

Newman and Last Things, Juan Vélez, “The Downside Review”, CXVIII, no. 414, (2001), 51-68.

Newman and Last Things

The encyclical letter *Faith and Reason* renders John H. Newman and other 19th and 20th century theologians a just recognition for their analysis of the interdependence of faith and reason¹. Newman’s *University Sermons* were his initial exposition on the subject. The essay *On the scope of University Education* is a continuation of his study which he completed in *The Grammar of Assent*. In these works, the Oxford don and later Catholic priest explained the intrinsic relationship between faith and reason. He pointed out the limits of reason, emphasized the reasonableness of faith, and described the complex human assent to revealed truths. Through a renewed understanding of moral consciousness he established the epistemological foundations for a new consideration of faith².

In this article we present an overview of Newman's teaching on eschatology that so far has been the object of few monographic studies³. His approach to revelation and dogma in eschatology could rightly be summarized by St. Anselm’s classical expression *fides quarens intellectum*. For him, dogmas are windows that peer into the mysteries of faith; they always allow for deeper understanding. Newman defended the dogmas on life after death confessed by the creeds, but sought a richer understanding of these truths, especially that of purification after death. In his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* and in *The Dream of Gerontius* he addressed these truths, albeit from a pastoral perspective, and

¹ Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, Editrice Vaticana, Vatican, 1998, n. 74.

² Cf. *Idem*, n. 59. This number does not refer directly to Newman, but it describes his idea of moral conscience.

³ McKEATING, Colm, *Eschatology in the Anglican Sermons of John Henry Newman*, Doctoral thesis, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, Rome, 1992; VELEZ, Juan Rodrigo, *Death, Immortality and Resurrection in John Henry Newman*, Doctoral thesis, University of Navarre, 1998; HENGESBACH, Theodore W., *John Henry Newman’s Theology of Death*, Doctoral thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1976.

rebutted the most common objection raised by his contemporaries: why an all-loving God punishes sinners for eternity.

His preaching and works contrasted with that of prominent Anglican and Unitarian theologians and clergymen, who debated, even outside theological settings, the existence of eternal punishment⁴. In late Victorian England many of these intellectuals were widely influenced by Schleiermacher's romanticism and by an overzealous acceptance of historical and textual criticism of the Bible. They paved the way for a sentimental religiosity, replacing the time-honored relationship between faith and reason by a critical approach to dogma and authority. Religion and theology were reduced to a matter of sentiments, history and morals.

The Intermediate State

As an Anglican priest Newman scoffed at the popular Roman Catholic depiction of purgatory yet at the same time he respected the essence of the Roman Catholic teaching on Purgatory. He discussed the condition of the souls of the faithful departed in his famous *Tract 90* (1841) and in various sermons, particularly in one titled *The Intermediate State* (1835). He considered the intermediate state to be a necessary and desired maturation for the vision of God. It is a manifestation of God's mercy, rather than a punishment⁵. Newman's study of this subject and its consequences in piety and liturgical life contributed through the Oxford Movement to the revival of Anglican belief in the intermediate state. According to Geoffrey Rowell in *Hell and the Victorians* (1974), this renewal was one of the most important changes in Victorian eschatology.

The Oxford don explained that the intermediate state is characterized by the certainty of salvation; it is no longer a period of probation. However, the soul does not

⁴ In 1927 Ronald Knox wrote in regards to the Anglican Church of England that "during the last fifty years and more, the fundamental dogmas of the Christian religion have been subjected, more and more, to criticism, to interpretation, and to restatement. Would a diocesan Bishop have dared, in the middle of the nineteenth century, to express in a newspaper article his disbelief in eternal punishment?" KNOX, Ronald A., *The Belief of Catholics*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1927, p. 13.

⁵ Cf. *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, NEWMAN, John Henry, ed. W. J. Copeland, 1869, III, *The Intermediate State*, Nov. 1835, p. 382.

enjoy the vision of God because it needs to undergo purification⁶, through a mysterious period of growth in holiness. In his sermons, the concept of purification in this state is present, but only implicitly. Newman envisioned the intermediate period primarily as a time of waiting between death and the Day of Judgment when the souls of the just will be vindicated and rewarded by Christ the King.

He conceived this period to be a time of rest or sleep, which is reminiscent of the Old Testament *sheol* and also connects with the patristic and early medieval symbolism of souls lying beneath the altar (Rev 6,11). Souls are alive, but they are not in the full presence of God. They are in an "incomplete state" because they are separated from their remains. They rest in a paradise rather than heaven⁷. These souls wait for the resurrection when they will behold the object of their hope which will complete their happiness⁸. Newman broke away from a dualistic understanding of man. For him, the separated soul is really incomplete and thus awaits the resurrection of the flesh. Like St. Thomas he believed that the human soul, although eternal, is not the same as a person. Only at the resurrection when the souls and bodies of human beings will be reunited, persons will be fully rewarded or punished.

Souls in their disembodied condition form part of the invisible world and the invisible Church. He acknowledged that they have some sort of communication with the world. "They animate us by their example; they cheer us by their company; they are on our right hand and our left, Martyrs, Confessors, and the like, high and low, who used the same Creeds, and celebrated the same Mysteries, and preached the same Gospel as we do"⁹. Newman's ecclesiology is marked by this invisible communion of the saints. The spiritual presence and example of the souls of friends, relatives and fellow Christians who have died faithful to Christ reach out to us as a source of "ever-enduring fellowship".

⁶ "Even those that lived by faith and obedience, have "much pride, much ignorance, much unrepented, much inconsistency, much irregularity in prayer, much lightness and frivolity of thought". *Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁷ Newman commented that the paradise of the good robber on the cross and the prison (*hades*) mentioned in 1 Pt 3,19 are the same as Christ's "descent into hell". The latter differs from the common understanding of the word "hell". Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 374-375.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

Newman explained the intercessory role of the faithfully departed in *The Communion of the Saints* (1837), one of the sermons in which he presented the doctrine of the Church as Christ's mystical body¹⁰. However this posed a considerable practical difficulty, namely the risk of undue honor or idolatry of the deceased which he criticized among Catholics. He thus wished to avoid the invocation of individual members of the faithful departed. In addition, he was unable to reconcile an early literal understanding of the biblical image of “rest” and the idea of activity implied by “intercession”. Newman also grappled with the manner in which souls intercede. At the time he sustained that the souls of the faithful departed pray for the Church as a whole, and not for individuals. Oddly he hardly delineated these questions and did not offer any possible philosophical or theological solutions.

The Oxford don rejected the existence of suffering in the intermediate state and much less of punishment through fire. He considered this belief to be a Roman corruption of Tradition. At first he took for Roman Catholic teaching the belief that purgatory is a prison where the souls of Christians are "kept in fire or other torments, till, their sins being burned away, (and) they are at length fitted for that glorious kingdom into which nothing defiled can enter"¹¹. However, at the same time Newman maintained that although the existence of such purgatory is not affirmed in the Bible, its existence would not be contradictory to the truths contained in it. Furthermore, he added that "it would be infinitely less evil to suffer for a time in Purgatory, than to be cast into hell for ever..."¹².

Particular judgment

Newman did not directly address the subject of judgment immediately after death, but this truth is latent in his exposition of the intermediate state. The firm belief in the existence of an immediate judgment or sorting out of the dead, like that in *sheol* is present in his sermons. Otherwise the happiness of the saints and the paradise-like condition of the intermediate state is unexplainable. It is unlikely that Newman eluded the subject due to the absence of direct Scriptural reference to this doctrine. His silence on the matter may be explained by his Calvinist upbringing, which in light of numerous

¹⁰ Cf. *P.P.S.*, IV, *The Communion of the Saints*, May 1837, pp. 181-183.

¹¹ *P.P.S.*, III, *The Intermediate State*, Nov. 1835, p. 371.

¹² *Ibid.*

biblical texts on the last judgment centers eschatological expectation on the Parousia alone.

Newman's sermons emphasized biblical teaching on the vindication of God's justice and honor, which will take place at the Parousia. This public manifestation of Christ's royalty and divinity will complete the salvific economy. Nonetheless the reason for his omission is unclear since the affirmation of an immediate personal judgment after death does not attenuate the importance of the final judgment.

The absence of the term "particular judgment" and the corresponding Catholic doctrine is of no surprise in Newman's first spiritual writings, the *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. A few texts however, actually come close to the content of this doctrine¹³. In one of the sermons he affirms the actual separation and retribution of souls at the moment of death. The sermon alludes to a judgment without employing this term: "certain it is that every one who dies, passes at once into one or other of two states; and if he dies unsanctified and unreconciled to God, into a state of eternal misery"¹⁴. This passage may signal the point when Newman begins to distinguish between a particular and a final judgment.

As Newman began to reflect on the true development of doctrine in the history of Christianity, he wrote that the doctrine of purgatory was a development of the doctrine of baptism and post-baptismal sin¹⁵. After forgiveness of sins obtained through the sacraments of baptism and confession there remains a temporal punishment for sins for which purgatory seems a natural source of forgiveness and healing.

¹³ For example, "Go before God's judgment-seat, and there plead that you know the Truth and have not done it." *P.P.S.*, I, *Knowledge of God's Will without Obedience*, Sept. 1832, pp. 35-36. Another text speaks of the moment "after death", but does not establish the existence of an immediate or personal judgment. "They (The Apostles) taught so far as the heathen: "Tomorrow we die;" but then they added, "And after death *the judgment*;"- judgment upon the eternal soul, which lives in spite of the death of the body." *P.P.S.*, I, *The Immortality of the Soul*, July 1833, p. 16.

¹⁴ *P.P.S.*, IV, *The Individuality of the Soul*, March 1836, p. 90.

¹⁵ Cf. *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, NEWMAN, John Henry, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1974 (1845 edition), pp. 419-421.

In the *Catholic Sermons* the doctrine of a particular judgment appears as one related, but distinct from that of the final judgment¹⁶. One of his *Sermon Notes* titled *On the Particular Judgment* begins with the affirmation of a "judgment (that) will take place directly" at the moment of death¹⁷. In both periods however, Newman maintained that judgment is the personal encounter with Christ who is absolute Lord and Judge¹⁸. This is perhaps best expressed in the final verses of the *Dream of Gerontius* that describe the beatific vision or the soul's comprehension of the beauty and power of Christ.

Newman emphasized the relationship that exists between God's judgment and Christ's Redemption. The passion offers the true perspective for a correct understanding of the gravity and consequences of original sin as well as personal sins. Newman repeated the patristic idea that Christ's passion and death shed light on the depth of iniquity, which has required such great a "remedy". The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, and its sacramental renewal in the Mass fully reveal the greatness of God's mercy. These are signs of His boundless mercy and a warning of His perfect justice. The Son of God will judge each person at the moment of death, and at the end of time His judgement will be made manifest in a solemn and public manner.

Some middle and late nineteenth century English theologians, especially Latitudinarians, and writers, most notably Alfred Tennyson revived a version of Origin's *apokatastasis*. According to Origin, all men, just and sinners, would be purified by fire after the resurrection of the body; the former would undergo a purification while the latter would be subject to a prolonged fire effecting in them a final reconciliation with God¹⁹. The late Victorian belief in universal salvation or final restoration of all men did not

¹⁶ Two biblical passages imply an immediate retribution after each person's death, namely, the parable of poor Lazarus and the words of Christ to one of the repentant thief. Cf. *Catechismus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, n. 1021.

¹⁷ *Sermon Notes*, NEWMAN, John Henry, Longmans, Green and Co., London, *On the Particular Judgment*, July 1850, pp. 40-41. On p. 26 he cited at length a passage from St. Francis de Sales on purgatory. The Constitution *Benedictus Deus* (1336) had defined this doctrine teaching that purification for the faithful begins "*mox post mortem*". *BENEDICTUS XII, Const. Benedictus Deus* (29.I.1336); DS 1000-1001.

¹⁸ Cf. *P.P.S., III, A Particular Providence as Revealed in the Gospel*, April 1835, p. 115; *S.N., On Death*, Dec. 1850, p. 51.

involve this purification through fire, but it was based on similar arguments deduced from Biblical texts that focus exclusively on God's mercy without regard to his justice.

This eschatological view known as Universalism is historically tied to the name of Fredric Farrar. In his scholarly work *Mercy and Judgment* (1881) Farrar, Canon of Westminster and later Dean of Canterbury, attempted to refute these charges²⁰ which ensued after his earlier work *Eternal Hope* (1878). Although he claimed in the prologue of both works that he did not deny the existence of hell or the doctrine of eternal punishment he did in fact refute the orthodox belief in its endless duration by arguing the temporal meaning of the word “eternal”²¹. He agreed on a future retribution for unrepented sins, but questioned endless punishment because the word “eternal” derives from the Greek for *aion* and Hebrew for *olam* that mean “for an age”, rather than all ages. In other words, he defended the general idea of Origen’s argument of temporal punishment and final restitution²².

In addition to the endlessness of hell, Farrar objected in both works to three other points, the material nature of hell fire, the condemnation of the majority of men, the irreversibility of condemnation²³. The idea that the vast number of men and women incur in endless punishment was a popular opinion worthy of historical scrutiny and correction. On the other hand, the doctrine of the irreversibility of the state of sin at the moment of death was a conclusion derived from the long-standing theological doctrines of free will and merit. Its denial would undermine the importance of man’s historicity and the value of the body in its composition soul-body. It would also reject the notion of freedom, with the corresponding doctrine of merit, as an essential characteristic of the person.

¹⁹ Cf. *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, eds. VACANT, A., MANGENOT, E., AMANN, E., Librairie Letouzey et Ané, Paris 1936, Vol. XIII, *Purgatoire*, MICHEL, A., Col. 1193-1195.

²⁰ FARRAR, Frederic W., *Mercy and Judgment*, E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, 1881, pp. 1-15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 378-380.

²² Farrar who greatly admired Origen defended him of an unjust condemnation for eschatological views that when he proposed them were regarded as open questions. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 17; FARRAR, Fredric W., *Eternal Hope*, E. P. Dutton & Company, 1878, p. xxiii-xxiv.

Furthermore it would imply the possibility of a process of endless repentance contrary to the Christian idea of preparation and vigilant expectation for judgment.

Newman was well informed of Universalism and the theological opinions anticipating it, but unlike Dr. Edward Pusey, who wrote *What is of Faith?* contesting Farrar's *Eternal Hope*, he did not formally write on the subject of the eternity of punishment. Cannon Farrar sent Newman a copy of *Mercy and Judgment* explaining that he thought Pusey and himself were really in agreement on the main points, and asking Newman for suggestions. We ignore Newman's response to Farrar, but know that he commented to Pusey that Farrar was mistaken in postulating the possibility of a second trial after death.

In the *Plain and Parochial Sermons* Newman had countered the central argument on behalf of Universalism. Half a century earlier, he had written of authors with similar views: "You will meet with writers who consider all the Attributes and Providences of God are virtually expressed in this one proposition, "God is love"; the other notices of His Unapproachable Glory contained in Scripture being but modifications of this. In consequence, they are led to deny, first, the doctrine of eternal punishment, as being inconsistent with this notion of Infinite Love; next, resolving such expressions as the "wrath of God" into a figure of speech they deny the Atonement, viewed as a real reconciliation of an offended God to His creatures."²⁴

In a number of sermons such as *Reverence, a Belief in God's Presence* and *Tolerance of Religious Error* Newman had argued that the divine attributes of justice and mercy are not contradictory even though for men they may seem to be²⁵. In *Chastisement amid Mercy* he admitted that the connection between both surpasses human understanding²⁶. Scripture reveals both attributes of God, but how they are reconciled is hidden to man. Newman's sermons do not neglect the truth of God's infinite mercy; they often deal with the manifestation of this truth in Christ's Passion and in God's continual

²⁴ *P.P.S.*, II, *The Gospel, a Trust Committed to us*, 1834, pp. 259-260.

²⁵ *P.P.S.*, V, *Reverence, a belief in God's Presence*, Nov. 1840, pp. 17-18; *P.P.S.*, II, *The Tolerance of Religious Error*, Dec. 1834, pp. 287-288. Some consider only One attribute in God, his mercy. They consider punishment only as something remedial and therefore deny its eternal duration. Newman labeled this as the principle of expediency and utility.

²⁶ Cf. *P.P.S.*, IV, *Chastisement amid Mercy*, pp. 102, 114.

“visitations”. God’s calls to repentance continue for each person until the very moment of death.

Newman described two vantage points of divine mercy: Christ’s intimate knowledge of mankind and his closeness to it in virtue of his humanity. The incarnate Son of God knows perfectly the thoughts, dispositions, strengths and weaknesses of each person. His justice therefore has an infinitely higher perspective and it is joined to a love for each person which surpasses all human possibilities. “He sees thee, and understands thee, as He made thee...Thou dost not love thyself better than He loves thee²⁷”. At the same time as Creator, he commands men to obey his precepts, warning those who refuse to do so of an endless punishment. In sum, the union of justice and mercy in God are a mystery for man because of the limited nature of human understanding that cannot grasp God’s perfections and God’s oneness²⁸.

Newman defended the teaching on the eternal duration of punishment for those who die in a state of sin as a consequence of God’s perfect justice and man’s free will. His belief was based on the traditional exegesis of texts such as Lk 19, 22 and Mt 25, 30, on the talents; Mk 13, 33, on vigilance; Mt 25, 13 on the ten virgins; Mt 25, 31-46, on the Last Judgment; and Rev 20, 13-15, on the second death. These texts were univocally understood by the overwhelming majority of Church Fathers and were supported by many ancient Church creeds. The Athanasian Creed explicitly affirmed the existence of eternal damnation in article 22.

For Newman, the failure to interpret Scripture in a “plain and natural way”²⁹ in the light of universal Church Teaching and Tradition leads to a unilateral emphasis on certain texts, a simplification of truths and an exaggerated scrutiny of revelation. Furthermore, Newman denounced the desire to circumscribe faith to reason, and to rid revelation of its mysterious and veiled nature. Edward Sillem, who edited Newman’s *Philosophical Notebook*, pointed out that the underlying philosophical milieu at Oxford was a combination of Kant’s rationalism and Hegel’s idealism that re-interpreted the

²⁷ *P.P.S., III, A Particular Providence as Revealed in the Gospel*, p. 125.

²⁸ Pope John Paul II has recently remarked on this “oneness” when he said that “Judgment and mercy can thus be understood as two dimensions of the same mystery of love...” *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, N. 28, 14 July, p. 11.

²⁹ *P.P.S., III, Faith and Obedience*, p. 88.

central truths of revelation. In short, Newman described the intellectual climate of Oxford in the last quarter of the century as one of atheism.

Newman did not discard prayers for the final repentance and forgiveness of individuals or for the universal salvation of men, but he highlighted the responsibility each individual has to live a good moral life in consonance with God's covenant. Attune to the needs of his times he warned parishioners of the risk of a sentimental religion which dilutes personal accountability. For this reason in his sermons he focused on the individual aspects of “last things” such as repentance, judgment and the real possibility of condemnation. His ecclesiology however manifests a fuller picture with much significance placed on the communion of the saints and Christ’s priestly prayer for the salvation of all men.

Early in his studies, Newman had been impressed with natural theology’s valuable aid to revealed religion; it put forth the common sense notion of judgment and retribution. In various letters he acknowledged the insight he had gained from the Anglican Bishop Joseph Butler, in particular through the *Analogy of Natural to Revealed Religion* (1736). The rewards and punishments, which are held as natural consequences to right or wrong behavior in family and social life, provide an understanding for the proper relationship between man and his Maker. Through common sense we perceive a necessary just retribution for our actions. We realize that each person shapes his life through many free decisions and acts that are tied to future consequences.

Justice implies the recognition of man's free will and the responsibility for his acts and intentions. Human acts, unlike the involuntary behavior of animals, are regulated by the virtue of justice. Against a soft and sentimental Late-Victorian religiosity, Newman argued that persons must assume responsibility for the consequences of their own acts. In the end, each person freely decides to go to heaven or hell; this is a decision that cannot be forced upon any one. The judgment, which condemns some one to eternal punishment, is not an fortuitous event; it is the result of a personal decision, often preceded by a long and complex line of other free human acts³⁰. This vision of man’s freedom strongly

³⁰ Cf. *P.P.S.*, II, *Human Responsibility*, pp. 320-331. In this sermon Newman discussed the doctrine of predestination and criticized St. Augustine's position.

contrasted with two extreme concepts of freedom sustained by fundamentalist and romanticist, the former tended to rid man of his freedom and the later made it absolute.

The Dream of Gerontius

Once a Catholic, Newman's understanding of the purification after death deepened. He then spoke of purgatory rather than of an intermediate state, but more importantly he envisioned it in terms of God's Mercy. Purgatory was no longer a Roman superstition mixed with rhetorical abuses or false artistic representations, but a merciful and just purification that contrasted with the fundamentalist options: heaven or hell.

Newman offered some insights on this purification in *The Dream of Gerontius*, a unique poem written in 1865 under the presentiment of an imminent death; his death did not in fact take place until many years later. According to Meriol Trevor, one of Newman's biographers, it was praised in all the newspapers, and oddly even read with interest by those who rejected the doctrine of purgatory or by his opponents such as Charles Kingsley³¹. Friends and acquaintances sent him letters expressing gratitude for the consolation they found in the poem³², or asking permission to reproduce parts. Even so, not all were enthusiastic; for example, Sir Francis Doyle, Professor of Poetry at Oxford did not consider it a poetical accomplishment. Interestingly Newman remarked that Doyle was "shrinking from doctrine"³³.

A musical adaptation by Sir Edward Elgar, a nationally renowned composer increased the fame of *The Dream*³⁴. Some music reviews criticized the composition, but their primary objection was against its Catholic doctrine. Not surprisingly one of the critics wrote: "There are many parts of the libretto which seem fanatical to us; for

³¹ Cf. WAMSLEY, Geoffrey, *Newman's Dream of Gerontius* in "The Downside Review" XIC, no. 304 (1973) 173.

³² Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, ed., DESSAIN, Charles S., and GORNALL, T., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1973, XXII, 72, 86, 163, 320; LD,XXXI, 248.

³³ Cf. WAMSLEY, Geoffrey, *o.c.*, p. 171, and *L.D.*, XXIV, 214-215, *Letter to Frederic Rogers*, Feb. 12, 1869.

³⁴ Cf. TAYLOR, Eric, *Elgar's Dream of Gerontius*, in "Blackfriars" XXXII, no. 373 (1951) 156-157.

instance, we believe in the existence of 'Purgatory' as much as we do in Jack's Beanstalk or Alice's Wonderland, but the whole is vivid and imaginative"³⁵.

The Dream provides spiritual and theological reflections on Christian death. Gerontius, the protagonist is a Christian very close to death who probably represents the author himself. From the start to the end of the poem, Newman stressed the intercessory and sacramental role of the Church at the point of a Christian's death³⁶. The poem has a marked Trinitarian content, reminiscent of the author's sermons. Each of the Divine persons and their respective mission are distinguished. The patristic theme of the Incarnation and its finality, the restoration of God's image in man are frequently developed. Gerontius' agony and final expiration are in fact presented as an image of Christ's own passion and death. The verses portray the Holy Spirit's transformation of man into the perfect image of Christ, and the Trinitarian inhabitation of the soul.

A central theme of this work is the Christian idea of man's final destiny; man is made for a perfect happiness that is only fulfilled through a personal and lasting union with the Triune God. Life on earth is a preparation for this definitive encounter with God. At the moment this life ends the soul undergoes particular judgment, which Newman envisioned as the appearance before the countenance of God. He described it as one divine glance in which the "happy suffering soul" is consumed and "quicken". For those who die in friendship with God, but need further purification personal judgment marks the beginning of purgatory.

Newman provided a short outline of key eschatological elements that can contribute ideas for a true development of dogma and spirituality concerning "last things". In *The Dream* the mysteries of creation, soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology are shown in their intimate relation, a unitary approach characteristic of the Church Fathers. Newman did not deal with these doctrines as closed independent treatises, a common mistake later criticized by Congar and Von Balthasar³⁷. In addition,

³⁵ This was the opinion of J. Porte, a music critic. Taylor cites two other critics, Cecil Gray and Basil Maine who had similar opinions. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

³⁶ *The Dream* opens with the *Subvenite* of the Commendation service, and closes with: "the masses on earth, and the prayers in heaven will aid thee at the throne."

³⁷ Cf. CONGAR, Yves M., *Le Purgatoire*, in *Le Mystère de la Mort et sa Célébration*, Paris 1956, pp. 303-305, 311-313, and VON BALTHASAR, Hans Urs, *Escatologia* in

Newman's theology highlights the immediate relevance and sense of urgency that eschatology has for a Christian's life; here too it underscores the necessary unity between dogmatic and moral theology.

Purgatory

Although *The Dream* does not center exclusively on the subject of purgatory, it constitutes the author's final and comprehensive treatment of it³⁸. Aside from the early sermon, *The Intermediate State*, Newman looked to Church Tradition rather than Scripture for the teaching on the existence of purgatory. This century Yves Congar has singled out Church tradition as the main theological source for the doctrine of purgatory. The French Dominican indicates the insufficiency of classical texts to affirm the existence of purgatory. For both of these authors, revealed texts provide the necessary truths on personal responsibility, divine justice, divine forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and expiation for sins³⁹ which are the foundation for the doctrine on purgatory. They suggest the existence of purgatory, but do not prove it. Newman, reached the conclusion, as Congar later did independently, that the "true place" for the doctrine on purgatory is Church Tradition and its interpretation of Scripture.⁴⁰

As mentioned earlier, Newman rejected the popular Catholic seventeenth and eighteenth century consideration of purgatory, inspired by excessive moral concern⁴¹, which made purgatory akin to hell, but shorter in duration. The latter belief focused on the threats of physical pains and sadness, and associated purgatory with a material place. Newman recognized that analogy enables human language to speak of mysteries, but in general he avoided the analogy to fire, and insisted on a spiritual purification of the soul.

Panorama de la Teología Actual, FEINER, Johannes, TRÜTSCH, Josef, BÖCKLE, Franz, Ediciones Guadarama, Madrid 1961, pp. 499-512.

³⁸ In his fine commentary on *The Dream of Gerontius*, Wamsley identifies three main themes: (1) the mysteriousness of the human soul, (2) the reality of the invisible world, and (3) the majesty of Christ - Savior, Master and Judge. We think that another main theme of the poem is the nature of purgatory. Cf. WAMSLEY, G., *o.c.*, p. 174.

³⁹ Congar's exegesis led to similar conclusions. Cf. CONGAR, Yves M., *o.c.*, pp. 285-287. He comments on 2 Mac 12,39-46; Mt 12,31-31; 1 Cor 3,12 s; 1 Cor 5,25-26.

⁴⁰ Cf. CONGAR, Yves M., *o.c.*, p. 287.

⁴¹ According to Tenenti, moral and educational motives were over emphasized by authors of *ars moriendi* during the renaissance. Cf. TENENTI, Alberto, *Il Senso della Morte e l' Amore della Vita nel Rinascimento*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Torino, 1989, pp. 121-147.

For him, purgatory involves two pains: a longing to behold God, and sorrow and shame for one's sins.

The purification of the soul of a faithful departed in the state of purgatory consists of the experience of a tremendous sorrow of love for offences against God, united to a deep awareness of worthlessness. Furthermore the soul's yearning to see God and to possess Him constitutes its very purification. In light of the disembodied condition of the soul the pains of purgatory can be considered to have a spiritual character. This "penance-fire" mysteriously serves to transform the soul, making it Christ-like. In consonance with the spiritual nature of the soul before the resurrection of the body, the *Catechism of the Church* refers to Purgatory as a "state" rather than a place⁴².

Purgatory has no parallel with hell; the first has to do with love of God and the latter with hate and rejection of Him. Newman followed the Church Tradition of the East, which opposed the notion of purgatory as a temporary hell or the association of a "purifying fire" with the intermediate state⁴³. St. John Chrysostom (345-407) strongly affirmed the Biblical teaching on the eternity of everlasting punishment, and in his homily on 1 Cor 3, 12-15 found some distinction between hell and purgatory⁴⁴. The key words, "judgment through fire" ("*ignis probabit*" in the *Vulgatam Clementinam*) of this text were for him a Biblical foundation for the doctrine of purgatory, but did not refer to physical fire. In effect, the Greeks, at the Council of Florence (1439), appealing to St. John Chrysostom, rejected any material or temporal fire because to admit this would be to favor Origin's error which denied eternal punishment⁴⁵. The Eastern Churches have kept Chrysostom's doctrine of the intermediate state or *hades* in which souls await the resurrection, each with its own degree of happiness or misfortune⁴⁶.

⁴² "*in statu qui appellatur purgatorium*" Cf. *Catechismus, o.c.*, n. 1472

⁴³ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that the purification of the chosen, termed purgatory, is completely different from the punishment of the damned. Cf. *Catechismus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1997, n. 1031.

⁴⁴ St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 12, *The Works of John Chrysostom*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, 1994, pp. 49-53.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique, o.c.*, Vol. XIII, *Purgatoire*, MICHEL, A., Col. 1252-1253.

⁴⁶ Cf. RATZINGER, Joseph, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1989, p. 228.

The interpretation of 1 Cor 3, 15, and the nature of this “fire” have always been controversial⁴⁷, and, according to Candido Pozo, remain so in contemporary exegesis. Pozo thinks that fire should be understood as a metaphor for the delay of the beatific vision. It involves the painful waiting for the possession of the Loved One. For him, purgatory should be thought of in terms of a "purification of love"⁴⁸. Ratzinger, following J. Gnilka's exegesis of 1 Cor 3, 1-17, points to a similar interpretation which underscores the Christological orientation of purgatory. He considers that the "fire" spoken of in this text is Christ Himself who purifies and transforms man⁴⁹. As mentioned earlier, both of these notions are contained in *The Dream of Gerontius* in which the personal judgment of the just is described as being "consumed" by the encounter with Christ, the Son of God⁵⁰.

The soul experiences an intimate spiritual pain⁵¹, which is both a punishment and a welcome purification. For Newman this pain is greater than any other pain on earth yet it produces contentment without equal on earth because it likens the soul to God⁵². He went as far as to compare the pain of purgatory to Christ's agony, and also to the stigmata

⁴⁷ Cf. *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, o.c., Vol XIII, *Purgatoire*, MICHEL, A., Col. 1190-1195, 1253.

⁴⁸ Cf. POZO, Candido, *Teología del Más Allá*, Colección Historia Salutis, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 1992, pp. 531-533.

⁴⁹ “Does not the real Christianizing of the early Jewish notion of a purging fire lie precisely in the insight that the purification involved does not happen through some thing, but through the transforming power of the Lord himself, whose burning flame cuts free our closed-off heart, melting it and pouring it into a new mold to make it fit for the living organism of his body?”, RATZINGER, Joseph, o.c., p. 229.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Verses on Various Occasions*, NEWMAN, John Henry, *The Dream of Gerontius*, p. 366; *P.P.S.*, V, *Worship, a Preparation for Christ's Coming*, Dec. 1838, p. 5. Newman refers to 1 Cor 3 in *S.N.*, *Punishment of Sin*, March 1876, p. 270.

⁵¹ Bellarmine had written that: "*obiecto est ignis vivacissimus. Coniunctio est in ipse substantia, intime et non in superficie, ut corporibus evenit.*" ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE, *Opera Oratoria Postuma*, II, ed. STRUMP, Sebastianus, Universitatis Gregoriana, Rome, 1945, p. 327.

⁵² Cf. *S.N.*, *Purgatory*, Nov. 1849, pp. 23-27. St. John of the Cross summarized the ten steps of divine love which according to St. Bernard and St. Thomas lead the soul to the likeness of God. The last one is the soul's total assimilation to God, which occurs with the clear vision of God after death. The few who reach the ninth step by virtue of their union with God on earth will not need Purgatory. Cf. ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Commentarios a los Poemas, Noche Oscura*, Ediciones Aguilar, Madrid 1989, book 2, ch. 20.

which some saints have received on earth. However, the wounds are spiritual, and produce simultaneously an indescribable pain and joy.

Newman's description of the "flame of Everlasting Love" bears some similarities with the remarkable doctrine of St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) contained in *Purgation and Purgatory*⁵³ written in part by one of her disciples, Ettore Vernazza⁵⁴. Newman however admitted in a letter to his friend Edward Pusey that regrettably he had not read Cardinal Manning's translation into English⁵⁵; even so he may have known of its content from secondary sources. In any event, both authors sustain the idea of a purification of love and God's mercy for the suffering souls⁵⁶.

Newman favored the vision of Athanasius, for whom redemption is conceived primarily as a restoration of Christ's image in each Christian, rather than a penal satisfaction⁵⁷. Although towards the close of *The Dream*, he did describe Gerontius being dipped into "penal waters", the context and the child-like connotation of the word "dip" convey a different notion of punishment than that held by theologians or jurists⁵⁸. In other works such as *The Philosophical Notebook*, he expressed his opinion that the intermediate state does not involve "penal suffering"⁵⁹.

⁵³ JAMES, Jane M.C., *Judgment and Purgatory in Newman's The Dream of Gerontius and the Treatise on Purgatory of St. Catherine of Genoa* in "The Downside Review" Vol. CXVIII, no. 401 (2000) 137-144.

⁵⁴ CATHERINE of Genoa, *Purgation and Purgatory, The Spiritual Dialogue*, Paulist Press, New York, 1979, Introduction by Benedict J. Groeschel, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁵ NEWMAN, John Henry, *Letters and Diaries*, Vol. XXIII, 256, *Letter to E. B. Pusey*, June 19, 1867.

⁵⁶ JAMES, Jane M.C., *Judgment and Purgatory in Newman's The Dream of Gerontius and the Treatise on Purgatory of St. Catherine of Genoa* in "The Downside Review" Vol. CXVIII, no. 401 (2000) 142.

⁵⁷ Cf. DESSAIN, Charles S., *Cardinal Newman and the Eastern Tradition*, in "The Downside Review" XCIV, n. 315 (1976) 83-99, especially pp. 94-96. Dessain refers to the opinion of Henri Rondet in *Gratia Christi*, Paris, 1948, p. 338. Congar, comes to a similar conclusion through the study of St. Justin and St. Irenaeus. Cf. CONGAR, Yves M., *El Purgatorio*, in *El Misterio de la Muerte y su Celebración*, Desclée, Buenos Aires 1952, pp. 279-336, especially pp. 326-330.

⁵⁸ Cf. Congar criticizes the juridical perspective held by Francisco Suarez (1548-1617). Cf. CONGAR, Yves, *ibid*, pp. 314-315.

⁵⁹ NEWMAN, John Henry, *The Philosophical Notebook*, ed. SILLEM, Edward J., Vol. II, Nauwelaerts Publishing House, Louvain 1970, entry for Aug. 29, 1875, pp. 181-183.

Newman adhered to the doctrine on purgatory of the Council of Trent, which affirmed the existence of particular judgment, immediate retribution after death, purgatory, and the need of suffrages for the souls in purgatory⁶⁰. The council had omitted reference to the controversy on purgatorial fire. Keeping within this doctrinal framework he developed in *The Dream* his considerations on personal judgment and the nature of purgatory's suffering. In other works and in letters he quoted from the writings of some Western theologians, namely St. Bonaventure (1217-1274)⁶¹, St. Robert Bellarmine⁶², and St. Francis de Sales⁶³.

Few modern authors have, like Newman, drawn attention to the condition of joy mixed with suffering of the state of purgatory⁶⁴. This characteristic, a direct consequence

⁶⁰ He was already familiar with it since he had written *Tract 90*. In the latter he had acknowledged the Catholic Church's prohibition of superstitious practices, and the gain of any profit from indulgences for the souls in purgatory. In addition, Trent urged bishops to study the sound doctrine on purgatory, received from the Fathers and earlier councils, and to withhold from common people obscure theological questions on the subject. Cf. Council of Trent, *Decr. de Purgatorio* (3.XII.1563); DS 1820.

⁶¹ In a letter to Pusey who was looking for passages about purgatory, Newman sent him quotes from St. Bellarmine, who referred to St. Bridget, from St. Bonaventure and from Bail. Cf. *L.D.*, XXIV, 256, *Letter to E. B. Pusey*, May 13, 1869.

⁶² Newman admired Bellarmine's doctrine and referred to it often in *The Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, see for example *Dev.*, pp. 139, 174. St. Robert Bellarmine taught: (1) that the principal suffering in purgatory is sorrow for having offended God, (2) the pains of purgatory are greater than any pain on earth, (3) the souls of purgatory are sure of their salvation, (4) prayer, fasting, alms, and especially the Sacrifice of the Mass help the souls of purgatory, (5) Christians should have compassion for those souls and pray for them, and (6) Indulgences are a great grace from God. Cf. St. ROBERT BELLARMINE, *o.c.*, VIII, pp. 162, 194-195.

⁶³ The Bishop of Annency maintained the idea of suffering for past sins, but did not consider "purgatory" a horrible situation; the souls of purgatory suffer willingly and peacefully, assured of their salvation. In addition, he taught that suffrages for these souls are part of the communion of prayers, which exists in the Church. Cf. St. FRANCIS DE SALES, *Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales*, ed. Les Soins des Religieuses de la Visitation, Annency 1900, XI, p. 199; X, p. 283. He based his belief in the existence of purgatory on the Church Tradition, and its interpretation of 2 Mac, 12, 38-45, pp. 273-5.

⁶⁴ Newman wrote: "*S. Bonventura docet poenam damni in Purgatorio non esse majorem omni poenâ...licet absentia Summi Boni ex se generat in amante summam tristitiam, tamen in Purgatorio mitigatur haec tristitia, et levatur magnâ ex parte propter certam spem etc Ista enim certissima spes affert incredibile gaudium*" *L.D.*, XXIV, 256, *Letter to E. B. Pusey*, May 13, 1869. St. Ignatius of Loyola expressed the same idea in *The Spiritual Exercises*, (completed in 1541), n. 23.

of the assurance of salvation of persons who die in a state of grace, has been neglected in theological and spiritual literature as well as in popular manifestations of piety. Various reasons such as a fear-inspiring morality, an excessive juridical outlook, marked attention to purgatory's pain, and insistence on suffrages can account for this omission. Antonio Piolanti, one of the few authors during this century to indicate joy as a characteristic of purgatory, cited *The Dream of Gerontius*, from a 1931 Italian translation⁶⁵. For Newman, this joy was a logical consequence of a devout Christian life; the earnest exercise of virtues and repentance of sins on earth is expressed in purgatory as an immense peace and joy produced by salvation⁶⁶. In terms of morality this would correspond to a healthy fear of salvation and the consequent struggle for holiness on earth.

In summary, Newman offered some valuable ideas for a renewal of eschatology based on an interpretation of Sacred Scripture guided by a close study of early Church Tradition, and acceptance of Church doctrine. On becoming a Catholic priest, he fully adopted the belief in an immediate personal judgment after death, a doctrine that was only partially present in his earlier writings. His mayor contribution to the doctrine on "last things" can be found in his later works, especially in *The Dream of Gerontius*, in which he developed the notion of purgatory as a "purification of love". This view had been maintained by a few Catholic writers in earlier centuries, but it was widely forgotten.

Newman sustained the idea succinctly expressed by *Gaudium et spes*: man without his Creator vanishes, and its corollary: without the awareness of a Judge, fallen man destroys himself. There was no pessimism or wishful thinking in his thought; man can only make full sense out of his life with the knowledge of that absolute Being who is his Creator, and at the same time his Redeemer and Judge. Newman's sermons and other

⁶⁵ Cf. PIOLANTI, A, *o.c.*, pp. 55-73. St. Francis de Sales spoke of "suffering with love". Cf. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, *o.c.*, V, p. 131. Cf. BARTMANN, Bernhard, *Grundriss der Dogmatik*, XI, Herder, Freiburg, 1931, p. 261; CONGAR, Yves M., *o.c.*, pp. 3000-304; 316-320.

⁶⁶ Tolhurst points out that once Newman became Roman Catholic, he did not rid purgatory of its painful aspects, but his grief and sense of finality are lessened. Cf. TOLHURST, James, Cf. TOLHURST, James, *A Blessed and Ever enduring Fellowship: The development of John Henry Newman's Thought on Death and Life Beyond*, in "Recusant History" XXII (1994-1995), 439-440.

works are permeated with a keen sense of the reality of “last things”. In a world so tied down with material progress and dazzled by scientific discoveries, he reminded men that “last things” are an essential source of inspiration for authentic Christian life. Lastly, from a theological perspective his teaching of eschatology, although not ordered into a treatise, underscores the necessity of integrating “last things” to other fields of theology.