

THE ROLE OF CONSCIENCE IN JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN'S
NOVELS: CALLISTA AND LOSS AND GAIN

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School
University of San Carlos

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Literature

by

Sister Pilarmaria Navarro, S.Sp.S.

June 1970

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As early as 1825, while yet in the prime of his Anglican career, John Henry Newman already enunciated that "self-knowledge is a necessary condition for understanding the great Christian doctrines."¹ In fact this was the core message of his sermon, "Secret Faults," in early June of that year. He said:

. . . . Now (I repeat) unless we have some just idea of our hearts and of sin, we can have no right idea of a Moral Governor, a Saviour or a Sanctifier; that is, in professing to believe in Them, we shall be using words without attaching distinct meaning to them. Thus self-knowledge is at the root of all religious knowledge; and it is in vain,--worse than vain,--it is a deceit and a mischief, to think to understand the Christian doctrines as a matter of course, merely by being taught by books, or by attending sermons, or by any outward means, however excellent, taken by themselves. For it is in proportion as we search our hearts and understand our own nature, that we understand what is meant by an Infinite Governor and Judge; in proportion as we comprehend the nature of disobedience and our actual sinfulness, that we feel what is the blessing of the removal of sin, redemption, pardon, sanctification, which otherwise are mere words. God speaks to us primarily in our hearts. Self-knowledge is the key to the precepts and doctrines of Scripture. The very utmost any outward notices of religion can do, is to startle us and make us turn inward and search our hearts; and then, when we have experienced what it is to read ourselves, we shall profit by the doctrines of the Church and the Bible.²

¹John Henry Newman, Sermons and Discourses, 1825-1839 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 2.

Newman's subsequent sermons likewise reflect the same thought in one aspect or another. Anyone who reads and studies them will hardly escape noticing a mind so vital in its vigor and pursuit of a truth long felt and discerned, but not yet possessed.

With Newman's unrelenting pursuit of and fidelity to truth which was nourished and nurtured by painful experiences, the thought did not only crystallize into a conviction, but it actually led him into and harbored him in, the true Church of its Progenitor; hence, his conversion and reception into the Catholic Church on October 9, 1845. An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine is a result of these years of anguish and doctrinal study; and it stands as a testimonial to the author's tenacious clinging to truth. Furthermore, in 1864, in the face of both friend and foe, he declared: "I am a Catholic because I believe in God."³

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

There are strong indications that Newman's philosophic and theological dictum is also present in his fiction. This thesis aims to demonstrate these indications

³John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua: A History of His Religious Opinions (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1924), p. 198.

in Callista and Loss and Gain; it aims to show how one can come to a real knowledge of self and of the vital truths of faith, and how such a knowledge can lead to the one true Church.

Scope and Procedure of Study

The procedure of study is, therefore, chiefly analytical, paying close attention to descriptive passages and spoken or dialectical parts. Impediments to real self-knowledge and factors to gaining self-knowledge are given due consideration in the first place; and the more immediate stages towards the acceptance of God complete the whole demonstration. Only the main characters, Agellius and Callista in the first novel, and Charles Reding in the second, are made the objects of study.

Preview of Organization

The thesis proper, which immediately follows this introduction, is worked out in two separate parts or chapters, namely: (1) A Moral Emancipation; (2) The Personal and Living Way to God.

A recapitulation of the entire study and an evaluation of the artist's works, showing their relevance to contemporary thought, make up the concluding chapter.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED READINGS

As far as the writer is aware, no one in the Philippines has yet taken up Cardinal Newman's novels as a subject of study; in the world at large, however, several or more authors have taken them up for general evaluative work, but not at all for a strict analysis of the role of conscience as the present writer aims to undertake.

Tillotson, for instance, commenting on the novels of the 1840's, reckons Loss and Gain as "bringing back the 'genius of place' as formerly seen in W. Scott whose novels are known for spaciousness and beauty of landscape,"⁴ besides alluding to Newman's own debate of ten years⁵ and satiric attitude towards Oxford's partisans.⁶ A fine ray of hope, however, gleams through Tillotson's further remarks:

Introspection or "dialogue of the mind with itself" was characteristic of the times. The novel of Harriet Mozley, Newman's sister, exemplifies this, together with Newman's Loss and Gain.⁷

⁴Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen Forties (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 89.

⁵Ibid., p. 121.

⁶Ibid., p. 129.

⁷Ibid., pp. 131-132.