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PROVIDENCE AND SCRIPTURE: Maturity, Subtlety, and Consciousness in Newman

JOHN F. BRITT, DAYTON, OH

A. PREAMBLE

In writing his classic work, *Orality and Literacy*,¹ Walter Ong, the most recent winner of the Marianist Award at the University of Dayton, made it clear that humans are affected profoundly both by writing and by print. This he did throughout the work, but, for our purposes, his final chapter, "Some Theorems," provided the challenge to write this present article. There Ong set forth a number of theorems he hoped future researchers would accept and examine in depth.

One such theorem is "*The Type of Consciousness*."² The change from the extroverted type of the end of the last century, exemplified in impressionism, to the introverted type of today, exemplified in the expressionism of the turn of the century, is shown today in the change from a narrow-minded to an open-minded approach to issues. John Henry Newman, genius that he was, went beyond the limits of the extraversion-introversion paradigm. Hence, he is a good subject for our consideration in examining this theorem. In order to examine it, I have taken the consciousness of Newman, exhibited in his most *oral* mode—in his sermons—and in a most general problem—Providence, to determine his consciousness and open-mindedness as he wrote his sermons for publication.

The inspiration for this approach came from reading Werner Kelber's *The Written and Oral Gospel*, where Kelber took the insight of Ong and showed how we can gain a new interpretation of Mark's Gospel by its means.³ The question I formed was: Can one gain a new insight into Newman by an orality/literacy approach?

¹ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen Press, 1982), p. 117.

² *Ibid.* pp. 178-179.

³ Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 129-131, 173-174.

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1. Subtlety and Consciousness

A starting-point is in the issue Herbert Read raised: Newman's writing is too subtle for the ordinary student of prose writing because Newman's passion is beyond their grasp.⁴ We shall see that this fact is due to the difference in our awareness of consciousness. In this exceptional work, Read selected specimens from great English prose stylists, yet he found Newman was beyond his audience.⁵ The issue is why is this the case? The answer to this issue is contained in the search for the answer to the orality/literacy issue and in the need for a James Joyce to write *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* to reveal the *conventionality* of both our writing and our consciousness.⁶ Newman united the oral and the written nicely in regard to his purpose for writing. Though he could have written as Gerard Manley Hopkins wanted him to write, conventionally, that is, with the "strain of address," nonetheless, he was more concerned to achieve *his goal* than to accept the convention.⁷ Yet we can gain a great deal of insight by ourselves going through the process of this "strain of address." For, if Newman had added this to his writing, it would have meant his having to begin again on a second writing with the insight gained from the first *writing*; hence, his works would have expanded beyond what both his publishers and readers would have been willing to accept.

Since Newman wrote most frequently at the urging of a *call* upon him and most usually polemically, his audience was not that of the believer and friend, but rather of the non-believer and enemy.⁸ Hence he was not able to use the full resources of his faith and his own position. However, frequently he reminds his readers near the end and/or at the end of his writings, that there is this better way⁹ and *it is up to them to follow it out*. In *The Idea of a University*, for instance, he did this, responding to the limits of his audience's patience and endurance, their having listened to their very breaking point.¹⁰

⁴ Herbert Read, *English Prose Style*, new ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952), pp. 183-184.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶ Ong, *Orality*, p. 131.

⁷ Read, *English Prose*, pp. 180-181, 183-184.

⁸ John Henry Newman, *Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), pp. 272-273.

⁹ John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 352, 379.

¹⁰ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. M. J. Svaglic (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), p. 114.

2. Method of Second Reading

On the other hand, the real purpose is best exemplified in the case of the indications we can gain from the last pages of the *Grammar*.¹¹ There Newman demonstrates that he had to write for an audience of non-believers and hence he did not use the help he could get from Scripture and Tradition.¹² If we keep this in mind, we have a twofold help—firstly, *we* can read Newman with a greater fullness by searching out just such indications of this need to carry out *our own* second reading, and, secondly, we have a major reason for *using Newman's sermons* as a more reliable source of his positions than those writings which were polemical. This is so even in the case of his novels which were directed to a wider, polemical public.

This method of approach is especially important in dealing with the topic Providence, since we know Newman in the *Idea* had warned that the usual audience in England was adverse to both mystery and miracles.¹³ He himself felt it better to sin on the side of superstition than on the side of doubt.¹⁴ With this in mind, we will consider the topic from his sermons. Secondly, since I have written two works on Newman's use of Scripture under the guidance of Father Theodore Koehler and Father William Cole, I will consider how Newman uses Scripture in regard to Providence.¹⁵ I will depend upon my general understanding of how Newman used Scripture to interpret his use of it in this instance, but I will present his explicit teaching on this use since it is integral to his preaching on Providence. Central to this is the fact that Newman followed the Alexandrian rather than the Antiochean hermeneutic, from which we have the *sensus plenior* as a constant link between the literal sense, which he uses as a starting point, and the typical and allegorical senses, upon which further insight into the material for his applications can be achieved.

B. Specimens AS BASES OF ANALYSIS

In order to search for the consciousness of Newman, we will have to review his use of Scripture where he is treating Providence in an *ex officio* manner in as many instances as possible; yet space severely limits the number of illustrations we can

¹¹ Newman, *Grammar*, pp. 375-379.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), pp. 291-297.

¹⁴ John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* (2 vols.; New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1891), 2:33.

¹⁵ My dissertation is in press with *Marian Library Studies*.

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collect for analysis and synthesis. Therefore we will use a specimen approach from which the reader, by using Johannes Artz' *Newman-Lexikon*, will be able to pursue a broader use of the principles which these selections will exemplify.¹⁶

1. "The Glory of the Christian Church" (276-285)¹⁷

The first specimen, from just before the heart of the sermon "The Glory of the Christian Church," contains as explicit a statement on Providence as we are to find in Newman:

Now the system of this world depends, in a way unknown to us, both on God's Providence and on human agency. Every event... has two faces; it is divine and perfect, and it belongs to man and is marked with his sin. I observe next, that it is a peculiarity of Holy Scripture to represent the world on its providential side; ascribing all that happens in it to Him who rules and directs it, as it moves along....

In other words, Scripture more commonly speaks of the Divine *design* and *substantial work*, than of the *measure* of fulfilment which it receives at this time or that.... (278-279)

Obviously, Newman has the believer (one who has had the opportunity to notice this peculiarity of Scripture) in mind, as he argues in this instance.

In this sermon for Epiphany, Newman, after situating Providence in both its social and individual aspects, reminds us of the "rule of Scripture interpretation... to walk by faith (284)." He had recalled that "it is observable that in the two passages last cited, the Christian Church is considered as merely the continuation of the Jewish, as if the Gospel existed in its germ even under the Law (282)." Thus in interpreting Scripture, we must read it as one Bible. Between these two principles of scriptural interpretation, Newman demands that "the same interpretation will apply to the Scripture account of the Elect People of God, which is but the Church of Christ under another name (282)." Here he gives a most concrete presentation of the difference between the secular interpretation and the scriptural. Providence has already achieved its purpose in the direction which everything follows by grace. This will become clearer as we get further into the principle of interpretation in his "The Glory of the Christian Church."

Newman, taking the issue from the perspective of the habitual way Scripture views Providence, examined the two sides of the ultimate moral end: God's glory and our salvation. He saw that the Divine design and substantial work took priority in this perspective, and, as a result, the measure of fulfillment took such a subsidiary

¹⁶ Johannes Artz, *Newman-Lexikon* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1975), *passim*.

¹⁷ John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987) is the source for the following referenced sermons.

position that its statement, rather than being made, was assumed in the former. Or, in a further way of putting this, a rule of Scripture which is exemplified throughout the sermon, the *tendency*, plays such a role in Scripture that the *ultimate fruits* can be and are ignored. But our historical perspective reverses this set of assumptions. Newman illustrates the process of the latter which operates by: 1. means and ends, 2. steps, 3. victories, and he shows our movement towards salvation as always in need of repair and as something which we must constantly accept as a venture. As such, our destiny appears piecemeal, multiple, and partial, rather than as a wholeness, a salvation, and a harmony or unity. Only from the perspective of the Angels does it come together. This is because, as Westermann made clear in our time in his *Beginning and End in the Bible*, Scripture anticipates the end from the beginning; thus *Genesis* awaits the *Apocalypse*, and the seventy books in between are in relation to these two.¹⁸

Crucial here is the necessity of faith in order to accept the fact "that the word 'elect' in Scripture has two senses, standing both for those who are called *in order* to salvation and for those who at the last day shall be the *actually resulting fruit* of that holy call (283)." Why? Because Providence is incomprehensibly beyond anything human. What, then, is most encouraging in this interpretation? All which can be "represented in Scripture" of the *whole* Church can be said "in some sense" of its *parts* (284). And why is the interpretation of this sermon important to Newman? Because he wanted to give a view of Providence for the *mature* rather than for those who need milk. The interesting assumption which goes through this entire sermon is that for Newman the Church of Antiquity possessed a greater maturity of faith than the Church to which he was preaching.

2. "Divine Decrees" (300-305)

This assumption is continued in his sermon on the Feast of St. Matthias, entitled "Divine Decrees." Here he distinguished between the assumption of the Jews as a chosen people and the Jews as part of the single Covenant: the Jewish people assumed that, because Scripture called them "*by name*," there could be no Christian Church. But in this he found "they did not seek out and use the one clue given them for their religious course, . . . amid all the intricacies of His providence" (303)—the keeping of God's commandments. Providence, for Newman, was always as close as this "unchangeable Rule of God's government" (303).

¹⁸ Claus Westermann, *Beginning and End in the Bible*, trans. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), *passim*.

3. "Secrecy and Suddenness of Divine Visitations" (293-299)

In his sermon for the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Secrecy and Suddenness of Divine Visitations," Newman went to great lengths to show that "God hides His providence, yet carries it forward" (297). Once again he found an opportunity to contrast the Church of Antiquity with the Church of his own day, dismal on the surface, yet invincible in truth. From this somewhat disturbing analysis he went on to remind his hearers that a promise made to us before we were born will bring us and the Church through any hour of peril.

4. "A Particular Providence as Revealed in the Gospel" (552-560)

Here we can best go to "A Particular Providence as Revealed in the Gospel" to discover an interesting principle—analogue to the one used in Plato's *Republic* where Plato wrote of the *state* in order to get to the *individual*, since the latter seemed beyond our sight: that God has both Universal and Particular Laws. This point was used by Pope Pius XIIth in his 1952 Christmas Message, where, in order to clarify the rights of the poor, he named it "duality in unity."¹⁹ Newman first poses the problem: people most frequently grant there is a universal law, but they do not expect an individual presence of God to them; then, after they have had a special insight into their relation with God, they assume they are special. Just as in the earlier sermon, "Divine Decrees," the Jews assumed because they were given a special call there could be no Christian call, so these individuals to themselves seem special in a way which causes them to be *separated off* from the others. Only *they* have the Providence of God in particular and others do not. Newman summarizes this problem:

Now, had they been all along in the practice of studying Scripture, they would have been saved from both errors—their first, which was blindness to particular Providence altogether—their second, which was a narrow-minded limiting of it to themselves, as if the world at large were rejected and reprobate; for Scripture represents this privilege as the portion of all men one by one. (554-555)

To capture the next point, it is helpful to illustrate Newman's position with an objection from Gandhi: leaders must decide whether to love individuals or the whole world. Rather than make an objection similar to that which Newman made in this sermon, Erik Erikson chimed in with Gandhi, because he had spent a lifetime on the

¹⁹ Pope Pius XIIth, "The Rights of Man," in *Major Addresses of Pope Pius XII*, edited by Vincent Yzermans, vol. II: "Christmas Messages" (St. Paul: North Central Publishing, 1961), p. 161.

dichotomy between social psychology and personal psychology.²⁰ And in *The Idea of a University*, Newman even suggests that one might almost imagine there must be two creators, one for the individual and one for society.²¹ Thus we are not surprised at Newman's detailed illustrations of the conflict between the justice obvious in God's general laws and the mercy shown in a personal Providence. But another principle in Newman's interpretation of Scripture underlies his many examples in this sermon regarding the Incarnation: "He has taken upon Him the thoughts and feelings of our own nature, which we all understand is capable of such personal attachments (555)." A surprising way of stating this follows: "The most winning property of our Saviour's mercy . . . is its . . . tender discrimination" (555). And the way to feel and receive this tender discrimination, he shows us from Scripture, is by seeking God and his Providence.

As usual, because Newman used all the senses of Scripture in his preaching, in the application of this sermon he shows that God's very tenderness can become a threat and a punishment. Matthias knew that Judas had felt this tenderness before he fell, and hence Matthias was in danger. So, at the end of this sermon, we are reminded that "the tares were 'bound in bundles' for the burning, *indiscriminately*, promiscuously, contemptuously" (560; italics added). What leads from the tender discrimination to the indiscriminate binding but *our own response*? Thus Newman argued that discrimination need not be prejudicial, because God could at once treat one special while also treating the other special—and each according to a personal relationship.

5. "Waiting for Christ" (1322-1334)

In one of his favorite sermons, "Waiting for Christ," Newman summarized his many teachings on Providence with a contrast between the superstition which the hints of God's action raises in the unbeliever and the meaning which these hints provide for the believer. After a careful analysis of these, Newman shows the need for faith and for Scripture: The superstitious

. . . have been ignorant, too, of Scripture, in which God has most mercifully removed the veil off a portion of this world's history, in order that we may see *how* He works. Scripture is the key by which we are given to interpret the world; but they who have it not, roam amid the shadows of the world, and interpret things at random. (1332-1333)

²⁰ Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 139.

²¹ Newman, *Idea*, p. 349.

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Thus he used Providence in accord with all of his principles of interpretation to give the *basis* for interpreting the Book of Revelation: a work which is given to the believer "not to show him what is coming, but to show him that now, as heretofore, a secret supernatural system is going on *under* this visible scene. And therefore he looks out for Christ, for His present providences, and for His coming... (1334)."

6. "*Peace in Believing*" (1400-1408)

The many Providences which Newman noted in "Peace in Believing," in telling that God revealed something of history, indicate that the history he considered was salvation history: "We have gone through in our memory the whole course of that Dispensation of active providences, which God, in order to our redemption, has superinduced upon His eternal and infinite purpose (1403)." Thence he can enter into the mystery of the Trinity and give us the principle of Scripture which makes this mystery available to us: "In Scripture, the promises of eternity and security go together; for where time is not, there vicissitude also is away (1403)." In Scripture we have the ways of eternity and salvation shared with us as a memorial of the covenant. By the use of the liturgy and the Athanasian creed, we are prepared, according to Newman, to gain something of the mystery: "What the Beatific Vision will then impart, the contemplation of revealed mysteries gives us as in a figure (1405)." Here we come upon Newman's way to approach Scripture—as a *lectio divina* by which we enter into the meaning of revelation.

7. "*Divine Calls*" (1566-1574)

Eventually we come to the relation between living at the time of Christ and at any other time. Newman uses our call as his way of making this concrete:

He works through our natural faculties and circumstances of life. Still what happens to us in providence is in all essential respects what His voice was to those whom He addressed when on earth: whether He commands by a visible presence, or by a voice, or by our consciences, it matters not, so that we feel it to be a command. (1570)

8. "*The Gospel Witnesses*" (341-355)

In this sermon we have a confirmation and a beginning synthesis of much of the above.

Christianity was, and was not, a new religion, when first preached to the world; it seemed to supersede, but it was merely the fulfilment, the due development and maturity, of the Jewish Law, which, in one sense, vanished away, in another, was perpetuated for ever. (342)

This important fact led Newman to contrast the reading of the providential work of St. Paul, as viewed by those who denied its relevancy to the Gospel and those who claimed it went beyond the Gospel to the point where it formed a new religion, with the equally providential work of St. James and St. John. With sufficient *maturity*, we can see the reconciliation of these *two beginnings of the Gospel*. And thus "we shall find abundant matter of praise in this Providential arrangement (343)."

C. SYNTHESIS

In distinguishing the *whole body* from the *individual* in the sermon "Divine Decrees," Newman searched the Old Testament and found, in the Jewish experience, times when God had determined to destroy the whole people but was kept from this by an individual. This gave Newman a most basic Rule by which to relate Scripture and Providence:

"... And the Lord said unto Moses, *Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.*" So clearly has He shown us from the beginning, that His own glory is the *End*, and justice the essential *Rule*, of His providence. (302)

In "The Glory of the Christian Church," after situating Providence in both its social and individual aspects, Newman reminded us of "the rule of Scripture interpretation . . . to walk by faith" (284). We recall that Newman followed the Alexandrian rather than the Antiochean hermeneutic, from which we have the *sensus plenior* as a constant link between the literal sense, which he uses as a starting-point, and the typical and allegorical senses, upon which a further insight into the material for his applications can be achieved. This prepares us to accept the fact that Newman was seeking a view of Providence for the *mature*.

We also remember that in Newman the need for maturity was due to the fact that "God hides His providence, yet carries it forward" (297). Certainly he found that by their

... studying Scripture, they would have been saved from both errors—their first, which was blindness to particular Providence altogether—their second, which was a narrow-minded limiting of it to themselves, as if the world at large were rejected and reprobate; for Scripture represents this privilege as the portion of all men one by one. (554-555)

But Newman demanded an equal maturity on the part of Christians in examining the foundations of their faith. Only by reconciling the two beginnings of the Gospel would they be in a position to realize that there is but one testament. Earlier, Newman had presented the other side of this demand for maturity:

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Now the system of this world depends, in a way unknown to us, both on God's Providence and on human agency. Every event... has two faces; it is divine and perfect, and it belongs to man and is marked with his sin. I observe next, that it is a peculiarity of Holy Scripture to represent the world on its providential side; ascribing all that happens in it to Him who rules and directs it, as it moves along,...

In other words, Scripture more commonly speaks of the Divine *design* and *substantial work*, than of the *measure* of fulfilment which it receives at this time or that. ... (278-279)

Thus the reconciliation is not a surprise for us. After situating Providence in both its social and individual aspects, Newman reminds us of "the rule of Scripture interpretation... to walk by faith" (284).

We are prepared by his use of Providence in accord with all of his principles of interpretation to find the *basis* for interpreting the Book of Revelation: a work which is "not to show [the believer] what is coming, but to show him that now, as heretofore, a secret supernatural system is going on *under* this visible scene. And therefore he looks out for Christ, for His present providences, and for His coming..." (1334).

Central to this is the fact that Newman followed the Alexandrian rather than the Antiochean hermeneutic (from which we have the *sensus plenior* as a constant link between the literal sense which he uses as a starting-point and the typical and allegorical senses upon which a further insight into the material for his applications can be achieved). The next principle is "a peculiarity of Holy Scripture to represent the world on its providential side" (278). Then we come upon "the one clue given them for their religious course... amid all the intricacies of His providence" (303)—the keeping of God's commandments. Because Newman wanted to give a view of Providence for the *mature*, he took into account that the Jewish thinkers could have readied themselves for an openness to maturity by doing the one thing they forgot to do: "they did not seek out and use the one clue given them for their religious course... amid all the intricacies of His providence" (303)—the keeping of God's commandments.

We also remember that for Newman the need for maturity was due to the fact that "God hides His providence, yet carries it forward" (297). Certainly he found that by their

...studying Scripture, they would have been saved from both errors—their first, which was a blindness to particular Providence altogether—their second, which was a narrow-minded limiting of it to themselves, as if the world at large were rejected and reprobate; for Scripture represents this privilege as the portion of all men one by one. (554-555)

In this overcoming of narrow-mindedness, we come to the fact He has "shown us from the beginning, that His own glory is the *End*, and justice the essential *Rule*, of His providence" (302). With this we have both open-mindedness and maturity.

Beyond this unity in his thought is a further complexity, such that Newman proposes one could almost imagine there must be two creators, one for the individual and one for society.²² The reconciliation of this is not only in a personal Providence, but also in another principle in Newman's interpretation of Scripture which underlies many examples in his sermons: the Incarnation. This very personal relationship could have been turned into a prejudicial discrimination; instead, through a wonderful following of the principle of duality in unity, it remained a "tender discrimination."

Hence, he summarized his many teachings on Providence for the mature with a contrast between the superstition which the hints of God's action raise in the unbeliever and the meaning which these hints provide for the believer. In contrast we recall his words: "Scripture is the key by which we are given to interpret the world; but they who have it not, roam amid the shadows of the world, and interpret things at random" (1333). Thus he used Providence, in accord with all of his principles of interpretation, to give the *basis* for interpreting the Book of Revelation: a work which is given to the believer "to show him that now, as heretofore, a secret supernatural system is going on *under* this visible scene. And therefore he looks out for Christ, for His present providences, and for His coming..." (1334).

D. SCRIPTURE IN THE ABOVE SPECIMENS

1. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." (Isa. 60:1)
2. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." (Lk. 17:20)
3. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. 3:11)
4. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." (2 Cor. 13:1)
5. "Thou God seest me." (Gen. 16:13)
6. "He who testifieth these things, saith: Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20)
7. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts." (Isa. 6:3)
8. "And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered: Speak, for Thy servant heareth." (1 Sam. 3:10)

²² *Ibid.*

E. CONCLUSION

Lectio divina indicates the issue of this article. In his lecture on "Literature," included in *The Idea of a University*, we find Newman reminding us of a point which Ong would later make: all writing finds its roots in orality, but not all orality moves on to writing. Despite the fact that monks took time in their day to read and contemplate Scripture, their very manner of doing this was sentence-by-sentence, orally repeated, in order that they might savor the word. What had been oral became written, and this became oral once more. Monks learned to read in order to proclaim the written word.

The *subtlety* which Read recognized in Newman is the *open-mindedness* we have considered. Yet, how can we have Newman's maturity, his subtlety, and his consciousness and still be able to communicate with the many? Newman did not let the "strain of address" close him in upon himself. Nowhere do we find a better reason for Newman's remaining open than in his treatments of Scripture and of Providence. Newman wanted us to be aware, as James Joyce put it in his *Ulysses*, that the future flows back into the past: "Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past."²³ God is present now among us. Providence is already but not yet. Time is done away with when we look at the world from the perspective of eternity, of Providence. Repeatedly, Newman joins the Old and the New into a single Testament. The seed exists from the beginning as the end. In this we find the end and the goal—the glory of God.

Just as we could find hundreds of instances of glory in Scripture, so we could find a like number of instances of Providence. Both glory and Providence put us in a state of mind beyond time, and no approach to study is more beneficial in obtaining this than an oral/written approach. The proclamation is available to all; the preaching is available to all. Yet to preserve it, we need the written text; however, the written text must be interpreted, which means it is always vulnerable to the understanding of the literate. Somehow we must do a pair of difficult operations; we must return to the *text* with a *listening* approach, and we must accept the *consciousness* of those who are *illiterate*, to safeguard ourselves from an ever-widening gap between the word and its expression through the *eyes* of those who see but *do not hear*.

As we went beyond the commentary upon Newman's uses of Scripture, searching for an interpretation of the topic Providence in which Newman's open-mindedness would become evident, we found both his subtlety and his solution to his own obsession with time. Time, for Newman, was the opposite to eternity, just as Providence

²³ J. Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1946), p. 184.

was the opposite of the world and both were united for him in God's glory. This unity was found in the Incarnation and, thus, the exemplar for any search for such unity will always be the *Theotokos*, a woman whose spoken words have been recorded in Scripture, but whose written words are unrecorded.

With the proportionate number of illiterates increasing in the world, no more significant duty rests upon the literate than that of finding a means to share the benefit of the *result* of an oral/literate insight into God's word with those who will never themselves achieve such an insight.

Question for Future Study

When we read the *Book of the Hebrews* we find a strange mixture of the oral and the written. Few writings in the Bible stress the oral more fully and yet few consider the Hebrew Scripture proportionally more. Thus, a future study on orality and literacy based upon this work would be helpful. This shows the complexity of the issue of this article. Whether we follow a Hebrew interpretation or a Hellenistic interpretation, we face the question of the relation of orality and literacy at the time the Bible was written.

Postscript: Analysis of Problems of Interpretation

Problems of Interpretation:

Though Newman could write: "Scripture is the key by which to interpret the world," yet the problem of interpretation looms large in Newman's *Grammar*. "Word" itself varies: the Incarnate is the *logos*, the spoken word. However, Newman, in the lecture "University Preaching," contained in his *Idea of a University*, recalls that the Gospel of John is scientific. This means that the writing about the Word has become logical rather than open-ended. Once the word is written, it becomes limited. Beyond language is the elastic human mind. This elastic human mind goes beyond logic and achieves fulfillment in its very elasticity.

Relationships within the Sermons:

Eternity: Providence: Spoken word

Time : World : Written word

Time, World, and Literacy "catch" something of Eternity, Providence, and the Spoken word.

Two keys to Revelation (and Scripture in general):

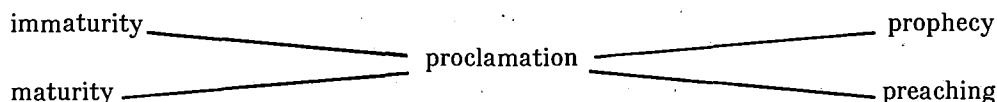
open-endedness

sensus plenior

Providence and Scripture

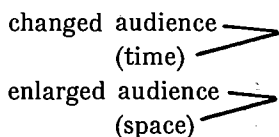
Specimens from Scripture:

The eight specimens from Scripture highlighted Newman's concern with the *mature view* needed if one would seek to unite the principles of his interpretation of Scripture and take into account the fact that prophecy and preaching are forms of proclamation (in which the spoken word brings life to the community).

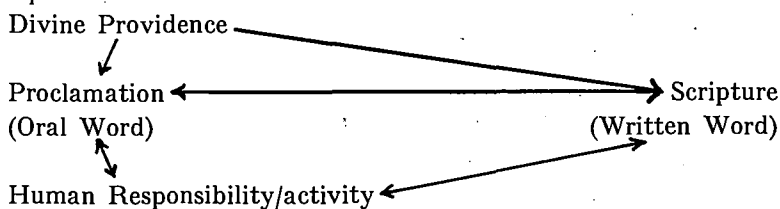


1. Proclamation = orality (OT prophets to NT preachers; personal proclamation)
2. Scripture = literacy (Newman's written sermons)

Result:



Ultimate Relationships:



"Sensus Plenior":

The need for the *sensus plenior* arose from the fact that no matter how hard we try to have an absolute interpretation, we can never achieve it. The very limits of language, beyond which there is the human mind, forestall any possibility that *the one interpretation* can be achieved. Without the *sensus plenior*, the word would be dead rather than alive; and the dead letter would replace the live spirit. And God's Proclamation would be limited to the human way of communicating. Providence, rather than speaking to each of us personally, would be restricted to an interpretation—somewhat as if an illiterate would want to communicate with another illiterate and had to depend upon a literate person as a medium. Only when this literate person would speak would the illiterates understand, and then only as the literate person interpreted.

Newman began in these sermons with the proclamation—the oral word. Each sermon could be heard by the immature in one way and by the mature in another.

For the immature, each would be the present and in accord with orality; for the mature, there would be two possibilities: one for those who were mature and literate and the other for those who were mature and not literate. The mature would have an illative sense achieved either through education or in some other way.²⁴ As such, they would be able to interpret the word either orally or literately or both. Hence, Newman strove to give his message in such a way that the mature could use their very maturity to find a sense in the passages which could lead them beyond the strict limits of the written text, on the one hand, and towards the proclamation remaining through its *residue* in each text, on the other. In his day, Newman would have realized that for his actual audience he was restricted severely in time, place, and number, but that by writing the sermons and using the *rhetorical approach* he had gained from Cicero he would be able to "speak" to the largest possible audience of place and time. Yet his speech would have to become a writing. Writing for the mature, he wanted to remain as close to the spoken word as possible, but this very means forced him to use a printed form without the rhythm and the structure of the original (oral form). As a result, Gerard Manley Hopkins would rail against Newman's conversational style which, for Hopkins, lacked the "strain of address" he demanded of a written work.

Here, in Proclamation, we have the link between Scripture and Providence, between Time and Eternity, between the Written and the Spoken, between the Literal Sense and the *sensus plenior* and the close-minded and the open-ended. In this way, Providence is at the beginning and at the end *all at once* and is able to give meaning to the general as well as to the particular, to the oral and to the literate and even to the literately oral, in a deeper way than the restrictions of logic, science, and writing originally seemed to demand. Only through a study of Newman in the light of Walter Ong and Werner Kelber would these insights have been possible, or, rather, would these resonances over such a span of time and place have sounded.

²⁴ Newman, *Grammar*, p. 283.