

“The Personal Structure of Truth in the Thought of John Henry Cardinal Newman”

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“Truth” writes Joseph Ratzinger, “is the central idea in Newman’s intellectual striving. Conscience is central to his thinking because truth is the heart of everything.” This dissertation seeks to explore and develop John Henry Newman’s understanding of truth in light of God’s revelation given in and through Jesus Christ. In his writings on the *depositum fidei* entrusted to the Church, the development of doctrine, the assent of faith, and the nature of conscience, Newman uncovered what might be called the “personal structure” of truth. The form and content of the truth revealed by God and the response of faith involve the concrete and intimate center of personal existence – *cor ad cor loquitur*. This dissertation shows how Newman's search for truth begins and ends in the mystery of the Church, the “ground and pillar of truth” (1 Tim 3:15). For Newman the personal structure of truth is essentially ecclesial.

Chapter One, considers Newman’s view of dogma and argues that truth has a definite content to communicate about the relationship between God and man. Through dogma, the infallible proposition of the highest truth, we discover the God wants us to know him. For Newman, dogma forms the bond of the communion between God and man and it secures the ecclesial communion in the orthodox faith.

In **Chapter Two**, I will argue that the principle of development is a characteristic of truth that gives evidence that ultimate truth, the revealed truth about God, entails an historical unfolding that is entrusted by Jesus Christ to the Catholic Church as the pillar and ground of the truth.

Chapter Three explores Newman's account of the unconditional assent of faith that truth calls forth. We raise questions that Newman himself sought to address about the relationship between faith and reason in forming the certitude required for faith. Real assent, to be truly personal, must include all of our subjective experience, but to safeguard it from falling into superstition we must love what truth reveals through the Church, Jesus Christ.

In **Chapter Four** we turn to what is most personal in man, the inviolable sanctuary of conscience. Newman's sense of conscience is the messenger of truth, where the image of Christ is formed in us, and informs how the *sensus fidei* plays a role preserving the truth in the Church. I show how Newman guides us to find the fullness of truth in the Church, where heart speaks unto heart.