THE

INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

A COURSE OF LECTURES

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IV.

THE GRAMMAR OF ASSENT.

BEFORE coming to the immediate subject of this lecture, I find it convenient to mention a very interesting book, published several years ago by Mr. Capes, one of those who went over to Rome about the same time as Dr. Newman, but who, unlike him, did not submit to having his eyes quite blindfolded, and consequently saw reason to distrust the guide whom he had chosen, and therefore returned to the Church of England. His reasons were given in the book of which I speak. In this he tells* that he had been about five years a Roman Cath- olic before he fully understood the nature of the claim made by members of that communion. About that time he was taken to task by one of the leading divines of that Church for having spoken of the certainty which they had of the truths of their religion, as in its nature moral, not absolute; that is to say, as amounting to a very high kind of probability, and nothing more. He was in- formed that a Catholic possesses absolute certainty as to the truths of revealed religion, which are taught him by an infallible Church, in whose statements he believes with an undoubting faith, which faith is the supernatural gift of God. His knowledge, then, of the supernatural truths of Christianity is alleged to be absolute, and to admit of neither criticism nor doubt. In the next lecture I mean to say something about the theory of the supernatural gift of faith as laid down at the Vatican Council, merely remarking now that the theory of a supernatural endowment superseding in matters of religion the ordinary laws of reasoning, an endowment to question the validity of which involves deadly peril, deters Roman Catholics from all straightforward seeking for truth; for they fear lest they should trifle with that supernatural gift by seeking for that which they claim to have already.

Now observe that the evidence which proves the truth of Christianity is in its nature historical, not demonstrative. That Jesus Christ lived more than eighteen centuries ago; that He died, rose again, and taught such and such doctrines, are things proved by the same kind of argument as that by which we know that Augustus was Emperor of Rome, and that there is such a country as China. Whether or not Christ founded a Church; whether He bestowed the gift of infallibility upon it; and whether He fixed the seat of that infallibility at Rome, are things to be proved, if proved at all, by arguments which a logician

* *Reasons for Returning to the Church of England.* 2nd edition, 1871, P 56.

would class as probable, not demonstrative. It is true that Roman Catholics maintain that when a Divine revelation has been given, our assent is not a matter of opinion, but of certainty. We must receive without doubt what God has revealed. In a popular lecture, there is room for abundant declamation on the topic that whatever God has revealed must be absolutely true. It is a common rhetorical artifice with a man who has to commend a false conclusion deduced from a syllogism of which one premiss is true, and the other false, to spend an immensity of time in proving the premiss which nobody denies. If he devotes a sufficient amount of argument and declamation to this topic, the chances are that his hearers will never ask for the proof of the other premiss. Thus it is really amusing in Roman Catholic popular books of controversial teaching to see how much labour is expended on the proof that God is true; that He cannot deceive; that nothing which He has revealed can be false; and that therefore those who accept His statements without doubting cannot possibly be in error, and have infallible certainty that they are in the right. But all the time it is tried to make us forget to ask for proof of what is the real point at issue, namely, that God *has* revealed the doctrines which their Church teaches. It is certain enough that what God has revealed is true; but if it is not certain that He has revealed the infallibility of the Roman Church then we cannot have certain assurance of the truth of that doctrine, or of anything that is founded on it.

But it is unavoidable that the proofs that God has revealed the infallibility of the Church should be, in their nature, historical: that is to say, probable, not demonstrative. The great crux, then, with Roman Catholic divines is to explain how, from probable premisses, we arrive at absolutely certain conclusions; how we can have a stronger assurance of what the infallible Church teaches than we can have of the fact of her infallibility.

Dr. Newman had the merit of seeing more clearly than other champions of his Church that a solution of this problem was impossible, if the infallibility of the Church was to be proved by any logical process of reasoning, the necessary law of which is, that we cannot have greater certainty of any conclusion than we have of the premisses from which it is derived. He saw, therefore, that the thing to be done was to remove the process of finding the infallible Church into some province outside logic, in which it shall not be amenable to logical laws. And this is what he tried to do in the last of his works, called an *Essay on the Grammar of Assent.* The professed object of it is, leaving to works on logic the discussion of the theory of Inference to give a theory of the process by which men arrive at their beliefs. Perhaps the chief fault in the book is that Newman has not, even in his own mind, sufficiently distinguished two very different things. He has given a most interesting history of the process by

which men actually arrive at beliefs; and he gives this in substitution for the answer to the question, How shall men secure that their beliefs shall be correct?

Perhaps you might suppose that a sound theory of the reasoning process would give a sufficient account of all our correct beliefs. The great merit of Newman's book is, that it brings out very clearly that this is as far as possible from being the case. A moment's reflection will convince you that the majority of our beliefs, true or false, have not been arrived at by any process of reasoning, but have been handed to us by authority, or caught up from sympathy. In childhood, on the authority of our elders, we accept a mass of beliefs which long govern our practical conduct. As we grow up, experience verifies the soundness of much that we have been taught; some things, however, we examine and reject. But no subsequent reasoning adds anything to the strength of our earlier faith. The belief of him to whom it has never occurred to doubt, though certainly less secure, is commonly stronger than that of him who has doubted, and has by his own investigation verified the correctness of what he had been taught.

So, again, we naturally believe what our neighbours believe, and what commends itself to our feelings. It is the most difficult thing in the world to help believing what all about you believe. There is an interesting account in a book, not so much read now as it was once on a time *(Eothen)*, of the process by which a hard-headed Englishman going out to live in the East, and at first laughing at the people's superstition about witchcraft and ghosts, and such like, becomes gradually infected by the beliefs which form the atmosphere in which he lives, and ends by becoming a slave to superstitions he had once despised. How little evidence is necessary to get a popular rumour to be accepted as fact? Take, for example, the generation of panics. With scarcely any ground to justify alarm, a whole army has been seized with apprehension of imminent danger, and in that belief has turned to flight. It requires great training and discipline to make a force proof against such alarms. I need hardly remind you how terribly dangerous it is for anyone to raise a cry of fire in a crowded theatre or concert-room. Often has a whole audience rushed to the doors, trampling each other to death in their eagerness to escape, fully believing in the presence of danger of which there was no evidence whatever. At the time of the Indian mutiny, I remember that stories were current, and were generally believed, of atrocities perpetrated on our countrymen and countrywomen, which we now know to have been gross exaggerations; but at the time to hint a suspicion of exaggeration would have been regarded as a mark of sympathy with the rebels.

Dr. Newman quarrels with Locke's dictum, that we ought not to entertain any belief with assent greater than is proportioned to the grounds on which it rests. He shows that nobody does carry out this rule in practice; and that Locke himself confesses that there is a number of things not demonstrable, which we hold with as full belief as we give to any proposition in Euclid. It would be mad to doubt that you will one day die; yet the thing is not demonstrably certain. I repeat this from Newman; but I may remark that it is a weakness of his logic that, though quite familiar with the theory of the deductive process, he seems quite unacquainted with the logic of induction. It is more to the point when he says that a man may be content to trust all he has in the world to the faith he has in the truth of his wife, or his friend; he may be most wise in refusing to listen to any question on the matter, yet other people have been deceived in such confidence, and he would be unable to give any logical proof that it was impossible for himself to make a mistake such as theirs.

With this part of Newman's book I have not much to dispute, unless it be the supposition that it gains anything for the Church of Rome. Nay, I found it very useful when an Essay was published a few years ago on *The Ethics of Belief,* by the late Professor Clifford. Clifford, whose great fear came to be lest men should believe too much, tried to make out that it is a highly immoral thing to believe anything the proofs of which we have not fully investigated. Newman's book, if he had read it, might have taught him that what he condemned was really a necessity of our life.

The simple truth is, that as all our action must be guided and stimulated by beliefs of some kind, our Creator has not left us dependent for such beliefs on the slow process of argumentation. Instead of the tedious and laborious process of forming conclusions for ourselves, by weighing arguments *pro* and *con,* we take ready-made the conclusions of others; and it is in this way that the best results one generation is able to arrive at are handed over as the starting-point for the next. To this is due that the world makes any progress in knowledge, for if each generation had to start afresh, there could be no reason why one should be more successful or wiser than another.

But it is important to remark, that though our beliefs are not, in the first instance, generated by reasoning, they are bound to justify themselves by reason. There is nothing more rational than that children should accept what is taught them by their instructors, even though those instructors may be in error on some points; and generally that, on subjects which we have not leisure or capacity to investigate for ourselves, we should receive the conclusions come to by those who have, and who have the highest reputation for knowledge and ability.

But all this investigation as to the manner in which we get beliefs is seen to be utterly worthless as a basis for the doctrine of Church infallibility, if we observe that though we get beliefs originally, as a general rule, without much personal investigation, every belief has to submit to a constant process of testing and verification, either by ourselves individually, or by general experience; and the confidence we have in traditional belief mainly depends on the constant examination to which it is subjected. Thus you have a general knowledge that the theory of gravitation will account for all the movements of the heavenly bodies. You might count on your fingers the number of persons in the three kingdoms who could say this from their personal knowledge; but you know that if any one of them discovered any case of failure or exception, it would immediately become a subject of scientific controversy, and we should soon hear of it in every newspaper. How do you know that we are living in an island? You firmly believe that we are, and yet did you ever sail round Ireland yourself? Have you ever spoken to anyone who had? The history of your belief is simply that you were told it when you were a child, and have never heard it contradicted since. But what makes your firm belief rational is that you know that if it had not been true, you would be quite sure to have heard it contradicted. If a single ship had sailed out of Dublin, either to the north or south, and had found its way stopped by land; if a single person had made his way out of Ireland by land, you could not help hearing of it. And so, generally, about geographical propositions of this kind, which are favourite examples with Dr. Newman, we know that the maps published by a number of independent publishers, all substantially agree in the geographical facts which they assert. We know that a multitude of persons are acting every day on the faith that these facts have been correctly stated; and we know that if any one of these persons had found that this faith had misled him, he would have been sure to make his disappointment known. In this way we all feel undoubting certainty about a multitude of geographical facts that it would be quite impossible for us to investigate for ourselves. And though maps are not absolutely infallible, and though we sometimes hear of navigators making rectification of the charts, sometimes even of shipwrecks caused by too implicit dependence on them.

I have already said that, in claiming the right of private judgment, we acknowledge the need of human teaching to inform our judgment. In particular, we own that the teaching of the Church is God’s appointed means for the religious instruction of mankind. But the confidence with which we can trust such teaching is altogether proportionate to its willingness to submit to correction. The teaching of the primitive Church, or of our own, may be as safely

trusted as the uncontradicted statements of the newspaper press in a free country, where we know that anything erroneous that may be published is liable to be met by an immediate counter-statement. The teaching of a Church which claims infallibility is as little worthy of confidence as what is published in the newspapers of a despotic country, where nobody is permitted to deny whatever it is the wish of the Government that the people should believe.

A few words will suffice as to a second point on which Dr. Newman lays stress, namely, that we give to things for which the evidence is only probable in its nature as strong a practical assent as to truths which are actually demonstrated. This is no more than what is laid down in the Introduction to Butler's *Analogy:* probability is the very guide of life. Evidence which a logician would refuse to class as demonstration suffices to give us practical certainty. Even when there is but a strong probability one way, with a small opposing probability the other way, the small probability is, in practice, completely neglected. For instance, when the life of a fellow-creature is at stake (as when a criminal is tried on circumstantial evidence), the judge tells the jury to find him guilty if they have no 'rational doubt' of his guilt: that is to say, that even though one can imagine an explanation of the facts consistent with his innocence, still they are to find him guilty if the probability of this explanation is smaller than that which reasonable men ordinarily allow to influence their conduct. It will presently be part of my own case that it is impossible to draw a sharp line of distinction between things of which we may describe ourselves as practically certain, and things which can only be said to be in the highest degree probable.

But what I take to be the specialty of Dr. Newman's book was his imagined discovery of a supposed 'illative sense.' It has already been made evident that logic will not provide any means of freeing us absolutely from risk of error in our religious opinions. If we take our opinions on trust from a guide supposed to be infallible, we are still liable to have erred in the process by which we persuaded ourselves that he is infallible. It would be a 'petitio principii' if we employed the infallible authority in proving his own infallibility; and if we recognize it without his help we are liable to all the risk of error with which our unassisted religious speculation is said to be attended. Dr. Newman hoped to get over this difficulty by showing that the process of arriving at beliefs was not the work of logic, but of a special sense.

Some persons, he remarks, have an intuitive perception of character, and yet would be unable to assign reasons for the distrust which certain persons inspire in them. A weatherwise peasant can predict the weather, without being able to give his reasons for saying it will rain to-morrow. Savages have been able to track their way over an unknown country with a sagacity which seems

more like instinct than reason. All these sagacious inferences, of which logic seemed unable to give an account, Newman imagined to be the work of a special illative sense, and to this he trusted to give him some higher certainty than reason was capable of yielding, so that he might be rightly as sure that the Pope would not deceive him as a child is that mother will not deceive him; and might trust the indications which manifest the existence of an infallible Church as safely as a practised physician trusts those by which he makes a diagnosis of a disease arriving at a right conclusion, which he would not always find easy to justify by argument.

It certainly is true that right conclusions sometimes are arrived at by what looks like a process of divination; but I do not in the least believe that we are entitled to assume a special sense to account for them, or that they are obtained in any other way than as the results of rapid inference from minute facts unnoticed by any but very careful observers. It is no objection to this account of the matter that the parties themselves are unable to explain the steps by which they arrive at their conclusions; for it requires a high state of culture to be able to analyse mental processes. Reasoning came first; logic afterwards. Men reasoned correctly for many generations before Aristotle or anyone else undertook to give an account of the laws which govern all correct inference.

To take Newman's own example, it is true that an experienced physician may be able at a glance to detect the real nature of the disease under which a patient is labouring; but, if he can give no account of his reasons, I should not place him in the first rank of educated physicians; for such a one would be able to teach his class what were the symptoms which had guided his diagnosis. Just in the same way, any of us, meeting a man whom we had never seen before, might be struck by his likeness to a brother or parent whom he had known, and might yet be quite unable to tell in what the likeness consisted; while a portrait painter, who had made it his business to observe features, might be able not only to detect the likeness, but also to tell in what it consisted. Or, to take another example of the same kind, we all can recognize the handwriting of a friend, and yet might be embarrassed if we had to give evidence on a case of disputed signature in a court of justice. But a few years ago, an interesting book was published by an expert on the handwriting of Junius, showing that those who make the discrimination of handwriting their profession employ no inarticulate process, but reason by arguments of which they are well able to give an account. Once more, take the case of some parts of plays ascribed to Shakespeare, his authorship of which has been disputed. There are parts which some critics, on general considerations of style, had pronounced not to be his, but their grounds of judgment were unappreciable by others of

less, fine ear or less familiarity with the poet. Recently the metrical peculiarities of these parts have been studied, and have been found to differ from those of Shakespeare's certain works. This is an argument which anyone can test who is able to count. But, no doubt, the metrical peculiarities in question were among the things that were felt by the earlier critics, though they had not so analysed their feelings as to be able to make others understand the grounds of their judgments.

On the whole, I do not think that there is the slightest ground for thinking that we have any special sense to guide us to correct beliefs, though I readily concede that many a man arrives at correct beliefs, not without reasoning, but without being able to state to others the reasons which have influence his judgment. The sum of the matter is, then, that there is not the smallest pretence for the assertion that the process by which Newman or anyone else arrived at belief in an infallible Church was the business of a special sense, or lies in a province above logic, or is not amenable to the necessary law of reasoning that we have no stronger reason for holding the conclusion than we have for holding the premisses from which it was obtained. Belief in an infallible Church, when not merely traditional, is the result of a process of reasoning; and, when we come to analyse that process, we shall find it to be a very unsound one. At any rate, if there be any uncertainty about this process, this uncertainty must attach to all its results, and there can be no success in a search for infallibility unless we are infallible ourselves.

Dr. Newman is obliged, in substance, to accept this conclusion, though he objects to the form of expression. To say we are infallible would imply that we were sure of being *always* in the right; but you must own that there are *some* cases in which we may be absolutely certain that we are in the right. Who can refuse to own that there are some things about which we may be perfectly certain? Are you not certain that two and two are four? Are you not certain that Great Britain is an island? that the reigning sovereign is Queen Victoria, and not William the Fourth? Are you not certain that I am now addressing you? And we may be equally certain of the falsity of some other things. Would you condescend to discuss the truth of the heathen fancy that Enceladus lies under Etna, or the notion that Johanna Southcote was a divinely-inspired prophet, or that the Emperor Napoleon had, as he fancied, a star? Why may we not, then, without being infallible, have the same kind of certainty that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ?

Well, we may reasonably ask of the advocates of the Church of Rome that they shall not blow hot and blow cold on the question of what kind of certainty is attainable by man's unassisted powers. When they try to prove our need of

an infallible guide, they would make you think that, without such help, man's attainment of religious truth is impossible. Now, when the question is whether such a guide has been found, we are told that the answer to this, which is certainly not the easiest of religious problems, can be known as certainly as that two and two are four. If this be so, surely we are safe in asserting our power, without any help from the Church of Rome, to arrive at certain knowledge of all the truths which we hold in common with her. Is not the evidence for the statement, 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,' quite as clear and convincing as that for the proposition, 'the Pope is Christ's vicar'?

The simple answer to Newman's talk about certainty is got by observing what is the kind of things about which we can have practical certainty. They are the things about which our own judgments agree with those of all other men. The truths which we have the highest confidence in accepting are those which commend themselves as plain and self-evident to everyone else as well as to ourselves. Is the infallibility of the Roman Church a truth of this class? We know, as a matter of fact, that it is not. We need not now determine whether we heretics are right or not. Our very existence proves that if Christ saw fit to found an infallible Church He did not see fit to give her unmistakeable credentials. He might, if He had chosen, have made her Divine commission as plain as that the sun is in heaven; but, instead of that, He has left the matter, to say the least, so doubtful, that more than half of those who own Christ as their Lord reject the authority of him who pretends to be the Saviour's mouthpiece; and of those who in name acknowledge that authority, it is safe to say that more than half give only nominal submission. It is safe to say it, because it has been the theme of constant lamentations, in the encyclicals of the late Pope and the present, how its authority is resisted in Italy itself and in other countries professedly Roman Catholic. Cardinal Newman cannot be more certain that the Pope is Christ's vicar than I am that he is not. I do not say it for the purpose of talking big, but state a simple fact, that to my mind this proposition stands on exactly a level with the examples given by Newman, 'that Enceladus lies under Etna, and that Johanna Southcote was inspired,' as a thing that I not only do not believe to be true, but cannot conceive it possible that I should ever be made to believe it to be true. Now, when that is the honest expression of the feelings of a person who has given much study to the subject, and has done his best to be candid, it is absurd to talk as if the proposition were of the same class as that two and two make four.

When I deny the possibility of Roman Catholics having any success in their search for an infallible Church, I hope you will not think that I hold any Pyrrhonic system of sceptical philosophy, or that I disparage the amount of

certainty which the human mind is capable of arriving at. It is, in truth, Roman Catholics who get into difficulties from disparaging that homely kind of certainty which suffices to govern our practical decisions in all the most important affairs of life. This seems to them a poor thing, because logicians will only class this practical certainty as high probability, and because it shades off into probability by gradations impossible to be measured. We are certain, for instance, that there was such a man as Julius Caesar. We may call ourselves certain about the principal events of his life; but when you go into details, and inquire, for instance, what knowledge he had of Catiline's conspiracy, you soon come to questions to which you can give only probable or doubtful answers. And it is just the same as to the facts of Christianity; for ours is a historical religion, and our knowledge of it has to follow the same laws as our knowledge of other history. About the great facts (including all, the knowledge of which we count necessary to salvation) we may fairly call ourselves certain. When we descend to details, questions may be proposed, our answers to which can only be said to be probable, and others which we answer with hesitation, or declare ourselves unable to answer at all. This seems to Roman Catholics an unsatisfactory state of things, and they look about for some tribunal which shall give to any question that may be proposed answers absolutely free from risk of error. But how can we eliminate risk of error from the process of finding this tribunal, or, indeed, of determining whether it exists at all? Archbishop Whately used to tell a story of a bridge at Bath which was so crazy that an old lady was afraid to walk across; so she got herself carried over in a sedan chair. What she gained by that was just not seeing the danger; but the bridge had to bear her own weight and that of the chair and bearers into the bargain. And so those who, through fear of making wrong decisions, trust themselves to adopt blindfold the decisions of a supposed infallible authority gain nothing but not seeing the risk of error. But, in real truth, their risk of going wrong in each of the decisions adopted blindfold is fully as great as before, and, in addition, they make one judgment which we may confidently pronounce to be wrong, namely, the judgment that the Church of Rome is infallible.

The certainty to which Roman Catholics aspire is a thing different altogether in kind from what we commonly call practical certainty. Newman claims for his certainty the attribute of indefectibility, and he plainly shows that it is his theory on this point which has kept him a Roman Catholic, notwithstanding several shocks his faith has met with since he joined that communion. Newman's idea is this: if you only think a thing to be true, you may to-morrow find reason to think it not to be true; but if you certainly know a thing to be true, truth cannot change—that will be true to-morrow which is true

to-day; so that, if we once certainly apprehend a truth, we must hold it fast, convinced that any other truth we may discover can only contradict it in appearance. Thus, he holds that a man can never lose his certitude, and, if he appears to do so, it only proves that he never had had it. For example, if a man believes himself to have become certain of the infallibility of the Roman Church, and, after joining her, becomes disgusted at the definition of the Immaculate Conception or the Pope's personal infallibility, and says, This is more than I bargained for, and quits her communion, this does not show that he has lost his certainty of the Church's infallibility, but that he never had had it. He might have believed all the doctrines which the Church had propounded at the time he joined her, but he did not understand that faith in her inerrancy required him equally to believe all that she might at any time teach.

By way, I suppose, of making his theory more acceptable to a Bible Protestant, Newman puts the following case:—'Suppose,' he says, 'I have a certainty that the Bible is inspired, and that it teaches that Adam was the first man; and suppose that all ethnologists, philologists, anatomists, and antiquarians, led by a multitude of independent proofs, agreed in holding that there were different races of men, and that Adam had only made his appearance at a definite point of time, in a comparatively modern world; then, if I had believed with an assent short of certainty, this new evidence might make me lose my faith; but otherwise I should still firmly hold what I believed to come from Heaven. I should not argue or defend myself, but only wait for better times. Philosophers might take their course for me; I should consider that they and I thought in different mediums, and that their certitude could not be in antagonism with mine.' I recollect hearing, when I was young, that there were then still surviving Roman Catholic ecclesiastics who, in reference to the Copernican theory of astronomy, took the course here described. They looked upon it as a scientific craze, which had become so epidemic, that direct struggle with it was time wasted. They must only wait until it would blow over.

Dr. Newman owns that he is making an impossible supposition in putting the case that a philosophic discovery might contradict Revelation. But in such a case I am sure that the course which he recommends is an irrational one. No one can rationally maintain the same thing to be theologically true and philosophically false. Men may resolutely look at a question only from one side. A philosopher may shut his eyes to the facts with which theologians are conversant, or *vice versa*. In the case supposed, clearly, Newman would simply refuse to examine the evidence tendered him by the philosophers. But if he did examine, and found it convincing, he would be obliged to revise his former opinion; and either own that what he had taken for a revelation was not one, or,

more probably, that he had misunderstood it. Dr. Newman's fallacy is simply this—he knows that what is true must always remain true, and he infers that what men are fully persuaded is true must always remain true. This would be the case if men were infallible, and if their undoubting persuasion always corresponded with the reality of things; but, alas, this is by no means the case. A single example suffices. For how many ages must all men have believed with undoubting persuasion in the immovability of the earth we stand on, and yet the opposite doctrine is now taught as part of a child's elementary education?

Indeed, with respect to this word certainty, I may remark, that the more people talk about their certainty the less they really have. If one of you came in and told me, 'I saw the Prince of Wales just now walking down Sackville-street,' I might be a good deal surprised at your news, but there would be nothing in your language to make me think you were saying anything about which you had not full knowledge. But if you said, ' I am certain I saw the Prince of Wales just now,' I should conclude you were by no means assured yourself of the truth of what you said.

But to return. There cannot be a plainer proof that men's so-called certainty does not always correspond with the reality of things, than the fact that there may be opposing certainties. Dr. Newman, for instance, is certain the Pope is infallible, and I am certain he is not. Dr. Newman would get over this by calling his strong conviction certainty, and giving to mine some weaker name. But what is this but assuming that he is infallible, and I am not? And when he refuses to revise his former judgment that the Church of Rome is infallible, notwithstanding that since he came to it the Pope has made two decisions which, if Newman were free to exercise his own judgment, he would pronounce to be wrong, what is this but assuming that he was infallible at the time of his former judgment?

On the contrary, no wise man holds any conclusion of his to be absolutely irreversible. There are some things which we may firmly believe with a full persuasion that no new evidence will turn up to contradict them. In that persuasion we may legitimately refuse to attend to opposing evidence that is manifestly not of the first class. Thus, I have a firm belief in the universality of the law of gravitation. I do not give myself the trouble to examine into stories of contrary facts alleged to take place in darkened rooms, because I know that while the working of the law of gravity is just the same in the dark and in the light, the absence of light is highly convenient when imposture is attempted. In like manner, I would not lightly give heed to stories affecting the character of a person in whom I had full confidence. But if I made it a canon that on no evidence whatever would I believe anything to that person's disadvantage; if, in

any case, I maintained that the conclusion I had drawn from my study of one class of facts must never be abandoned, no matter what new facts might come to light, then my belief could no longer be called faith—it would be prejudice.

I have thought that Cardinal Newman's celebrity required me to give full examination to his attempt to make a philosophic basis of Roman belief, founded on a study of the ordinary laws of human assent; but I think I may safely say that that attempt has totally failed, even in the judgment of his own co-religionists. When Newman's book first came out, one could constantly see traces of its influence in Roman Catholic articles in Magazines and Reviews. Now it seems to have dropped very much out of sight, and the highest Roman Catholic authorities lay quite a different basis for their faith. But I will put off speaking of that till the next lecture.