



Episcopal and Prophetic Traditions in the Church

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In his Preface of 1877, Newman, taking his cue from Ephesians, identifies an ‘Episcopal tradition’ and a ‘Prophetic tradition’ which issue in the life of the church in complementary ways. What, in the first case, does the Episcopal tradition do? You know the remark of Sydney Smith: ‘Of course I believe in apostolic succession. How else do you explain the continuity between Judas Iscariot and the Bishop of Exeter?’ The Episcopal tradition is engaged in ruling and preaching, Newman says. It is a ministry of governance and proclamation exercised originally by the Twelve and subsequently by bishops, transmitting the truths necessary for salvation. It gives rise to summaries of faith in the New Testament scriptures, creeds and written documents, the teachings of councils and authoritative teachings rites and ceremonies by which the kernel of saving truth is conveyed. The apostolic or Episcopal tradition is a ministry of governance and proclamation exercised originally by the Twelve and subsequently by bishops. It gives structure to the church: it provides clear governance and formally approves the teaching we need. The basic unit of the church is bishop and people, not, as many Catholics in a Congregationalist mode think, the parish. Newman distinguishes and relates them in these terms:

Almighty God placed in His Church first Apostles, or Bishops, secondarily Prophets. Apostles rule and preach, Prophets expound.

But Prophets – Newman alternatively calls them ‘Doctors’, understood as ‘Teachers’ – are ‘the interpreters of the revelation; they unfold and define its mysteries, they illuminate its documents, they harmonize its contents, they apply its promises.’ So the visible, structuring of the church through bishops is only one half of the story: there is a complementary dimension of interpretation and exposition exercised by prophets. Prophecy is tied to the church’s experience of Christ and deals with what needs to be said if the church is to explore the richness of God’s action in Christ as proclaimed by its leaders. The proclamation of Gospel has to be interpreted and that is what the prophetic tradition does. If you have a church solely defined by its Episcopal tradition, you have a church with a weakened sense of

its identity because then it will be imbalanced, overly focused on the structuring and institutional dimensions.

Notice the verbs that Newman uses to describe what prophets do: as ‘interpreters of revelation’, they *unfold* and *define* its mysteries, they *illuminate* its documents, they *harmonize* its contents, they *apply* its promises. The images are of expounding, casting light, reconciling ideas and putting those teachings into practical action: in the hands of prophets, the gospel proclamation is to be so elaborated, clarified, fully grasped in all its details and implications that we then know how to *live* it. The gospel moves from being *understood* to being *lived* because authentic teaching flows into authentic living, and so the prophetic tradition enables the gospel to become incarnated in human life.

You will notice that Newman regards the prophetic tradition as the interpretative teaching that draws upon, complements and perhaps completes the preaching of those who govern in the Church. This will come as a surprise to a modern person for whom the charism of prophecy is often regarded as antithetical and antagonistic in relation to the offices of governance in the Church: we perhaps unreflectively assume that prophets stand at the periphery, and that they are angry people who rebuke those in authority because prophecy is of its nature a demand in the name of God for a deeper righteousness than human authority can require.

Newman does not see prophecy as a radical counter-balance to institutional religion: for him, far from being a Spirit-guided corrective to all too human religious institutions, it is more like an amplification of what apostles/bishops convey to the church which enables the church to be filled with faith and love. Prophecy is not tied to views or movements which deflect the church from its authority-guided present – quite the reverse if Newman is to be believed. Prophecy for him is how the church comes to be bound to the gospel of Christ because it enables the apostolic proclamation to be received deeply by human beings, thereby creating a believing body enlivened by its faith in Christ.

Where is this prophetic tradition located? If the substance of apostolic tradition is transmitted in prescribed and usually written form (scripture, creedal formulae, the decrees of councils, sacraments), by contrast what is given by prophets is exuberant and diverse. It is, to use a loose but thoroughly accurate phrase, ‘all over the place’ and this is surely one of the wonderful features of Newman’s treatment of the prophetic office. He writes:

Their teaching is a vast system, not to be comprised in a few sentences, not to be embodied in one code or treatise, but consisting of a certain body of Truth, pervading the Church like an atmosphere, irregular in its shape from its very profusion and exuberance; at times

separable only in idea from Episcopal Tradition, yet at times melting away into legend and fable; partly written, partly unwritten, partly the interpretation, partly the supplement of Scripture, partly preserved in intellectual expressions, partly latent in the spirit and temper of Christians; poured to and fro in closets and upon the housetops, in liturgies, in controversial works, in obscure fragments, in sermons, in popular prejudices, in local customs. This I call Prophetical Tradition, existing primarily in the bosom of the Church itself.

Through the work of prophets there is a manifold elaboration of the living gospel throughout the whole body of the church. Newman describes their teaching as 'vast' and if he then uses the word 'system', he does not mean it in our modern sense of something ordered and systematic. Quite the reverse: he says that it is 'irregular, profuse and exuberant', words that we might apply to Baroque style of art and architecture, rather than to systems of thought.

Significantly, if we ask who constitutes this prophetic tradition? who are the prophets? it is clearly not theologians, or not always and not necessarily theologians, and not bishops, or not always and necessarily bishops. Apparently everyone can be involved in expressing it and certainly everyone in the church is shaped by it. The prophetic tradition (dimension, impulse) works in a random way as presumably the Spirit guides, and it is not tied to particular offices in the church but is open to all. The interesting question is would you like a church in which there was a formal office called 'Prophet'? How would parish priests like to be told by their parishioners, 'I'm sorry Father, we've asked the Prophet and he doesn't agree with you'? Probably not very helpful because, I think, prophecy is a gift, a charism which by its nature cannot and should not be institutionalised.

Newman's point is that there are always prophets and the work of interpreting and elaborating is manifold, taking place in multiple ways and apparently, anyone can be called by God to exercise this office. As we would say, surely, it is built into the grace of baptism. You will remember the character in the play by Molière who is delighted to discover that he has been speaking prose all his life; perhaps it is the case that we have been 'prophetic' all our lives, interpreting the gospel in its true character, conveying God's truth to others, and living it out in ways that point to Christ.

Let me pick out one of the features of Newman's list. He says that the prophetic tradition is responsible for producing popular religion (he calls it 'legend and fable'); it gives rise to 'popular prejudices' and local customs'; as well as being sometimes written down ('obscure fragments'), it is conveyed orally in conversation and private speech ('closets'); it shapes the sensibility of people ('spirit and temper'). I doubt if any other religious writer in the nineteenth-century thought that expressions of faith among the least educated members of the

church, what we would call ‘popular religion’ was an expression of the prophetic office.

The Offices of the Church

So in this Anglican work, popular religion is related to prophecy, and I find his account highly impressive and rich. But when he turns to it again in his later Catholic Preface, for some reason he loses sight of the perspective he had given earlier and considers popular religion as an aspect of the priestly dimension of the church because it is concerned with devotion and worship. First, however, we should look at the main ideas of the Preface Newman wrote as a Catholic. Newman argues that the church shares in the priestly, prophetic and kingly offices of Christ. If you are one of the poor banished children of Vatican II, this idea will be familiar to you because the great Council ‘adopted this threefold division of functions for its Christology, its ecclesiology, its theology of the episcopacy, its theology of the presbyterate, and its theology of the laity.’¹ It is a key idea of that Council. Newman says:

These offices, which specially belong to Him as Mediator, are commonly considered to be three; He is Prophet, Priest, and King; and after His pattern, and in human measure, Holy Church has a triple office too; not the Prophetical alone and in isolation, as these Lectures virtually teach, but three offices, which are indivisible, though diverse, viz. teaching, rule, and sacred ministry

What Newman will then do is distinguish between the effects of these offices in the life of church: the priestly office gives rise to worship; the prophetic office gives rise to teaching and the kingly office to the exercise of authority. So the church is a worshipful, teaching, authoritative community. Newman is also clear that while these three dimensions together form a unified pattern of activity in Christ’s name, nevertheless there is a tension among them. Potentially, each is in danger of going wrong if it escapes from the modifying effect of other two. In Newman’s words,

Arduous as are the duties involved in these three offices, to discharge one by one, much more arduous are they to administer, when taken in combination. Each of the three has its separate scope and direction; each has its own interests to promote and further; each has to find room for the claims of the other two; and each will find its own line of action influenced and modified by the others, nay, sometimes in a particular case the necessity of the others converted into a rule of duty for itself.

¹ A. Dulles, ‘The Threefold Office in Newman’s Ecclesiology,’ *Newman After a Hundred Years*, ed. I Ker & A.G. Hill (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990), 375–00; 395.

What then does Christianity look like in the light of these offices?

Christianity, then, is at once a philosophy, a political power, and a religious rite: as a religion, it is Holy; as a philosophy, it is Apostolic; as a political power, it is imperial, that is, One and Catholic. As a religion, its special centre of action is pastor and flock; as a philosophy, the Schools; as a rule, the Papacy and its Curia

Truth is the guiding principle of theology and theological inquiries; devotion and edification, of worship; and of government, expedience. The instrument of theology is reasoning; of worship, our emotional nature; of rule, command and coercion. Further, in man as he is, reasoning tends to rationalism; devotion to superstition and enthusiasm; and power to ambition and tyranny.

But why does he develop this scheme? Not, first of all, to develop an account of the nature of the church in a comprehensive way. Instead he has a particular focus for his thinking:

I am to apply then the doctrine of the triple office of the Church in explanation of this phenomenon, which gives so much offence to Protestants; and I begin by admitting the general truth of the facts alleged against us

What does he mean by this? He's pointing to the scandal caused by the popular and political dimensions of the Catholic Church: the presence of superstition and the difficulty of the Church having a political role in European life and making decisions that are pragmatic rather than evangelical. These are the features of the Church which cause him and others some embarrassment, and he writes the Preface in part in order to present these things as misguided effects of the priestly and kingly offices. Remember that a Jesuit at this time was expelled from the Society of Jesus for denying that the Papacy had authority in secular matters. He denied that the Papal States formed an integral part of the Petrine Office and this was unacceptable to Roman authorities. The Vatican State is the residue of this Papal claim to exercise secular authority.

So, far from being a detached, elaboration of the richness of this great teaching about the church, Newman's Preface is aimed at a particular concern to Anglicans, Catholics, and, I think, to Newman himself. He frequently did not find himself at ease in the nineteenth-century Catholic Church, especially in the circumstances surrounding Vatican I's declaration of Papal Infallibility in 1870, seven years before this Preface was written. The Preface offers a way of understanding two features of Catholic Christianity which caused scandal then as now, namely the role of the Church as a political force exercising disproportionate social power and the Church's promotion or tolerance of superstitious practices at odds with the core of gospel faith. In Fergus Kerr's words, 'As [Newman] rightly sees it, the Roman Catholic Church, was then, as it is now, quite unique in the

authoritarianism of its pastors as well as in the wild and savage religion of many of its faithful . . . Without attention to doctrine, worship is likely, as Newman said, to collapse into superstition, and leadership to become arbitrary or (these days) to fall into vociferous but impotent irrelevance.²

Authoritarianism and wild, savage religion are the almost inevitable products of a church in which theology, reasoned inquiry, deliberation, study, debate, dialogue and conversation are not given what Newman calls a 'power of jurisdiction' over the 'political and popular elements in the church's constitution'. So how are authoritarianism, an exaggerated concentration on political power, superstition and irrational devotion to be regulated? Newman's answer is that this is what theology is meant to do.

Theology is the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system. It is commensurate with Revelation, and Revelation is the initial and essential idea of Christianity. It is . . . the expression of the Prophetic Office, and, as being such, has created both the Regal Office and the Sacerdotal. And it has in a certain sense a power of jurisdiction over those offices, as being its own creations, theologians being ever in request and in employment in keeping within bounds both the political and popular elements in the Church's constitution,—elements which are far more congenial than itself to the human mind, are far more liable to excess and corruption, and are ever struggling to liberate themselves from those restraints which are in truth necessary for their well-being.

He makes the remarkable statement that 'ambition, craft, cruelty, and superstition are not commonly the characteristic of theologians', which clearly shows he was not familiar with the snake-pits that most theology faculties are. But he does so because while decision-making is concerned often with compromise and the pragmatic 'art of the possible', and devotion is concerned with feelings and piety, theology is a reasoned inquiry into divine truth and is directly connected with the church's experience of God's revelation. So he places theology, understood as a reasoned response to revelation, in the position of regulative principle of the church's life, and he is right. Newman however recognises that theology has its faults:

Yet theology cannot always have its own way; it is too hard, too intellectual, too exact, to be always equitable, or to be always compassionate; and it sometimes has a conflict or overthrow, or has to consent to a truce or a compromise . . .

The alternatives are unacceptable: if you place worship and devotion at the centre, you have religion undirected by reason, subject

² Fergus Kerr OP, 'Tradition and Reason: Two Uses of Reason, Critical and Contemplative', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6 (1004), 37–49; 41,43.

to currents of emotion, enthusiasm, wild religion, fundamentalism, superstition, self-directed spiritual indulgence, Enneagrams, forms of tree-hugging and getting in touch with your inner child. Alternatively, give central place to the need for order and cohesion and you open the way to the *Führerprinzip*, tyranny, venality, spiritual and psychological power over others, shiftiness and *mauvaise foi* – the kind of thing that has surfaced in various parts of the Catholic Church as the handling of child-abuse scandals has come under internal and external scrutiny.

Theology can dry up the soul unless the heart is emotionally and spiritually alive. In relation to devotion, theology can come across as too austere. According to Newman, ‘worship, being the act of our devotional nature, strives hard to emancipate itself from theological restraints’. It can also be a nuisance to those exercising authority who often want to have a quieter life. A church with silent theologians is not doing its job properly. By the same token, there are some theologians who are so far from the centre of the church’s life that one wonders why they bother to call themselves Catholic in any significant sense; they often play little games on the periphery and treat theology as principally a matter of ideological conflict. Ill-educated theologians, who know nothing but the work of late twentieth-century thinkers, are not of genuine service to the church.

The Priesthood of Christ

At this point, you will wonder what has happened to the great theme of the priesthood of Christ in which the church shares. Here, I have to say, is where Newman is least satisfactory because he allows his preoccupation with devotion and superstition to divert him away from the majesty of this theme. Where he should be expounding the eucharist and the priestly dignity of the Christian community and its ministers, he gets worked up by the phenomenon of what he calls ‘a poor Neapolitan crone,’ an uneducated old woman from Naples, ‘who chatters to the crucifix, refers that crucifix in her deep mental consciousness to an original who once hung upon a cross in flesh and blood’. Newman understands her. I don’t think he had an instinctive sympathy with her, but he sees her equivalent in the Gospels when the woman with ‘an issue of blood’ touches the cloak of Christ, paying, Newman says, ‘a sort of fetish reverence to the hem of his garment’. Christ does not condemn her, but

in his new law He was opening the meaning of the word ‘idolatry’, and applying it to various sins, to the adoration paid to rich men, to the thirst after gain, to ambition, and the pride of life, idolatries worse in his judgment than the idolatry of ignorance, but not commonly startling or shocking to educated minds.

If you think badly of the Neapolitan crone, Newman seems to be saying, then be aware that there are worse instances of idolatry: bankers, manipulators, X-Factor judges and the cult of celebrity. Newman then turns his guns on those who look sniffily on the Neapolitan crone and says that if there are people like her in the Church, then that is a sign that the gospel has penetrated through all the levels of society: ‘... we may surely concede a little superstition, as not the worst of evils, if it be the price of making sure of faith.’ When a form of Christian Church can offer no space to popular religion and the possibility of superstition, then does that nation really have the faith? A sharp rebuke, I think, to nineteenth-century Anglican respectability.

I feel, at this point, as does the Queen in Alan Bennett’s story, *The Uncommon Reader*, when she discovers the pleasures of novel-reading and comes to dislike Henry James. ‘Am I the only one,’ she wonders, ‘who thinks that Henry James needs a good talking to?’ I do think that although the Preface is a wonderful work, Newman too needs a good talking to. If he does not do justice to the theme of the priestly office, it is no less true that his treatment of the prophetic office is similarly weak. You will remember the treatment of the prophetic office in the earlier, Anglican work; here, Newman locates the prophetic office in what he calls the ‘theological schools’, the Colleges associated with the Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits. Is this an unnecessary restriction of the prophetic office because effective teaching guided by God is found all through the Christian community? But Newman has a particular point. In an important letter to Robert Ornsby, an editor of *the Tablet*, Newman explains the importance of the theological schools, the faculties of theology in European Universities that were closed down by secularising powers. He says:

Truth is wrought out by many minds, working together freely... this has ever been the rule of the Church till now. When the first French Revolution having destroyed the [theological] Schools of Europe, a sort of centralization has been established at head-quarters – and the individual thinker in France, England or Germany is brought into immediate collision with the most sacred authorities of the Divine Polity.³

Without these schools, mediating and focused expressions of Catholic intellectual inquiry, you simply have individual thinkers subject to the highest authorities of the church, and that is not a good context in which theology can flourish. This statement, which clearly reflects how Newman thought of his own isolation as a thinker, unsupported by a body of scholars, is an indication of how he thought proper theology, able to regulate and direct the devotional

³ J.H. Newman, to Robert Ornsby, an editor of *The Tablet*, in *Letters and Diaries* xx, 426.

and political aspects of the church, should function. In the first sentence of this quotation, the key words are ‘many minds’ and ‘freely’. Truth is not established by the *diktat* of an individual, but is reached through dialogue, inquiry, shared study, a body of scholars working in a context of free inquiry into theological truth. That is the ideal of theological study within a properly functioning Catholic Church that Newman presents. In many ways, Newman was out of sympathy with what he saw as the excessive concentration on the Papal office and Curia in relation to truth. It is interesting that although he acknowledges that there is a teaching function exercised through the Vatican, he considers theology not in relation to either the Papal or the Prophetic Office.⁴

There is a specific role for academically guided theology. And Newman wants an analytic, intelligent appropriation of the truth of revelation to be situated in relation to the exercise of administrative order and religious observances, with a certain oversight and monitoring of what goes on in these areas. So if I say that Newman is too preoccupied with the question of the role of theology in regulating the other dimensions, he does however want to establish a social space within the life of the church in which theology can function freely. But theology is not just regulative; it is the adherence of the mind to divine truth and it is a creative engagement between human reason, language and the self-giving expressiveness of God. Newman speaks of ‘the critical judgements of clear heads and holy hearts’, a formula that all theologians should have written on their laptops. Theology has to find words appropriate to the mystery, which do not dissolve it or dilute it, but can speak to the human mind and heart about the radiance of the Word that comes to us in the creation, the person of Christ and the love he bestows in the human heart. Theology at its best will try to preserve the divine glory, and in that sense all genuine poetry, truth-bearing and resonant of the depths of human insight and experience, is ‘spilled theology’.

The Kingship of Christ

If I read him right, Newman thought that the health of the church was directly linked to the quality and vigour of its theology. What

⁴ ‘For the simple truth, verified through the centuries, is that the teaching function in the church at its most serious, profound and influential has actually been exercised most often by others than bishops. The latter have rather a regulative function with regard to the transmission of tradition. From church history one can only conclude that, if one were to locate and identify the “teaching church” in terms of the importance of services rendered, then “hierarchical status” in the Church has not been essential or even always particularly relevant, except in so far as teaching in the name of the Catholic Church requires due authorisation or at least good standing as a church member.’ (Robert Murray SJ, ‘The Teaching Church and the Thinking Church,’ *The Month*, 1990, 310–9; 315).

else would save it, as he saw it, from the excesses of unguarded religion and pragmatic decision-making? Can Catholicism really value intellectual freedom or is it permanently bound to regard it as the enemy of true religion? Are consciences always to be bound? With these questions, we move into the area of the pragmatic exercise of authority because Pope, Curia and Bishops have the task of ordering, organising, directing, rebuking, approving what is done intellectually and what is done devotionally. The kingly office has its role to play in enabling the church to have a claim to sovereignty, visible polity, the necessity of a visible polity, and the right to “meddle” with the world,⁵ and although the kingly office is to preserve the truth established by the prophetic and priestly offices, it has broader concerns than simply those of truth. Ecclesial life has to be characterised by ‘collisions and compromises’ between different duties. How does Newman handle the kingly or regal office? He writes:

... [the Church] has ever from her beginning onwards had a hierarchy and a head, with a strict unity of polity, the claim of an exclusive divine authority and blessing, the trusteeship of the gospel gifts, and the exercise over her members of an absolute and almost despotic rule. And next, as to her work, it is her special duty, as a sovereign State, to consolidate her several portions, to enlarge her territory, to keep up and to increase her various populations in this ever-dying, ever-nascent world, in which to be stationary is to lose ground, and to repose is to fail.

And if the church is to have the kind of impact on human society which it needs to have, then cohesion, clarity, unity and a unified polity are called for, and this is the function of the kingly office. This I think is a pragmatic point rather than a theological one. I have considerable reservations when I read Newman saying that ‘by promising her infallibility in her formal teaching, He [Christ] indirectly protected her from serious error in worship and political action also.’ I appreciate the awkward position in which Newman found himself post-1870, with the Papal States still a live issue, but this seems to be without proper justification. Divine guidance, without error, may be present in the teaching of the church; it does not then follow that the church is correlatively preserved from error in its political decisions.

What exactly is the problem here? We should be very uncomfortable with any attempt to move from the regal authority of Christ to the regal authority of the church because we may reasonably suspect that the kingship of Christ is being used to justify a social phenomenon and a social system whose contingent features should not be justified in this way. One should not say without considerable

⁵ Phrases from H.D. Weidner, *op. cit.*, lxviii.

qualifications that because Christ is King, the church too is regal, authoritative, constituted by a despotic social polity. Then what you are doing is using Christ's kingship as the ideological support of a particular way of governing the church.

'Among the Gentiles, their great men lord it over them. But it shall not be so with you', Christ says. The Gospels are clear that Jesus did not want to be acclaimed king, did not want to create a theocratic order, nor to exercise social authority; Jesus resolutely refused social and political power. Only in the dialogue with Pilate in the Fourth Gospel does Jesus acknowledge a kingship, but it is not of this world. A Jesus who refuses social authority is apparently invoked by Newman and indeed by other Catholic writers as a validation of the claim that the Church might thereby exercise authority often in the most peremptory way. I cannot but feel that Newman's whole attempt to link Christ's kingship with the social polity of the Church from the medieval period through to the late nineteenth-century is misguided. He clearly wants to explain how it comes about that decisions are made which compromise fundamental principles of the gospel and truth. I quote two passages from him:

The early tradition of the Church was dissuasive of using force in the maintenance of religion. 'It is not the part of men who have confidence in what they believe,' says Athanasius, 'to force and compel the unwilling. For the truth is not preached with swords, or with darts, nor by means of soldiers, but by persuasion and counsel.' Augustine at first took the same view of duty; but his experience as a Bishop lead him to change his mind. Here we see the interests of the Church as a regal power, acting as an influence upon his theology.

Newman clearly presents the adoption of force to impose religious discipline as an instance of the pragmatic exercise of power by the church in its own name as a violation of something fundamental to the nature of truth. Pragmatic? Certainly. Offensive to truth and Christian witness? Undoubtedly. The second instance of a 'collision' leading to a compromise with truth is the Galileo case. Newman writes:

Galileo's truth is said to have shocked and scared the Italy of his day. It revolutionized the received system of belief as regards heaven, purgatory, and hell, to say that the earth went round the sun, and it forcibly imposed upon categorical statements of Scripture, a figurative interpretation. Heaven was no longer above, and earth below We are used to these questions now, and reconciled to them; and on that account are no fit judges of the disorder and dismay, which the Galilean hypothesis would cause to good Catholics, as far as they became cognizant of it, or how necessary it was in charity, especially then, to delay the formal reception of a new interpretation of Scripture, till their imaginations should gradually get accustomed to it Not all knowledge is suitable to all minds.

I suppose if you are going to defend the Catholic Church on this matter, this is about as good a defence as you can get, but its grounds are thin and the decision damaging to the intellectual profile of the Church. What has been the impact of the Galileo decision on subsequent generations of Christian mission? It was a wrong decision which still carries consequences for the intellectual credibility of Christian faith. I simply cannot think it was the case that those who condemned Galileo were simply deferring acceptance of his hypothesis until there was a 'formal acceptance of a new interpretation of Scripture'. However much Newman and we like to think in this way, Church condemnations are usually not prompted by prudential considerations, thinking that in fifty years time the members of the Church will then be able to cope with what is true.

If Newman needs to cope with how those in authority make wrong decisions, he surely does not have to invoke the theme of the kingly office of Christ which flows into the church. The kingship and authority of Christ surely has to do with his acting with the authority of God in relation to human destiny. It is not about the creation and administration of a particular ecclesial and social structure. It is about resurrection, when 'the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to exercise judgment because he is the Son of Man' (Jn 5.25–7). If these lines are taken seriously, they would lead to a very different account of the regal office within the church. Newman, I fear, mangles this theme. Remember again the significance of Newman placing the prophetic office, with its concentration on truth, at the regulative centre of the church's life: a subtle way of indicating that truth, and not the fearful assertion of ignorant authority, is the beating heart of the church's faith and life. Newman knows these things, but could not say them openly.

Newman was clearly writing in a particular context, with particular concerns and I think it is not unfair to him to say that the particular issues he deals with in the Preface distort a proper understanding of what these offices ought to mean for the church. I do think that his treatment of the kingly or regal office is simply misguided and theologically wrong. Nor can we handle the priestly office as though the issue of the Neapolitan crone is primary. Nor can we replace the wonderful treatment of the prophetic office in his Anglican work with how it is treated in his later, more restricted Catholic Preface. Nor perhaps would Newman want us to. Prudent people might have reservations about the restricted notion of Papacy at work in the Preface: it surfaces primarily in relation to governance and pragmatic, politically guided decisions. Can one envisage a more fruitful exercise of the Petrine office than this? Of course, and those with a clear memory of what Pope John Paul II did during his ministry will have

a better example of what the Papacy could be in prophetic terms (teaching through word and example) than was available to Newman in the time of Pius IX. Again, where are bishops in this discussion? Barely in evidence, but it is probably only with the Second Vatican Council that the church begins to develop a better understanding of Episcopacy in the life of the church, and one should not be too hard on Newman in this matter. Indeed, given the stimulus he has given us in his original Anglican work and his later Catholic Preface, we have good reason to be grateful to him. Both his Anglican work and his Catholic Preface continue to teach, prophetically.

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