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AUCTORITAS AND RATIO IN SAINT AUGUSTINE AND NEWMAN

Although it may seem unnecessary, we must begin by justifying the choice of Saint Augustine as an author who can help us to attain better understanding of the nature of the act of faith. It is not only a question of whether Saint Augustine directly influenced certain aspects regarding his understanding of the act of faith that matured in John H. Newman over the course of his life; we must also take into consideration the power and enduring validity of Saint Augustine’s thinking on faith and reason, something that the *Magisterium* has reminded us of repeatedly in recent times.

We should note, particularly, the reference in John Paul II’s Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*¹ and, more recently, those in the Apostolic Letter issued “*Motu Proprio*” *Porta Fidei* by which Benedict XVI pro-

¹ John Paul II, *Fides et ratio* (1998), 40: “The Bishop of Hippo succeeded in producing the first great synthesis of philosophy and theology, embracing currents of thought both Greek and Latin. In him too the great unity of knowledge, grounded in the thought of the Bible, was both confirmed and sustained by a depth of speculative thinking. The synthesis devised by Saint Augustine remained for centuries the most exalted form of philosophical and theological speculation known to the West. Reinforced by his personal story and sustained by a wonderful holiness of life, he could also introduce into his works a range of material which, drawing on experience, was a prelude to future developments in different currents of philosophy” (www.vatican.va, accessed on Jan 20, 2016).

claimed a Year of Faith in 2011. From a total of twenty-two notes in this latter document, Saint Augustine is cited no fewer than four times, the rest being all citations from the *Magisterium* or the Bible. This is understandable, given that:

His extensive writings, in which he explains the importance of believing and the truth of the faith, continue even now to form a heritage of incomparable riches, and they still help many people in search of God to find the right path towards the ‘door of faith’.²

Taking into account, moreover, the considerable influence that Newman exercised over the Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council and his presence in no less a work than the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,³ in which he is cited in sections devoted to the nature of faith and conscience, it would appear quite reasonable to compare Newman’s thought with that of the African bishop.

Auctoritas and ratio in De vera religione

From amongst the many writings to which *Porta fidei* refers, we shall focus particularly here on the treatise *De vera religione*. In doing so, we shall attempt to demonstrate the parallels that exist between the line of argument contained in this treatise with regard to *auctoritas* and *ratio* and several significant passages in the work of the English cardinal.

Saint Augustine wrote *De vera religione* in around the year 390, dedicating the treatise to his friend Romanianus, inviting him to follow

² Benedict XVI, *Porta fidei* (2011), 7 (www.vatican.va, accessed on Jan 20, 2016).

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1993), 157: “Faith is *certain*. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but ‘the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives’ (note #31: St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II 171, 5, obj. 3). Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt (note #32: John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (London Longman, 1878) 239)” (www.vatican.va, accessed on Jan 15, 2016).

the path that he himself had taken by being baptised and entering into the bosom of the Catholic Church. As Augustine himself had helped to draw Romanianus into Manichaeism some fifteen years earlier, the tone of the work—which was written ten years before the *Confessions*—at times takes that of one who seeks to justify his own spiritual evolution at the same time as he attempts to dispel any confused ideas that his friend might harbor with regard to the true content and demands of the Catholic faith. Although we shall not discuss here the biographical or psychological parallels that might be found between the two converts, who, in any case, followed very different paths, there can be no doubt that Saint Augustine's circumstances at this time were comparable to Newman's state of mind when writing the *Apologia pro vita sua*.

In his personal exercise of intellectual searching, Saint Augustine is at great pains to distinguish between that which corresponds to a fleetingly held false certainty and that which corresponds to a firm certainty supported by the authority of the Church. To this end, he does not hesitate to describe his own personal journey as an example of how *auctoritas* and *ratio* are present in this search:

Ego itaque diu multumque considerans quales oblatrantes, et quales quaerentes expertus sim, vel qualis ipse, sive cum latrarem, sive cum quaererem, fuerim; hoc modo mihi utendum putavi. Quae vera esse perspexeris, tene, et Ecclesiae catholicae tribue; quae falsa, respue, et mihi qui homo sum ignosce; quae dubia, crede, donec aut respuenda esse, aut vera esse, aut semper credenda esse, *vel ratio doceat, vel praecipiat auctoritas*.⁴

The exact meaning of this passage is as follows: firstly, hold fast to whatever truth you have been able to grasp and attribute it to the teachings of the Church or as being in consonance with it; secondly, reject what is false and attribute it to the weakness and limitations of the writer, even if, in this treatise, the writer is Augustine himself, who

⁴ Saint Augustine, *De vera religione*, in *Obras completas*, vol. 4 (Madrid: BAC, 1948), X, 20. The italics are ours.

is nothing more than a theologian who employs *ratio*,⁵ and, thirdly and finally, believe what is doubtful until either reason teaches *or* authority commands that it is to be rejected. In both cases, these are non-exclusive circumstances. We can deduce, therefore, from this passage from *De vera religione*, that there cannot exist a real incompatibility between *auctoritas* and *ratio*.

In an earlier passage, Saint Augustine judges the simultaneous difference and complementary relationship between *auctoritas* and *ratio* as reflecting the admirable beauty with which God has ordered our faculties:

Quamobrem ipsa quoque animae medicina, quae divina providentia et ineffabili beneficentia geritur, gradatim distincteque pulcherrima est. Distribuitur enim in auctoritatem atque rationem. Auctoritas fidem flagitat, et rationi praeparat hominem. Ratio ad intellectum cognitionemque perducit. Quamquam neque auctoritatem ratio penitus deserit, cum consideratur cui sit credendum: et certe summa est ipsius iam cognitae atque perspicuae veritatis auctoritas.⁶

Authority demands faith (*auctoritas fidem flagitat*) but not in such a way as to deny the exercise of reason. On the contrary, authority prepares man for reason (*auctoritas . . . et rationi praeparat hominem*). And it is reason that leads to knowledge (*ratio ad intellectum cognitionemque perducit*). Were faith, by some impossible means, to be exercised absolutely in the absence of reason, it would have no intelligible object, and we would not know what we believe in. In fact, we would believe in nothing. Moreover, *ratio* acts by indicating, using various means, who we should consider *auctoritas*, who we should believe in, *cui credere*. Of course, *ratio* operates through and for *auctoritas* by developing our understanding of the dogma, that is to say, the theology

⁵ In this respect, we should remember that, when Augustine wrote this treatise, he had not yet even been ordained as a priest.

⁶ *De vera religione*, XXIV, 45.

itself. In its unfolding, *ratio* comes to know and understand a truth whose sum or synthesis (*summa*) is *auctoritas*. In this way, no one is excluded from the saving truths due to any difficulties that may be entailed in the exercise of *ratio*. Moreover, within these difficulties, *ratio*, we might say, comes up against *auctoritas* even unintentionally, by revealing the inexorable need to *believe*, in a process that at all times unfolds in an analogous way to that of natural knowledge:

Sed quia in temporalia devenimus, et eorum amore ab aeternis impedimur, quaedam temporalis medicina, quae non scientes, sed credentes ad salutem vocat, non naturae et excellentia, sed ipsius temporis ordine prior est. Nam in quem locum quisque ceciderit, ibi debet incumbere ut surgat. Ergo ipsius carnalibus formis, quibus detinemur, nitendum est, ad eas cognoscendas quas caro non nuntiat. Eas enim carnales voco, quae per carnem sentiri queunt, id est per oculos, per aures, ceterosque corporis sensus. His ergo carnalibus vel corporalibus formis inhaerere amore pueros necesse est; adolescentes vero prope necesse est; hinc iam procedente aetate non est necesse.⁷

In its investigation of facts, whether current, past or future, reason alone does not suffice: it needs faith. In order to know what God ordained in the past and has prepared for the future of all humanity, we need to know, first, which people to ask or what books to seek. The Church shows us a continuity between the faith that spread quickly amongst the first Christians thanks to the miracles and the faith that has spread amongst the following generations due not to the continuation of the miracles, but to the very founding and diffusion of the Church throughout the world:

Sed accepimus, maiores nostros eo gradu fidei, quo a temporalibus ad aeterna conscenditur, visibilia miracula (non enim aliter poterant) secutos esse: per quos id actum est, ut necessaria non essent posteris. Cum enim Ecclesia catholica per totum orbem

⁷ Id.

diffusa atque fundata sit, nec miracula illa in nostra tempora durare permissa sunt, ne anima semper visibilia quaereret, et eorum consuetudine frigeret genus humanum, quorum novitate flagravat: nec iam nobis dubium esse oportet iis esse credendum, qui cum ea praedicarent quae pauci assequuntur, se tamen sequendos populis persuadere potuerunt.⁸

Ratio teaches us *cui credere* thanks to circumstantial arguments, which are never enough in themselves but are forces that make the opposite position repellent. Amongst these circumstances, what stands out is the successful call for unity and exclusivity in *auctoritas* made by the Catholic Church:

Sicut enim in ipsa rerum natura maior est auctoritas unius ad unum omnia redigentis, nec in genere humano multitudinis ulla potentia est nisi consentientis, id est unum sentientis: ita in religione qui ad unum vocant, eorum maior et fide dignior esse debet auctoritas.⁹

Securus iudicat orbis terrarum:
John Henry Newman’s *tolle, lege*

This last passage from *De vera religione* has parallels with the famous *securus iudicat orbis terrarum* argued by Saint Augustine in his polemic with the Donatists,¹⁰ and which John Henry Newman considers his own, personal *tolle, lege*, the solid inspiration to finally abandon the project of the *via media* (“middle way”) and direct his steps towards the Catholic Church. He describes this in one of the best-known passages in the *Apologia pro vita sua*, in the chapter devoted to the 1839–1841 period. In August 1839, when the two were discussing an article published by Nicholas Wiseman—who would go on to become Archbishop

⁸ Id., XXV, 47.

⁹ Id., XXV, 46.

¹⁰ Saint Augustine, *Contra epistolam Parmeniani libri tres*, in *Obras completas*, vol. 32 (Madrid: BAC, 1988), III, 4, 24: “Quapropter securus iudicat orbis terrarum bonos non esse, qui se dividunt ab orbe terrarum in quacumque parte terrarum.”

of Westminster and a cardinal—on the analogy between Anglicanism and Donatism, Robert Williams, a Protestant friend of Newman's, led him to understand the meaning that Saint Augustine gave to this idea of the unity of the Church as testimony to its authority in the words '*securus iudicat orbis terrarum*':

they were words which went beyond the occasion of the Donatists: they applied to that of the Monophysites. They gave a cogency to the Article, which had escaped me at first. They decided ecclesiastical questions on a simpler rule than that of Antiquity; nay, St. Augustine was one of the prime oracles of Antiquity; here then Antiquity was deciding against itself. What a light was hereby thrown upon every controversy in the Church!¹¹

The controversy that was instantly laid to rest in Newman concerned the *via media*, which he had supported for some time, seeing the Church of that time as three autonomous branches (Anglican, Roman and Orthodox) all equally descended from the original Church. Newman had always believed in the authority of the Scripture and in the authority of the original Church, especially in the authority of the Fathers of the Church when they interpret the Scripture in the same way.¹² However, the *securus iudicat orbis terrarum* episode led him to begin to believe seriously that the universal Church of the time required the

¹¹ John H. Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (1864), 211–212 (www.newmanreader.org, accessed on Feb 10, 2016).

¹² Étienne Gilson, "Introduction," in John H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1955), 18: "When Newman entered the Catholic Church, he brought with him a more purely patristic intellectual formation than would have been the case if, born in the Church, he had received in it his early theological formation. The Church alone has authority to say what place John Henry Cardinal Newman will later on occupy in the memory of the faithful, but it is not too early to say that, owing to him, the great theological style of the Fathers has been worthily revived in the nineteenth century. The method of demonstration followed by Newman is characteristic in this respect. From more than one point of view it carries the mark of his personal experience as plainly as the works of St. Augustine bear witness to the spiritual history of their author. The close connection which Newman has always affirmed between vital and personal religion on the one hand and the articles of the Athanasian Creed on the other dominates his whole conception of religious assent."

assistentia of the Holy Spirit in order to interpret the faith received. Accordingly, the believer must be in communion with the universal Church today; it is not enough to say that three branches without communion between them each descend from the original Church:

For a mere sentence, the words of St. Augustine, struck me with a power which I never had felt from any words before . . . they were like the *Tolle, lege, – Tolle, lege*, of the child, which converted St. Augustine himself. *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum!* By those great words of the ancient Father, interpreting and summing up the long and varied course of ecclesiastical history, the theory of the *Via Media* was absolutely pulverized.¹³

In the pages of the *Apologia* that follow this passage, Newman recounts how he gradually reached the logical conclusion that could be deduced from that instantaneous intuition and the consequences which, in all good conscience, he could and should draw from it and apply in his own duties with regard to faith, in the exercise of his ecclesiastical profession and in his responsibility for his publications. Despite the appearances and the words used by Newman himself, one should not unduly exaggerate the parallels between experiences, but rather seek them in the meditation that these experiences generated.¹⁴

We should remember that it was not until the autumn of 1845 that Newman was received into the Catholic Church, more than six years after that remarkable Augustinian episode. The Bishop of Hippo,

¹³ Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua*, 212. Newman does not understand Saint Augustine's phrase as if the prevailing theological opinion at any given moment in the Church were the criterion of truth. We remember Newman's intense intellectual and human appreciation of Saint Athanasius, who was forced to fight for decades against an episcopacy governed by an Arian or semi-Arian majority.

¹⁴ Jean Honoré, "Newman et Saint Augustin," *Revista Agustiniiana* 31 (1990): 834ff: "Si l'expérience de la conversion leur est commune, il semble vain de chercher dans l'événement lui-même la clef d'une similitude qui rapprocherait Newman et St Augustin. C'est plutôt dans la leçon qu'ils tirent l'un et l'autre et dans la réflexion qu'elle suscite, que leurs esprits se rencontrent." Cf. Richard Penaskovic, "Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and Newman's *Apologia*: Similarities and Differences," *Augustinian Studies* 9 (1978): 81–91.

in his great dedication to the fight against Donatism and in favour of the unity of the Church—a fight that was, above all, epistolary—revealed the vital importance of this unity. In the *Confessions*, he refers on several occasions to the Church with the affectionate words *tua catholica*, seeing it as an instrument with which to spread news of Christ’s redemption amongst humanity. However, in similar fashion to the way in which, in *The City of God*, Saint Augustine warns that purely visible, external membership of the Church is not a sufficient guarantee of becoming a pilgrim to the heavenly Jerusalem, so Newman mistrusts those who wish to convert the Protestants to Catholicism at any cost, using crude arguments and showing little sensitivity towards the individual conscience. For both of these zealous defenders of the unity and apostolic nature of the Church the decisive factors were the ecclesiastic controversies that they witnessed and in which they themselves protagonised. However, apart from prudently chosen solutions to certain conflicts, an understanding of the relationship between *auctoritas and ratio* was decisive in the paths taken by both these men.

By Cords of Adam

As Saint Augustine says, as we have just seen, that “Wherever a man falls, there he must lie until he is raised up,” so Newman also affirms, in his discourse *Purity and Love* addressed in 1849 to a mixed group of Catholics and Protestants, that

when souls wander away from Him, He reclaims them by means of themselves, *by cords of Adam*, or of human nature, as the prophet speaks,—conquering us indeed at His will, saving us in spite of ourselves,—and yet by ourselves, so that the very reason and affections of the old Adam, which have been made *the instruments of iniquity unto sin*, should, under the power of His grace, become *the instruments of justice unto God*.¹⁵

¹⁵ John H. Newman, “Discourses to Mixed Congregations: Purity and Love” (1849), 69 (www.newmanreader.org, accessed on Feb 20, 2016).

Newman, closely following Saint Augustine and his treatise on the Gospel of Saint John, insists on this idea:

Yes, doubtless He draws us *by cords of Adam* . . . There is a certain pleasure of heart, when that heavenly Bread is sweet to a man . . . Fruits are offered to the child, and he is drawn; in that he runs, he is drawn, he is drawn by loving, drawn without bodily hurt, drawn by the bond of the heart [cfr. St Augustine, *In Ioan. Ev. Tr.* 26, 4, 5] . . . He takes him as he is, and uses him against himself: He turns his affections into another channel, and extinguishes a carnal love by infusing a heavenly charity.¹⁶

Auctoritas does not destroy *ratio*; rather, the former points the latter in the right direction. In the act of believing that which reason shows us to have great probabilities of being a divinely assisted institution, we need the free gift of a grace whose victory resides in the fact that:

He enters into the heart of man, and persuades it, and prevails with it, while He changes it. He violates in nothing that original constitution of mind which He gave to man: He treats him as man; He leaves him the liberty of acting this way or that; He appeals to all his powers and faculties, to his reason, to his prudence, to his moral sense, to his conscience.¹⁷

Faith and Doubt

Having emphasised that the act of faith engages the whole person, Newman also seeks to avoid both an empty, merely sentimental concept and a rationalist posture. The English theologian finds a balance by establishing the difference between inference and assent. For example, in his discourse *Faith and Doubt*, he affirms that:

Faith is the gift of God, and not a mere act of our own, which we are free to exert when we will. It is quite distinct from an exer-

¹⁶ Id., 71.

¹⁷ Id., 72.

cise of reason, though it follows upon it. I may feel the force of the argument for the Divine origin of the Church; I may see that I ought to believe; and yet I may be unable to believe.¹⁸

This distinction should not be taken as an excuse to systematically avoid assent to what the Church proposes. Rather, it suggests that, in such a situation, one must strive to shake off all those attitudes that may be at the origin of such an incapacity. Needless to say, one should not frivolously precipitate oneself, but neither should we indefinitely prolong our study of the arguments in favour of the Church:

men are convinced in very various ways,—what convinces one, does not convince another; but this is an accident; the time comes anyhow, sooner or later, when a man ought to be convinced, and is convinced, and then he is bound not to wait for any more arguments, though more arguments be producible. He will find himself in a condition when he may even refuse to hear more arguments in behalf of the Church; he does not wish to read or think more on the subject; his mind is quite made up. In such a case it is his duty to join the Church at once; he must not delay; let him be cautious in counsel, but prompt in execution.¹⁹

Faith and Conscience

The exquisite manner in which Newman deals with the vital issue of the inviolability of the conscience is particularly evident in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*. Written in reaction to the attacks of Prime Minister Gladstone, who had questioned the loyalty of English Catholics with regard to their patriotic duties, the *Letter* should be seen within the context of this polemical purpose. Nonetheless, Newman spares no effort in supporting his argument with the necessary logical rigour, which leads him to considerations regarding fundamental moral

¹⁸ John H. Newman, “Discourses to Mixed Congregations: Faith and Love” (1849), 224 (www.newmanreader.org, accessed on Feb 20, 2016).

¹⁹ *Id.*, 235. Here, Newman seems to apply a relevant principle from Aristotelian ethics according to which one should be slow to think but quick to act.

theology, ordered to the purpose of clarifying the concept of conscience:

I say, then, that the Supreme Being is of a certain character, which, expressed in human language, we call ethical. He has the attributes of justice, truth, wisdom, sanctity, benevolence and mercy, as eternal characteristics in His nature, the very Law of His being, identical with Himself; and next, when He became Creator, He implanted this Law, which is Himself, in the intelligence of all His rational creatures. The Divine Law, then, is the rule of ethical truth, the standard of right and wrong, a sovereign, irreversible, absolute authority in the presence of men and Angels. “The eternal law,” says St. Augustine, “is the Divine Reason or Will of God, commanding the observance, forbidding the disturbance, of the natural order of things.” “The natural law,” says St. Thomas, “is an impression of the Divine Light in us, a participation of the eternal law in the rational creature.” This law, as apprehended in the minds of individual men, is called “conscience;” and though it may suffer refraction in passing into the intellectual medium of each, it is not therefore so affected as to lose its character of being the Divine Law, but still has, as such, the prerogative of commanding obedience.²⁰

The dangers of such deformation, precisely, provide the decisive argument to establish the need for the existence of an *auctoritas* that can overcome the insufficiency of natural knowledge about God and the moral order:

It is his claim [Pope’s] to come from the Divine Lawgiver, in order to elicit, protect, and enforce those truths which the Lawgiver has sown in our very nature, it is this and this only that is the explanation of his length of life more than antediluvian. The championship of the Moral Law and of conscience is his *raison d’être*. The fact of his mission is the answer to the complaints of those

²⁰ John H. Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone’s Recent Expostulation*, 246 (www.newmanreader.org, accessed on Feb 20, 2016).

who feel the insufficiency of the natural light; and the insufficiency of that light is the justification of his mission.²¹

These meditations on the correct understanding of conscience connect perfectly with Newman's view of the relations between *auctoritas* and *ratio*. An illustration of this is found in the same work, when Newman affirms that:

Our logical powers, too, being a gift from God, may claim to have their informations respected; and Protestants sometimes accuse our theologians, for instance, the medieval schoolmen, of having used them in divine matters a little too freely. Still it has ever been our teaching and our protest that, as there are doctrines which lie beyond the direct evidence of history, so there are doctrines which transcend the discoveries of reason; and, after all, whether they are more or less recommended to us by the one informant or the other, in all cases the immediate motive in the mind of a Catholic for his reception of them is, not that they are proved to him by Reason or by History, but because Revelation has declared them by means of that high ecclesiastical *Magisterium* which is their legitimate exponent.²²

²¹ Id., 253. José Oroz Reta, "Tres grandes testigos de la luz interior: San Agustín, san Buenaventura y J. Henry Newman," *Augustinus* 35 (1990): 274: "To confirm his doctrine, Newman seeks support in the two great doctors of the Church: Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas of Aquinas . . . The moral conscience reflects, then, the light of God's reason, urging man to conserve the natural order. For this reason, Newman considers conscience the 'voice of God', a voice in which moral truth resounds. Two words, *light* and *voice*, help us to understand the nature of human conscience. Both testify to God's existence and nature. Although they coincide substantially, Newman's journey follows rails different to those expounded by Saint Augustine and Saint Bonaventure. Whilst, in the phenomenon of knowledge, Augustine and Bonaventure are impressed by the *veritas aeterna* as the basis for the absolute and necessary affirmations with which the spirit works to decipher the world's mystery, Newman is intrigued by absolute judgements of moral truth and the rules of conscience that discern between good and evil."

²² Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk*, 313.

Conclusion:**Catholic *auctoritas* Illuminates a True *ratio***

And so, finally, we reach the question of the certainty in one's own faith, a subject brilliantly discussed in Chapter 7.2 of the *Grammar of Assent*, which is devoted to the indefectibility of certitude. After explaining this point in the natural order, Newman goes on to develop his subject within the context of supernatural faith.²³ When a change in religious certitude takes place, we may be sure that certain elements in which there was, previously, certainty will continue to be held as true and certain within the framework of the new faith. In fact, only a certain amount of truths common to the old and new religions can serve as a fulcrum to support the change. Having adopted the new creed through a persevering will to adhere to the truth, it is logical that one should maintain full sympathy and assent towards those elements in the old

²³ Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 200ff: "The first point to be ascertained, then, when we hear of a change of religious certitude in another, is, what the doctrines are on which his so-called certitude before now and at the present has respectively fallen . . . There are few religions which have no points in common; and these, whether true or false, when embraced with an absolute conviction, are the pivots on which changes take place in that collection of credences, opinions, prejudices, and other assents, which make up what is called a man's selection and adoption of a form of religion, a denomination, or a Church . . . And if this intercommunion of religions holds good, even the common points between them are but errors held in common, much more natural will be the transition from one religion to another, without injury to existing certitudes, when the common points, the objects of those certitudes, are truths; and still stronger in that case and more constraining will be the sympathy, with which minds that love truth, even when they have surrounded it with error, will yearn towards the Catholic faith, which contains within itself, and claims as its own, all truth that is elsewhere to be found, and more than all, and nothing but truth. This is the secret of the influence, by which the Church draws to herself converts from such various and conflicting religions. They come not so much to lose what they have, as to gain what they have not; and in order that, by means of what they have, more may be given to them. St. Augustine tells us that there is no false teaching without an intermixture of truth; and it is by the light of those particular truths, contained respectively in the various religions of men, and by our certitudes about them, which are possible wherever those truths are found, that we pick our way, slowly perhaps, but surely, into the One Religion which God has given, taking our certitudes with us, not to lose, but to keep them more securely, and to understand and love their objects more perfectly."

creed that continue to be considered true, before, during and after conversion.

Therein lies the secret of the attraction exercised by the Catholic faith: it contains—and claims as its own—all truth, wherever it may be found. Or, as we have seen in the words of Saint Augustine, “Hold fast to whatever truth you have been able to grasp and attribute it to the teachings of the Church.” The *auctoritas* of the Church not only does not oppose the conscience, but would cease to have meaning if the personal path of the conscience were to be replaced, if the exercise of *ratio* were to be abolished.

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SUMMARY

This article seeks to demonstrate the influence of Saint Augustine’s thought on the work of John Henry Newman, especially on the doctrine aimed at clarifying the relations between the act of faith and the other operations of the intellect. To this end, the concepts of *auctoritas* and *ratio* are presented as they appear in *De vera religione*. Subsequently, certain passages in Newman’s work are discussed in which the ascendancy of this doctrine is clear, particularly as regards the subject of doubt and that of the conscience. Finally, a comparison is established between the overall thought of both authors.

KEYWORDS: *auctoritas*, *ratio*, reason, truth, faith, religion, God, conscience, Augustine of Hippo, John Henry Newman.