and operation between the Persons.

Newman lays a great deal of stress on the connection between Christ’s eternal and temporal Sonship. He explains that in the Incarnation “this great God condescended to come down on earth from His heavenly throne, and to be born into His own world; showing Himself as the Son of God in a new and second sense, in a created nature, as well as in His eternal

\(^{56}\) PS 6.62.

\(^{57}\) PS 3.163.
substance.” Moreover, Newman links Christ’s dual Sonship to the adoption of human beings as children of God. Commenting on Athanasius’ concept of grace, Newman argues that

the adoption of sons which is the gift which we gain by the Incarnation, is far more than adoption in the ordinary sense of that word, and far stronger terms are used of it…The true statement is, that, whereas there is a primary and secondary sense in which the word Son is used,—the primary, when it has its formal meaning of continuation of nature, and the secondary, when it is used nominally, or for an external resemblance to the first meaning,—it is applied to the regenerate, not in the secondary sense, but in the primary.\footnote{Ath. 2.140.}

This is not to confuse the distinction between Christ’s Sonship and ours; elsewhere Newman clearly states, “We are but called the sons of God—we are adopted to be sons—but our Lord and Saviour is the Son of God, really and by birth, and He alone is such. Hence Scripture calls Him the Only-begotten Son.”\footnote{Ath. 2.88.} But he sees this adoption by grace as rooted in “our real participation (μετοχὴ) of the Son by His presence within us, a participation so intimate that in one sense He can be worshipped in us as being His temple or shrine.”\footnote{Ath. 2.136-37.} Elsewhere Newman explicitly links the grace of adoption to the Son’s status as “First-born” through the Incarnation.\footnote{“This grace of adoption was imparted in both cases by the ministration of the Eternal Son, in capacity of Primogenitus or First-born, (as through His Incarnation in the Gospel Economy, so through His συγκατάβασις, or the coming of His Personal Presence into the world in the beginning,) and was His type and likeness stamped upon the world, physical and moral, and a fullness of excellence enriching it from the source of all excellence.” So Ath. 2.136-37.}

Related to adoption is the concept of regeneration or new birth. Newman naturally connects this to the Incarnation as well, in terms such as these:

Our Saviour’s birth in the flesh is an earnest, and, as it were, beginning of our birth in the Spirit. It is a figure, promise, or pledge of our new birth, and it effects what

\footnote{Ps 5.89. Cf. Ath. 1.411.}

\footnote{Ath. 2.140.}

\footnote{Ps 3.162.}

\footnote{Ath. 2.88.}
it promises. As He was born, so are we born also; and since He was born, therefore we too are born. As He is the Son of God by nature, so are we sons of God by grace; and it is He who has made us such.63

For Newman, Christ’s dual Sonship—eternal and incarnate—is the foundation for “sonship” of human beings toward God, whether that is understood in terms of adoption or regeneration.

This in turn connects to how Newman understands the reason(s) for the Incarnation. While at times he echoes the nineteenth-century evangelical stress on Christ’s expiatory death, he often presents the totality of the Incarnation in more patristic terms as the basis for humanity’s salvation as divinization.64 While he more often and more directly associates this work with the Holy Spirit, he also speaks of “the actual presence, as well as the power within us of the Incarnate Son as a principle or ἀρχὴ…of sanctification, or rather deification.”65

The Son’s role in the economy of salvation is the centerpiece of how Newman conceives the Trinitarian economy. It is precisely in the syncatabasis at the Incarnation of the Son, and the concomitant sending of the Spirit, that the Trinity is revealed to us. It is also from this same process of condescension that human beings become adopted as children of God, and thus brought into the life of the Trinity.

63 PS 5.86; cf. 3.265: “Thus the greater Mystery of the Incarnation is made to envelope and pledge to us the mystery of the new birth. As He was in Heaven in an ineffable sense, even ‘in the days of His flesh,’ so are we, in our degree…”

64 These are two of the three main approaches listed by Keith Beaumont in _Dieu Intérieur_, 194-96. The third option is that the Incarnation’s main purpose was to announce the kingdom of God, as commonly held by liberal Protestants of the modern era. Beaumont notes that Newman’s focus on divinization is unique for his context.

65 Ath. 2.130. Likewise, “Let me have in my own person, what in Jesus Thou hast given to my nature. Let me be partaker of that Divine Nature in all the riches of Its attributes, which in fulness of substance and in personal presence became the Son of Mary.” So MD 430.
The Holy Spirit

Newman’s treatment of the Holy Spirit is likewise centered on, and grounded in, the saving economy as a whole. Günter Biemer argues that Newman sees the Spirit as the driving force in salvation history, and as John Connolly points out, he even tells the narrative of salvation history from the standpoint of the indwelling Spirit in his 1840 sermon, “The Law of the Spirit.” Graham argues that, in Newman’s mind, the Spirit specifically makes Christ present in three overlapping “phases:” “preparatorily” in creation, “hypostatically” in the event of the Incarnation, and “historically” in the subsequent life of Jesus on earth.

While Newman acknowledges the Spirit’s activity in creation prior to Christ, he notes a distinction between that activity from before and after Christ’s glorification:

This is explained by our being told by the Evangelist, that the Spirit was not given till Christ was glorified. St. John “was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb,” yet even this extraordinary gift was as nothing compared with the Presence of the Spirit which Christ’s followers received, and by which they are regenerated. It is indeed a double, or rather a sevenfold portion of the Spirit, and gives us powers, in proportion to our faith, above all that we can anticipate or comprehend.


69 Graham, Eastertide to Ecclesia, 73 ff.

70 SD 169-70; cf. PS 4.265-66.
Graham speaks of four “pneumatological moments” in the New Testament that “signal the transition from the earthly ministry of Christ to the beginning of the Church.” These are Jesus’ commending his “Spirit” on the cross (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 19:30), his breathing on the disciples in the upper room (John 20:22), his Ascension (Acts 1:8-10), and the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Graham notes that Newman is most interested in the first of these, the commendation of the Spirit on the cross. He makes a persuasive case that when Newman says that Christ “commended His Spirit to the Father,” he is referring to the Person of the Holy Spirit, not Christ’s human soul or divine nature.

Newman also takes a particular interest in the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ resurrection and in making Christ present to the disciples afterward. Graham argues that he sees the Holy Spirit as the “leading actor” in the Resurrection. But Newman’s focus is primarily on the coming of the divine Spirit among us. He describes the event of Pentecost in this way:

Such was the coming of the Comforter; He who is infinitely personal, who is one and individual above all created beings, who is the One God, absolutely, fully, perfectly, simply, He it was who vouchsafed to descend upon the Apostles, and that, as if not a Person, but as an influence or quality, by His attribute of ubiquity; diffusing Himself over their hearts, filling all the house, pouring over the world, as wholly here, as if He were not there; and hence vouchsafing to be compared to the inanimate and natural creation, to water and to wind, which are of so subtle a nature, of so penetrating a virtue, and of so extended a range.

Newman stresses that the coming of the Spirit naturally follows upon Christ physically leaving his disciples, so that “they were to be blessed with the presence of Him who was equal to Him

71 Mix. 341.
72 Graham, Eastertide to Ecclesia, 114-16.
73 Ibid., 125-31.
74 SD 128, cf. 311; OS 50.
and one with Him, and would unite them to Him, the Third Person of the Eternal Trinity, God the Holy Ghost.” At the same time, Christ’s own presence continues through the presence of the Spirit. However, “the Apostles’ fellowship with Christ through the Spirit, after His ascension, was very different from their fellowship with Him on earth.” Despite this difference, it must be borne in mind that Newman sees Christ’s presence, as realized by the Spirit, in quite real terms. This is simply due to the intimate bond between the Son and the Holy Spirit, as it plays out in the economy of salvation.

It is worth noting here as well that Newman applies the concept of syncatabasis to the Spirit along with the Son. Again, he speaks of the “economy of condescension, on the part of the Son and Spirit.” As Susanne Calhoun points out, Newman here expands on the patristic use of syncatabasis, specifically to include the Holy Spirit. Thus we can even speak of a certain “co-syncatabasis” between the Son and Spirit, such that the Spirit’s presence after Christ’s ascension is the natural outgrowth of the Son’s condescension in the Incarnation.

At various times Newman speaks of the Spirit as a gift. As Luu-Quang points out, this language has patristic precedent in the writings of Athanasius, Basil, and Augustine, with which Newman would doubtless have been familiar. Newman specifically associates the gift of the

76 SD 140.
77 See Beaumont, Dieu Intérieur, 172-73.
78 TT 193, emphasis added.
81 Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 80-81.
Spirit with regeneration in baptism: “When God regenerates an infant, He imparts to it the gift of His Holy Spirit.” The Spirit given to the regenerate is the source of their inner righteousness and holiness. In particular, human nature is actually changed by the Spirit to be oriented toward love as “the immediate fruit and the evidence of regeneration.”

As mentioned in the last chapter, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a major theme in Newman’s theology, one which we will explore in greater depth in Chapter 5. Again, it is worth bearing in mind that he always thinks of this indwelling in economic and Trinitarian terms, not simply as “divine” in some generic sense. This brings us again to Newman’s interpretation of salvation itself as theosis or divinization. As we will explore later, this refers to entering the life of the Trinity through the indwelling of the Spirit, such that the believer “is redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, is born again and sustained by the Spirit through the invisible strength of Sacraments, and called, through self-denial and sanctification of the inward man, to the Eternal Presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

Conclusion

Some of the themes brought up in this chapter will be dealt with in somewhat greater detail in Chapter 5. For now it is sufficient to reiterate some key summary features in how

82 PS 4.312; cf. PS 3.266: “It is imparted to every member on his Baptism; as may plainly be inferred from our Lord's words, who, in His discourse with Nicodemus, makes a birth through the Spirit, which He also declares is wrought by Baptism, to be the only means of entering into His kingdom; so that, unless a man is thus "born of water and of the Spirit," he is in no sense a member of His kingdom at all.”

83 See PS 5.131, 148-49, 168, 181; SD 142-43.

84 PS 4.310.

85 See Mark A. McIntosh, Discernment and Truth: The Spiritual and Theology of Knowledge, (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 181.

86 PS 2.318.
Newman treats the economy of salvation as it relates to his Trinitarian theology: (1) Newman frequently speaks of the narrative of salvation history in explicitly Trinitarian terms, both in summary form and in how he treats specific events. This is because he sees the economy of redemption and the mystery of the Trinity as essentially joined to one another. (2) In how he conceives of the respective roles of each Person in the economy, Newman seeks to balance both the unity of divine operations and the distinctiveness of each Person and respective role, just as the unity of the Godhead and the distinctions between Persons must be held together. (3) Regarding the Son, the central idea is that of syncatabasis or condescension, as displayed in creation, preservation, and above all the Incarnation, including the Passion. This constitutes the center of Newman’s understanding of the Trinitarian economy, in terms of both the revelation of the Trinity and the participation of humanity in the Triune life. (4) Newman contextualizes the work of the Holy Spirit within the broader economy of condescension, and his focus is largely on the gift of the Spirit indwelling the justified soul. It is this indwelling, moreover, that is the basis for humankind’s divinization.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE TRIUNE GODHEAD

For Newman, the economic missions of the Son and Holy Spirit provide the basis of God’s self-revelation. He claims that “although Scripture tells us not a little concerning those Divine Persons, as They are in Themselves, it tells us much more about Them, as They are to us, in those ministrative offices towards creation, towards the Universe and towards mankind.”

Thus it is from the activity of the Triune God in the world that we have knowledge of the eternal relations of the Persons in the Godhead. Newman explains this quite clearly:

It is reserved for the close of that series of Dispensations which has innovated upon Eternity, for God to manifest Himself as in Eternity He was and ever has been, as “All in all,” and “as He is;” hitherto, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard” what He is in Himself; and, in particular as regards the Son and the Spirit, we know them mainly in Their economical aspect, as our Mediator and our Paraclete.

Thus, in an effort to follow Newman’s own logic, we first treated Newman’s understanding of the economic dimension of the Trinity in the previous chapter. Only now will we consider how he approaches the immanent aspect, i.e. the Triune God in se, utterly distinct from—yet revealed in—the events of creation and redemption.

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1 TT 192. Cf. JHNS 3.284: “The incomprehensible persons of the Trinity are revealed not as they are in themselves but as they are to us, not as to their nature but as to their working – for their nature we could never understand, their works we may.”

2 TT 192-93.
As mentioned earlier, there has been surprisingly little scholarship on Newman’s Trinitarian theology, relatively speaking. In this chapter I will flesh out Newman’s understanding of the Trinity in se, arguing that the key feature is how he correlates the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity. In other words, his reflections on the eternal Godhead are distinctly grounded in the revelation of the Triune God in the economy of salvation. Indeed, this makes a great deal of sense, given what we have already seen in Newman’s distinct sacramental vision that he adopts from the Alexandrian Fathers, Joseph Butler, and John Keble. Just as created things, or even words, can point to some higher reality in which they participate, so the concrete actions of God in the world share in and manifest the eternal realities of the life of the Trinity. This will become especially evident in how Newman treats three components of classical Trinitarian theology: the principatus of the Father, consubstantiality, and coinherence.

**Newman’s Terminology**

Before exploring the content of Newman’s theology of the Trinity in se, it is worth clarifying how he uses various Trinitarian terms. Newman is certainly conscious of the importance of speaking properly about the Trinity. For instance, he writes to Thomas Mozley in 1842, “The truth is the essence of the doctrine…seems to me to be that God who is necessarily Personal, is and is revealed under three ἰδιότητες as begetting, begotten, and proceeding—i.e. is

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3 Ono Ekeh identifies three particular areas deserving of further study: (1) the development of Newman’s thinking, (2) how he approaches the Persons of the Trinity, and (3) how he understands ousia. See “A Phenomenological Theology of the Trinity: A Study in John Henry Newman and Edmund Husserl” (doctoral dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2009), 341. The first of these has been accomplished, at least in part, in recent studies by Benjamin John King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers: Shaping Doctrine in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Vinh Bao Luu-Quang, “The Trinitarian Theology of John Henry Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*: 1833-1843” (doctoral dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2010). While it is not the primary aim of this chapter to contribute to the second and third topics, it may shed some light on them.
Three Persons;—so that it is truer to say that God is Three than that Three are God.”⁴ In his appendix to his translations of Athanasius, Newman at times goes into great detail parsing out how certain technical terms were used in ancient doctrinal debates.⁵

Regarding the very term “‘Trinity,’” Newman states that “the word Trinitas is properly abstract; and only in an ecclesiastical sense expresses τριάς or ‘a three’…Unitas is abstract as well as Trinitas.” Yet when applied to the God of Christian revelation, the term takes on a more concrete meaning: “‘Trinity’ does not mean the state or condition of being three, as humanity is the condition of being man, but is synonymous with ‘three persons’…the Holy Trinity is a three, or a unity which exists in three.”⁶ In other words, in the context of Christian theology, the term Trinity refers simply and specifically to God as revealed in the economy of salvation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Newman speaks of the divine substance in a similar manner. On the one hand, he is not interested in God’s substance as something totally abstract, a divine property somehow separable from the personal God: “By the substance of God we mean nothing more or less than God Himself.”⁷ Yet he notes appropriate contexts for distinguishing between “divinity” and “God,” such as when speaking of each Person as distinct from the others.⁸ As we will see, Newman takes the view that the divine substance does not exist independently, but only as instantiated in each Person, a position also found in the Cappadocian Fathers, i.e. Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil

⁴ LD 8.485.
⁵ E.g. Ath. 2.403-04, 418.
⁶ Ath. 2.473-74.
⁷ Ath. 2.455. Elsewhere he states that “the definition of God applies to unus and tres.” So TT 347.
of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nyssa.9 Or as Donald Graham puts it, for Newman, “Divine essence and divine personhood are coincident and not opposite.”10 In his engagement with the Arian controversy, for instance, Newman argues that the term “ingenerate” applies to the Person of the Father, but not to the divine substance shared with the Son: “Though the Divine Substance is both the Father Ingenerate and also the Only-begotten Son, it is not itself ἀγέννητος or γεννητή.”11

Vinh Bao Luu-Quang and Ono Ekeh have both observed that Newman does not really give a definition of “person.” In sermon from 1825, Newman admits the ambiguity of the term, as “a word which does not mean the same as when we apply it to men, but which intimates that the Father is not the Son, the Son not the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost not the Father.”12 Luu-Quang notes, however, that Newman shifted in the early 1830s from using the English word person to the Greek hypostasis when referring to the Son,13 which may indicate that his understanding was increasingly formed by his engagement with the Greek Fathers. In a later work, Newman actually notes some of the ambiguities of the patristic use of the term, as it “would on first hearing suggest Tritheism to one who made the word synonymous with individual; and Unitarianism to another, who accepted it in the classical sense of mask or

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11 Ath. 2.418. As he explains elsewhere, “The word ἀγέννητος, ingenitus (unborn, ingenerate), was the philosophical term to denote that which had existed from eternity.” Thus the use of this term in Trinitarian discourse requires careful nuance. See Ari. 181.

12 JHNS 3.280.

character.” Nevertheless, he claims that, in the context of philosophical language in the ancient world, “hypostasis is a word more peculiarly Christian than usia.” At any rate, the particularity of the three Persons is an important feature in Newman’s thinking. As Ekeh explains, “Newman appeared to be more at ease focusing on the persons of the Trinity and then affirming their common godhead.” He goes on to argue that Newman thinks in terms of three divine Persons, yet one personal God. As we will see below, Newman views the distinction between Persons as positive, not simply negative. It is not merely that each Person is not the others, but that each Person has some distinguishing particularity within the Godhead.

In all of these cases, Newman is drawing on how terms have been used in the larger Christian tradition, or at least certain strains of it. His engagement with the patristic writers involved in the Arian controversy is especially impactful on his thinking. There are also a few instances worth noting where Newman’s use of terms is more peculiar. For example, in one sermon he gives this caveat: “not as if that Trinity were a name only, or stood for three manifestations, or qualities, or attributes, or relations,—such mere ideas or conceptions as we may come to form when contemplating God.” As Graham argues, Newman’s use of “relation” here does not follow the way the term is typically used in Trinitarian discourse, but refers only to

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14 TT 335; cf. Ath. 2.158.
15 TT 349.
17 Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 229.
19 PS 6.352.
the concepts in human understanding.\textsuperscript{20} Luu-Quang gives a detailed catalogue of terms and descriptions that Newman uses in the \textit{Parochial and Plain Sermons}, both for the Trinity and for each Person. He correctly notes that Newman combines simple, non-technical language, which his hearers could understand, with carefully chosen qualifiers that allow him to highlight specific theological points. For instance, he at times calls the Father “Unchangeable God” and “Divine Author of our salvation,” the Son “Co-eternal Son incarnate” and “The Godhead in a New Manifestation,” and the Holy Spirit “Giver of all gifts” and “Divine Glory.”\textsuperscript{21}

At times Newman uses analogies to speak of the Trinity \textit{in se}. For instance, he speaks of marriage as something that can “recall to us the everlasting ineffable love with which the Father loves the Son who is in His bosom and the Son the Father who has from all eternity begotten Him.”\textsuperscript{22} More specifically, he sees the Holy Family as presenting “an image of the Eternal Trinity.”\textsuperscript{23} Newman also comments on some of the analogies used by Athanasius and other patristic writers. As one example, he gives some commentary to Athanasius’ use of the relation between the sun and its rays of light to illustrate the relation between the Father and the Son. His interpretation is that “the illustration is not used to show \textit{how} such a thing may be, or to give an \textit{instance} of it, but to convey to the mind a correct \textit{idea} of what it is proposed to teach in the Catholic doctrine.”\textsuperscript{24} In other words, the analogy has a pedagogical function, but should not be pressed too far.

\textsuperscript{20} Graham, \textit{Eastertide to Ecclesia}, 55.

\textsuperscript{21} See Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 347-49, for the complete list.

\textsuperscript{22} NO 275.

\textsuperscript{23} NO 150.

\textsuperscript{24} Ath. 2.174-75.
Indeed, Newman seems to take a certain level of caution with analogies, not wanting to press them beyond what they can legitimately do for our understanding. This makes sense, given what we saw in Chapter 2 about his concept of economical language. His modus operandi is to take such language as far as it will go in describing revealed truth, while also recognizing its limitations. This may explain why Newman does not construct any overarching or central analogy for the Trinity *in se*, as have some theologians (e.g. Augustine of Hippo’s memory, understanding, and will; or Richard of St. Victor’s lover, beloved, and co-beloved). Newman is mostly content to start with the economical data of revelation, using both terms and analogies to the extent that they are helpful in elucidating that data, but ultimately leaving room for the mystery that transcends our understanding.25

**The Relation between the “Economic” and “Immanent” Trinity**

Many recent scholars have noted the correlation in Newman’s thinking between the Trinity *in se* and the Trinity *pro nobis*, some arguing that he anticipates Karl Rahner’s famous axiom, “The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity.”26 While I ultimately agree with this assessment, I must make two important comments before expounding it further. First of all, Newman himself does not use the terms immanent and economic Trinity. While it has become commonplace to apply these categories to his thought, we must be careful not to read into it more recent discussions in Trinitarian

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25 This is not to imply that theologians like Augustine and Richard fail to respect mystery or to acknowledge the limits of their analogies. But it seems to be a characteristic of Newman’s approach that he does not find it necessary to utilize the sort of summary analogies that they present.

theology. Secondly, any legitimate distinction between the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity is epistemological, not ontological. There are not two Trinities—that is precisely Rahner’s point—but two standpoints for talking about the one Triune God: in reference to the economy of salvation, and in reference to the eternal Being and relations between Persons.

Indeed, Newman usually treats both of these aspects together and closely connects them. This is arguably another instance of how Newman’s reading of the Church Fathers impacted his own thought. As Graham points out, Newman’s thinking in this regard is consistent throughout his career. Thus Newman stresses the correlation between Christ’s divine Sonship and Incarnation in an 1836 sermon, and then quotes this very sermon in an essay written nearly forty years later.

The practical upshot of this relationship is that the eternal, immanent life of the Trinity is genuinely revealed in the economy of redemption. Newman even sees this as an aspect of the syncatabasis that marks the economy:

It is part of the condescension of the Persons of the Ever-blessed Trinity, that They vouchsafe to allow the adorable mysteries of heaven to be adumbrated in some inscrutable way on earth. The Eternal Son was subjected to a generation in time; He received the Spirit in time; and the Spirit proceeded from the Father to Him, and them from Both, in time. The texts which speak of what took place in eternity, are also fulfilled in the economy of redemption.

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27 Graham notes an exception in the sermon “The Mystery of the Holy Trinity,” which focuses on the Trinity in se, but argues that Newman had specific reasons for doing so in this sermon. See “Sermon,” 68-69.

28 See Graham, Eastertide to Ecclesia, 60, which notes patristic and medieval precedents for this correlation.

29 Ibid., 59. To be specific, Newman quotes his sermon “Christ, the Son of God Made Man” (PS 5.58) in his essay “Causes of the Rise and Successes of Arianism” (TT 185-86).

30 VM 1.304.
While the economic events are not identical with the eternal realities, there is a clear correspondence, such that what happens in salvation history expresses something of the immanent relations between the three Persons. As Luu-Quang sums up, “Newman’s theology of the Trinity is the theology of God’s self-giving in God’s immanent life as well as in the economy. What happens in the life of God in se is now expressed in the economy pro nobis, in which human beings and all creatures are drawn into a participation in the inward divine life.”\(^{31}\) Or working the other way, we cannot ascribe anything to the eternal (immanent) life of God that is not rooted in (economic) revelation. Indeed, Newman’s stress on the Incarnation, as the key event in the revelation of the Triune God, not only leads him to his understanding of the Trinity, but also becomes a safeguard for the doctrine, in both its immanent and economic dimensions.\(^{32}\)

One of the ways that this correlation plays out is how Newman prioritizes the unity of God in explicating the doctrine. He states that “we must begin by laying down the great Truth that there is One God in a simple and strict sense, and then go on to speak of Three, which is the way in which the mystery was progressively revealed in Scripture.”\(^{33}\) This is not to diminish the plurality of the Godhead, but to follow the Triune God’s own order of revelation in the economy of salvation.

It is worth pausing here to expound on how Newman conceives of the divine unity. Benjamin King notes a shift in his thinking from writing The Arians of the Fourth Century in 1833 to his translations of Athanasius around 1842. In both cases, Newman frames God’s unity through “couplets” that seek to circumscribe the doctrine properly. In the earlier period, these are

\(^{31}\) Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 188.

\(^{32}\) See Luu-Quang, “Immanent,” 76 ff.

\(^{33}\) PS 6.349.
unity “of God” and unity “in God,” which respectively refer to the doctrines of *monarchia* and *perichoresis*, which we will explore below. By the 1840s, however, Newman begins thinking in terms of numerical and generical oneness. The former of these simply means that there is one God, one Trinity, and this is stressed by the Latin Church Fathers.\(^34\) The latter term refers to the divine nature as something common to the three Hypostases, and this tends to be how the Greek Fathers express divine unity. In Newman’s later thinking, he tries to combine these two strains, and seeks to interpret the Greek Fathers accordingly.\(^35\) King argues that this leads him to conform Athanasius to Latin theology, and thus misrepresent him in his translations.\(^36\)

In his later period, Newman stresses that each of the three Persons *is* the one God, yet without contradiction:

> The Father is the One Simple Entire Divine Being, and so is the Son. They do in no sense share divinity between Them; Each is ὅλος θεός. This is not ditheism or tritheism, for They are the same God; nor is it Sabellianism, for They are eternally distinct and substantive Persons; but it is a depth and height beyond our intellect, how what is Two in so full a sense can also in so full a sense be One, or how the Divine Nature does not come under number in the sense in which we have earthly experience of numbers.\(^37\)

Indeed, Newman is clear that we cannot think of either the Trinity or the divine unity in strictly numerical or arithmetic terms. To do so “may be as unphilosophical as it is profane.”\(^38\) This is

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\(^34\) Newman comments briefly on the historical development of numerical unity in TT 344-45.

\(^35\) In 1843, for instance, he claims that “not till the thirteenth century was there any direct and distinct avowal, on the part of the Church, of the numerical Unity of the Divine Nature, which the language of some of the principal Greek fathers, *prima facie*, though not really, denies.” So US 323.

\(^36\) King, “Alexandrian Fathers,” 202-06. King notes, however, that Newman stays true to Athanasius in his reluctance to say what God is. See ibid., 212.

\(^37\) Ath. 2.322.

simply because, “Infinity does not add to infinity; the treatment of infinities is above us.”\(^{39}\) While he acknowledges the charge that the plurality of Persons undermines God’s oneness—the accusation of various heresies, and even a struggle for many professedly orthodox Christians\(^{40}\)—he argues that this is not actually the case. In one instance, he draws an analogy with the existence of multiple divine attributes: “For as the attributes of God are many in one mode of speaking, yet all One in God; so, too, there are Three Divine Persons, yet these Three are One.”\(^{41}\)

The most significant area where Newman’s correlation of the immanent and economic dimensions of the Trinity impacts his thinking is how he links the temporal missions of the Son and Holy Spirit to their eternal relations with the Father as origin. Not only does syncatabasis begin before the Incarnation; it is in fact an expression of the Son’s generation and the Spirit’s procession. Thus he claims that “the mission of the Son to create is included in the eternal gennesis…the mission to create signifies the gennesis of a Son in eternity who is in time to be the Creator.”\(^{42}\) That God creates through the Word is not only evidence of the reality of the immanent Trinity, but a proper and natural expression of the eternal relations between Persons, as they manifest economically.

Newman furthermore links the divine Sonship with the Incarnation of Christ, arguing that our Lord’s Sonship is not only the guarantee to us of His Godhead, but also the condition of His incarnation. As the Son was God, so on the other hand was the Son suitably made man; it belonged to Him to have the Father’s perfections, it became Him to assume a servant’s form. We must beware of supposing that the Persons of the Ever-blessed and All-holy Trinity differ from each other only in this, that the

\(^{39}\) Ath. 2.325.

\(^{40}\) See Dev. 174, 423.

\(^{41}\) PS 6.350. He immediately goes on, “Let it not be for an instant supposed that I am paralleling the two cases, which is the Sabellian heresy; but I use the one in illustration of the other.”

\(^{42}\) Ath. 2.400.
Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. They differ in this besides, that the Father is the Father, and the Son is the Son. While they are one in substance, each has distinct characteristics which the Other has not.\(^{43}\)

Newman’s point is that the divine Persons cannot be defined merely in terms of “relations of opposition” (i.e. the Father is not the Son, etc.). Moreover, he anticipates Rahner’s claim that “the incarnation may be considered as a dogmatically certain ‘instance’ for a…economic relation, proper to each person, of the divine persons in the world.”\(^{44}\) It was not by accident that the Second Person of the Trinity became incarnate, as if any of the divine Persons could have; rather the Incarnation of the Son reveals something about the eternal relations in the Trinity.

In this same passage, Newman goes on to make a point about Trinitarian language:

Surely those sacred Names have a meaning in them, and must not lightly be passed over. And they will be found, if we reverently study them, to supply a very merciful use towards our understanding Scripture; for we shall see a fitness…now that that sacred truth is revealed, in the Son of God taking flesh, and we shall thereby understand better what He says of Himself in the Gospels. The Son of God became the Son a second time, though not a second Son, by becoming man. He was a Son both before His incarnation, and, by a second mystery, after it. From eternity he had been the Only-begotten in the bosom of the Father; and when He came on earth, this essential relation to the Father remained unaltered; still, He was a Son, when in the form of a servant,—still performing the will of the Father, as His Father’s Word and Wisdom, manifesting His Father’s glory and accomplishing His Father’s purposes.\(^{45}\)

For Newman, the term “Son” is not just a metaphor taken from human relations. Indeed, he seems to see it the other way around: “The words ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ have a high archetypical sense, and human fathers and sons have but the shadow of it.”\(^{46}\) By this he means that

\(^{43}\) PS 6.58.

\(^{44}\) Rahner, *Trinity*, 27.

\(^{45}\) PS 6.58-59; cf. 3.170; Ath. 2.115; TT 179, 199.

\(^{46}\) Ath. 2.114.
it is by imparting Himself wholly that the Father begets the Son; and a perfect \( gennesis \) finds its termination in itself. The Son has not a Son, because the Father has not a Father. Thus the Father is the only true Father, and the Son the only true Son; the Father only a Father, the Son only a Son; being really in Their Persons what human fathers are but by function, circumstance, accident, and name.\(^{47}\)

Thus, as Newman sees it, “Father” and “Son” are in some sense proper titles that describes the relationship between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity, both from eternity and in the Incarnation. They also indicate the identity between the eternal Word and the Word made flesh.

Newman does not develop such continuity between divine personhood and economic mission nearly as explicitly with regards to the Holy Spirit,\(^{48}\) but it is easy to see how the same principle would apply. He does at times state it clearly, such as when he claims that “it was fitting that the Son should be incarnate, and not the Father; and fitting that the Holy Ghost should be the energizing life, both of the animate and rational creation, rather than the Father or the Son.”\(^{49}\) For Newman, life-giving is properly suited to the Spirit, just as becoming the incarnate mediator is properly suited to the Son.\(^{50}\)

There are, however, some ambiguities in how Newman conceives the relation between the roles of the Son and Spirit. As noted in the last chapter, he is concerned to balance the unity of divine operations with the respective roles of each Person. He is aware, moreover, of “the absurdity, as well as the presumption, of inquiring minutely about the actual relations subsisting between God and His Son and Spirit, and drawing large inferences from what is told us of

\(^{47}\) Ibid.

\(^{48}\) See Graham, *Eastertide to Ecclesia*, 75-77.

\(^{49}\) OS 186.

\(^{50}\) See Graham, *Eastertide to Ecclesia*, 77-83.
them.”\textsuperscript{51} Roderick Strange argues that Newman is once again emulating Athanasius and other patristic writers in not wanting to parse things out too exactly.\textsuperscript{52}

But there is another reason for this ambiguity in Newman’s thinking, which has to do with the correlation between the Trinity \textit{in se} and \textit{pro nobis}. As Graham describes it, “This correspondence warrants speaking similarly of the eternal and temporal acts of the Son and Spirit as unified, complementary and distinct.”\textsuperscript{53} Thus the Holy Spirit’s role in the economy is unified with that of the Son as part of a single divine work; it is complementary in that it completes and furthers the work of the incarnate Christ; yet it is also distinct: the Spirit does different things than does the Son, properly speaking. Yet this also reflects the eternal relation between the Son and the Spirit, which is inter-penetrating or co-inhering—thus both united and distinct. We will discuss this relationship of perichoresis below, but here it is worth noting that this eternal relation is likewise manifested economically.\textsuperscript{54}

Newman’s correlation between the immanent relations and economic missions of the three Persons leads to how he treats some key pieces of classical Trinitarian theology: the principatus of the Father, consubstantiality, and coinherence. We will now treat each of these in detail.

\textsuperscript{51} Ari. 155.

\textsuperscript{52} Strange, \textit{Gospel of Christ}, 153-55.

\textsuperscript{53} Graham, \textit{Eastertide to Ecclesia}, 74.

\textsuperscript{54} See Graham, \textit{Eastertide to Ecclesia}, 77. Graham later explains how this perichoretic relationship and the correlation of mission to Person undergird Newman’s view that the Holy Spirit is the leading actor in the resurrection. See ibid., 126-28.
Principatus

The *monarchia* or *principatus* of the Father refers to the idea that the Son and Spirit originate eternally from the Father, who has no origin. As Newman himself describes it, “As is implied in the word *monarchia*…the Father alone is the *arche*, or *origin*, and the Son and Spirit are not origins.”55 He further explains how the catholic tradition has made sense of this within Trinitarian doctrine, from the historical facts “that ἀρχὴ had notoriously two meanings, origin and beginning; that in the philosophical schools these senses were understood to go together, but that Christianity had introduced a separation of them.”56 Thus to speak of the Father as origin of the Son and Holy Spirit is not to imply, as in Arianism, that the latter two Persons have a temporal or quasi-temporal beginning.

According to Strange, Newman takes his understanding of the principatus directly from the Church Fathers.57 Graham cites evidence that it is present in his theology as early as 1827,58 while Luu-Quang notes that it seems to be implicit in his sermons from the early 1830s, even if he does not use the term or its synonyms.59 Newman places great emphasis on this concept in his 1833 book *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, though he seems to be more aware of the potential pitfalls in his later works, even by the 1840s.60 Indeed, in his 1872 essay, “Causes of the Rise and

55 Ari. 182.
56 Ath. 2.349.
60 See King, *Alexandrian Fathers*, 198-99. It is my judgment that King overstates his case regarding the diminished place of the principatus in Newman’s later thinking.
Successes of Arianism,” he identifies the principatus as one of the doctrinal bases on which the Arian heresy took hold. He writes, “This danger is so obvious, that I shall have chiefly to employ myself…in defending the doctrine, not in showing its capability of perversion.” Yet even with such qualification, Newman not only defends the principatus of the Father, but continues to regard it as an essential part of Trinitarian doctrine. Strange points out that the difficulties that come with this concept, of which Newman is fully aware, make his emphasis on it quite noteworthy.

For Newman, the principatus is necessary to safeguard both the unity of the Godhead and the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit. In both his earlier and later periods noted above, his conception of divine unity is not abstract, but personal, founded on the Father as origin of the Son and Spirit: “The Father is absolutely the One God, as if [there is] no Son and Spirit.” While such a statement by itself may sound quasi-Arian, Newman’s point is exactly the opposite: that the fullness of divinity is not an abstract category, but perfectly instantiated in each Person, originating with the Father. This is his synthesis of numerical and generical unity at work. Thus the principatus “is one of the especial senses in which God is said to be one.”

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61 TT 167. He goes on to note, “No subject was more constantly and directly before the Christian intellect in the first centuries of the Church than the doctrine of the Monarchia. That there was but one First Principle of all things was a fundamental doctrine of all Catholics, orthodox and heterodox alike.”

62 He states, “I still consider it as an important doctrine, and valuable now not less than when it was more insisted on. It is remarkable that the great Fathers of the fourth century, with their full experience of Arianism, nevertheless continued to enunciate it. What Basil and Gregory did, we, under the guidance and correction of the Church, may safely do also; and if safely, profitably.” So TT 175.

63 Strange, Gospel of Christ, 11-12.

64 See ibid., 13.

65 SN 158.

Yet the doctrine of the principatus also means that there is a particular appropriateness of referring to the Father as God, and to God as Father. Newman states that “of the Three the Father is emphatically, (and with a singular distinction from the Other Two, as the πηγὴ θεότητος,) spoken of as God.” He also notes that the Apostles’ Creed opens by identifying God as the Father. Ekeh explains the reason for this, in Newman’s thinking: “The Father is divinity in the fullest sense, since he does not participate in anyone else’s divinity, but in whom the other persons of the Trinity participate and so can be called God.” This means that any concept of God that is not the Father must somehow be rooted in the Father—as are the Son who is begotten and the Spirit who proceeds. Ekeh further argues that, for Newman, the distinction between divine nature and personhood in the Father is “practically non-existent,” and thus God’s essence is a “shared incommunicable aspect of the Father.” Luu-Quang concurs, noting that Newman generally connects the ousia of God to the Person of the Father.

However, the principatus of the Father should not be seen as diminishing the Son and the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, Newman insists that God the Father necessarily implies God the Son and God the Spirit: “The Monarchia of the Father is not only the symbol of the Divine Unity, but of the Trinity in that Unity, for it implies the presence of Those who, though supreme, are not ἀρχαί.” Newman likewise claims that the Son and Spirit “are, so to express it, but the

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67 TT 161; cf. 168.
68 Ari. 176.
69 Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 234.
70 Ibid., 225-28.
71 Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 56. As we will see shortly, this is quite reminiscent of the approach taken by Cappadocian theologians such as Basil.
72 Ath. 2.110.
new manifestation and repetition of the Father,” so that, “in naming the Father, we imply the Son and Spirit, whether They be named or not.”\textsuperscript{73} Indeed, since the divine essence possessed by the Father is unchanging, “what He was once, that He ever was. Once a Father, always a Father.”\textsuperscript{74} In other words, God the Father is necessarily relational, and so there is no divine Father without the divine Son and divine Spirit. And so, despite its potential Arian abuse, Newman sees the principatus of the Father as an important guarantee of the full divinity of the Son and Spirit. It is because the Father is fully God that the Son and Spirit can receive the same divine nature from the Father as their source.

Indeed, this is what allows for the affirmation of the full divinity of all three Persons without falling into tritheism. Newman notes how the Church Fathers came to articulate this in relation to the principatus:

There is One God then, they would say, “not only because the Three Persons are in one \textit{usia}, or substance (though this reason is good too), but because the Second and Third stand to the First in the relation of derivation, and therefore are included in their Origin as soon as named; so then in confessing One Father or Origin, we are not omitting, but including, those Persons whom the very names of the One Father or Origin necessarily implies.”\textsuperscript{75}

Thus we can speak of the Son and Spirit as “having a communicated divinity from the Father, and a personal unity with Him; the Three Persons being internal to the Divine Essence.”\textsuperscript{76} As Ekeh explains, Newman sees the Son’s divinity as a sort of participation in the Person of the Father: there is no abstract divine nature, so the Father’s divinity is the Son’s divinity. Moreover,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{73} Ari. 175; cf. PS 5.87-88; Ath. 2.107, 112-13, 288; TT 168, 171. He cites Athanasius and other patristic writers to support such statements.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} Ath. 2.290.
  \item \textsuperscript{75} TT 169.
  \item \textsuperscript{76} TT 168.
\end{itemize}
the incommunicability of the divine nature makes the full divinity of the Son and Spirit logically inevitable. Only because they are themselves divine can they share the Father’s nature.77

Here it is worth putting Newman in the context of the larger Christian tradition(s) on this matter. As we have noted, Newman largely follows a Greek, specifically Cappadocian, trajectory, which locates the unity of the Godhead primarily through the monarchia of the Father. This can be seen by comparing what Newman says with the following quotation from Basil of Caesarea. In response to the charge of tritheism, Basil writes,

> By worshipping God from God, we confess the particularizing property of the persons, and we stay within the monarchy. We do not scatter the divinity among a separated multitude because one form, as it were, has been imparted in the unchangeability of the Godhead and is contemplated in God the Father and God the Son, for the Son is in the Father, and the Father, in the Son.78

By “the particularizing property of the persons,” Basil means that each of the three hypostases is, in a sense, the particular instantiation of the one divine ousia. The divine nature is communicated from the Father, as arche, to the Son and the Spirit, such that we can speak of the latter Persons being “in” the Father. The means that, for both Basil and Newman, God’s ousia does not exist abstracly or independently from the three hypostases.

A more recent theologian who has taken up this line of thought (and specifically cites the Cappadocians, especially Basil) is John Zizioulas. Zizioulas claims,

> Among the Greek Fathers the unity of God, the one God, and the ontological “principle” or “cause” of the being and life of God does not consist in the one substance of God but in the hypostasis, that is, the person of the Father…That is to say, the substance never exists in a “naked” state, that is, without hypostasis, without a “mode of existence.” And the one divine substance is consequently the


78 Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, 18.45.
being of God only because it has these three modes of existence, which it owes not to the substance but to one person, the Father.\textsuperscript{79}

Zizioulas takes this principle, that the being of the Trinity is rooted in the Person of the Father, as his starting point to construct an entire ontology of relation, in which the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Spirit make God—and thus all reality—to be fundamentally relational: “To be and to be in relation becomes identical.”\textsuperscript{80} While he speaks more in the vocabulary of twentieth-century philosophy, Zizioulas, like Newman before him, is attempting to follow the Cappadocian emphasis on the monarchical of the Father as the source of divine unity.

This approach stands in contrast with that of Augustine of Hippo, who largely set the pattern of the Western tradition of Trinitarian theology. While Augustine certainly acknowledges the principatus of the Father, from whom the Son is begotten and the Spirit proceeds, his conception of divine unity is much more focused on the one substance itself. For instance, he states that “the substance or being which is God is alone unchangeable, and therefore it pertains to it most truly and supremely to be, from which comes the name ‘being.’”\textsuperscript{81} Unlike the Cappadocian tradition, Augustine is inclined to identify the “one God” primarily with the shared nature: “The name ‘Father’ signifies only the Father in himself but the name ‘God’ includes him and the Son and the Holy Spirit, because the one God is a trinity.”\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{79} John D. Zizioulas, \textit{Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church} (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 40-41. Zizioulas explains the ontological assumption behind this as follows: “No substance or nature exists without person or hypostasis or mode of existence. No person exists without substance or nature, but the ontological ‘principle’ or ‘cause’ of being—i.e. that which makes a thing to exist—is not the substance or nature but the person or hypostasis. Therefore being is traced back not to substance but to person.” So ibid., n. 37.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 88.

\textsuperscript{81} Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, 5.1.3.

\textsuperscript{82} Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, 5.2.9.
follows Augustine tends to start with the one substance and then move to the three Persons. When taken to an extreme, “God” and “divinity” come to be thought of as abstract concepts that precede, logically if not metaphysically, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as such. Newman thus stands out in this regard, as being closer to the Eastern approach that starts with the three Persons, especially the Person of the Father.83

This contrast brings out one more noteworthy point. Like the unity of substance, Augustine also stresses the unity of God’s works ad extra, rather than the distinct roles of each Person.84 Basil, on the other hand, conceives of a specifically Trinitarian shape to the economy of salvation, rooted in the monarchia of the Father: “The way, then, to knowledge of God is from the one Spirit, through the one Son, to the one Father. And conversely the goodness and holiness by nature and the royal dignity reach the Father, through the Only-begotten, to the Spirit.”85 As we saw in the last chapter, Newman thinks in very similar terms. While he would certainly agree with Augustine that there is a unity to the divine operations, he also insists on certain works properly belonging to each Person. For this reason, it is easy to see how Newman’s economic focus would lead him to an emphasis on the principatus. The fact that the Father sends the Son and the Holy Spirit in their missions in the world reveals and correlates with the reality that the Father is also their origin eternally.

83 This general tendency should not be taken too rigidly. There are other exceptions to the trend, such as Bonaventure. The point of highlighting it here is simply to locate where Newman fits within the broader streams of historical theology.

84 For instance, he writes that “with reference to creation Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit are one origin, just as they are one creator and one lord.” So De Trinitate, 5.3.15.

85 Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, 18.47.
Consubstantiality

As we have seen, the principatus of the Father is what allows for the full communication of the divine nature from Person to Person. It is on this basis that Newman defends the Nicene adoption of the term *homoousios* or consubstantial “to express the real divinity of Christ, and that, as being derived from, and one with the Father’s.”\(^86\) Newman is clear that it really is the same divinity shared by the three Persons: “Father and Son are both the same God, though really and eternally distinct from each other; and Each is full of the Other, that is, their Substance is one and the same.”\(^87\) Consubstantiality, for Newman, is what counter-balances the principatus: just as the Father is the one God, as if there were no Son or Spirit, the same statement can be made about each of the other Persons. Each of the Persons *is* God, not merely a portion or aspect of God:

The Second Person in the Holy Trinity is not a quality, or attribute, or a mere relation, but the One Eternal Essence; not a part of the First Person, but whole or entire God, all that God is; nor does the *gengesis* impair the Father’s Essence, which is already whole and entire God. Thus there are two infinite Persons, in Each Other because They are infinite. Each of Them being wholly One and the Same Divine Being, yet not being merely separate aspects of the Same. Each is God as absolutely as if the Other were not.\(^88\)

Newman not only affirms consubstantiality; he is keenly aware that it carries important theological implications. In his sermons, for instance, Newman is especially careful to stress the full divinity of Christ and the divine nature, attributes, and roles that follow from it.\(^89\)

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86 Ari. 186. Elsewhere Newman notes the uniqueness of this dogmatic term, as “fifteen hundred years have passed since the Nicene Council, and it is the one instance of a scientific word having been introduced into the Creed from that day to this.” So GA 125.

87 Ath. 2.76.

88 Ath. 2.291-92. Cf. SN 38: “Each person all God; the Son the only God, as if only Person.”

89 E.g. PS 2.29-30 ff.; 3.162-63; 5.87-88; 6.55-58; Mix. 286. We will return to this theme in greater detail in the next chapter.
With regard to the Son, Newman consciously connects consubstantiality with eternal begetting and Sonship. He points out that the begetting of the Son is not so much an event as an ongoing reality: “It follows from this perfection and unchangeableness of the Divine Nature, that, if there is in the beginning a gennessis of the Son, it is continual:—that is the doctrine of the ἀειγεννέζ…In other words, by the Divine γέννησις is not meant so much an act, as an eternal and unchangeable fact, in the Divine Essence.”\textsuperscript{90} That is to say, the Father ever was, is, and will be begetting the Son.\textsuperscript{91} If this is difficult to comprehend or imagine, Newman claims that it is no more so than the doctrine of creation out of nothing.\textsuperscript{92} This is important because it distinguishes Newman’s orthodox interpretation of the principatus of the Father from the Arian conception that “there was when the Son was not.” Principatus and consubstantiality go hand in hand in Newman’s thinking.

Likewise, Newman sees Christ’s status as Son of God as the guarantee of his full divinity. He stresses the importance of this point, explaining that while our Lord is God He is also the Son of God, or rather, that He is God because He is the Son of God. We are apt, at first hearing, to say that He is God though He is the Son of God, marveling at the mystery. But what to man is a mystery, to God is a cause. He is God, not \textit{though}, but \textit{because} He is the Son of God…And after all, if the truth must be said, it is surely not so marvelous and mysterious that the Son of God should be God, as that there should be a Son of God at all. It is as little level to natural reason that God should have a Son, as that, if there be a Son, He must be God because He is the Son of God. Both are mysteries; and if we admit with Scripture that there be an Only-begotten Son, it is even less to admit, what Scripture also teaches, that the Only-begotten Son is God because He is Only-begotten. And this is what makes the doctrine of our Lord’s Eternal Sonship of such supreme importance, viz. that He is God because He is begotten of God; and they who give up the latter truth, are in the way to give up, or will be found already to have given up, the former.

\textsuperscript{90} Ath. 2.351-52.

\textsuperscript{91} In a letter from 1859, Newman states that “the Word is from the Father’s will, yet exists in consequence of the Father’s Eternal Nature.” So LD 19.247.

\textsuperscript{92} Ath. 2.109.
The great safeguard to the doctrine of our Lord’s Divinity is the doctrine of His Sonship; we realize that He is God only when we acknowledge Him to be by nature and from eternity Son.93

“Son,” as Newman points out, is not a term of inferiority to the Father, but of equality. The Father communicates everything to the Son, except for the fact of being the Father. The Persons are distinct, but the divine essence is the same. Elsewhere he explains more explicitly how Sonship in fact means a sharing of nature:

The Son of God must be God, granting that the human word “Son” is to guide us to the knowledge of what is heavenly…A continuation or communication of nature enters into the very idea of γέννησις; if there is no participation of nature there is no sonship…The Son then participates in the Divine Nature, and since the Divine Nature is none other than the One individual Living Personal True God, He too is that God, and since He is thus identical with that One True God, and since that One True God is eternal and never had a beginning of existence, therefore the Son is eternal, and without beginning.94

Here we see an example of how theological language functions in Newman’s thinking. Terms like Father, Son, and gennesis provide content, however imperfectly, to the theological realities they describe. Just as human parents pass on human nature to their child, so the divine nature is fully shared between the Persons of the Trinity. Furthermore, as Ekeh points out, Newman’s emphasis on divine Sonship allows him to avoid both modalism and tritheism. As Son of God, Christ is clearly distinguished from the Person of the Father, while also acknowledged as deriving from—and thus one with—the Father eternally and essentially.95

93 PS 6.56-58.
94 Ath. 2.287-88.
95 Ekeh, “Phenomenological,” 244; cf. Strange, Gospel of Christ, 43.
It is in light of consubstantiality that Newman can make such statements about the Father-Son relationship as that the Son “is not external to the First Person,”⁹⁶ and that “there is, (so to express it,) a reiteration of the One Infinite Nature of God, a communicated divinity, in the Person of our Lord.”⁹⁷ This last description seems to stand in contrast to Newman’s insistence that God’s nature is incommunicable. But aside from the fact that he is consciously stretching the limits of the available language, he clearly sees that the divine nature can be and is communicated between the Persons of the Trinity. It is perhaps tautologous to state in these terms, but in Newman’s thinking, the three Persons can share the (otherwise) incommunicable divine substance precisely because they are divine Persons. Outside of the Triune Godhead, the divine nature as such is utterly incommunicable.

Newman is attentive to how even the different titles for the Second Person speak of this intra-divine relationship:

This Image, as being the Effluence and Expression and Likeness of the Almighty, may equally well be called Word or Son, and whether we use one of these names or the other, we mean to express, though under a distinct aspect in each of them, a Second Person in the Godhead. The name of Image teaches us that the Second is commensurate and co-equal with the First; that of the Son, that He is co-eternal, for the nature of God cannot alter or vary; and the name of Word teaches us that in Him is represented and manifested the intelligence, living force, and operative energy of the Supreme Being.⁹⁸

For Newman, there is value in a multiplicity of names, not only because no single term could capture the mystery of the intra-divine relations between Persons, but also because each name positively highlights some aspect of that reality. With these particular terms, we also see again

⁹⁶ Ath. 2.288.
⁹⁷ Ari. 163.
⁹⁸ Ath. 2.289; cf. 338.
how Newman’s conception of principatus and consubstantiality work together in expressing how
the divine nature of the Father is communicated fully to the Son. While Image, Son, and Word
all imply a distinct source (i.e. Image, Son, Word of whom?), they also indicate a complete
expression of that source in a particular form, as Newman points out.

Once again, Newman treats the Son far more thoroughly than the Holy Spirit, this time
with regard to the relation of each to the Father. But again, much of what he says about the Son
vis-à-vis consubstantiality with the Father could be applied to the Spirit as well. On a few
occasions Newman refers to the Augustinian idea that the Holy Spirit is the bond of love
between the Father and the Son.99

There is one issue worth mentioning here, namely the question of the filioque: does the
Holy Spirit proceed simply “from the Father,” or “from the Father and the Son?” The former
phrase was the original next of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, and continues to be
insisted upon in the Eastern tradition. The latter addition entered the Creed in Spain during the
early medieval period and spread gradually until it became universal in the West. This continues
to be a point of contention between Eastern and Western Christians.

Despite his strong affinity for the tradition of the Greek Fathers, Newman clearly affirms
the doctrine of the filioque. Not only would he have accepted it as part of the received teaching
in both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, he teaches it explicitly in his sermons.100 He

99 MD 302, 375, 402.

100 PS 6.64, 357, 379, 364-65; OS 186.
admits late in life that he has never studied the issue closely, but he commends the 1876 book on the topic by his former Oxford colleague Edward Bouverie Pusey.

Newman likewise sees consubstantiality as manifest in the economy of salvation. He notes that the word *arche* is used in theological discourse on both the Trinity and the Incarnation. In the first case, it clearly refers to the Father. In the second case, however, “it expresses the great providential office of the Second Person towards the universe, spiritual and material, which He has created.” This office of the Son begins in creation, culminates in the Incarnation, and “in its very nature implies divinity.” Newman also draws out the implication of the patristic metaphor of the Son and Holy Spirit as “hands” of God the Father: “This image is in contrast with that of *instrument*, ὄργανον, which the Arians would use to express the relation of the Son to the Father, as implying separateness and subservience, whereas the word *Hand* implies His consubstantiality.” Thus even the economic syncatabasis of the Son and Spirit are indications that they share the divine nature of the Father, another example of how the eternal Trinity is revealed in salvation history.

**Coinherence**

Consubstantiality naturally leads to another key point in Newman’s conception of the Trinity *in se*: the doctrine of coinherence or perichoresis, i.e. the idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live and abide “in” one another, in a sort of inter-penetrating manner. On one level, Newman seems just to accept this as a revealed datum, as he never gives it an extensive

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103 Ath. 2.380.
104 Ath. 2.142.
treatment.105 As Luu-Quang observes, Newman sees God as fundamentally relational, much like Athanasius and the Cappadocians did.106 While he only begins to use the term “co-inherence” around 1833-34, he places an emphasis on the mutual indwelling of the three Persons as early as 1831.107

Yet in relation to the two other concepts we have been discussing, coinherence clearly plays an important role in Newman’s Trinitarian thinking. He notes that any affirmation of the unity in divine Substance implies a coinherence of Persons: “Since the Father and the Son are the numerically One God, it is but expressing this in other words to say that the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, for all They have and all They are is common to Each, excepting their being Father and Son.”108 Coinherence also provides an important check on the potential excesses of the principatus of the Father.109 While the divine unity originates in the Father, the fullness of divinity is communicated to the Son and Spirit, and all three Persons, as coinhering in each other, share the divine nature equally. Indeed, Newman goes as far as to say of coinherence, “This doctrine is not the deepest part of the whole, but it is the whole, other statements being in fact this in other shapes.”110 Moreover, Graham argues that this is key to how he correlates the economic and immanent Trinity “without thereby reducing the immanent Trinity to the economic

105 Strange, Gospel of Christ, 31.
108 Ath. 2.78.
109 See Strange, Gospel of Christ, 31. For a discussion on how Newman’s thinking on how to relate these concepts changed over the course of his career, see King, Alexandrian Fathers, 238-39.
Trinity. Trinitarian acts *ad extra* are understood wholly to be the acts of the self-same God; that is, perichoretic acts which are coincidentally one, relationally distinct and complementary.”¹¹¹

In a few instances Newman reflects on what the doctrine of coinherence means for the inner life of God. He notes how the perichoretic love of the Trinity is a sort of fundamental bond of all reality: “It is eternal Charity which is the bond of all things in heaven and earth; it is Charity wherein the Father and the Son are one in the unity of the Spirit; by which the Angels in heaven are one, by which all Saints are one with God, by which the Church is one upon earth.”¹¹² For Newman, the coinherence of the Trinity is not merely an ontological union, but an inter-Personal relationship of perfect love. Naturally flowing from such charity is a sort of divine sympathy:

> Sympathy may be called an eternal law, for it is signified or rather transcendentally and archetypically fulfilled in the ineffable mutual love of the Divine Trinity. God, though infinitely One, has ever been Three. He ever has rejoiced in His Son and His Spirit, and they in Him—and thus through all eternity He has existed, not solitary, though alone, having in this incomprehensible multiplication of Himself and reiteration of His Person, such infinitely perfect bliss, that nothing He has created can add aught to it.¹¹³

Here Newman even uses the language of joy and bliss to describe the eternal intra-Trinitarian relationship, emphasizing that the Godhead is personal and inter-personal, not simply an abstract metaphysical reality. Moreover, he stresses that the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is complete in itself: “All things once were not, all things might not be, but it would be enough for the Father that He had begotten His co-equal consubstantial Son, and for that He was

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¹¹² PS 4.318.

¹¹³ MD 309.
embraced in the Bosom of the Eternal." In other words, God does not need creation as some sort of addition to the divine perfection of the Trinity.

Nevertheless, this relationship of love and delight also plays out in the economy of salvation. While creation is not strictly necessary for perfection of divine love, Newman points out that it was precisely the overflow of that perichoretic love that resulted in creation:

Rather how was it that He ever began to create, who had a Son without beginning and without imperfection, whom He could love with a perfect love?...I ask, how was it that He who needed nothing, who was all in all, who had infinite Equals in the Son and the Spirit, who were One with Him, how was it that He created His Saints, but from simple love of them from eternity? God’s love toward creation is not marked by need or desire, but by the abundance—one might even say excess—of the love that already exists within the Triune Godhead. As Newman sees it, this love comes to us as a generous gift, manifested in creation itself as well as our redemption.

Newman also argues that the eternal sympathy of the Trinity is the basis for Christ’s sympathy and love in his earthly mission: “When, for our sakes, the Son came on earth and took our flesh, yet He would not live without the sympathy of others. For thirty years He lived with Mary and Joseph and thus formed a shadow of the Heavenly Trinity on earth.” Once again, this is simply the economic manifestation of an eternal reality; in this case, the divine love seen in the incarnate Christ reveals the perichoretic love of the Triune God. As we will see in the next chapter, this also plays out in how Newman conceives of the relationship between the Son and Spirit in their

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114 MD 366-67; cf. SN 45.

115 PS 6.365-66. Cf. MD 372: “And when Thou hadst created us, then Thou didst but love more, if that were possible. Thou didst love not only Thy own Co-equal Self in the multiplied Personality of the Godhead, but Thou didst love Thy creatures also. Thou wast love to us, as well as Love in Thyself.”

116 MD 309; cf. 311.
economic missions. In many ways, then, Newman sees coinherence as the foundation for God’s works in both creation and redemption.

**Order and Equality?**

At this point we must explicitly address a question that has been lurking behind much that we have discussed in this chapter, a question which raises some serious difficulties for Trinitarian theology: what is the relation between order and equality in the Trinity? On the one hand, stressing order—even hierarchy—among the divine Persons can easily undermine the equality between them, and thus fall into subordinationism. On the other hand, the data of both the New Testament and the mainstream Christian tradition seems to preclude dropping some notion of order entirely. This matter is further complicated by what seems to be a clear *economic* subordination of the Son and Spirit to the Father in the New Testament.¹¹⁷

How then does Newman seek to strike a balance on this point? He is certainly aware of the problem, and sees it as a particular risk in grounding the doctrine of the Trinity in the economy of redemption: “It is natural then, in spite of the baptismal formula, for Christians at all times, without guarding their words, to speak of the Second and Third Divine Persons as subordinate to the Father; for that Economy is the very state of things into which we are all born.”¹¹⁸ Yet the economic subordination is not disconnected from the eternal relations in the Godhead. Christ’s earthly submission to the Father is not merely a function of his human nature, but of his divine Sonship.¹¹⁹

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¹¹⁸ TT 192-93.

¹¹⁹ “Again, we read in Scripture of His being sent by the Father, addressing the Father, interceding to Him for His disciples, and declaring to them that His Father is greater than He; in what sense says and does He all this? Some will be apt to say that He speaks only in His human nature; words which are perplexing to the mind that tries
According to King, the early Newman tended to follow many seventeenth-century Anglican writers who held some sort of *ad intra* subordination as the consequence of the Father’s monarchia.\(^{120}\) Indeed, Newman himself attests that at one point he regarded the Athanasian Creed to be “written in a less scriptural style than the Nicene,” in part because of its emphasis on the Son’s equality with the Father.\(^{121}\) This line of reasoning is still present in his thinking, to some extent, in a sermon delivered in 1853, where he maintains a sense in which one can speak of subordination within the Godhead. He claims that

> as there is a subordination...of attribute to attribute, without any detriment to the infinitude of each of them individually...so also does an order, and, as I may say, a subordination exist between Person and Person, and this is the incommunicable glory of the God of Grace. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are all equal to Each Other in their Divinity, else They would not Each be the One God. Yet, true as it is, that not one of the Divine Persons is less infinite, less eternal, less all-sufficient, than the Other Two, it is true also that, in the history of the Everlasting mystery, the Father comes first in order, as the Fountain-head of Divinity; the Son second, as being the Offspring of the First; and the Holy Ghost third, as proceeding from the Father and the Son. And for this reason it would appear that the Second and Third Persons hold certain offices, such as that of mission, which are fitting only in Them.\(^{122}\)

Here Newman takes seriously the relations of origin and order of processions, and he goes on to draw out the connection between these eternal relations and the temporal missions of the Son and Holy Spirit.

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\(^{120}\) King, *Alexandrian Fathers*, 258.

\(^{121}\) LD 2.185, n. 4. According to King, Newman seems to have regarded the Athanasian Creed as superior to the Nicene from about 1847 on. See *Alexandrian Fathers*, 235-36.

\(^{122}\) OS 186.
At the same time, Newman is careful to rule out any denial of divine equality among the Persons. This is to be expected, given how much time he spent studying the Arian controversy. In one instance, though, he seems to struggle with how to articulate this equality most accurately:

The Athanasian Creed says that ‘the Son is equal to the Father.’ Now this either means ‘equal’ in His Personality, or ‘equal’ in His Divinity to the Father; but in neither alternative is the expression correct: for in His Divinity He is not equal to the Father but the same as the Father, and in His Personality He is not equal but subordinate to the Father.\(^\text{123}\)

To be sure, Newman’s insistence on both consubstantiality and coinherence in the Godhead shows that he affirms the full equality of the divine Persons. Yet his emphasis on the principatus also leads him to balance this with some sort of order even within the immanent Trinity. His attempt to strike this balance is perhaps best summed up in a comment he makes regarding George Bull’s use of “subordination” in his 1685 *Defensio Fidei Nicaenae*. Newman states, “I would rather avoid his word ‘subordination’ in its application to our Lord, since, however grammatically exact, in its effect it is misleading…instead of the ‘subordinatio Filii,’ let us speak of the ‘Principatus Patris.’”\(^\text{124}\) Thus Newman seeks to hold in positive tension both order and equality in the Godhead. This is his natural attempt to make sense of all the theological data of the Triune God revealed in the economy of redemption.\(^\text{125}\)

**Conclusion**

In this chapter we have looked at how Newman conceives of the Trinity *in se*, and how he grounds it in the revelation of the Trinity *pro nobis*. I have argued that his correlation between the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity impacts how he treats such issues as divine equality.

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\(^{123}\) LD 2.185, n. 4.

\(^{124}\) TT 174; cf. LD 26.37.

\(^{125}\) See also Graham, *Eastertide to Ecclesia*, 56; Ekeh, “Phenomenological, 239-41.
unity and the missions of the Son and Spirit in the world. I have further argued that this
correlation is especially key to understanding how he articulates the classical, and inter-related,
concepts of principatus, consubstantiality, and coinherence, It should now be evident as well how
Newman holds these three concepts together, and how this allows him to make some sense of the
tension between order and equality in the Godhead.

As we have seen, all of this flows from the revelation of the Triune God through the
economy of salvation. In the work of the one God through Christ and by the Spirit in the world,
the eternal life of the Trinity is made manifest. Thus there is a certain sacramental or analogical
character to salvation history in this regard. It is perhaps for this reason that Newman sees
Trinitarian theology as inseparable from the rest of Christian doctrine. Now that we have
examined Newman’s theology of the Trinity, in both its economic and immanent aspects, we will
finally look at how this dogma relates to—indeed, grounds and centers—the rest of Newman’s
thought.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE TRINITARIAN STRUCTURE OF NEWMAN’S THEOLOGY

As is now evident, Newman is explicit about the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. After all, it is this doctrine that distinguishes the Christian understanding of God from the mere God of natural religion: “As all nations confess to the existence of a God, so all branches of the Church confess to the Gospel doctrine; as the tradition of men witnesses to a Moral Governor and Judge, so the tradition of Saints witnesses to the Father Almighty, and His only Son, and the Holy Ghost.” As Albert Kirk observes, Newman never preaches on God in a generic sense, as if the Trinitarian revelation had not occurred. To speak of God in the context of Christian theology is to speak of the Trinity.

Moreover, as several scholars have noted, Newman clearly sees the Trinity as having a central, unifying place within Christian belief more broadly. During his Anglican years, he classifies it, along with the Incarnation, the Atonement, and several other doctrines, among the necessary fundamentals of the Christian faith—as distinct from secondary, less essential

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1 PS 2.257. Elsewhere he claims that “it is impossible to view historical Christianity apart from the doctrine of a Trinity…some doctrine or other of a Trinity lies at the very root of the Christian conception of the Supreme Being, and of His worship and service.” So TT 158.


teachings. In one sermon he calls the doctrine of the Trinity “the foundation of the whole Dispensation” and states that it “is necessary to be believed by every one in order to salvation.”

In the process of converting to Roman Catholicism, he abandons his earlier distinction between primary and secondary doctrines, yet he continues to see the Trinity as having a central place in revealed dogma: “The doctrine…of a Supreme Triad is the elementary truth of Christianity; and accordingly, as might have been expected, its recognition is a sort of a key-note, on which centre the thoughts and language of all theologians, from which they start, with which they end.” More than once he cites the baptismal formula in Matt. 28:19 as the basis of this doctrine’s centrality, both theologically and historically.

Given that Newman is so conscious of the Trinity’s centrality, it is no surprise that he should structure his theology within a largely Trinitarian frame. Now that we have explored how Newman approaches the doctrine itself, we will turn our attention in this chapter to how such a Trinitarian structure plays out in his theology more broadly. In some ways this involves a certain revisiting of themes raised in Chapter 3, which discussed the divine condescension in the economy of salvation. However, while the earlier treatment took a sort of narrative-theological perspective, this section will be more systematic in nature.

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4 See VM 1.44. He also states in a letter from 1839 that the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation are a central theological interest of his. See LD 7.99.

5 PS 2.271. Cf. JHNS 3.286, where he calls the doctrine of the Trinity “the very groundwork and foundation of the Gospel revelation.”


7 TT 150.

8 E.g. PS 2.264; 6.343-44; TT 149.
Such an endeavor might seem to run counter to the ethos of Newman’s theology, given that his writings are almost always occasional and rarely, if ever, systematic. However, as we have already noted, and as will become even more evident in this chapter, Newman is very consistent in his thinking, even if he never writes it out as a comprehensive system. The Trinitarian frame of his theology is one example of this tendency.

In particular, we will examine the Trinitarian dimensions of how Newman approaches four other areas of his theology: Christology, Pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. While we will treat them separately in turn, there will inevitably be some overlap between them. For Newman, these areas are deeply inter-related, and one thing that joins them so closely is precisely his Trinitarian emphasis throughout. By exploring Newman’s treatment of these four subjects, I will demonstrate how his understanding of the Trinity, and especially his focus on the economic condescension of the Triune God, suffuses his theology as a coherent whole. The role of the Holy Spirit will also come more to the fore in this discussion, despite the fact that the emphasis in Chapters 3 and 4 has tended to rest on the Father and the Son.

Christology

In Newman’s thinking, the Incarnation holds a central place, alongside the Trinity. “It is the Incarnation of the Son of God,” he writes, “rather than any doctrine drawn from a partial view of Scripture…which is the article of a standing or a falling Church.” Numerous scholars have remarked on this centrality in Newman’s thought. Kirk notes that the theology and spirituality of the Tractarians tended to focus on the Incarnation rather than Atonement, and

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10 US 35.
Newman is no exception. Donald Graham observes Newman’s dual criticism of liberal and evangelical reductions of the Incarnation: the former by seeing Christ merely as a moral exemplar, and the latter by focusing so much on the Atonement as a means to personal conversion. Roderick Strange goes further by pointing out the connections that Newman draws between the Incarnation and the church, ministry, and sacraments. Indeed, Ono Ekeh argues that it is specifically the Incarnation—the life, death, and resurrection—of Christ that provides the context for Newman’s approach to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Indeed, this should come as no surprise, given everything we have seen in Newman’s focus on the condescension of the Triune God in the economy of salvation. The Incarnation is, after all, the central event in that economy, and the pinnacle of divine syncatabasis. There are, though, a number of specific reasons why Newman regards the Incarnation as so pivotal. One is his concern for mystery in revealed religion. Indeed, he even notes a sense in which the Incarnation is a “more overwhelming” mystery than the Trinity itself, because it involves the very fact of divine condescension in God the Son becoming human. As usual, Newman insists that his interest in this mystery is practical, and that a proper articulation of it is necessary for sound faith and piety.

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15 PS 3.156-57. As Graham puts it, “Newman’s solicitude for the Trinity’s impenetrability is surpassed only by his sensitivity to the mystery of the Incarnate Word.” So Eastertide to Ecclesia, 61.

Newman makes a number of other statements that point to why the Incarnation is so central in his thought. He sees the Incarnation as the primary revelation of God, in which “we are allowed to discern the attributes of the Invisible God, drawn out into action in accommodation to our weakness.”17 Once again, God’s economic condescension comes to the fore. Moreover, as Keith Beaumont points out, Newman sees the Incarnation as not only a past event, but also Christ’s continued presence among us by the Spirit.18 Finally, Newman expresses a clear sympathy for the Scotist view that the Incarnation would have happened even if humankind had not sinned, since “if the Supreme condescended to create, to partake in creation was involved.” Because of sin, however, its primary purpose became remedial.19

The divine nature of Christ is an obvious connection between the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity, but it is worth noting the implications of this divinity as Newman conceives it. Strange has pointed out that Newman felt a particular need to stress this in his time, as there was a tendency to emphasize Christ’s humanity, sometimes to the point of denying, implicitly or explicitly, his full divinity. This is one of the issues at stake with his criticisms of Jacob Abbott in Tract 73, “On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Religion:” a strong focus on the human Jesus as moral exemplar could sideline his divine nature as something vague and external to his person as such. Newman feared that the logical outcome was to deny

17 US 26.


Christ’s divinity altogether, as had happened with his former Oriel colleague, Joseph Blanco White, who converted to Unitarianism.\textsuperscript{20}

In contrast to such a trajectory, Newman’s insistence that Christ’s divine Sonship is the basis for his Incarnation preserves all of the elements of orthodox Christology, with their various implications. As Strange points out, this flows directly from Newman’s correlation of the Trinity’s eternal relations and economic manifestations. On the one hand, Christ is fully God, and not merely human; on the other hand, he is also God from God, i.e. the only-begotten Son, who appropriately condescends to be born as a human being.\textsuperscript{21} It is perhaps to emphasize these dimensions that Newman rarely refers simply to “Jesus” in his sermons, but prefers to speak of “Christ,” usually alongside terms like “Eternal Son” or “Son of God.”\textsuperscript{22}

What is the significance of this emphasis in Newman’s approach? It means, first, that the incarnate Christ is no less than God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. Yet while there is a clear correspondence between Christ’s place in the eternal Godhead and role in the economy of salvation, Newman notes that this is not a strict identity; the two must still be distinguished. Christ is \textit{only-begotten} qua the Godhead, and \textit{first-born} qua creation. In his auxiliary material for his translations of Athanasius, Newman comments on this difference: “Primogenitus is never used in Scripture for Unigenitus. We never read there of the First-born of God, of the Father; but of the First-born of the creation, whether of the original creation or of the new. First-born, or the beginning…is a word of office, not of nature.”\textsuperscript{23} At the same time, the importance of this

\textsuperscript{20} Strange, \textit{Gospel of Christ}, 44-46.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 43.

\textsuperscript{22} See Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 105.

\textsuperscript{23} Ath. 2.459.
office—which is rooted in the eternal begetting of the Son—should not be underestimated: “Our Lord is in three distinct respects πρωτότοκος, First-born or Beginning, as the animating Presence of the Universe, as the Life of the Christian Church, as the first-fruit and pledge and earnest of the Resurrection.”24 Here we see the role of God the Son in the whole scope of salvation history.

In taking on human nature, Christ’s divinity does not diminish or recede to the background. Rather, it is continually operative throughout his incarnate life. In one poignant passage Newman reflects on how the consubstantiality and coinherence between Persons continued during Christ’s earthly life:

But Christ really saw, and ever saw, the face of God, for He was no creature of God, but the Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. From eternity He was with Him in glory, as He says Himself, dwelling in the abyss of the infinite greatness of the Most High. Not for forty days, as Moses on the mount in figure, but for ever and ever was He present as the Counsellor of God, as His Word, in whom He delighted. Such was He of old; but at the time appointed He came forth from the Father, and showed Himself in this external world, first as its Creator, then as its Teacher, the Revealer of secrets, the Mediator, the Off-streaming of God’s glory, and the Express Image of His Person. Cloud nor image, emblem nor words, are interposed between the Son and His Eternal Father. No language is needed between the Father and Him, who is the very Word of the Father; no knowledge is imparted to Him, who by His very Nature and from eternity knows the Father, and all that the Father knows. Such are His own words, “No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” Again He says, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,” and He accounts for this when He tells us, that He and the Father are one; and that He is in the bosom of the Father, and so can disclose Him to mankind, being still in heaven, even while He was on earth.25

Not only is this relationship between the incarnate Christ and God the Father astounding to consider; it is also the very basis on which Christ can reveal the Father to humankind. There is perfect knowledge and communication between the Father and the Son, and that allows the

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24 Ath. 2.460.

incarnate Son to be the perfect revelation of the Father. In a similar manner, Newman sees the words and deeds of Christ, as recorded in the gospels, as having a place of priority in scripture, “sacred beyond other portions, distinct and remote in its nature from the rest,” because they belong to the divine Son.26

Christ’s divinity takes on a special importance in his suffering and death.27 At one point Newman states explicitly that “when He suffered, it was God suffering. Not that the Divine Nature itself could suffer, any more than our soul can see or hear; but, as the soul sees and hears through the organs of the body, so God the Son suffered in that human nature which He had taken to Himself and made His own.”28 Elsewhere he goes as far as to call Christ’s wounds “perpetual founts of mercy, from which the fullness of the Eternal Trinity flows.”29

As Strange points out, for Newman, Christ’s divinity does not ameliorate his suffering, but intensifies it.30 Like his experience of temptation by Satan,31 the suffering of Christ would be all the more poignant because it is contrary to his nature as God.32 Thus Newman argues that the Passion was not only a physical suffering, but mental as well:

as the whole of His body, stretched out upon the Cross, so the whole of His soul, His whole advertence, His whole consciousness, a mind awake, a sense acute, a

26 VM 1.292.
27 As Luu-Quang observes, Newman often stresses Christ’s divine nature when discussing the Passion. See “Trinitarian Theology,” 131-32.
28 PS 6.72.
29 Mix. 42.
30 Strange, Gospel of Christ, 90.
31 “For if it be a trial to us creatures and sinners to have thoughts alien from our hearts presented to us, what must have been the suffering to the Eternal Word, God of God, and Light of Light, Holy and True, to have been so subjected to Satan, that he could inflict every misery on Him short of sinning?” So PS 6.8.
32 Newman writes, for instance, “Our Lord’s soul was in heaviness in Gethsemani, though it was in personal union with His All-blissful Divinity.” So NO 244.
living co-operation, a present, absolute intention, not a virtual permission, not a heartless submission, this did He present to His tormentors. His passion was an action; He lived most energetically, while He lay languishing, fainting, and dying. Nor did He die, except by an act of the will…He surrendered His soul, he did not lose it.\textsuperscript{33}

It is clear that Newman sees Christ’s mental anguish as the greater suffering than his physical pain. He further stresses that Christ had perfect control of his humanity through his divinity, which means that he embraced his suffering and death with complete willingness.\textsuperscript{34} All of this, for Newman, shows the depth of Christ’s syncatabasis in his Passion and Crucifixion.

Finally, Newman makes an explicit connection between Christ’s divine nature and his Resurrection. In particular, he stresses how Christ’s resurrected glory was a manifestation of his divine origin:

Then the Divine Essence streamed forth (so to say) on every side, and environed His Manhood, as in a cloud of glory. So transfigured was His Sacred Body, that He who had deigned to be born of a woman, and to hang upon the cross, had subtle virtue in Him, like a spirit, to pass through the closed doors to His assembled followers; while by condescending to the trial of their sense, He showed that it was no mere spirit, but He Himself as before, with wounded hands and pierced side, who spoke to them. He manifested Himself to them, in this His exalted state, that they might be His witnesses to the people; witnesses of those separate truths which man’s reason cannot combine, that He had a real human body, that it was a partaker in the properties of His Soul, and that it was inhabited by the Eternal Word.\textsuperscript{35}

For Newman, however, this is not merely a raw display of divinity for the sake of fear and awe. As always, he is concerned with the practical and soteriological implications: “Such then is our risen Saviour in Himself and towards us…filling us incomprehensively with His immortal

\textsuperscript{33} Mix. 331. Cf. SN 75: “Christ’s mental pain would have swallowed up even His bodily, had He not willed to feel it.” Elsewhere, Newman claims that Christ would have felt even the physical pain more strongly than an ordinary human being. See MD 321.

\textsuperscript{34} Mix. 329-30.

\textsuperscript{35} PS 2.143.
nature, till we become like Him; filling us with a spiritual life which may expel the poison of the
tree of knowledge, and restore us to God.” To put it simply, as God, Christ can overcome
death, but as a human being, he can communicate immortality to us. This is the ultimate fruit of
the divine syncatabasis of the incarnate Christ.

It is worth asking whether Newman lays too great a stress on Christ’s divinity, at the
expense of his human nature. After all, if Newman’s focus on the economic condescension of the
Son is to have its full force, it must involve the complete reality of human nature assumed in the
Incarnation. To be sure, Newman seems far more concerned with Christ’s divinity than his
humanity, and Kirk even describes some of his statements as bordering on Docetism, particularly
in Tract 73. As Kirk acknowledges, though, there are some mitigating factors that must be borne
in mind. For one thing, Newman’s affinity for Alexandrian patristic theology, and even
Platonism, seems to be at work here. More importantly, his historical context likely drove his
emphasis. With the rise of views like Socinianism and Unitarianism, as well as the liberalism
that Newman sees as leading in that direction, he seems to think that Christ needs to be preached
as the Son of God incarnate far more than as the human, “historical” Jesus. Thus he criticizes
Protestants who “speak in a dreamy, shadowy way of Christ’s divinity” without having an
adequate grasp of the full doctrine of the Incarnation.

First of all, there can be no doubt that Newman affirms Christ’s full humanity, given
comments like this:

36 PS 2.147.
38 Mix. 344-45. See Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 136-38, for a concise but thorough summary of
scholarship on this question.
He did not come in a mere apparent or accidental form, as Angels appear to men; nor did He merely overshadow an existing man, as He overshadows His saints, and call Him by the name of God; but He “was made flesh.” He attached to Himself a manhood, and became as really and truly man as He was God, so that henceforth He was both God and man, or, in other words, He was One Person in two natures, divine and human.\textsuperscript{39}

Such statements are easily recognized as simple affirmations of classical doctrinal formulae. Newman also devotes an entire essay to “The Heresy of Apollinaris,” in which he not only defends the church’s rejection of Apollinarianism—the idea that the divine Word took the place of Christ’s human mind (\textit{nous})—as denying Christ’s full humanity, but also highlights a number of reasons why it mattered.\textsuperscript{40}

Newman not only affirms Christ’s full humanity, but also regards it as absolutely essential to his person and work. As Strange has shown, Newman sees Christ’s humanity as having abiding, even eternal, significance. His promise to be continually present in the church refers not only to a divine presence, but a human presence as well.\textsuperscript{41} Strange also comments on how Newman anticipates a concern raised by Karl Rahner, that modern theology has inadequately reflected on the significance of Christ’s humanity continuing to be a part of him in perpetuity. Newman, following Athanasius, sees Christ’s human nature as not only a means, but even a source of new life and divinization.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} Mix. 345; cf. SN 147-48.

\textsuperscript{40} Newman argues that in Apollinaris’ conception, Christ would not have shared a true commonality with other humans because he would lack a constitutive part of human nature; as a result, he could not act as a satisfaction for sins. Moreover, his passion would have been rendered meaningless because he could not experience the full \textit{mental} anguish of suffering. Finally, the divine Word would have to take on all the functions of the human mind, which would amount to a downgrading of Christ’s divinity—ironically, as Apollinaris’ aim was to guard against Arianism. See TT 307, 309, 318-19, 323. Cf. Mix. 325.

\textsuperscript{41} Strange, \textit{Gospel of Christ}, 132; cf. PS 6.126.

\textsuperscript{42} See Strange, \textit{Gospel of Christ}, 122-26, 132, 143.
Indeed, as Newman conceives it, Christ’s humanity, like his divinity, is essential to salvation. For one thing, it is the necessary means of the Son’s syncatabasis in the economy: “After this manner…must be understood His suffering, temptation, and obedience, not as if He ceased to be what He had ever been, but, having clothed Himself with a created essence, He made it the instrument of His humiliation; He acted in it, He obeyed and suffered through it.”

It is by becoming fully human that the Son of God accomplishes the work of condescension for salvation.

But for Newman, the soteriological significance of Christ’s human nature extends beyond a one-time event in salvation history. At one point he writes, “Our Lord, by becoming man, has found a way whereby to sanctify that nature, of which His own manhood is the pattern specimen.” In viewing Christ as the “pattern” of humanity, Newman does not simply mean that Christ is an exemplary, model human being, one whom we should all emulate. His meaning has more to do with Christ’s real solidarity with the human race, a solidarity that allows his sanctification of human nature to effect sanctification in any other human being. Newman immediately goes on: “He inhabits us personally, and this inhabitation is effected by the channel of the Sacraments…By this indwelling our Lord is the immediate ἀρχή of spiritual life to each of His elect individually.”

As Beaumont puts it, Newman’s emphasis here is on “the transformation of our nature, rendered possible by the Incarnation.”

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43 PS 3.165. Elsewhere Newman stresses that the term “instrument” can rightly be applied to Christ’s humanity, but not to his Person vis-à-vis the Father. See Ath. 2.450.

44 As Luu-Quang notes, Newman begins describing Christ as “our Brother” in his sermons in 1839. See “Trinitarian Theology,” 181. For more on Christ as pattern of humanity, see Strange, Gospel of Christ, 52-54.

45 Ath. 2.193; cf. 2.195.

46 Beaumont, Dieu Intérieur, 197. The translation from French is my own.
This is further evidenced in how Newman describes Christ’s Ascension: “It was the triumph of redeemed man. It is the completion of his redemption. It was the last act, making the whole sure, for now man is actually in heaven. He has entered into possession of his inheritance. The sinful race has now one of its own children there, its own flesh and blood, in the person of the Eternal Son.”\textsuperscript{47} Not only does the human nature of Christ make possible the condescension of God; it also results in the exaltation of humanity.

It should be noted, however, that Newman is far more interested in the universal category of human nature that Christ took on, rather than his individuality as a particular human being. He appeals to the Athanasian Creed regarding Christ’s divine personhood, explaining that

His personality is in His Godhead, if I may express myself in theological language. He did not undo what He was, He did not cease to be the Infinite God, but He added to Him the substance of a man, and thus participated in human thoughts and feelings, yet with no impairing (God forbid) of His divine perfection. The Incarnation was not “a conversion of the Godhead into the flesh, but a taking of the manhood into God.”\textsuperscript{48}

While Newman does not use the term, this is essentially the concept of anhypostasis, the idea that Christ’s human nature, while containing all constitutive elements, is generic or “impersonal” because Christ’s one hypostasis is in fact the divine Word. Elsewhere Newman explains why this is important:

We cannot conceive of an incarnation, except in this way; for, if His manhood had not been thus after the manner of an attribute, if it had been a person, an individual, such as one of us, if it had been in existence before He united it to Himself, He would have been simply two beings under one name, or else, His divinity would have been nothing more than a special grace or presence or participation of divine glory, such as is the prerogative of saints.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{47} MD 388.

\textsuperscript{48} Ess. 1.86-87

\textsuperscript{49} Ath. 2.293. Cf. Ess. 2.203; SN 148; LD 29.10.
On one level, this simply provides a dogmatic safeguard against quasi-Nestorian or adoptionistic conceptions of the Incarnation. The Chalcedonian formula that Christ is one person with two natures is preserved. But it also carries an important implication for the relation between the incarnate Christ and the human race. Jesus is not simply one individual among many, but takes on humanity as such, and is thus united to all human beings who partake of the same nature. While Newman does not spell this all out, it fits with his concerns and how he conceives of the soteriological significance of Christ’s human nature.50

As a result, Newman emphasizes the Person of the Word as the locus of unity between the divine and human natures.51 He states explicitly, “Whereas the Apostle says, ‘One Lord Jesus Christ,’ that unity does not lie in the unity of two natures…but in His Person, which brings the two natures together, which is and ever has been indivisible from His Divine Nature, and has absorbed into Itself, and is sovereign over, not destroying thereby, but perpetuating, Its human nature.”52 Elsewhere Newman explains this in greater detail:

Two natures are united in One Christ, but it does not follow that their union is like any other union of which we have cognizance, such, for instance, as the union of body and soul. Beyond the general fact, that both the Incarnation and other unions are of substances not homogeneous, there is no likeness between it and them. The characteristics and circumstances of the Incarnation are determined by its history. The One Self-existing Personal God created, moulded, assumed, a manhood truly such. He, being from eternity, was in possession and in the fullness of His Godhead before mankind had being. Much more was He already in existence, and in all His attributes, when He became man, and He lost nothing by becoming. All that He ever had continued to be His; what He took on Himself was only an addition…for

50 Luu-Quang argues that this conception, including Newman’s 1835 adoption of the term “assume” as used by Gregory of Nyssa and John of Damascus, is what allows him to preserve the unity of the Trinity in se alongside the Incarnation. See “Trinitarian Theology,” 107. Cf. PS 3.164.

51 According to Luu-Quang, Newman is following Athanasius in his concern for Christ’s unity of person. See “Trinitarian Theology,” 112.

52 Ath. 2.327-28.
its integrity and completeness it depended on Him, the Divine Word…for the medium of union was the Person of the Word.53

We see in this passage, first, that Newman stresses the uniqueness of the hypostatic union. There is simply no analogue in our experience of the natural world to the mystery of the Incarnation. Newman even downplays the analogy of body and soul, which is used in the Athanasian Creed. Secondly, Newman’s conception of anhypostasis is clearly at work here. The person of Christ refers to the hypostasis of the Son or Word, and the human nature that is assumed has no existence apart from that assumption at the Incarnation.54

On the whole, Newman sees the relationship between Christ’s divinity and humanity as (in Strange’s words) “utterly harmonious.”55 Both natures have an economic and soteriological significance, and they are uniquely and supernaturally united in the Person of the Eternal Word made flesh. While it is true that Newman often puts more emphasis on the divine nature than the human, there is a certain logic to this, especially in the context of theological trends in his time. But in at least one instance, it is also connected to his focus on the economy of salvation. He argues that it is better to say, of the incarnate Christ, that “God is man,” rather than “man is God.” While he acknowledges that both are legitimate and orthodox, part of his rationale for

53 Ath. 2.426-27; cf. MD 412. Elsewhere he stresses the permanence of the hypostatic union as what makes possible the Resurrection. See SN 302.

54 This also plays into Newman’s 1858 defense of Cyril of Alexandria’s use of “one nature” to describe the incarnate Christ. Newman essentially argues that Cyril was simply using older Alexandrian vocabulary to describe how the eternal Word took on humanity while remaining the divine Person, what would become known as the hypostatic union. The difference, then, between the Cyrilline formula and the Chalcedonian definition is one of terminology, not doctrine. See TT 352, 357, 361-62, 364, 372, 373.

55 Strange, Gospel of Christ, 65.
preferring the former statement is that it “expresses the history of the Economy,” i.e. that it was God the Son who took on human nature.\textsuperscript{56}

As for the role and work of Christ, Newman conceives of the threefold office as prophet, priest, and king as having an explicitly Trinitarian dimension, namely that “in these offices He also represents to us the Holy Trinity; for in His own proper character He is a priest, and as to His kingdom He has it from the Father, and as to His prophetical office He exercises it by the Spirit. The Father is the King, the Son the Priest, and the Holy Ghost the Prophet.”\textsuperscript{57} All three offices, of course, belong properly to Christ, but they also indicate something of the roles of all three divine Persons in the economy of salvation. Newman is also conscious of how Christ fulfills the threefold office in relation to the other Persons. As priest, Christ offers himself to the Father on the cross, and now intercedes at the Father’s right hand. Similarly, one of his “kingly” actions is sending the Holy Spirit to guide the church after his ascension.\textsuperscript{58} As Beaumont observes, Newman stresses that it is the same Son who both continues his mediating role before the Father and is present in the church through the Spirit.\textsuperscript{59}

Indeed, Newman claims that we cannot fully distinguish Christ’s office(s) in the economy of salvation from his divine Sonship: “In regard to truth so far above us, it is impossible for us to draw the line precisely between such of our Lord’s acts as belong immediately to His Sonship, and those which belong to His office.”\textsuperscript{60} While such a distinction

\textsuperscript{56} Ess. 1.74.

\textsuperscript{57} SD 55.

\textsuperscript{58} SD 52-53. Cf. SN 70.


\textsuperscript{60} TT 196.
makes sense in the abstract, alongside the distinctions between Christ’s divinity and humanity or between the Trinity in se and pro nobis, Newman warns against trying to parse it out exactly. The two are indeed distinct, but they are also related and have some measure of correspondence to one another. Thus his treatment of Christ’s office(s) show yet another example of how Newman sees the Triune God revealed through activity in the economy of salvation.

“Pneumatic Christology” or “Spirit Christology” is a term that has gained traction in some theological circles in recent years, referring to the idea that, to be properly understood, the person and role of Christ must include a pneumatological dimension. Some have applied this to Newman’s theology, including Graham, who suggests that the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus is “one of the most underdeveloped areas of Newman studies.” He notes some limitations to Newman’s pneumatic Christology, especially how his reliance on Athanasius leads him at times to speak as if the Spirit is some sort of added power in the life of Christ, and not the coherent Person who was involved in the hypostatic union itself. Graham points out, however, that if anything this is an inconsistency in Newman’s thinking, as other aspects of his writings point in the direction of a far more robust account of the Spirit. Moreover, Graham argues that at other times Newman does explicitly flesh out the place of the Holy Spirit, both in the event of the Incarnation and in Christ’s actions on earth, such as the Spirit’s role in the temptation of the wilderness. Graham essentially concludes that the strengths of Newman’s pneumatic Christology

61 Graham, Eastertide to Ecclesia, 91.

62 Ibid., 92-100.
outweigh its weaknesses.\footnote{Ibid., 104-14.} He also argues that Newman’s Trinitarian theology (or “grammar”) is what provides the backdrop for his pneumatic Christology.\footnote{Ibid., 60.}

Building on Graham’s work, Susanne Calhoun also argues for a “Spirit Christology” reading of Newman.\footnote{Susanne Calhoun, “The Indwelling Spirit: From Christology to Ecclesiology in John Henry Newman,” \textit{Newman Studies Journal} 13 no. 1 (2016), 48-49.} In particular, she draws three summary conclusions: (1) for Newman, the “co-syncatabasis” of the Son and Holy Spirit frame salvation history; (2) Newman’s Spirit-Christology is the result of this co-syncatabasis; (3) Newman likewise thinks in terms of “pneumatological soteriology and ecclesiology,” as contained in his conception of theosis.\footnote{Ibid., 51.} As Graham and Calhoun demonstrate, Newman never separates the work of the Son and Holy Spirit: his Christology is to some extent informed by his Pneumatology, for the simple reason that the perichoretic unity between the Son and the Spirit works out in this way in the economy of salvation.

As we have seen, the Trinitarian frame of Newman’s thought plays out in a number of ways in his understanding of the person and work of Christ. The Incarnation holds a central place in his theology as the primary instance of economic condescension. How he conceives of Christ’s divinity vis-à-vis his humanity, as well as the hypostatic union, exemplifies how he sees the Son’s role in the economy expressing the eternal divine Sonship. Newman further makes explicit Trinitarian connections with regard to Christ’s threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. Finally, the explicitly pneumatic aspect of his Christology stands as a concrete instantiation
of the consubstantial and coinherent relation between Persons as manifest in the economy of redemption.

**Pneumatology**

If Newman’s Christology is informed by his Pneumatology, the opposite can also be argued, that his Pneumatology flows from his Christology. It has already been noted that Newman sees a close connection between the work of the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit. As Luu-Quang puts it, “One might say then that Newman began his Pneumatology from Christology, or, in other words, he viewed Pneumatology in the light of Christology.”

Thus Newman keeps in focus the eternal union between the Son and Spirit as it plays out economically.

Newman arguably stands out in his time and place for having a fairly explicit and developed Pneumatology. As Kirk notes, Newman refers to the Holy Spirit in a myriad of contexts, beyond those that the reader would typically think of as Pneumatological. The Holy Spirit, for Newman, is involved in every aspect of the Christian life.

As with the Son, Newman insists on the full divinity of the Holy Spirit: “The disciples, when Christ went, had to go through much trouble, and therefore He comforted them by the coming of the Holy and Eternal Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.” But as always,

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67 Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 77.

68 Philip Dixon explains some of the historical reasons for the neglect of Pneumatology in the decades preceding Newman. See _Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century_ (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 213.


70 Kirk further argues that Newman’s emphasis on the Spirit is present from an early date, as evidenced in some of his unpublished sermons. For a summary of the relevant texts, “Spirituality,” 263-68.

71 PS 8.152.
Newman is concerned with the economic and practical dimensions of the Spirit’s divinity. When God the incarnate Son left his disciples, he sent nothing less than God the Holy Spirit to continue the divine work in and through them.

Newman is also attentive to the various ways that the Holy Spirit works within the economy of redemption. He speaks of various offices pertaining to the Spirit, yet he conceives these manifold operations as one, insofar as they are holy.72 In one place he states, “The graces of the Spirit cannot be separated from each other; one implies the rest.”73 Thus they are distinct yet united. For instance, Newman speaks of the Holy Spirit as source of life for creation,74 consoler,75 inspirer of Scripture,76 and guide in understanding beyond what is in Scripture.77 John Connolly argues that Newman’s understanding of divine providence has a specifically Pneumatological character as well.78 It is, moreover, the Spirit who glorifies Christ, especially in “revealing Him as the Only-begotten Son of the Father, who had appeared as the Son of man.”79

In at least one instance, Newman makes an intriguing distinction between the “sanctifying Spirit” and the “Spirit of regeneration or adoption.” The former refers to the Holy

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72 *Tracts* 361.
73 *Mix.* 62.
74 *MD* 396.
75 *PS* 2.277.
77 *PS* 2.72.
Spirit’s work prior to the coming of Christ, as well as operations through natural qualities like “reason, affections, conscience, passions, natural-affections, tastes, associations,” and so forth. The Spirit of regeneration refers to the unique gift and relationship that Christians receive in baptism.\textsuperscript{80} This is, of course, the work of the same Spirit, but this distinction carries two important implications. On the one hand, Newman clearly admits that the Holy Spirit is at work outside of the visible boundaries of the church, something he states explicitly elsewhere.\textsuperscript{81} On the other hand, he sees those within the church as having a qualitatively different relationship to God through the Spirit.

Indeed, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the faithful is at the center of Newman’s Pneumatology. This theme shows up in a number of his works, perhaps receiving its fullest treatment in his Pentecost sermon “The Indwelling Spirit.” Newman takes the biblical language of the Spirit dwelling in the believer very seriously, even literally:

He pervades us (if it may be so said) as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume the folds of some honourable robe; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in Him, and He in us. It is plain that such an inhabitation brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvellous, far above the possession of mere gifts, exalts him inconceivably in the scale of beings, and gives him a place and an office which he had not before.\textsuperscript{82}

It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul that sets the baptized, regenerate Christian apart.\textsuperscript{83} As Connolly points out, however, the realization of this fact is an ongoing process for

\textsuperscript{80} LD 5.14-16. Elsewhere he alludes to conscience as an “echo of God’s voice,” when viewed from the standpoint of faith. See SN 327.


\textsuperscript{82} PS 2.222.

\textsuperscript{83} He goes as far as to claim, “A brute differs less from a man, than does man, left to himself with his natural corruption allowed to run its course, differ from man fully formed and perfected by the habitual indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” So PS 5.179.
Newman, one which marks the entire scope of the Christian life.\(^{84}\) Newman describes this process as “silent,” “gradual,” and “thorough.”\(^{85}\) Nor is it necessarily linear, as he speaks of instances where the Spirit departs from the soul as a result of sin.\(^{86}\) Thus the presence of the Spirit does not function as a quasi-magical change, nor is it to be a source of pride and prestige for the Christian. Rather, is simply the condition of possibility for spiritual growth—the fulfillment of the work of the Triune God in the souls of individual people.

Connolly calls Newman’s conception of the Spirit’s indwelling “highly personal.”\(^{87}\) Indeed, Newman states explicitly that the Holy Spirit “comes to us as Christ came, by a real and personal visitation.”\(^{88}\) Elsewhere he suggests that one reason that the Spirit is not addressed in prayer as often as the Father and the Son is “because He has taken the office of God within us,” rather than outside of us.\(^{89}\)

As C. S. Dessain has pointed out, Newman’s understanding of the Spirit’s indwelling, while biblically based, is fairly uncommon, both in his own context and in the western tradition of Christian theology more broadly.\(^{90}\) As we saw in Chapter 2, Newman clearly sees a need to

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\(^{85}\) SD 130.

\(^{86}\) PS 8.70.

\(^{87}\) Connolly, “Notion,” 6.

\(^{88}\) PS 2.221.

\(^{89}\) LD 6.218.

defend such a “mystical” reading, which he does by appealing to the biblical language regarding
the eternal unity of the divine Persons:

since the promise expressly runs that we shall be made one as the Father and the Son are one, we are necessarily led either to think highly of the union of the Christian with God, or to disparage that of the Father and the Son; and that such schools of religion as maintain that the former is but figurative, will certainly be led at length to deny the real union of our Lord with His Father, and from avoiding mysticism, will fall into what is called Unitarianism.91

If the real indwelling of the Spirit in the soul is a mere metaphor or hyperbole, claims Newman, then the same argument can be made regarding the mutual indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity. The eternal coinherence of the Godhead and the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of human beings stand and fall together.

It should be noted, however, that Newman does not spell out a detailed theory of the “mechanics” of this indwelling. This is largely the conclusion that Gulielmo Leroux draws in his 1959 study on the topic.92 Leroux argues that Newman’s conception could be described, in scholastic terms, as “quasi-formal causality,” but he cautions that these are not the categories in which Newman is dealing.93 Kirk likewise notes Newman’s reserve in attempting to explicate the mode of divine indwelling, aside from the fact that he implies an ontological, almost “physical” presence of the Spirit.94

91 Jfc. 145-46.
93 Ibid., 56. In contemporary theology, the term quasi-formal causality is most often associated with Karl Rahner’s conception of grace. However, Leroux indicates no connection here. Moreover, the term has been used in various contexts at least as early as the seventeenth century. See, for instance, William Forbes, Considerationes Modestae et Pacificae Controversiarum de Justificatione, Purgatorio, Invocatione Sanctorum Christo Mediatore, et Eucharistia, ed. J. H. Parker (Aberdeen: Bennett, 1850), 137 (originally published 1658).
What is clear is that Newman conceives this indwelling in a wholeheartedly Trinitarian manner. As Leroux points out, Newman sees the Spirit’s indwelling as a proper relation with the third Person of the Trinity, not simply a matter of appropriated language. Nevertheless, because of the coinherent unity of the three Persons, it is through the Spirit that the whole Trinity is present to the justified soul. This will become important later as we consider Newman’s theology of justification. For now it should simply be noted how he connects the eternal Trinitarian relations with God’s indwelling of human souls through the Spirit. As Kirk sums it up, it is the work of the Holy Spirit that is “the origin and the completion of the divine indwelling” in the human soul.

Newman frequently stresses that the Spirit’s presence has a transformative effect on each person. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then, is not only a great blessing and source of joy and glory; it is a necessity for human existence to fulfill its purpose. He states bluntly, “We can do nothing right, unless God gives us the will and the power; we cannot please Him without the aid of His Holy Spirit.” Likewise, it is because of the gift of the Spirit that we are able to obey the commandments of God: “Christ bids us do nothing that we cannot do…He gives us the gift of His Spirit, and then He says, ‘What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love

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95 Leroux, *Inhabitation*, 56. Leroux argues that the principle that all divine works *ad extra* apply properly to the whole Trinity (the rationale for the Augustinian concept of appropriation) only applies in matters of efficient causality. Since he defines Newman’s concept of divine indwelling as quasi-formal causality, he sees no problem with connecting the divine indwelling specifically and primarily to the Holy Spirit.


97 See PS 1.13-14; 3.356-66; 7.208-09; US 37; Jfc. 302; CS 113.

98 See PS 5.66-70; 8.52, 56-57.

99 PS 7.185; cf. 189-90, 199; MD 399.
mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?’ and is this grievous?” Indeed, Beaumont points out that the gift of the Spirit becomes a source of humility in Newman’s thinking, as it makes us realize that we receive everything from God.101

At the same time, Newman’s sermons often focus more on the human element of obedience than the grace of the Holy Spirit, but it should not be thought that Newman regards the Spirit’s role as anything less than necessary. As Ian Ker explains, Newman intentionally focused his preaching in this way, not because of a deficiency in his understanding of the Spirit’s importance to the Christian life, but because he was concerned that people understand the Spirit’s working through ordinary, habitual means. This was a conscious push against certain forms of evangelical preaching that, in Newman’s judgment, were so focused on grace, forgiveness, and immediate transformation that it rendered human effort irrelevant.102 For Newman, the Holy Spirit does not replace human nature, but works with it in bringing it to perfection.103 It is in this sense that he speaks of “that new and second nature which God the Holy Ghost gives.”104

It must be stressed that, in Newman’s understanding, it is the very presence of the Holy Spirit that is in the soul, not just the sanctifying grace that comes from the Spirit.105 Thus any

100 PS 1.106.
101 Beaumont, Dieu Intérieur, 185.
103 See SD 130, 139. Beaumont calls this theme “the one constant in all his teaching.” So Dieu Intérieur, 183.
104 PS 8.118; cf. Mix. 98. Kirk suggests that Newman’s conception of the Spirit’s work within us can be summed up with the word “maturity.” So “Spirituality,” 294.
notion of created grace must be seen as resulting from, and not preceding, the Spirit’s indwelling. Dessain argues that Newman was about a century ahead of his time in thus focusing on the uncreated grace of the Spirit’s presence, rather than somewhat distorted notions of created grace that dominated 19th century Catholic theology. Newman was drawn to this conception of grace, with its biblical and patristic foundations, in the 1830s, and continued to hold it as a Roman Catholic. For Newman, grace is not a “thing” that God grants to people, but the divine presence itself—the Holy Spirit, condescending to dwell within mere mortals.

As we have seen, Newman’s Pneumatology naturally grows out of his larger concern for the Triune God’s revelation in the economy of redemption. Thus the presence of the divine Spirit as both gift and necessity is central to his thinking. Moreover, it is through the very real indwelling of the Holy Spirit that the fullness of the Trinity is present in the souls of the justified. This, for Newman, is the true foundation for any other notion of grace: the uncreated gift of the divine presence.

Soteriology

Much of what we have said about Newman’s Christology and Pneumatology lays the groundwork for approaching his soteriology. This area of his theology likewise follows a consciously Trinitarian structure. For one thing, Newman sees the whole Trinity as involved in the various aspects of salvation. Luu-Quang observes that Newman tends to focus on the themes

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109 Dessain notes that Newman wrote much less on the subject after 1845, but he suggests that it may have been out of caution, given current theological trends in the Roman Catholic Church. See “Uncreated Grace,” 285.
of justification, sanctification, and glorification, but these should not be seen as corresponding to
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit respectively. As noted in previous chapters, “Newman
always viewed the economy as the whole and undivided work of the Triune God.” Yet he
clearly does ascribe certain aspects to one or other of the Persons. As we will see, he specifically
connects the atonement to the Son and the application of that atonement—i.e. justification—
fundamentally to the Spirit. Even so, the other Persons are involved in these processes.

Newman’s approach to the death of Christ as Atonement for humanity’s sins developed
somewhat in the early years of his career, but his mature and abiding conviction is to affirm it
as an article of faith while exercising reserve in committing to any particular “theory” to explain
it. Once again, his concern, at least in part, is that it should be properly respected as a
mystery. At one point, he states bluntly, “We do not know how the death of Christ operates for
our salvation; we do not know why it was required, or what is its full design and effect.”
Elsewhere he speculates that God might have accomplished humanity’s salvation without the
Crucifixion:

We might have been pardoned without the humiliation of the Eternal Word; again,
we might have been redeemed by one single drop of His blood; but still on earth
He came, and a death He died, a death of inconceivable suffering; and all this He
did as a free offering to His Father, not as forcing His acceptance of it. From

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12 This is in contrast to the evangelical Calvinists of his time, who insisted on interpreting it in

13 LD 5.336-37.

14 VM 1.94.
beginning to the end it was in the highest sense a voluntary work; and this is what is so overpowering to the mind in the thought of it.\textsuperscript{115}

It should be noted, though, that Newman’s point here is simply to emphasize that Christ died freely. Regardless of how salvation \textit{might} have been accomplished, revelation tells us that it \textit{has} been accomplished through the death of the incarnate Son, and this makes it a fundamental component of Christian doctrine. For this reason, Newman calls the idea that amendment of life itself constitutes an expiation of past sins “a practical Socinianism,” as it fails to take seriously the importance of the divinity of Christ in the atonement.\textsuperscript{116}

Indeed, Newman sees the divine nature of Christ as what makes his death unique.\textsuperscript{117} He draws out the soteriological implications of Christ’s divinity thus: “None but the Eternal Son, who is incommincably like the Father, can be infinitely acceptable to Him or simply righteous. Yet in proportion as rational beings are like the Son, or partake of His excellence, so are they really righteous; in proportion as God sees His Son in them, He is well pleased with them.”\textsuperscript{118}

Thus in spite of his respect of the mystery of the Atonement, his reserve in explaining it, and even his speculations regarding its absolute necessity, Newman clearly takes the death of the incarnate Son, as effecting reconciliation between God and humanity, as a basic datum of the Christian faith. More specifically, it is as an instance of condescension, even humiliation, that the death of Christ for our salvation is presented to us. Whatever else the Atonement might be, for Newman it is a manifestation of the divine syncatabasis in the economy of redemption.

\textsuperscript{115} Mix. 308.

\textsuperscript{116} PS 4.98.

\textsuperscript{117} Newman asks, “why should the death of the Son be more awful than any other death, except that He though man, was God?” So GA 121.

\textsuperscript{118} Jfc. 107; cf. 161.
If it is the Son’s role to accomplish the work of the Atonement, Newman sees it as the Holy Spirit’s role to apply that work to individuals: “God the Son atoned; God the Holy Ghost justifies.” Indeed, Newman’s soteriology is perhaps most markedly, and uniquely, Trinitarian in how he articulates the doctrine of justification. To fully appreciate his approach, some background and context are in order.

The doctrine of justification was a major point of contention since the Reformation: are sinners justified by faith alone, as the Protestants held, or by faith and works, as the Roman Catholics maintained? There is a great deal of complexity and nuance to this issue, including how the words “justification” and “faith” are defined. For our purposes here, it is worth noting that the Church of England had affirmed a more or less Protestant position in its ninth Article of Religion: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works, or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholsom [sic] Doctrine.” In Newman’s day, Anglican evangelicals tended to interpret this as the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer and nothing more. Newman found this approach less than satisfactory, and he sought to give a more robust account of the doctrine in the context of Scripture and the larger Christian tradition.

Newman developed his theology of justification over a period of many years, and some Pneumatological and Trinitarian aspects of his eventual conclusion were evident from an early

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119 Jfc. 206; cf. 91, 175, 202-04.


121 For a fuller treatment of how Newman distinguishes himself from Protestant and Unitarian views on justification, see Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 306-13. In a similar vein, Dessain argues that Newman’s thinking was motivated in part by his theology of uncreated grace as a means of reconciling various errors on the question. See “Uncreated Grace,” 269 ff.
During this process, Newman saw the doctrine of justification as deeply intertwined with the question of baptismal regeneration. The final result of this development was his 1838 *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, which he would later re-publish as a Roman Catholic, with minimal changes. While not entirely without precedent—he himself cites various patristic, medieval Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Protestant writers—the solution to the problem that Newman presents here is synthetic, ecumenical, and thoroughly Trinitarian.

Newman begins the *Lectures* by summarizing both sides of the debate; he is critical of both, but more so of the Protestant view. He then considers the meaning of the term “justification,” concluding that its primary meaning is in fact a declaration of righteousness (as in Protestant/Anglican theology), but it also implies a secondary meaning of renewal or making righteous (as in Roman Catholic theology), for the simple reason that “the justifying grace of God effects what it declares.” Already Newman shows some ingenuity in approaching the debate, but all of this is really just setting up for the heart of his contribution.

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126 There is a question of how accurately Newman treats the Protestant position, particularly in his reading of Martin Luther. However, he arguably sets up both sides as archetypal paradigms to frame his own solution, not unlike the way he treats “Alexandria” and “Antioch” in *Arians*. For a fuller discussion on this, see Thomas L. Holtzen, “Newman’s Interpretation of Luther: A Reappraisal,” *Theological Studies* 78 no. 1 (2017), 121-46.

127 Jfc. 79.
Newman argues that the true basis, or “formal cause,” of justification is in fact the presence of Christ in the justified soul: “This is really and truly our justification, not faith, not holiness, not (much less) a mere imputation; but through God’s mercy, the very Presence of Christ.”\textsuperscript{128} Here Newman directly connects justification to the Incarnation itself. Justification proves to be the ultimate consequence of the divine syncatabasis in the economy of salvation. As Louis Bouyer puts it, “we are redeemed from sin, adopted by God, made partakes of His divine glory through the Holy Spirit, not only \textit{because} of the Incarnation of the Son of God but, literally, \textit{in it}.”\textsuperscript{129} Leroux likewise notes that this emphasis on the indwelling of the incarnate Christ is “quite peculiar to Newman.”\textsuperscript{130}

Moreover, this presence of Christ is mediated by the indwelling Holy Spirit, such that “justification is wrought by the power of the Spirit, or rather by His presence within us. And this being the real state of a justified man, faith and renewal are both present also, but as fruits of it.”\textsuperscript{131} In other words, by receiving the Holy Spirit in baptism, a person receives the presence of the Trinity, including the incarnate Son, and this becomes the foundation for being accounted righteous in the sight of God. But this also effects a real change within the soul, so that the person experiences both living faith in Christ’s saving work and interior renewal by the Spirit.

It is worth noting here how exactly Newman connects the respective roles of the Son and the Holy Spirit through the events of salvation history. He explains that, “in saying that Christ

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{128}{Jfc. 150; cf. 154, 156, 221.}
\footnotetext{130}{Leroux, \textit{Inhabitation}, 30.}
\footnotetext{131}{Jfc. 138; cf. 144, 202.}
\end{footnotes}
rose again for our justification, it is implied that justification is through that second Comforter who after that Resurrection came down from heaven.”

Here Newman interprets Rom. 4:25 (“Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification”) as the crucial link between the Son’s work of atonement and the Spirit’s application of that work in justification. Thus it is not merely the death of Christ, but his Resurrection and Ascension that makes possible the coming of the Holy Spirit, and thus justification:

The Divine Life which raised Him, flowed over, and availed unto our rising again from sin and condemnation. It wrought a change in His Sacred Manhood, which became spiritual, without His ceasing to be man, and was in a wonderful way imparted to us as a new-creating, transforming Power in our hearts. This was the gift bestowed on the Church upon His ascension; for while He remained on earth, though risen, it was still withheld.

As Strange points out, Newman’s emphasis on the resurrection in the scheme of redemption is uncommon for his time. But in the context of Newman’s theology, it is yet another way that the whole economy of salvation, and the divine condescension within it, drives his thinking within a Trinitarian framework.

Thus Newman grounds justification in nothing less than the indwelling of the Triune God. In doing so, he moves past a longstanding theological debate among Western Christians by locating the formal cause of justification in the indwelling of Christ through the Holy Spirit, not in faith or renewal in the abstract. More importantly, he integrates the whole discussion into the doctrine of the Trinity and the economy of salvation. Thomas Holtzen argues that Newman’s

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132 Jfc. 202-03.

133 Jfc. 207.


approach to justification should be seen not only as a negative critique of other views, but as a positive theological construction.\textsuperscript{136} And as Kirk notes, Newman’s \textit{Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification} stand as a clear demonstration that the Trinity really is at the heart of his theology.\textsuperscript{137}

There is one more aspect of Newman’s soteriology that merits comment, one which also sets him apart somewhat from other modern Western Christian theologians. As noted in Chapter 2, Newman clearly holds a patristic doctrine of \textit{theosis} or deification, and this too takes on a specifically Trinitarian character. Newman cites Athanasius with approval regarding deification, which he also identifies with sanctification.\textsuperscript{138} In one sermon Newman expounds on what exactly this means:

\begin{quote}
Men we remain, but not mere men, but gifted with a measure of all those perfections which Christ has in fulness, partaking each in his own degree of His Divine Nature so fully, that the only reason (so to speak) why His saints are not really like Him, is that it is impossible—that He is the Creator, and they His creatures; yet still so, that they are all but Divine, all that they can be made without violating the incommunicable majesty of the Most High.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{136} Holtzen, “Union,” 151.


\textsuperscript{139} PS 8.253.
Deification, then, is the participation of human beings in the divine nature of Christ, to the extent that such participation is possible for creatures. Like Athanasius, Newman connects this directly with the Incarnation—with the eternal Son sharing in human nature.

In Newman’s thinking, deification or sanctification, which begins in this life, naturally leads to glorification in eternity. Indeed, it might be seen as what connects the events of the economy of salvation to its promised fulfillment. Newman states, “We enter into our rest, by entering in with Him, who, having wrought and suffered, has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.” As Luu-Quang has argued, Newman also conceives of glorification in specifically Trinitarian terms. He likewise notes the respective roles of the Son and Holy Spirit in making possible the resurrection of the body.

From beginning to end, Newman’s soteriology is deeply Trinitarian. More specifically, he largely identifies the economic event of the Atonement as the work of the incarnate Son, but the application of that work he ascribes to the Holy Spirit, through the processes of justification, deification, and glorification. In a way this is simply the ongoing manifestation of divine syncatabasis in the saving economy.

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140 Newman describes the paradox of sharing in the transcendent divine life in these terms: “Thou hast, O Lord, an incommunicable perfection, but still that Omnipotence by which Thou didst create, is sufficient also to the work of communicating Thyself to the spirits which Thou hast created…I do not know how this can be; my reason does not satisfy me here; but in nature I see intimations, and by faith I have full assurance of the truth of this mystery. By Thee we cross the gulf that lies between Thee and us…And thus, remaining one and sole and infinitely removed from all things, still Thou art the fulness of all things, in Thee they consist, of Thee they partake, and into Thee, retaining their own individuality, they are absorbed.” So MD 429.

141 In at least one instance, Newman practically quotes Athanasius verbatim, when he says that “by God’s becoming man, men, through brotherhood with Him, might become as gods.” So PS 5.118; cf. Athanasius, De Incarnatione 54.

142 PS 6.369.

143 For a summary of several texts that demonstrate this, see Luu-Quang, “Trinitarian Theology,” 127-29.

144 PS 1.275, 278.
Ecclesiology

Newman does not see salvation as an entirely individual affair, however. In one of his early *Tracts for the Times*, he states, “We are taught first, the SPIRIT’S indwelling in the Visible Church or body; I do not say, *in every member of it*, but generally *in it*; – next, we are told that the SPIRIT baptizes individuals *into* that body.” 145 Newman, along with many of his colleagues in the Oxford Movement, sees the process of deification as something that happens in and through the life of the church. Calhoun argues that Newman’s particular way of expressing this is to draw an analogy between the Spirit-indwelt Christ and the Spirit-indwelt church, such that “because the Spirit descended to Christ and had a role in deifying his human nature, so the Spirit descends to the Church – deifying the people of God by indwelling them, thus enabling them to participate in divine life.” 146

Indeed, receiving the Holy Spirit and becoming a member of the church as Christ’s body go hand in hand for Newman, as “it is by being incorporated into the one Body, that we have the promise of life; by becoming members of Christ, we have the gift of His Spirit.” 147 This connection makes sense in Newman’s thought, given the link we have already noted between baptismal regeneration and justification resulting from the indwelling Spirit. On this basis, he even claims that “the heart of every Christian ought to represent in miniature the Catholic Church, since one Spirit makes both the whole Church and every member of it to be His Temple.” 148

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145 *Tracts* 47.

146 Calhoun, “Indwelling Spirit,” 51.


148 SD 132.
This is but one of the ways that Newman’s ecclesiology is deeply informed by his Trinitarian commitments, as both an Anglican and a Roman Catholic. After all, it is “the Holy Trinity, in whom their [i.e. the saints’] communion with each other consists.” Luu-Quang describes Newman’s ecclesiology as “built upon a Trinitarian foundation,” and Dessain notes how Newman strikes a balance between the Christological and Pneumatological elements of the church.

This is demonstrated in one of Newman’s more mature works on ecclesiology, the 1877 Preface to the third edition of his Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church. Here he describes the church as “the supernatural creation of God.” He notes both the Christological and Pneumatological elements, calling the church both Christ’s “representative…His mystical Body and Bride,” and “the shrine and organ of the Paraclete, who speaks through her till the end comes.” Newman further fleshes out the Christological dimension by explicitly connecting the three offices of Christ with three offices of the church: “He is Prophet, Priest, and King; and after

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149 See Beaumont, *Dieu Intérieur*, 190. It should be noted that Newman’s conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism turned less on what the church is, and more on where it is. Thus there is a great deal of continuity between the two periods in how he conceives the nature of the church as such. Though he does, at one point after his conversion, draw an analogy between how divine unity and ecclesial unity are conceived, in which he likens Roman Catholic ecclesiology to Nicene doctrine and Anglican ecclesiology to Arianism. See LD 14.402.

150 PS 4.171.


152 C. S. Dessain, “Cardinal Newman and the Eastern Tradition,” *Downside Review* 94 no. 315 (1976), 97. He compares Newman to the 20th century Orthodox theologian George Florovsky in this regard, and contrasts both with an Eastern tendency to focus exclusively on the Pneumatological, and a Western tendency to focus exclusively on the Christological.

153 Newman originally wrote these lectures in 1837 as an Anglican. This republication, decades later, included a lengthy preface and copious footnotes in which Newman, now a Roman Catholic, sought to refute some of his earlier positions.

154 VM 1.xciv.

155 VM 1.xxxix.
His pattern, and in human measure, Holy Church has a triple office too...three offices, which are indivisible, though diverse, viz. teaching, rule, and sacred ministry.” Thus Newman takes seriously the idea that the church is, in a sense, continuing Christ’s incarnate presence on earth. It is his body and his representative, and it participates in his threelfold office.

Even so, the Pneumatological foundation of Newman’s ecclesiology seems to stand out far more in his writings. During both his Anglican and Roman Catholic periods, he frequently notes specific points of connection between the Holy Spirit and the church. It is the coming of the Spirit, after all, that marks the beginning of the church, and the same Spirit is the necessary condition of the church’s continued existence. Graham argues that Newman’s “pneumatic ecclesiology” follows the same lines as his pneumatic Christology. Once again, an analogy can be drawn between Christ’s human nature and the human element of the Spirit-indwelt church. It is this analogy, in Newman’s thought, that makes possible the real participation of Christians in the life of the Trinity.

Newman locates both the unity and the authority of the church in the Holy Spirit. He explicitly notes that the Spirit is the source of the church’s unity, and in one instance he even

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156 VM I.xl.

157 Dessain argues that this is another point where Newman anticipates what will become a major theological concern a century later. See “Uncreated Grace,” 281-82.

158 PS 6.63; US 17, 82-83. At one point he compares the church before Pentecost to unformed matter. See SN 85.


160 Graham, Eastertide to Ecclesia, 14. Later he claims that the ninth of Newman’s Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification presents his richest exposition of this connection, though it continues to come up in his later writings as well. See ibid., 124, 201. Calhoun also takes up this “pneumatological analogy,” and goes on to argue that it is undergirded by three convictions in Newman’s thinking: the co-syncatabasis of the Son and Spirit, Spirit Christology, and theosis. See “Indwelling Spirit,” 46 ff.

draws an analogy between the Personhood of the Spirit and the church as having a sort of corporate personhood: “The body of faithful men, or Church, considered as the dwelling-place of the One Holy Spirit, is invested with a metaphorical personality, and is bound to act as one, directing human conduct in which the entire system may be considered as originating.”

Newman likewise sees the Spirit as the basis for ordained ministry, and he attributes the promise that the truth committed to the church will never be lost to “the ever-present care and guidance of the Holy Ghost.” More importantly, these three themes—unity, authority, and the Holy Spirit—are deeply intertwined in Newman’s thinking. He explains this concisely in one passage, where he indicates that the promises Christ made to the church were conditional: “This condition is Unity, which is made by Christ and His Apostles, as it were, the sacramental channel through which all the gifts of the Spirit, and among them purity of doctrine, are secured to the Church.”

Newman originally made this statement as an Anglican, at which point he saw the church’s lack of unity as undermining its authority. He would conceive the situation quite differently as a Roman Catholic, but he continues to maintain the Pneumatological link between unity and authority in the church.

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162 US 30.

163 PS 2.307, 314; Tracts 4.

164 VM 1.193.

165 VM 1.199.

166 These last two quotations come from the Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church. It should be noted that in his third edition, he makes no comment on either of the passages cited here, which seems to indicate that he still holds these statements to be true in substance, even if he conceives the practical outworking of them quite differently. Again, the change in Newman’s ecclesiology is less about what the church is than where it is to be found.
Indeed, the role of the Spirit as guiding the church’s authority becomes quite pronounced in Newman’s mature ecclesiology. Kevin Mongrain argues that Newman comes to see the Spirit as a sort of divine pedagogue who guides the church in discerning truth. This can happen through the official channel of the Roman Catholic magisterium when it defines a dogma. Newman stresses that the aid of the Spirit guarantees the truth of the definition, even while working through—or even in spite of—the failings of the church’s human leadership. Yet Newman also sees the voice of the lay faithful as an expression of authentic tradition guided by the Holy Spirit. Thomas Norris sees an analogy in Newman’s thinking here, between the illative sense in the individual and the sensus fidelium in the church, the latter being an expression of the Holy Spirit’s phronesis. In Newman’s thinking, the Spirit is quite active in the church, and this is simply the present expression of the Triune God’s condescension in the economy of redemption.

All of this sets the stage for one of Newman’s most well-known contributions to ecclesiology: the idea of the legitimate development of doctrine in the church. Indeed, the doctrine of the Trinity undergirds Newman’s concept of doctrinal development in at least three distinct ways. In the first place, on a practical and methodological level, Newman’s studies of

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168 For example, Newman says of the 1870 definition of papal infallibility that “the definition, if valid, has been passed under the Presence and Aid of the Holy Ghost; for though the supernatural promise guarantees its truth, it does not therefore guarantee the Christian prudence, the spirit and temper of its promulgators.” So LD 25.166; cf. HS 2.353.

169 See Cons. 63, 73, 76, 86. Newman’s account of this was rather controversial in the Roman Catholic Church at the time.


171 He makes a similar argument for the possibility of genuine miracles in church history in Mir. 191.
patristics in general and the Arian controversy in particular constituted a major factor in his arriving at the idea of development. In fact, in his early patristic studies he seems to have avoided any notion of development, preferring to credit unwritten tradition with providing continuity between the apostles and the doctrinal formulations of the fourth century.\(^{172}\) In time, however, he came to see historical development of doctrine as necessary to make sense of how later formulae were in continuity with earlier beliefs.\(^{173}\)

Secondly, when Newman first reflects on development in the fifteenth of his *University Sermons*, he looks to the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation as test-cases.\(^{174}\) Regarding the Trinity he speculates that

> the mind which is habituated to the thought of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, naturally turns…with a devout curiosity to the contemplation of the Object of its adoration, and begins to form statements concerning Him before it knows whither, or how far, it will be carried. One proposition necessarily leads to another, and a second to a third; then some limitation is required; and the combination of these opposites occasions some fresh evolutions from the original idea, which indeed can never be said to be entirely exhausted. This process is its development, and results in a series, or rather body of dogmatic statements, till what was at first an impression on the Imagination has become a system or creed in the Reason.\(^{175}\)

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\(^{172}\) See, for instance, Ari. 50-56.

\(^{173}\) He admits in an 1844 letter, “I have always held a development of doctrine, at least in some great points in theology. E.g. I have thought that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and Incarnation are intellectual developments of the inspired declarations of Scripture—but I used to think either that this development was made in the Apostles’ life time and given by them traditionally to the Church, or at least that it was made by the Church in the *first ages*.” So LD 10.264-65. It falls outside our present scope to give a detailed account of this shift in Newman’s thinking, which was a key intellectual move that allowed him to convert to Roman Catholicism. For fuller treatments, see Jaroslav Pelikan, “Newman and the Fathers: The Vindication of Tradition,” *Studia Patristica* 18 no. 4 (1990), 389-90; cf. Brian E. Daley, “The Church Fathers,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, ed. Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38; Benjamin John King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers: Shaping Doctrine in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98.

\(^{174}\) US 335.

\(^{175}\) US 329. In numerous other places Newman mentions the doctrine of the Trinity as an example of why some paradigm of historical development is necessary, e.g. Diff. 1.395; DA 113, 123, 128-29, 145, 190; Ess. 1.130, 134; LD 10.593; 24.283; 25.330.
Here Newman offers a concrete picture of several interrelated ideas he proposes earlier in the *University Sermons*: the distinction between simple faith and wisdom or reflection,\(^1\) the similar contrast between implicit and explicit reason,\(^2\) and the idea that one can assume an idea without being conscious of it.\(^3\) In this case, however, this process unfolds in the communal context of the church, as the revealed data are expounded upon from one generation to the next.\(^4\) In his later *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman again appeals to the process of development in Trinitarian dogma as providing examples of a more general phenomenon.\(^5\)

Thirdly and most importantly, Newman’s mature theory is both Christological and Pneumatological in character, and it must be understood in an ecclesial context. While Newman makes a case for the progressive development of ideas in general,\(^6\) he also insists that Christianity’s divine origins set it apart from other systems of thought, “being informed and quickened by what is more than intellect, by a divine spirit.”\(^7\) Not only, then, will it follow a natural course of development over time; such development can reasonably be taken as God’s intentional plan.\(^8\) Newman then argues that such a revealed idea naturally implies some sort of

\(^{1}\) US 281.  
\(^{2}\) US 259, 277.  
\(^{3}\) US 329.  
\(^{4}\) On the other hand, Newman suggests that the disparagement of the Trinity within various Protestant churches of his day is the natural development of the principles espoused by Luther and Calvin. See Dev. 198.  
\(^{5}\) See, for instance, Dev. 14 ff., 134 ff., 365.  
\(^{6}\) Dev. 33-54.  
\(^{7}\) Dev. 57.  
\(^{8}\) “Thus developments of Christianity are proved to have been in the contemplation of its Divine Author, by an argument parallel to that by which we infer intelligence in the system of the physical world.” So Dev. 63. Newman’s reasoning here echoes Joseph Butler’s use of analogy from nature.
infallible authority to guide its proper development.\textsuperscript{184} At first glance, one might assume Newman simply means the institutional teaching office of Roman Catholic Church, but we must remember how thoroughly Pneumatological Newman’s understanding of ecclesial authority is. Thus Graham contends, against some critics, that Newman identifies the principle perpetuating the idea of Christianity across time with the Holy Spirit, and by the very “idea” of Christianity he means the totality of the Christ-event, continued in the church.\textsuperscript{185} Viewed from this perspective, we can see how Newman’s concept of doctrinal development fits within his larger vision of the saving economy. Indeed, we might go as far as to say that the Spirit’s continual guiding of the church into a deeper understanding of its faith is in fact an act of ongoing syncatabasis in the life of the church.

There is at least one more aspect of the church where Newman sees the active and continual presence of the Triune God at work: the sacraments. As Beaumont observes, Newman sees a very close connection between the Incarnation, the church, and the sacraments.\textsuperscript{186} More specifically, sacramental theology is another area where Newman sees the intertwined roles of the Son and Holy Spirit play out. As early as 1835 he calls the sacraments “the embodied forms of the Spirit of Christ.”\textsuperscript{187} He describes the respective roles of the Son and Spirit in baptism in these terms:

\begin{quote}
Once for all [Christ] hung upon the cross, and blood and water issued from His pierced side, but by the Spirit’s ministration, the blood and water are ever flowing as though His cross were really set up among us, and the baptismal water were but an outward image meeting our senses. Thus in a true sense that water is not what it
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{184} Dev. 87-90.
\textsuperscript{185} Graham, \textit{Eastertide to Ecclesia}, 190, 199.
\textsuperscript{187} LD 5.39.
was before, but is gifted with new and spiritual qualities. Not as if its material substance were changed, which our eyes see, or as if any new nature were imparted to it, but that the lifegiving Spirit, who could make bread of stones, and sustain animal life on dust and ashes, applies the blood of Christ through it.¹⁸⁸

This of course accords with how Newman sees the Spirit’s role in justification: applying the saving work of Christ to the individual Christian in a real and concrete way, thus bringing them into the life of the Trinity as manifested in the economy of redemption. Newman likewise credits the Holy Spirit with making Christ present in the Eucharist.¹⁸⁹ As Calhoun puts it, Newman sees “the indwelling Spirit as co-agent, not afterthought, of Christ” in the sacraments.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, in one instance he states plainly that it is the presence of the Spirit that makes the sacraments efficacious.¹⁹¹

Thus Newman’s ecclesiology also fits within the larger Trinitarian structure of his thought, and is, in a sense, the locus of the saving economy playing out even in the present. It is through the church that salvation, as participation in the Triune life of God, takes place. The very constitution of the church follows from the economic roles of both the Son and the Spirit. The latter, moreover, undergirds the unity and authority of the church, including the progressive development of revealed doctrine over time. Finally, Newman sees the sacraments as ever-present manifestations of the saving economy, mediated through the Son and the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸⁸ PS 3.278. As for the effects of baptism, Newman states that “none knows but God Himself and His Only Son, and His Spirit who then is present,—how much Holy Baptism does secretly for our souls, what hidden wounds it heals, and what inbred corruption it allays.” So PS 4.130.

¹⁸⁹ “In answer, then, to the problem, how CHRIST comes to us while remaining on high, I answer just as much as this, — that He comes by the agency of the HOLY GHOST, in and by the Sacrament.” So Tracts, 447. Elsewhere he suggests an analogy between Christ’s ascension and his ability to be present in the sacrament. See DA 225.

¹⁹⁰ Calhoun, “Indwelling Spirit,” 52.

¹⁹¹ “Sacraments, without the presence of the Holy Ghost, would sink into mere Jewish rites; and Creeds, without a similar presence, are but a dead letter.” So VM 1.165. In a letter later on, he refers to the Spirit working through priestly absolution. See LD 17.436.
Conclusion

As we have seen, there are numerous points at which the doctrine of the Trinity informs Newman’s thinking, particularly in his Christology, Pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. For Newman, the Trinity is not simply one doctrine among many, but provides the framework for discussing the whole of Christian revelation. Newman is consistent in grounding these other areas of his theology in this Trinitarian frame, which results in a theology that is cohesive, even if not explicitly systematic. More specifically, Newman links each of these areas with the divine condescension in the economy of redemption. The result is a theological vision in which humanity comes to participate in the life of the Trinity by entering into the economy in concrete ways: through the Incarnation and Atonement of Christ, applied in justification by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and mediated through church as a divine institution. In this way, the condescension of the Triune God in the economy of redemption continues in the communal and individual lives of Christians in every age.
CONCLUSION

We have now reached the end of this comprehensive study of John Henry Newman’s Trinitarian theology. As is now evident, Newman’s theology is consistent and coherent, even if he himself does not arrange it systematically. Moreover, the key to this coherence is how he sees the economy of salvation in terms of divine condescension that reveals the Triune God, while also drawing humanity into the life of the Trinity.

To recap, we began (Chapter 1) with a discussion of Newman’s various contexts and their bearing on his thinking, especially the occasional, practical, and pastoral orientation of his thought, as well as his engagement with patristic theology, especially Alexandrian figures like Athanasius. With this background, (Chapter 2) we took Newman’s Trinitarian spirituality as our point of entry into his theology, looking at how the two inform each other in his approach. This led us to see the high regard Newman has for both mystery and doctrine, how he understands theological language as “economical,” and how he makes sense of belief in a mystery like the Trinity. We saw various ways that a Trinitarian perspective informs these themes in Newman, even as the they in turn shape how he approaches the doctrine of the Trinity.

We then turned to examine the content of Newman’s Trinitarian theology as such. We first looked (Chapter 3) at the activity of the Triune God in the economy of redemption, and how Newman conceives of God’s actions as both unified and differentiated along Trinitarian lines. It was here, in discussing the work of the Son and the Spirit, that the theme of divine condescension or syncatabasis emerged as a central feature in Newman’s thinking. It is the
economic revelation of the Trinity that led us into Newman’s reflections on the Trinity *in se* (Chapter 4). Here we saw Newman’s close correlation between the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity, especially as it plays out in his treatment of the concepts of principatus, consubstantiality, and coinherence.

From this exposition of Newman’s theolog of the Trinity itself, we finally looked (Chapter 5) at how the doctrine informs other areas of this thought, specifically Christology, Pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. Here we not only saw that all of these are infused with a strong Trinitarian outlook, but also that various aspects of how he understands the Incarnation, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the process of salvation, and the church can be seen as expressions the divine condescension within the economy.

The primary value of this study is that it provides a fuller analysis of this aspect of Newman’s theology from a systematic perspective, and thus further reveals the inner logic of his thought. However, that does not limit its significance to Newman studies or even historical theology. Indeed, there are also a few points where Newman may have something to contribute to contemporary discussions of the Trinity. Newman anticipates some of the concerns of the so-called Trinitarian revival of the twentieth century,¹ but he does not fall into the categories that

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have come to dominate recent thinking. For this reason, he may offer a fresh perspective on contemporary Trinitarian theology.

One area where Newman may be helpful is in the relation between the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity. While Rahner’s axiom sought to overcome a virtual separation between the two in neo-scholastic theology, it has itself become a contentious question whether Rahner’s solution is adequate, and in some ways the issue has become increasingly convoluted. Newman might offer some insights here, given that he clearly anticipates the concern, and indeed does not have the slightest hint of a division between God in se and pro nobis. At the same time, because he predates the twentieth century formulation of the question, he is not caught up in the directions these discussions have gone—including the very terminology of immanent vs. economic. It is possible that he could offer some fresh perspective on the matter.

A second issue to which Newman might speak is the tension between order and equality among the divine Persons. Indeed, this question is closely related to the previous one, as the economic missions of the Son and the Spirit seem to imply at least a functional subordination to the Father. Taking this to an extreme leads to heresies like Arianism. On the other hand, more recent “social” models of Trinitarian theology tend in the other direction, to stress mutual equality in a way that effectively denies any notion of order or hierarchy altogether.

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3 Luu-Quang holds that Newman would in fact agree with both sides of Rahner’s axiom, i.e. that the immanent is the economic and the economic is the immanent. See “Trinitarian Theology,” 353-55.

4 E.g. Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 174-78; LaCugna, God For Us, 400.
clearly sees the tension for what it is, and seeks to hold both aspects together, in their economic and immanent dimensions. It is not entirely clear that Newman has fully resolved the matter himself, but his concern for fidelity to the theological data may at least provides a model for other theologians in addressing the matter.

A third question in contemporary Trinitarian theology is the issue of “naming” the Triune God and the nature of theological language. Probably the foremost expression of this in current discourse has to do with the gendered aspect of the traditional terms Father and Son. One side of this debate favors replacing, or at least expanding on, these words with more feminine or gender-neutral language. The other side insists that that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have a priority of place as the “proper name” of the Triune God. However, Newman’s understanding of economical language, as both normative and limited, as well as ecclesially contextualized, may present a third option for addressing this question. While we do not have space here to explore any of these question in detail, we can see briefly how and why such inquiries may be beneficial.

There are certainly other contemporary issues to which Newman’s theology might be able to speak. It falls far outside the present scope to explore any of these matters, but it is worth

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5 The Holy Spirit tends to be less of a problem, as the gender of the term varies in different languages, e.g. it is feminine in Hebrew (ruach), neuter in Greek (pneuma), and masculine in Latin (spiritus).


7 Rowan Williams strongly suggests this possibility, even stating bluntly, “Do some of the bitterness and anxieties in current theology about (for example) gender bias in traditional theological language have at least something to do with an isolation of formulae from practice, from the fluid, cross-referential process Newman sees in early theology, so that literalist interpretations are the point from which both liberal and conservative begin?” So introduction to The Arians of the Fourth Century, by John Henry Newman (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), XLIV; cf. XLI-XLIII. Cf. Williams, “Newman’s Arians and the Question of Method in Doctrinal History,” in Newman after a Hundred Years, ed. Ian Ker and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 266-71.

8 Kirk lists the primacy of uncreated grace, the interpenetration of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the personal relations that human beings can have with each divine Person. See “Spirituality,” 337-41, 348-53. Luu-
noting how Newman’s theology might offer some positive contributions. Like most theologians from past eras, Newman still has theological contributions to make beyond his own time period. Indeed, Newman himself would welcome such an exchange, seeing it as an opportunity to further the church’s reflection on—and entrance into—the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery that arises in eternity yet is revealed in time through the divine condescension in the economy of salvation.

Quang likewise suggests Newman might aid in better relations between East and West within Christianity, both in terms of patristic Trinitarian theology and modern ecumenical dialogue. See “Trinitarian Theology,” 352-53, 363-73.
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VITA

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