English IV long essay

The Novels of John Henry Newman

Ursula Coleman.

* Who is the greatest writer, Dedalus?

Stephen noted the mockery in the Question and said:

* Of prose do you mean?
* Yes
* Newman, I think.
* Is it Cardinal Newman? asked Boland.
* Yes, answered Stephen.

The grin broadened on Nash's freckled face as he

turned to Stephen and said:

* And do you like Cardinal Newman, Dedalus?

James Joyce The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Manl

As a subject for literary study, John Henry Newman currently depends almost entirely upon the single volume in which he chronicles the course of his religious changes from

Evangelism to Roman Catholicism, his Apologia Pro Vita Sua, "the most famous autobiography in the English language 2

But Newman also ventured with moderate popular success into the more frivolous field of fiction, publishing two novels, the first Loss and Gain in 1848, and the second Callista

in 1856, both classifiable as Victorian ”spiritual biography” or novels of ”faith and doubt”.

The pain of religious enquiry is a central theme in , Victorian literature, but it is doubt, the moral attitude celebrated by Tennyson in In Memoriam, the experience of

agnostics such as Arnold, Clough and George Eliot that engages literary interest rather than the pain of belief. Newman's novels stand out as rare dramatizations of the suffering involved in religious assent, in which ”availing

himself of the greater freedom that fiction and anonymity can bestow 3 he sustains both the emotional and intellectual

urgency involved not in the loss but the gain of faith.

1. James Joyce, The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,

(London, 1932), p.91.

1. Edmund Campion, John Henry Newman, (Melbourne, **1980)** p.17.
2. Margaret Maison, Search Your Soul, Eustace, (London, l96l)p.141

It is ten years since the two gay maidens put up the celebrated petition, "Aunt, do tell us what Puseyism is about - we can't get on at Almack's without being able to talk about it”. II the fair Questioners had waited a little, it would have been unnecessary to trouble their good kinswoman: for them and for all who might wish to acquire the current controversial small talk without the labour of reading great works of theology, the press was about to provide abundant instruction in the shape of novels and storybooks, illustrating the doctrines and the practices of the

new risen "ism”.

Fraser's Magazine 18481

Both Newman's novels, Loss and Gain (1848) and Callista

(1856) are briefly and for the most part indifferently

alluded to as of only incidental importance in almost

any modern account either of his life or of the literature of the period. Those modern critics who write at greater length about Newman's fiction do so almost apologetically in the context of his already much investigated literary

reputation,2 But the British press of 1848 chose to consider seriously Loss and Gain: a Tale of a Convert, the new and anonymous novel of Roman conversion, generally and

correctly attributed to the pen of the erstwhile ”prophet of

Littlemore”, The Spectator, for example, described it as ”tedious, deficient in science and leading to nothing \*3 almost

the most tolerant reaction - the Athenaeum exhibited

a greater disgust - ”feeble, flippant and farcical” 4 and

the longer review of the extremely Protestant Fraser's Magazine a greater severity, observing in it that ”same strange mixture of an all questioning scepticism with fanaticism which craves after impossibilities to believe”.

All three responses are admittedly resolutely Anglican,

Fraser's Magazine particularly so - in the same number in which

1.  ”Religious Stories”,Fraser's azine for Town and Countr XXXVIII, (August, 1848), p150
2. .f. George Levine The Boundaries of Fiction: Carl le Macauley, Newman (Princeton, 1968). Raymond Chapman, Fat th ai Revolt: Studies in the Literary Influence of the Oxford Movement (London 1970).
3. The Spectator, XXI (March 11, 1848), p225
4. he thenaeum, (March 18, 1848), p292
5. raser p164

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the review of Loss and Gain appeared, Charles Kingsley's specifically anti-Newmanic tale Yeast: A Problem was in the process of being serialized. But an example of Roman Catholic reaction can be found in the partisan journal the Dublin Review, which is perhaps immoderately enthusiastic about ”this beautiful work claiming it to be ”as

charming, as deep, and we must add, as piquant a work as

we have ever read” 2 The gusto of this reception was necessarily in part provoked by Newman's considerable popularity within the Catholic Church during the period immediately following his conversion, long before Monsignor Talbot, Newman's most celebrated enemy in the Catholic hierarchy, formed the opinion that he was ”the most dangerous man in England”.' Newman's later novel Callista (1856), published in the wake of his condemnation for libel against G.G. Achilli, the

entrepreneurial ex-priest who met with great popular success denouncing the unnatural practices of monks and nuns all over England, and of his controversial failures in Ireland

over the establishment of a Catholic University was received by the Dublin Review with a significantly lower degree of approbation.

Outside the Roman Catholic Church, any novel in its defence would have been rendered even more than ordinarily unpalatable to English Protestants at the time of the publication of Loss and Gain, not only by the threat, realized in 1850 of a restoration by the Pope of the Catholic hierarchy in England,

but also by the political agitation of 1848 at home and on the

1. Dublin Review, XXIV, (March, 1848), p2l8.
2. ibid, p219.
3. Letter from George Talbot t o Arc hbishop Man ni ng , i n Edmund Camp i on , opc i t p34 .
4. Dublin Review, XL, (June 1856), pp424-441

continent, both serving to aggravate the notorious xenophobias of the English, essential to which was, as Charles Kingsley suggests :

that dogged hatred of popery which lies inarticulate

and confused but deep and firm in the heart of the

## English people.

Even those members of Newman's reading public who may have sympathized with the radical movements in Paris and Manchester and remained uninfected by the endemic fear

of foreign infiltration, would in their turn have been offended by the essential conservatism oi Loss and Gain. The novel, of course, was hardly a political tract, and furthermore the only passage in which the “condition of

England” question is raised, is surprisingly tolerant

of radical agitation 2 nevertheless in any political sense it was an implicitly anti-democratic narrative.

Twentieth century criticism of Loss and Gain, such as there is, tends to dismiss the novel on grounds of artistic incompetence rather than on account of the purported ethical failings to which Newman's contemporaries were so sensitive.

The 1848 reviews do draw attention to the slightness of plot and character, what Raymond Chapman politely calls “an avoidance of sensationalism in plot and episode”, yet

the novel is not censured on that account - the critical focus of the period was moral, not aesthetic. According to Lytton Strachey's essay on Matthew Arnold, A Victorian Criti

When Dryden and Johnson wrote of literature they wrote of it as an art; but the Victorian critic has

a different notion of his business. To him, literature was always an excuse for talking about something else.

## Charles Kingsley, Two Years Ago , Volume VIII, The Works

(London, 1969), p49.

* 1. Loss and Gain, (London, 18T4), pl68. All subsequent references are to this edition.
	2. Chapman, cut, p121,
	3. “A Victorian Critic”, Lytton Strachey, Literary Essays

## (London, 1961), p210

Newman himself wrote in his early literary essay on Aristotle's Poetics:

We do not hesitate to say that poetry is ultimately founded on correct moral perception: where there

is no sound principle in exercise, there will be no poetry; and that on the whole (originality being granted) in proportion to the stand of a writer's moral character, will his compositions vary in poetical excellence.

sentiments which certainly concur with a comment respecting

priorities in Fraser's Magazine of 1851 that:

If we are to make a choice between prosy, decent books and vicious books that are written with sprightliness and skill, we are, of course, bound to prefer the former.

Fraser's accordingly reprimanded the author of Loss and Gain

for its occasional levity of tone, deemed inappropriate

for so unfortunate and tasteless a subject\*3 and The Spectator

too, while admiring the portrayal of Oxford life, notes that it is ”rather one-sided, the light, the weak and worldly side, not the black side”, Fraser's goes on to censure Newman for the very act of writing a novel, thereby jeopardizing his status as a sometime prestigious

Anglican clergyman, but concludes with regret that ”Romanism

does not sharpen the sense of propr i ety” . Newman ' s own

colleagues joined in the reproof, apparently accusing that

he had ”sunk below Dickens 4 and the author himself apologized for the novel in the preface to the later editions, agreeing that it was "a literary attempt .., out

of keeping with my antecedents and my position”. Along with most clergymen of the period Newman had preached against novel reading earlier in his career, and had in particular

1. ”Poetry with reference to Aristotle's Poetics”, in

J.H. Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, Volume I, (London, 1872), p91.

1. Fraser's, XLVIII, (October 1851), p37b

## Fraser’s, (August 1848), pl63

1. Chapman , opc 1 t , pl20 .
2. Preface to Loss and Gai n , s i xt h ed i t i on , (Lond on 1874 ) , pV

objected that certain "religious novels" had a tendency

to "cultivate religious affections separate from religious practice", that fiction had only transient emotional

value and was therefore suspect. Later in life he still

claimed to have no time for literature per se:

I own I am hard-hearted towards the mere literary ethos for there is nothing I despise and detest more. He is only half a man if he can't pt his book into the fire when told by authority.**'**

This possibly overstated rejection of the "literary ethos"

would appear to have stemmed from a disinclination to exalt a purely secular accomplishment. It was not a Calvinistic repudiation of culture such as that of Philip Gosse, who ”prided himself on never having read a page of Shakespeare \*2 but a wish to retain in perspective the

Visible and Invisible Worlds - "My great fault is doing

things in a mere literary way from the love of the work

without the thought of God's glory 3 Thus he resolves

in the poem ”Mature and Art”:

So living Nature, not dull Art

4

Shall plan my ways and rule my heart.

It is a notable feature in the history of Newman's literary endeavours that the larger part of his work can be

traced in motive not to the "mere literary ethos",

but to the events of what was really his "non-literary" life. He admitted himself:

What I have written has for the most part been what may be called official ,.. from some especial call or invitation or necessity or emergency ... I cannot

write without such a stimulus.

out of the way or impertinent.

I feel myself going

1. Geoffrey Tillotson, A View of Victorian Literature

(Oxford, 1978), p29.

1. Edmund Gosse, Father and Son, (Harmondsworth, 1979), p149.
2. Geoffrey Tillotson, opcit, p31.
3. Newman, Verses on Various Occasions, (London, 1889), p17.
4. Newman, Autobiographical Writings, (London, 1956), p272.

Thus the Apologia Pro Vita Sua was written in response

to Kingsley, specifically the pamphlet What then does Dr. Newman Mean?, Callista to Kingsley's Hypatia and on the request of his superior Cardinal Wiseman, and most of his poetry for a specific Tractarian anthology, Lyro Apostolica.

G.B. Tennyson argues that this practice of resolving public controversies through the more "private" medium of literature is integral to Newman's high literary achievement:

then Newman i s at his mos t succbessful , as i n the well known Pillar of the Cloud he i s abl e to l i nk the vo i ce of the private wor shipper to that sense

of energy and purpose that implies even when it does

not state, a wider public relevance

Loss and Gain was by Newman's own admission a form of reply to a novel sent to him in Italy by friends, entitled From Oxford to Rome: and how it fared with some who lately

made the journey, by a Companion Traveller. The "Companion Traveller" was a young woman, Elizabeth Harris, who had converted in the general excitement, an action she almost instantly regretted. It treats with the misfortunes of

a naive undergraduate by the name of Eustace (a name strangely popular in novels of faith and doubt) who is seduced at the University by subversive cryptocatholics and dragged down into the grim Italian abyss of the Catholic church,

climaxing in the proud revelation by a dismal abbess of the corpse of a young virgin, rotting away in the unspecified recesses of her nunnery. The novel is a pretentious and hysterical attack on Roman Catholicism, aiming to dissuade

any prospective converts and to confirm the common belief that

the English Church invites the obedience of intelligent love: the Roman Church commands the utter unreasoning submission of a soul denuded of its power and despoiled of its birthr i gh t of i ndependenc e .

## G.B. Tennyson, Victorian Devotional Poetry: the **Tracarian**

Mode , ( Cambr idge , Mass . , 1981 ) pl22

1. Elizabeth Harris, From Oxford to Rome, **(London, 1847), p21**

or as expressed rather more tolerantly in the highly popular 1880 Taractarian novel John Inglesant, the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism was:

a conflict within man's own nature - nay, between the noblest parts of man's nature arrayed against each other. On the one side, obedience and faith and on the other, freedom and the reason.

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Even Fraser's Magazine which reviewed From Oxford to Rome together with Loss and Gain deplored Harris' fictionalized confession, comparing it to

a sick man's dream ... indeed the opinions of this unfortunate lady can be of little interest to anyone but herself, We can attach no value to the impressions of a mind so unbalanced and

2

distempered

ex per i ence

even to the witness of her own

Newman himself is predictably characterized in the early chapters of the novel as the innocent genius wreaking unspeakable harm upon the world, the ”retreating figure” upon whom Eus t ace :

cast a lingering and earnest look ... as the wind floated the folds from his singular but fine form, Eustace thought ”certainly that man must be a king or a martyr”. But the unconscious object of his

and hundreds of others' speculations trode staidly on.

Neman 's irritation at this kind of portrait is not difficult

to imagine - he wrote in the Apologia:

I never had the staidness or dignity necessary for a leader, To the last, I never recognised the hold I had over young men. Of late years I have read and heard that they even imitated me in various ways. I was Quite unconscious of it, and I think my immediate friends knew too well how disgusted I should be at such proceedings to have the heart to tell me

 John Henry Shorthouse, John Inglesant, Quoted in Margaret

Maison, opcit, p66.

1. Fraser ' s p158 .
2. Elizabeth Harris, opcit, p11.
3. Newman,

PArolo ia

V ta **Sua, (London, 1893), p29.**

All subsequent references are to this edition unless

otherwise indicated.

Similarly, Charles Kingsley's speculations that he had nourished a conspiratorial coterie of fanatical youths incited the angry response - ”Why man, you are writing a romance!.... He thinks I was ever moving about with

a trail of Capulets at my heels” Newman suffered the centuries-old accusation of corrupting youth, a situation he parodies in Loss and Gain, when the maligned student hero, Charles Reding is rusticated by the Vice-Principal:

”What! remain here, sir, with all the young men about?” asked Dr. Bluett, with astonishment, ”with all the young men about you, sir?”

Charles really had not a word to say; he did not know himself in so novel a position. ”I cannot conceive, sir”, he said at last, ”why I should

be unfit company for the gentlemen of the college”.

Dr. Bluett's jaw dropped and his eyes assumed a hollow aspect. ”You will corrupt their minds, sir” he said - ”you will corrupt their minds." Then he added in a sepulchral tone which came from the very depths of his inside: "You will introduce them, sir, to some subtle Jesuit - to some subtle Jesuit,

Mr. Reding” (p241).

Newman himself deemed the contents of Harris' tale ”wantonly and preposterously fanciful" 2 and chose to

retaliate with a tale of his own ”drawn up with a stricter

regard to truth and probability \*2 to answer Harris'

aggressive horror with humour, her sensationalism

with his own ”realism”. But the kind of realism Newman attempts does not concur with most modern critical expectations of ”the novel”. George Levine, for example, complains that Loss and Gain fails to involve itself in the'1abyrinths of self”, that its psychological credibility

is negligible and that the account of the protagonist's

former years is scarcely satisfactory3 just as in the Apologia, the first twenty years of the convert's life are

1. Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (London,
2. Preface, Loss and Gain, pix
3. George Levine, opcit, pp218-225.

1955), p362.

## very cursorily treated. Martin Svaglic, Newman's modern

editor responds:

What is both curious and regrettable in Levine's criticism is the expense of intelligence and sensitivity in taking Newman to task, however gently, for failures he shared with most of his contemporaries, before the novel turned to psychology, and before the appearance of Zola and Freud

But Levine's criticism is not only anachronistic, it is

## also exclusively secular in perspective. For Newman, experience

and environment were scarcely relevant in the formation of the essential elements of the human soul. In his mind there

were “two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator 2 other beings, other

phenomena may have incidental and temporary importance,

no th i n g more : as J . E . Baker observes , Loss and Ga i n i s ”the

picture of a character acting in a certain way in spite of heredity and environment 3 Both Charles Reding and Callista

have the knowledge of what they should believe before they

are actually taught it - they conspicuously resist socialization assimilation. Charles again and again insists to his unbelieving detractors that he has had no contact with Catholics, and similarly Callista, while imprisoned on a

charge of Christianity still maintains ”My Lord Polemo, I am not a Christian: - I never said I was”. Newman argued of

h i s own con v er s i on :

My opinions in religion were not gained as the world said from Roman sources but here on the contrary the birth of my own mind

Thus the ”psychological realism” of both novels operates

in a strictly religious context,

1. M.J. Svaglic, ”Newman as Literary Artist”, (ch.V), D.J. DeLaura, Victorian Prose: A guide to Research, (New York, 1973), p14T.
2. A olo , p4
3. J.E. Baker, The Novel and the Oxford Movement, (New **York,**

1965), p62.

## Apologia, p93

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DEFECTION FROM THE CHURCH - We understand that a: other victim has lately been added to the list c those whom the venom oi Tractorian principles h precipitated into the bosom of the Sorceress

c: Rome. Mr. Reding of St. Saviour's, the son of a respectable clergyman of the Establishment, deceased, after eating the bread of the Church all his life, has at length avowed himself the subject and slave of an Italian Bishop. (p357)

The vital question was, how were we to keep the Church from being liberalized?

Apologia Pro Vita Sua1

Newman's first and more obviously autobiographical novel Loss and Gain has its setting in Oxford, the ”nursery of the

Church of England”2 an institution which, according to

Newman's novel, was proving to be alarmingly inefficient in its purpose. The conversion of the undergraduate hero, Charles Reding, results, objectively, from the inadequacy of the liberal education he is offered

from within the University, which inadequacy, in turn, is the result of the gradual but determined invasion of Oxford by the forces of Liberalism, so degrading

to intellectual and religious truth that Charles' only alternative is to secede from the Establishment and seek the truth elsewhere.

## The phenomenon of Liberalism has almost irredeemably infected both the academics and students encountered

by Charles Reding in the course of the social and educational activity of his undergraduate life. Charles himself

has inherited a philosophic attitude of broad, affirmative tolerance from his father, minister of a country parish who had confidently assured his son ”My dear Charles ... all sermons are good”. (p357) In one of the opening dialogues

1. A olo ia, p30.
2. Meriol Trevor, The Pillar of the Cloud, (London, 1962), plT£

Charles declares himself to his friend Sheffield a

disciple of the spirit of the age, outlining to him his credo

## of liberalistic benevolence:

I am for taking everyone for what he is and

not for what he is not: one has this excellence, another that: no-one is everything. Why should we not drop what we don't like and admire what we like? This is the only way oi getting through life, the only true wisdom, and surely our duty into the bargain (p8).

The repudiation of dogmatism as a system of thought is also invoked by several other characters of Loss and Gain in support of various sometimes incongruous causes. The Irish student, While, for example, who entertains notions of transferring his spiritual allegiance to Rome, justifies what is considered to be an unwholesome predilection thus:

We must take things as we find them. I don't like what is bad in the Catholic church, if there is bad, but what is good. I do not go for what is bad, but for what is good. (45)

A character of even more dubious intellectual coherence, Mr. Vincent, one of Charles' tutors, argues on the same grounds in favour of a certain controversial clergyman, Dr. Brownside, whose controversy lies in his endorsement of the subjectivity of religious belief:

But mind, I don't recommend him; yet I respect him, and I consider that he says many things

well worth your attention: I would advise you then to accept the good which his sermons offer, without committing yourself to the bad.(p82)

Dr. Brownside, about whom Mr. Vincent is at once so generous and so reserv ed, is a ”little, prim, smirking, bespectacled man“ (p67), generally taken to be a satirical portrait of the Broad Church divine Dr. Hampden

whose advocacy of the admission of Dissenters into the

University, thereby, according to Newman, tending

”altogether to make a shipwreck of the Christian faith” 1 and whose subsequent appointment as Regi us Professor of Divinity in 1836, were both strongly and publicly deplored by the Tractarian fraternity, particularly by Newman. The legitimization of the Hampden philosophy - that, as

Dr. Brownside proposes, theological tenets are ”neither good nor bad in themselves, but personal, national or periodic” (pTO) - signified by his government appointment as Professor of Divinity, unsuccessfully contested by Newman and his party, was unignorable evidence of the

ideological impurity of the Church of England - it had indeed:

accepted the notion of a dissenting body in its midst. The search for unity had ended and a plural society had come into being

## Charles interprets Dr. Brownside's public address,

championing as it does an almost unqualified permission in

the search for re l i gi ous tr uth , as a vi rtual nul l um :

All are true: impossible! one as true as

educa t i o ad

another! why then it is as true that our Lord is mere man as that he is God. He could not possibly mean this: what did he mean? (pT0)

In the poem ”Liberalism” Newman expresses his suspicion which was soon to become a conviction that latitudinarian theology was essentially a specious form of atheism, disguised by the personal piety and prestige of its public exponents:

Ye cannot halve the Gospel of God's Grace; Men of presumptuous heart, I know ye well ...

. . for ye in heart At best are doubters whether it be true The theme discarding as unmeet for you Statesmen or sages .

## Apologia, p257.

1. Paul Johnson, A History of Christianity (London, **1976) p332**
2. Newman, Verses on Various Occasions, (London, **1889),** pl45.

Sheffield's enthusiasm for an American Congregationalist, Coventry, presumably representing Emerson, functions similarly to discredit the Broad Church position, with which Newman refused to reconcile himself or even to

tolerate as Christian In the essay Some Difficulties Felt by Anglicans he is unequivocal in his condemnation of the ”new” philosophy:

The preachers of these new ideas from Germany and America .,. will tumble from one depth of blasphemy to another, until they arrive at sheer

and naked atheism2 the reductio ad absurdum of

their principles .

Brownside's sermon occurs exactly halfway through the first volume of the novel, serving to illuminate the route of Charles' admittedly undramatic road to Damascus. It

is at this point that he turns Irom a position of gentle and general tolerance to the search for a severe and exclusive dogmatism, a prefiguring of his ”official” conversion to the Roman Catholic Church.

According to Meriol Trevor, the whole Hampden/Brownside controversy had ”raised the Question of whether education

was to continue to be conducted on Christian grounds or to be secularized” Newman's major purpose in The Idea of a University was to demonstrate that a fully liberal education was

possible, or rather was exclusively possible only within a Catholic system. Mathew Arnold, the other highly celebrated champion of liberal education in the nineteenth century, while strongly maintaining that a religious element in education was indispensable, could not, as an agnostic, agree with Newman that such an element should

1. .c.I. Apologia, p34
2. Newman, Some Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching, (London, 4th Edition), pp27-28
3. Meriol Trevor, opcit, pl73

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be the all-pervading principle. To Arnold, the value of Christianity was moral, not intellectual, and was in collusion with culture in that it was, for the time being, at odds

with the Hellenic impulse, pleading in Culture and Anarchy:

”Now and for us it is time to Hellenize, and to praise

knowing, for we have Hebraized too much 1 Newman's poem ”Zeal and Love” can be read as a response to the Arnoldian concept of culture - that is, Hellenism restrained by Jewish

severity, Christianity as a necessary discipline, not a reality:

## Dim is the philosophic flame By thoughts severe unfed

Book-lore o'er served when trial came

Nor g ift s when faith was dead

Newman, just as the present Pope, peremptorily argued that education was valid only in collaboration with ”Faith” and efficient exclusively on the condition:

## that its terms of reference are purely religious,

provided that it does no adopt the categories of any secular ideology

The adoption of secular archetypes and standards to the subordination of the sacred, and the spiritual danger thereby involved, is most prevalent amongst the aesthetes of Loss and Gain, the ”Tractarians improper” as Newman called them:

such men as I used to consider of the ”gilt gingerbread school”, from whom I expected little good, persons whose religion lay

in ritualism of architecture and

”played at popery” or ”anglicanism”

The Irish undergraduate White, for example, a devotee of what Walter Pater later called the ”aesthetic charm of the Catholic Church”, alleges that ”we have no life or

poetry in the Church of England, the Catholic Church alone

1. Mathew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy , (Cambridge, 1960) p37
2. Newman, The Dream of Gerontius and Other Poems, (Oxford, **1914**

.p80.

1. Malachi Martin, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church (New York, 1981), p289.
2. Apologia, (1955), p270.

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is beautiful: (p43). His conviction is short-lived - by the end of the second volume he denies ever having preferred the Roman Church, and by Book III, Newman

has almost maliciously married him off to the frivolous

Miss Bolton. Another example is the senior tutor Mr. Bateman who cultivates an interest in the cultural aspects of religion which overrules his concern with the consistency

of dogma and belief. In an attempt to account to his students for a very Roman Catholic miracle legend he has purchased to decorate his parish church, he claims it will serve as a "Catholic Pilgrim's Progress" - the

absurdity of which virtual contradiction in terms is exploited by Sheffield, who satirically advises:

Perhaps you had better have scrolls from their mouths in Old English. This Saint Thomas is stout: make him say "I am Mr. Dreadnought", or "I am Mr. Giant Despair", and since this beautiful saint bears a sort of dish, make her "Mrs. Creature Comfort" (p47).

It is this too easy faculty for indiscriminate compromise which Newman and Charles Reding find most unacceptable in the academia of Oxford and in the dogma of the English Church. Bateman again, recommends that

the perfection of sacred music is Gregorian set to harmonies; there you have the glorious

old chants and just a little modern richness. (p286)

Mr. Campbell, a Cambridge clergyman, tersely responds to this promiscuous neutrality “It's no honour to be

the author of a mongrel type” (p287). The "mongrel type"

whi ch Bateman represent s 1n his taste f or music, f or

architecture, for art, is the Via Media, a system of justification of the Anglican Church to which Newman

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had been committed prior to his conversion and the subject of one of his most famous Tracts for the Times. The rejection of the Via Media is also illustrated in Loss and Gain by the comic dismissal of Mr. Vincent, the ”eating man ” who :

had a great idea of the Via Media being the truth; and to obtain it, thought it enough to flee from extremes without having any very definite mean to flee to (p74)

To facilitate this flight from extremes, language is converted by masters and undergraduates alike into a mere contrivance - the sacred nature of the word is abused and shown to be manoeuvred either stupidly or willfully into meaninglessness.

To Newma n :

Words have a meaning whether we mean that meaning

or not; and they are imputed to us in their real meaning, when our not meaning it is our own fault.

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Charles' most creditable tutor, Carlton, shares this determination that words be used in their purportedly "true" sense, as does the imaginary figure of the ”merciless

Mr. Black" who appears in a series of sketches in the Idea prophesying of a student who has been encouraged in undisciplined and irresponsible expression:

When he grows up and has to make a speech or write a letter for the papers he will look out for flowers - full-blown flowers, figures, smart

expressions, trite Quotations, hackneyed beginnings and endings, pompous circumlocutions and so on;

but the meaning, the sense, the solid sense, the foundation, you may hunt the slipper long enough before you catch it.

This emphasis on the "real" meaning of words is thus of foremost

impor tance wi th regard to the t ext ure of Newman ' s prose ,

which is sparing in the use of stylistic devices which are not

1. Newman, "Unreal Words", Parochial and Plain Sermons, V,

## (London, 1878), p33. ”

1. Newman, The Idea of a University (New York, 1968), p269.

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necessarily relevant to "meaning". John Holloway suggests

that it is typical of Newman's style of argument to "maintain that his opponents are using words loosely or wrongly 1

a controversial method of which Charles is master. At a tea party hosted by the Low Church Mr. Freeborn and composed of half a dozen or so "earnest, earnest, earnest" Evangelicals, the novel adopts a form of almost pure dialogue, the participants other than Charles and his host being identified by number only. Charles assumes the role of an innocent

and youthful Socrates, quietly allowing his opponents to expand upon their errors until he chooses to pose the inconvenient question:- he requests an explanation of the Evangelical position on Luther's major thesis, and after considerable incongruous discussion:

"You mean" said Charles, "that justification is given to faith with love, not faith and love".

"You have expressed my meaning," said No. 4. "And what is considered the difference between with and and?" asked Charles. (p153)

The sin of mischievous, whether innocent or conscious,

verbal manipulation is not confined to the Evangelical school. When Charles is prematurely promoted to a class on the Articles, he encounters the High Church Mr. Upton, and

thence ensues a battle between student and lecturer of questions and evasions, eventuating in Mr, Upton's perhaps rather menacing advice that "it was well to

avoid both curious Questions and subtle answers" (p127).

The relationship between Upton and Charles is very reminiscent of Thomas Moore's playlet Matriculation, also an attack

•n

upon the "high and dry" school of clergy\*and also revolving

around the discrepancies in the Thirty-Nine Articles - the "Rt. Rev. Dr. Phillpots" counsels one of his students:

1. John Holloway, The Victorian Sage: studies in argument (New York, 1965), p194.

19

Dr.P THERE, my lad, lies the Articles (Boy begins to count them) just thirty-nine -

No occasion to count - you've only to sign.

At Cambridge where folks are less highchurch than we The whole Nine and Thirty are lumped into Three.... But what's the boy doing? what! reading all throug And my luncheon fast cooling - this never wil do!

Charles, too, attempts to ”read all through”, and like the Boy in Moore's skit, his problems with the Articles remain unsatisfied, for ”Mr. Upton said that he did not

like extreme Questions; that he could not and did not wish to answer them“ (pl27) In the Idea, Newman refers to the tolerance of intellectual and verbal laxity as not merely misleading but perilous:

it may be said that the risk of theological error is so serious and the effects of theological conceit so mischievous that it is better for a youth to know nothing of the sacred subject

than to have a slender knowledge which he can use

## recklessly.

The corollary of a notion of essential verbal truths is a distrust of what Newman calls ”paper logic”, that which relies on the illusion of verbal manipulation and the contempt for which constitutes part of his refusal to enter upon metaphysical debate - a disinclination he shares with Blaise Pascal, whose famous ”wager” was surely the inspiration for the title ”Loss and Gain”.

The submission of meaning to convenience is only one of the symptoms of the encroaching secularism apparent in

the Oxford of Loss and Gain - it is a social as much as an intellectual liberalization, Newman's complaint of the deterioration of academic values in the late eighteenth century, that they were:

1. Thomas Moore, Matriculation, in W.H. Auden ed., Nineteenth Century British Minor Poets, (New York, 1966), p64.
2. 2.Idea, p281.

## 20

in no sense any longer places of education: they were for the most part mere clubs and sinecures and almshouses where the inmates did little but enjoy themselves

is pertinent to the flimsy everyday activity of the fictional St, Saviour’s, over which presides the omnipresent figure of the humble but brooding Charles, who, as Newman admitted of himself, appears to have ”not a grain in

his composition of that conviviality so natural to young men 2 Loss and Gain is an extremely social novel, composed

largely of light-hearted symposiums conducted over breakfast parties, tea parties, wine parties and supper parties - all of which led Fraser's Magazine to disparage it as a ”book

of jokes and gossip, of eating and drinking, of smartnesses

and levities and most probably personalities 3 Charles' tutors delight more in the good food than in the knowledge that they are employed to bestow upon their students - Mr. Vincent, for example, makes a mockery of liturgical fasts by denying himself, on the Vigil of Saint Peter,

Portugal onions and currant jelly. (p80) (Newman himself

was something of a fanatic about fasting, for days refusing to eat until sunset and drawing up detailed schemes of foods

permitted during Lent)4 Charles observes with regret no visible signs of piety in his superiors - there is considerable evidence in this novel to support the thesis that the

Oxford Movement as very largely a moral as well as a political and spiritual undertaking, that it was, as Martin

Svaglic argues "the impulse towards sanctity which supplied the deepest motive force 5 the Tractarian alliance.

## Newman, ”Abuses of the Colleges. Oxford.”, Historical Sketches

III, (London, 1906), p235.

1. Autobiographical Writings p 37
2. Fraser ' s , pl63 .
3. Autobiographical Writings, pp214-45
4. Star t i n Svalgic, ”Reviews”, Victorian Studies, II

(December, 1958), p164

21

Charles complains to his sister Mary that:

There is a worldly smell about Oxford which

I cannot abide .., here are ministers of Christ, with large incomes, living in finely furnished houses, with wives and families and stately butlers, with servants in livery, giving dinners all in the best style, condescending and gracious, waving

their hands and mincing their words as if they were the cream of the earth, but without anything to make them clergymen but a black coat and a white tie. **(256)**

The inclusion of "wives and families" in this category of worldly sins may seem a little severe - celibacy, although always an Anglo-Catholic ideal, is hardly a tradition of the Church of England - but Charles shares Newman's "repugnance" of marriage as one of God's concessions to human depravity, and therefore particularly unsuitable

f or the mi ni s try . Newman conf es s ed :

Above all, call it what one will, I have a repugnance to a clergyman's marrying. I do not say it is not lawful, I cannot deny the right - but, whether prejudice or not, it shocks me.

Charles, like Newman, has intuited from childhood that he should never take a wife - he argues with his tutor Carlton for the length of two chapters on behalf of the

celibate life, insisting that ”there is, (to say the least), great risk of marriage leading to sin in married people” (pl97).

When by chance a newly married couple of his acquaintance enter a bookshop in which Charles is browsing, he is physically repelled from them:

Love was in their eyes, joy in their voice, and affluence in their gait and bearing.

Charles had a faintish feeling come over him; somewhat as might beset a man on hearing a call for pork chops when he was seasick. He retreated behind a pile of ledgers. (p349)

1. Autobiographical Writings, p137

In one of his longer poems, "The Married and the Single”, Newman expresses his distaste for marriage explicitly as a yearning for a more austere way of life than that he observes about him. The poem accuses:

Ye countless multitudes content to bow To the soft thralldom of the marriage vow!

I mark your haughty step, your froward gaze

Gems deck your hair and silk your limbs arrays.

and continues to praise the asceticism of the celibate: Thus marriage pleads. Now let her rival speak -

## Dim is her downcast eye and pale her cheek, Untrimmed her gear; no sandals on her feet, A sparest form for austere tenant meet.

She drops her veil her modest face around,

And her l i ps open but we hear no sound .

Charles invokes the term ”supernatural” (p195) in support of his argument for the single life, defining it as an attempt not so much to fight nature as to transcend it. Certainly his rejection of Oxford and its theology is described in terms of something either against or possibly ”above”

nature. His final visit to the University as an Anglican makes explicit not only the irrevocability and pain of his secession, but also the identification of Oxford with Nature, with Natural Reason, perhaps, rather than Faith:

He threw his arms round the willows so dear to him and kissed them; he tore off some of their

black leaves and put them in his bosom. ”I am like Undine” he said, ”killing with a kiss”. (p35T)

- a scene immediately evocative of Newman's record of his own departure from Oxford in the Apologia in which the act of secession is associated with a withdrawal from nature in the form of snapdragon:

1. Verses on Various Occasions, p203

23

Trinity had never been unkind to me. There used to be much snapdragon growing on the walls opposite my freshman's rooms there, and I had

for years taken it as emblem of my own perpetual residence there even unto death in my University.

Charles, together with Newman cherished the relationship

between student and college as one of parent and child -

Trinity to Newman was ”a sort of shrine to which he makes

continual silent offerings of attachment and devotion 2 As such, Charles' deliberate rejection of his ”second home” becomes a painful betrayal of his ”natural” ancestry.

The final scenes of withdrawal from his ”first” home are also lavish in the pathos of loss and loneliness. It is suggested in the first volume that Charles' family home,

like Oxford, is in direct opposition to the Catholic Church - his two encounters with the rhapsodic convert Willis are divided by a chapter of repose spent at his midland home, a repose destined to be destroyed. Charles' own mother becomes,

on his conversion a symbol of his mother church - the passage in which Mrs. Reding is apprised of her only son's repudiation of the Establishment in which he was raised:

Charles threw himself on his knees and laid his cheek on her lap; she could no longer resist him; she hung over him and began to smooth down his hair as she had done when he was a child. At length, scalding tears began to fall heavily on his face and neck. (p34T)

recalls a chronologically parallel passage in the Apologia:

Accept this apology, my dear church, and forgive me. As I say so, tears come into my eyes; that ar i ses from the acc iden t of thi s t ime, when I am giving up so much I love.

Charles passes from the care of one mother, one father, to that of another ”Mighty Mother” (p333), the Roman Catholic Church, and of another father, Father Aloysius, ”in his

1. Apologia, p237
2. ”Abuses of the Colleges”, p234
3. Apologia, p233

24

dark Passionist habit, with the white heart sewed in at his left breast” (431), who, 9 Father Dominic did Newman, receives Charles into the Roman Communion, illustrating the loss and

gain of opposing earthly and heavenly agents of nurture.

The character Charles Reding's conversion is melancholy,

not affirmative, as it results not from a positive seizure of the truth but from a rejection of error and inconsistency, and thereby a formulation of the truth from the corollary of

remaining possibilities. By Newman's own admission ”It's drift

is to show how little there is in Anglicanism to satisfy and

retain a young and earnest heart"'1 - how little there is in

Anglicanism rather than how much there may be in Romanism, The apparent negativity of approach is partly accountable to the controversial nature of Loss and Gain - Newman wrote of the art of the controversialist that ”As to

positive statements he commits himself to as few as he can 2 Yet such an approach is consistent also with the

tradition of conscientious and sincere Christian retrospective

reasoning - according to T.S. Eliot:

The Christian thinker - and I mean the man who is trying consciously and conscientiously to explain to himself the sequence which culminates in laith, rather than the public apologist - proceeds by rejection and elimination

Loss and Gain is an imaginative exploration of this ”sequence which culminates in faith”, a pattern of conversion which is reflected in Charles' changing apprehension of the seasons.

As a novice undergraduate his preference is for the spring,

a predilection associated with immaturity, or potential:

1. Apologia, (1955), p271
2. Newman, Advertisement, Historical Sketches, II, pxii
3. T.S. Eliot, ”The Pensees o[ Pascal”,Essays Ancient and Modern

(London, **1949), pl46**

## 25

Without being a poet he was in the season oi poetry, in the sweet springtime when the year is most beautiful because it is new ... when we

first see things, we see them in a "gay confusion"

which is the principal element of the poetical.

As time goes on and we number and sort and measure things, as we gain views, we advance towards philosophy and truth, but we recede from poetry. (p18)

But spring never returns to the narrative after Book I -

## the novel becomes autumnal, disillusioned, even wintry.

The end of summer collaborates with Charles' failing confidence in the English church, the "natural" environment will no longer accommodate him and more than that, has actually become hostile and bitter, yielding only:

the tasteless, juiceless walnut, the dark mulberry, juicy but severe and mouldy withal ... the hopes of spring had given place to the sad realities of autumn. (p229)

It is only after a confrontation with the turbulent Willis recently converted, that there are any intimations of a returning spring - Charles forges his way home:

cutting down with his stick the twigs and brambles

, with the winter all around, he felt like the Spring-tide, when all is new and bright (p333)

This process of maturation, of "numbering and sorting

and measuring" to which Charles submits with such sorrowful resignation, is also treated in the poem ”The Trance of Time”:

In childhood when with eager eyes The season measured year I view 'd All garb'd in fairy guise

Pledged constancy of good ...

Far different now the whirling year Vainly my dizzy eyes pursue

And its fair tints appear All blent in one dusk hue.

1

Charles eventually rejects Nature for Supernature, the prevailing spring-like Liberalism for Faith, a decision which demands a denial of his spontaneous affection

1. The Dream of Gerontius and Other Poems, p53

26

for the created world. Newman's Wordsworthian lyric, The Pilgrim, written prior to his conversion **in 1831,** expresses this tension between affection and duty, an antagonism which is almost the leitmotif of the novel:

There strayed a while amid the wood of Dart One who could love them but who durst not love A vow had bound him ne'er to give his heart

1

To streamlet bright or soft-secluded grove.

It is denial and its rewards that constitute the loss and gain of the title - a gain conditional upon sacrifice.

It is a notion characteristically although not exclusively Roman Catholic - as Charles himself suggests ”Perhaps our highest perfection here is penance.” ( p200 ) . For Tiernon:

had never supposed that sanctity was to be purchased without cost: for him, the dark and suffering aspect of faith had been real. His chief hatred was the secular and ecclesiastical Liberalism which demanded privileges without accepting duties.

The emphasis in Loss and Gain is almost entirely upon the ”loss”, the sacrifice - the ”gain” is only implied, promised and hinted at - the ultimate earthly achievement of the convert is not bliss, but suffering.



Newman published his second novel Callista: A Sketch of the Third Century in 1856, primarily at the request of

Cardinal Wiseman who wished to create a series of historical novels treating with Primitive Christianity to counter

anti-Catholic interpretations of the same period, notably Kingsley's Hypatia, and thereby to validate one of Newman's

1. Verses on Various Occasions, p61

3. Robert Wolff, Loans: Victorian Novels of Faith and Doubt, (New York, **1977),** pp60-2

2 7

favourite arguments for Roman Catholicism - ”Was there ever a time, what was the time, when Christianity was not

that which Protestants protest against?"l Unlike Loss and Gain

Callista was scarcely noticed by the Protestant press - it was not in fact intended for Protestant consumption:

## I did not consider my tale to be in any sense controversial, but to be specially addressed to Catholic readers for their edification.

But the Dublin Review, doubtless impatient with Newman's recent and controversial behaviour both in England and Ireland, examined the novel at length and with considerably less warmth than it had Loss and Gain, complaining that:

 “Its story is exceedingly slight, perhaps too slight to satisfy the professed novel reader - little more indeed at times than a thread whereon to hang a series of sketches.” 3

In protest, the twentieth century critic Joseph Baker argues

that ”as a story, Callista shows a marked improvement over

the earlier novel, for it has more plot, more suspense, more

emotion, more action.,4 It certainly contains all the elements of a typical romantic adventure story - a maiden heroine, a love story, a concealed identity, secret passages, secret codes, hairbreadth escapes, a gothic crone, riotous bloodshed and panoramic disasters. But the foremost pre- occupation of the novel corresponds to that of Loss and Gain, Christian conversion, and might easily have been similarly subtitled ”the tale of a convert” or more correctly two converts. The primary conversion is Callista's, that of a Greek humanist to religious faith via a Catholic priest

## and the gospel of Saint Luke. The lesser conversion of

1. Newman, ”Primitive Christianity”, in Historical Sketches I, p439.
2. Preface to Callista, (London 1873), pxii, All subsequent

references are to this edition.

3 . ’Dublin Review, VXL, (June 1856), p433

4 . J.E. Baker, opcit, p67

the novel parallels more closely that of Charles Reding

- Agellius, a baptized youth committed to loose Christian ideals, isolated spiritually and physically from the dynamic centre of his faith in the pagan deserts of Africa, is converted to the absolutism and orthodoxy of the Catholic Church rescued from spiritual and bodily peril by that

same pri est, Sai nt Cypr i anus .

As a martyr tale, Newman is treating in Callista a subject of more than ordinary importance to him, In An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent he defends his belief that the early martyrs were to be considered not merely as heroic exempla by which the modern Christian might strengthen his faith, ”that solace and recompense of our peculiar trials which

has been provided for by our Gracious Master but as

absolutely instrumental in the survival of Christianity 2 Thus the documenting, or where history proved inadequate, the inventing of horrors supposedly suffered by the saints

was to Newman a necessary commemorative duty. Callista's cracking bones are undoubtedly offensive to the ”fastidious criticism of our delicate days”

”O my love, make haste and come!” The men turned round the wheels rapidly to and fro; the joints were drawn out of their sockets and then snapped in again. (369)

but Newman defended his tendency, evident in his pre- Roman Catholic days, to celebrate this kind of ferocious zeal in the Apologia, confessing that:

not even when I was fiercest could I have cut off a Puritan's ear and I think the sight of  Spanish aut o-da-fe wou ld have been the d eath

Of me .

1. Newman, Prospectus **1843,** lor The Lives o I Engl i sh Sai n t s ,

Quoted in A.W. Hutton introduction, Newman, The Lives of

English Saints, I, (London, **1900)** pxi

1. Newman , An Es say in Aid of a Grammar of Assent, (London, **1870**

pp469-478

3 . i bi d , p476 .

4 . Apologia , p47 .

Z9

Newman demanded of the modern church that same

”tremendous spirit 1 the saints upon which he

elaborates with such vast admiration in the Grammar of Assent, and that same fierceness of purpose found in the Punic

ecclesiastics, such as St. Cyprian, ”strict, puritanical,

strongly opposed to any compromise with the world”2

for Newman was convinced that the ”all-dissolving scepticism

of the intellect”, which had raised Rome to its heights of profanity, was gaining ascendancy in his own time. The form of the novel easily accommodated itself to the imaginative commemoration of such a "historical” saint as Callista, about whom very little is known.

The figure of St. Cyprianus is significant in Callista not only in terms of the narrative, but more importantly in terms of Newman's interpretation of Christianity itself, based as it was on the Primitive rather than the medieval

church - he consistently maintained "the Fathers made me a Catholic 4 Cyprianus, with his ”calm, tender, eager, wistful, unearthly tone 5 as a pre-eminent third century

African divine, and an uncompromising advocate of Catholicity in the Christian church, warning in his On the Unity of the Catholic Church that ”there can be no life in Christ and

hence no salvation for those who depart from the one true

church” 6 a statement obviously relevant to the status of

Protestantism. He is also the author of the famous

l. Assent, p476.

1. Paul Johnson, opcit, p82.
2. Apologia, p243.
3. Newman, Some Difficulties Felt b Anglicans in Catholic Teaching, Quoted in J.E. Baker, opcit, p60.

1. Newman, “John Davison, Fellow of Oriel“, Ess s Critical and Historical, II, p398.
2. Avery Dulls, Histor of etics (London, **1971), p44.**

I ma ge of the Vi ne and its branches to which Newman refers in the Apologia, ”found, I think, in St. Cyprian, as if a branch cut from the Catholic Vine must necessarily die The opening scene of Callista takes place in a:

neat and carefully dressed vineyard, the vine stakes of which, dwarfish as they are, already cast long shadows on the eastern side (p6).

suggestive of the small but highly organized Christian church already in existence in third century Africa. St. Cyprian, who along with St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, was most cherished by Newman of the early Fathers, is chief ”vine dresser” of the African church, effecting ”to gather together the developing threads of ecclesiastical order and

authority and weave them into a tight system of absolute

control” 2 Agellius, through this image of the vine gives

voice to the practical and ethical necessity of keeping

the divergent elements of the church or vine under "absolute

control” - he reprimands one of the slaves:

You never fasten together the shoots which

you don't cut off, they are flying about quite wild, and the first ox that passes through the fields next month for the ploughing will break them off. (pp7-8)

Agellius is pleading for the prevention of heresy, a threat he is aware of in his own spiritual state, deprived of the necessary comfort and discipline of the Catholic Church. He suffers the same sense of spiritual alienation as Charles Reding in the English Church:

He was lonely at home, lonely in the crowd. He needed the sympathy of his kind; hearts which might beat with his heart ... ”No-one cares for me”, he said, as he sat down on his rustic bench, ”I am nothing to anyone”. (pp27-8)

1. Apol a, p110
2. Paul Johnson, opcit., p59.

Under such conditions he is as helpless to the souls

of others as he is to his own - Callista reproaches him for not evangelizing to her the faith in which he was baptized, but as Newman defended his own uncertain situation against similar reproaches in the few years

immed i a te l y pr i or to hi s c onr ve s i on :

How could I in any sense direct others, who

had to be guided in so momentous a matter

myself? How could I be considered in a positions

even to say a word to them one way or the other

Agellius, in his involuntary but virtually schismatical state "might any day be betrayed into some fatal inconsistency" (p23), an observation which eventually becomes applicable

in Newman's view to the virtual schismatical state of the post-Reformation English Church.

The consecutive chapters "Death" and "Resurrection" deal in narrative form with the saving power of the Catholic

Church with regard to such wayward souls. Agellius' failing faith is challenged by Callista, and he subsequently succumbs to a feverish illness, a literary commonplace for spiritual turmoil. But Newman uses disease not simply as a metaphor but as significant of actual religious regeneration - he

wrote in 1d69:

Another thought has come on me › that I have had

three great illnesses in my li fe , and how they have turned out! The first keen, terrible one, when I was a boy of fifteen and it made me a Christian with experiences before and after awful and known only to God. My second, not painful, but tedious and shattering was that which I had in 1827 ... and it too broke me off from an incipient liberalism

and determined my religious course. The third was in

1833 Sicily before the commencement of the Oxford Movement” 2

It is the "third illness" which Newman documents in the

1. Apologia, p217
2. Autobiographical Writings, pll9.

Apologia and in the detailed memoir My Illness in Sicily,

and the "second" whi ch , combi ned wi t h the death of

his youngest sister, he considered as God-sent to rescue him from the temptation of that ”deep, plausible scepticism”, Liberalism:

The truth is, I was beginning to prefer intellectual excellence to moral; I was drifting in the direction of the Liberalism of the day. I was rudely awakened from my dream at the end of 1827 by two great blows - illness and bereavement,

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Agellius' "illness" is his fever of "restlessness and thirst" (pl35) his "bereavement", Callista's rejection of his marriage proposal, both of which serve to "counteract the religious languor and coldness which had grown upon him” (p23). He

is tended back to physical and spiritual health by Sr. Cyprianus who, as Catholic Absolutism, proves to be a tender but unequivocal and authoritative (perhaps Infallible?) nurse.

He answers Agellius' doubts with serene and severe statements

of fact, just as Newman wrote of the Roman Church:

## Such truths as these she vigorously reiterates

and pertinaciously inflicts upon mankind;

as to such, she observes no half-measures, no

economical reserve, no delicacy or prudence.

Whereas Agellius is representative of an undisciplined

but baptized soul, Callista is typical of Natural Religion, uninitiated in Revelation. In the poem ”My Lady Nature and her Daughters” Newman personified Nature as a woman, like Callista, beautiful, quiet, dutiful, playful, musical.

She is a disciple of Natural Reason, a Nature not identified with God the Creator but with the animism of the African pagans, The novel opens with a description of Africa as

Nature Triumphant - ”In no province of the vast Roman Empire ...

did Nature wear a richer or more joyous garb” (p1),

1. Apologia, pl4.
2. ibid, p248.

significant of godlessness, not godliness, Agellius' Christian melancholy is reprimanded with a Rousseau-like admission ”Do not be out of tune with Nature, nor clash and jar with the great system of the Universe” (p9). The sun, Nature's great sustainer, is a pagan fire and serves to nourish evil - the city of Sicca, dwelling-place of the heathen Callista and her brother - Agellius prefers to live beyond the city-walls - is

one of these set up in sin; and at the time of which we write, that sin was basking under the sun and rioting and extending itself to its amplest dimensions, like some glittering serpent or spotted pard. (p1l5)

Callista herself recognizes the hot, dry land as hell on

eart h , s i ng i ng :

For what is Africa, but the home Of burning Phlegethon. (p121)

The insistent heat is associated with the spiritual perversion of the citizens of Sicca - at ”high noon”, in a fever of spiritual crisis, Agellius confronts the city s tree t s :

half-idiotic chewers of opium, ragged or rather naked children.... A scattering of beggars were lying, poor creatures, on their backs in the blazing sun, reckless of the awful maladies, the fits, the seizures and sudden death which might be the consequence. (p14O)

The only shade available in this manmade and godless structure is in the shadow of the statue of the Roman Emperor, to whom, under the Decian edict, Agellius is obliged to offer prayer:

The words of the edict still met his eyes

and were of a brigh t , red colour . The sun was r i gh t before him , but the letters were i n the sun and the sun in his brain . ( p143 )

Implicit in this unequivocal presentation of Sicca as a city of sin is St. Augustine's concept of the mystic opposition between the city of man and the city of God:

such as live according to man and such as live according to God, These we mystically call the two cities or societies, the one predestined to reign eternally with God, the other condemned to perpetual torment with the devil.

St. Augustine, perhaps the most celebrated of the early Fathers, was particularly revered by Newman as the author of the ”mere sentence” - "securus iudicat orbis

terrarum”, by which ”the theory of the Via Media was absolutely pulverized” 2 Like St, Cyprian, Augustine was

a convert to Christianity, he was not born into the Church, and, according to J.H. Randall, the conviction of such an opposition between God and the devil is integral to the experience of conversion:

ontological dualism is thus a natural rendering

of the experience of the convert - there is the

precious thing

rest of things

3

He has found, and there is the

This doctrine of eternal damnation becomes a test point

for Callista's faith, a surrender of Natural to Supernatural reason, Like many, she is attracted to Christianity on aesthetic or sentimental grounds, but repulsed from it

for ethical reasons:

It seems too beautiful ... its maxims are too beautiful to be realized .,. and its dogmas are too dismal, too shocking, too odious to be believed. (p216)

In particular she cites the doctrine also considered especially immoral by various branches of nineteenth century Dissent (e.g. Unitarian), and one with which both Charles Reding and Newman himself had difficulty. Callista declares: ”Nothing will ever make me believe that all

## my people have gone and will go to an eternal Tartarus”

(p2l7). According to David DeLaura, it was ethics rather

1. St. Augustine, City of God, trans, John Healy, III (London,

1903), p38 (13:1)

1. Apologia, p1l7.
2. J.H. Randall Hellenistic Ways of Deliverance and the making of the Christian Synthesis, (Columbia, 1970), p200.

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than the more commonly cited factor of science, which proved

to be the stumbling block for belief:

The loss of religious faith in such representative early Victorian agnostics as F.W. Newman (John Henry Newman's brother), J.A. Froude (brother of Newman's close friend Hurrel Froude) and George Eliot, was not due in the first place to the usually suggested reasons - the rise of evolutionary theory in geology and biology and the Higher Criticism of the Bible.

Instead, in each life, the dominant factor was a growing repugnance towards the ethical implications of what each had been taught to believe as essential

Christianity:- Original Sin, Reprobation, Baptismal Regeneration, Vicarious Atonement, Eternal Punishment.

1

Newman described his own instinctive withdrawal from the

## last-mentioned doctrine early on in the Apologia:

From this time I have held with full inward assent and belief the doctrine of eternal punishment as delivered by our Lord himself, in as true a sense as I hold that of eternal happiness; though I have tried in various ways to make that truth less terrible to the imagination

This conviction of evil inherent in his conviction of good and which at the same time involves a revulsion from it, is evident in Callista in the treatment of the witch-mother Gurtha. On the one hand he ascribes to her devil-begotten practices of an obscene nature - her son Juba accuses:

Did I not catch you the other day, practising on that little child? You had him nailed up by the hands and feet against the tree and were cutting him up to pieces at your leisure as he Quivered and shrieked the while.... You were panting with pleasure. (p263)

- yet at the same time he hesitates to admit that Gurtha is truly allied to the devil: ”she so far deceived herself as to fancy what she learned by mere natural means came

to her from a diabolical source”. (p258) In the Apologia Newman identifies this disinclination to commit ’himself as a function of his Catholicism:

1, David J. DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian En land,

(Austin, 1969), pls.

2. Apologia, p6.

Catholics, on the other hand, shade and soften the awful antagonism between good and evil ,.. holding that there are different degrees of justification, that there is a

 real difference in point of gravity between sin and sin. 1

S R ln

Callista is highly sensitive to sin and the essential depravity of the phenomenal world she has been taught to rely on,

## in Nature itself:

the poisonous dews, the heavy heat, the hideous beasts, the green fever-gendering swamps. This vast, thickly-wooded plain, like some mysterious labyrinth, oppresses and disquiets me ... and I pant for breath. (p119)

## This perhaps unconventional sense of the oppression of

the natural world, common to both Agellius and Charles

Reding, is expressed again by Newman in the poem Melchizedek:-

Yea, the rich earth, garb'd in her daintiest dress

Of light and joy doth but the more oppress

- just as Agellius laments: ”Alas, sweet Nature, what a bondage you are in, and how you do groan till you are redeemed from it" (pll). The pagan society recognizes Christianity as something unnatural ("supernatural") and therefore anti-social, regarded as at once puTitanioal and obscene. In the Grammar of Assent,Newman argues that

## the chief reproaches of society against the early Christians

were their ”obstinacy ... and their magical powers”' - thus

in Callista, Agellius is taunted by the crowd:

O the toad, I know him now; he is a wizard; he eats little children.... He's a Christian, blight him! he'll turn us into beasts! (pl2)

The Christian perversity from nature finds expression as

it did in Loss and Gain in the advocacy of celibacy. Callista associates marriage with degradation, rejecting Agellius' proposal

1. Ibid
2. ’Verses on Various Occasions, p108
3. Assent, p469

37

”I had hoped he could 1ead me to wha t was

higher but woe, woe! she cr i ed , wr i ngi ng her

hands, "they thought I was only fit to bring him low” .., absorbed in her own misery in an intense sense of degradation in a keen consciousness of the bondage of nature. (pl33)

## Callista's rejection of her sexuality is a rejection of man's

fallen state - like Charles Reding, and more notably, St. Augustine, she specifically identifies sex with sin. Joseph Baker observes of Callista that ”all the emotional ecstasy that would ordinarily be lavished upon sexual love is devoted to the divine The pre-Christian Callista is characterized in terms of a forthright heroine of romance - she ”had not yet seen eighteen summers” (p323), is ”young, tall and graceful in person ... her face was most feminine”

(p212), but ”there was no appearance of timidity in her manner; very little of modesty” (213) and she is passionately

## demanding - ”I must have something to love; love is my life”

(132). Her gradual realization of Christ neutralizes, not her femineity - in fact, her feminine aspects, meekness, humility and vulnerability are accentuated - but her sexual potency:

The beauty which was her brother's delight is waning away; and the shadows, if not the rudiments of a diviner loveliness, which is the expression not of feature, which inspires not human passion, but diffuses chaste thoughts and aspirations are taking its place. (p308)

Her passion as a Christian is directed towards Jesus - on the morning of her execution she announces with pleasure ”I am going to be married today" (p357), and as she approaches the instruments of torture, the rack virtually becomes a bridal alter - in her face:

there was a tenderness and modesty which had never been there in that old time. Her cheek had upon it a blush. (p368)

1. Baker, opcit., p61

Callista's various pronouncements of divine passion - ”I have found my True Love”(p36l), ”I worship my True Love, He loves me the more for I am beautiful hen I am black” (p362) recall both the post-mortem sufferings of the love-sick

soul in Newman's longer poem The Dream of Gerontius - ”Thou

will be sick with love and yearn for himt’ and of the meditations of Saint Teresa on the Song of Solomon, her Conceptions of Love of God, where, like Callista, although more explicitly, she amplifies the biblical metaphor of the

bride of Christ:

This most wealthy spouse desires to enrich and comfort the bride still more, He draws her so closely to Him that she is like one who swoons

## from excess of pleasure and joy

suspended in those divine arms..

and,2seems to be

Just as Callista's spritual satisfaction mysticizes her sexuality so, in her dream of heaven, the physical appearances of Christ and the Virgin are indistinguishable - “the face, the features, were the same” (p355). This ”feminizing

quality of Newman's interpretation of Christianity was what Charles Kingsley found perhaps most offensive to his own robust and practical reading of the Scriptures, and was also the basis of his attack on the Oxford Movement in the novel Yeast: a Problem, in which the hero complains to the priestly Newmanic figure:

”I am not a child, but a man; I want not a

mother to pet but a man to rule me ... I came to you full of manhood and you send me a woman.

„3

Kingsley's objection to the devoted homage paid to the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church was apparently

not only doctrinal, but a matter of masculine pride - Yeast closes with all the force of capitals - ”JESUS CHRIST - THE MAN!'

1. Newman, The Dream of Gerontius, (London, 1907), p51
2. Saint Teresa of Avila The Complete Works, (London, 1963 ) I I p384.

## Charles Kingsley, Yeast: a Problem, (London, 1859), p70.

The earthly romance between Agellius and Callista is

eventually exposed as a philosophical rather than a

sexual attraction. Newman laid down in the Grammar of Assent that:

the Religion of Nature is a mere inchoation and needs a complement - it can have but one

complement, and that complement is Christianity. 1

Callista is the "Religion of Nature”, a child oi Greece, the epitome of secular virtue, ”a soul nourished upon the visions of genius and attuned by the power of a strong

will” (p213) - in her brother's words ”so clever, so witty, so sprightly, so imaginative, so versatile! why, there's nothing she couldn't do.“ (p289) Agellius is dumbfounded by the vastness of her secular achievement, she ”fascinated

him with her presence”. (p347) She is the embodiment of the attraction of ancient civilization, in spite of its essential paganism - Newman wonders guiltily in the poem “Messina”:

 Why, wedded to the Lord, still yearns my heart Towards these scenes of ancient heathen fame? 2

For Callista, despite her charm, nevertheless is a resident of godlessness, the city wherein exists, as St. Cyprian observes "but the work of man, which is evil”.(pl60) As

Agellius proceeds on his mission to propose to her marriage, he

considers the city into which he must enter:

Did he not know full well that iniquity was written on its very walls, and spoke a solemn warning to a Christian heart to go out of it, to flee it, not to take up a home in it, not to make alliance with anything in it? (pl13)

But Agellius is infatuated with this example of heathenism ”in its most specious form”(p98), and fails to remember that

Christian revelation is indispensable for the full apprehension

1. Assent, p479.
2. Verses on Various Occasions p129.

of the truth, and that despite the logical beauty of Greek

philosophy, ”almost every statement is perverted and made

false because it is not the whole truth” 1 pt has

been argued that the chief objective of Newman's The Idea of a University was to emphasize the absolute necessity of qualifying non-Christian achievement:

to warn that the character endowed with the fruits of a liberal education is particularly liable to mistake its real natural virtues for the essential Christian virtues that are of paramount importance

Whereas Arnold conceived the Hellenic and Hebraic impulses,

to be - necessarily and productively so - at odds with each other, Newman in the Idea, professed the two to be providentially complementary:

Sacred learning and profane are dependent on each other, correlative and mutually complementary, how faith operates by means of reason, reason is corrected and directed by faith.

## Initially, Callista argues that Greek thought cannot be

accommodated to Christianity:

"No! my lot is one way, yours another. I am a child of Greece and have no happiness but that such as it is which is my own bright land, my own glorious race.” P 222

Callista is guilty of the sin of her nation, hubris, which sin is an essential element of her pre-Christian character, and must be forfeited for true spiritual appeasement. When St. Cyprianus visits her in gaol where she is awaiting trial on a charge of Christianity:

What touched him most was the utter disappearance of that mien which once was hers, a gift so beautiful, so unsuitable to fallen man. (p345)

# Idea, pJ52

1. D.J. SeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, pT7.
2. Idea, p199.

The humility demanded of Callista by Christianity is recognized by her fellow Greek, the sophist Polemo, as antithetical to the essence of Greek thought, which acclaims human reason as the highest interpreter of truth:

”Blush, blush, Grecian Callista, you with a glorious nationality of your own to go shares with some hundred peasants, slaves, thieves, beggars, hucksters, tinkers, cobblers and fishermen!” p3l3

The argument of Callista is that common to all Newman's

apologetic writing, that Reason must bow down to Faith -

not to its complete subjugation, but so that they may function as co-operative powers. Unaided ”proud" 9eason tends, according to Newman, towards a:

simple unbelief in matters of religion. No truth, however sacred can stand against it in the long run; and hence it is, that in the pagan world, when our Lord came, the last traces of religious knowledge of former times were all but disappearing from those portions of the world in which the intellect had been active and had a career. 1

Greek philosophy in Callista has discarded Platonism and degenerated into a purely relativist position and has submitted to the compromising pragmatism of Rome. The sophist Polemo responds to Callista's spiritual turmoil, ”I am a Greek”, he said., ”I love Greece, but I love truth better ; and I look at the facts” (p31l), echoing the Gradgrind - like credo delivered by the Roman government official, Cornelius:

”We know nothing at Rome of feelings and intentions and motives and distinctions ... and we know nothing of understandings, connivances and evasions, We go by facts; Rome goes by facts. The question is, what is the fact?” (p290)

## Cornelius and Polemo both assume that what is perceived

by fallen man to be the "facts” necessarily coincides with

1. Apologia, p233.

4Z

supernatural truth. Polemo affirms the blasphemy against Christianity that Utopia is possible in a fallen world by mortal efforts, political, social and commercial, alone:

”This which we see is the last, the perfect human society ... it will be forever because it is a whole. The principle of dissolution is eliminated. We have reached the apotelesma of the world. (p31l)

Newman argues that the same ”High hope, pride-stain'd,

the course without the prize 1 inherent in the civilization of Greece has become manifest also in English civilization,

## the legacy of the Reformation, a church, and therefore a

society evolving without faith and dependent upon private

judgement. He wrote of England:

We find there men possessed of many virtues but proud, bashful, fastidious, and reserved. Why is this? it is because they think and act as if there were really nothing objective in their religion ... are engrossed in notions of what is due to themselves, their own dignity, their own consistency.

## An acceptance of the efficiency of unaided reason is the beginning of atheism, which process was observed by Newman in his own country with an extreme melancholy, expressed in the poem, ”The Progress of Unbelief”:

But I will out amid the sleet and view

Each shriveling stalk and silent-falling leaf

Truth after truth of choicest scent and hue

Fades and in fading stirs the Angel's grief Unanswered here; for she once pattern chief

Of faith, my Country, now gross-hearted grown 3

Waits but to burn the stem before her idol's throne.

But Callista, unlike her compatriots, although proud at the same time is sensitive to the inadequacy of her philosophical heritage - she is the Greek mind Paul Johnson speaks of:

1. Newman, "Hessina", in Verses on Various Occasions, pl29.

## Idea, p146.

1. Verses on Various Occasions, p181.

struggling manfully but blindly towards a knowledge of God , trying , as i t were , to conjure up Jesus out of thin Athenian air ,

to invent Christianity out of their poor

pagan heads

Thus her outburst : "O that I could f ind him .... On the

right hand and on the left I grope but touch Him not”. (p315) The light of Greece for which she yearns is the light of faith, not that of the destructive pagan sun - ”The sun of Greece is light”, answered Callista, ”the sun of Africa is fire. I am no fire worshipper.” (p120) It becomes clear that her nostalgia for Greece is really an intimation of the Christian heaven:

Callista had sighed for the bright and clear atmosphere of Greece .. but in reality, though she called it Greece, she was panting alter a better country and a more lasting home. (p366)

Newman insists and Callista unconsciously recognizes that Christianity is the perfect, the only fulfillment of Greek learning. When confronted with basic Christian principles she is forced to admit:

## Here was the very teaching which already was demanded by both her reason and her heart, which she found nowhere else. (p293)

Agellius, too, is aware of the spiritual correspondence he

in his turn has with Callista, convinced that:

## "ever since I heard you converse that there is between you and me a unity of thought so

strange .., and which widely as we are separated

in opinion and habit› and differently as we have

been brought up, is tO me inexplicable.” (pl28)

## Newman demonstrates in Callista the three primary constituents

of Western culture, Greece, Rome and Jerusalem, all geographically

dislocated, fighting for supremacy in a kind of no-man's-land of Africa. That the battle is to have an ultimately harmonious solution is affirmed in The Idea of a University:

1. Paul Johnson, opcit., p17

In the ancient World, we see two centres of illumination acting independently of each other and at first apparently without any promise of convergence ... the grace stored in Jerusalem and the gifts which radiate ens are made over and concentrated in

The argument of the novel is that Christianity needfully

appropriated a philosophy that, left to itself, had destroyed

its very aim2 and eventuated in the repressive materialism of the Roman Empire, and from this lawful and predestined appropriation developed Western culture as a synthesis of the two complementary traditions. Newman furthermore implies that any attempt to separate the two utterly interdependent components of that culture, as he perceived the force of Liberalism to be effecting in its devaluation of the objectivity of religion, must inevitably lead to its extinction. Callista is the dissatisfied student of Liberalism, whose uninitiated religion is "based upon the

sense of sin; it recognizes the disease, but it cannot find, it does but look out for the remedy 3 Her individual

efforts to obtain salvation end in failure, it is only through the agency of the Catholic Church that she is able to receive the grace necessary to redeem her imperfection. The words civilization and culture remained meaningful for Newman only in a Christian context.

Loss and Gain as ”the story, simply ideal, of the conversion of an Oxford man 4 can easily be read as a fictional

1. Idea, p199.
2. c.f. Arnold, Culture and Anarchy,pl30, i.e., ”man's

perfect i on or sa l vat i on” ,

1. As sent , p480 .
2. Apologia, (1955), p270.

# 4f

commentary on the issues and events treated in the Apologia and it has Deen suggested that Callista serves a similar function for the impossibly difficult An Essay in Aid of a

Grammar of Assent, being ”a kind of metaphorical mirror for the speculations advanced by Newman in his greater books 1

Certainly any interpretation of Newman's fiction depends largely, although not exclusively, upon a knowledge if not an understanding of his major theological preoccupations and likewise the circumstances under which both novels came to

be written.

That Newman chose, and in the case of Callista, was recommended to express his religious convictions in the

form of a novel emphasizes the fact that the Oxford Movement was very notably a literary as well as a religious phenomenon, and that the man of God was also, perhaps supremely, a man

of letters, a highly self-conscious and almost compulsive

## writer who admitted that he "wrote in style as another might write in verse or sing instead of speaking or dance

instead of walking 2 and who maintained an interest in all literary forms, not merely the non-fiction of argument and controversy for which he is justly most-celebrated.

1. DeLaura, Victorian Prose, p147.
2. Autobiographical Writings, p149.

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