

# CARDINAL NEWMAN.

## Scholar of Oxford: A SOUL'S QUEST FOR TRUTH.

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Every great achievement, it has been observed, is but the lengthened shadow of a great man. A movement which has weathered the storms of more than a century, as I write these words, and still exercises its influences upon the direction of human thought is indeed no small achievement. Such is the Oxford Movement, which projects into our modern day the mighty figure of John Henry Newman, scholar of Oxford, litterateur, philosopher, theologian and Cardinal of the Catholic Church. Toward the close of the last century, [the 19<sup>th</sup>] Lord Coleridge reflected the sentiment of many an

Englishman in referring to Newman as “that great man who still survives at Birmingham in venerable age, but with undimmed mental eye and unabated force of genius, a Roman Cardinal in title, but the light and guide of multitudes of grateful hearts outside his own communion and beyond the limits of these small islands.” After the lapse of half a century, instead of growing dim, that light shines with increasing brilliance as a beacon light for ever-enlarging multitudes of people outside his own communion and beyond the British Isles. The numerous volumes about him which have issued from the press in the last few years mirror this constantly widening interest among people of every faith in the retiring scholar of Oxford, who still speaks to a listening world from the pages of his mighty books. [John Henry Newman was beatified in 2010.]

## **I. Life.**

Born in London on February 21, 1801, Newman was the eldest son of John Newman, a banker, and of Jemima Fourdrinier, of Huguenot extraction. He was of a quiet, retiring nature, finding his recreation less in school games and more in the reading of the Bible and the novels of Scott which were then in the course of publication. From his mother he received his religious training, which was a modified Calvinism. At sixteen, he entered Trinity College, Oxford, and in the following year, he gained a scholarship of £60, tenable

for nine years. When only twenty-one he was elected a fellow of Oriel, then the acknowledged centre of Oxford intellectual life. In 1824, he was ordained in his native Anglican Church and became tutor of Oriel, and later was appointed vicar of St. Mary's, the University Church at Oxford of the established Anglican Communion — we in America tend to call it the Episcopalian Church.

He took a Mediterranean trip with Froude, whose health was impaired, visiting Sicily, Naples, and Rome. There he met Dr. Wiseman, then Rector of the English College [of the Catholic Church], who was destined to play an important part in his later career. Returning from Rome to Sicily alone, he was stricken with a dangerous fever at Leonforte. Recalling in later years the details of this critical illness, Newman saw himself upon his bed, a prey to delirium, with death hovering near, giving final instructions to his Italian servant, but adding the strange words, the memory of which was to haunt him later on: "I shall not die, I shall not die, for I have not sinned against the light . . . God has still a work for me to do." When the worst of the fever had passed, and he had determined to continue his journey, he remembered himself sitting on the bed of the inn, still weak and sobbing, and saying to his servant, who understood not a word: "I have a work to do in England." What that work was, he had no idea then. But subsequent events were to prove with a vengeance that he had a work to do.

With difficulty, he reached Palermo, aching to get home. He crossed the Mediterranean, then afterwards France, and it was while sailing home over the Mediterranean when the vessel became becalmed in the Straits of Bonifacio. While walking the deck, and gazing up at the darkened sky, he composed the poem, "Lead, Kindly Light," which has become a favourite hymn in all the Christian churches. It reveals to us the state of his mind questing for the light that he might obey the mysterious voice telling him that he had "a work to do."

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!*

*The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on!*

*Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene, — one step enough for me.*

*So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
Will lead me on,  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
The night is gone;  
And with the morn those Angel faces smile  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.*

## **THE OXFORD MOVEMENT.**

Newman landed in England on July 9, 1833. A few days later, what is called "The Oxford Movement" began. [It is sometimes

called the ‘Tractarian’ Movement, from the “*Tracts for the Times*” which it published.] Arriving at Oxford, Newman found his friends greatly excited over the government’s Bill to suppress a number of the Anglican bishoprics in Ireland. It was regarded by them as a shocking usurpation by the State, a clear manifestation that the Government considered the Church its creature, with which it could do as it saw fit. What then became of the Church as a divine institution, Apostolical in character, having a charter independent of the State, a conviction which these Anglican divines liked to entertain? Keble declared war against the measure in a sermon on “National Apostacy,” which he preached at St. Mary’s on July 14, 1833. The sermon was printed, widely distributed, and created a great stir.

Newman later wrote, “that he had ever considered and kept the day as the start of the religious Movement of 1833,” subsequently known as the Oxford Movement. While Keble first sounded the tocsin, and Pusey spread further the alarm, it was Newman who was the real leader of the movement. It was becoming increasingly apparent even to his reluctant eyes that soon he would be obliged to choose between Rome, the historic centre of Christian unity, with its emphasis upon apostolicity of doctrine and of practice, and the Church which Henry VIII had ushered into the world and which felt no need to hark back to the centre of unity for its credentials.

**“I SAW MY FACE . . . .”**

Newman was further unsettled by an article which Dr. Wiseman, who had now returned to England, had published in *The Dublin Review*. Wiseman compared the Donatist heretic with the Anglican. Newman had previously made an exhaustive study of the Arians and other heretical sects in the first five centuries, and he found the comparison disturbing. “I must confess,” wrote Newman, “that it has given me a stomach-ache . . . . At this moment we have sprung a leak; and the worst of it is that those sharp fellows, Ward, Stanley and Co., will not let one go to sleep upon it . . . this is a most uncomfortable article on every account.”

The more he pondered upon the parallel suggested by Wiseman between the earlier heresies, such as Donatism and Monophysitism, and the Anglican formularies, the more and more obvious it seemed, and by the same token the more difficult did escape become. “My stronghold was antiquity,” said Newman; “now here, in the middle of the fifth century, I found, as it seemed to me, Christendom of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected. I saw my face in that mirror, and I was a Monophysite.”

Wiseman had quoted with telling effect the famous phrase of St. Augustine, “*Securus judicat orbis terrarum*”, which may be interpreted, “Catholic consent is the judge of controversy.” There burst in upon Newman the concept of a living Church, witnessed to in the past by Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon,

and witnessed to at the present by its churches, schools, and monasteries in all the countries of the world. True, the seed had unfolded into a mighty tree but it had not lost its identity in the phenomenon of worldwide growth. The shadow of Rome as an institution destined by its Founder for mankind in all the ages, was over-clouding his Anglican compromise, his “Via Media” [‘Middle Way’]. From this time on, Newman was on his deathbed, he confessed afterward, as regards his membership in the Anglican Church.

Newman was not to take a step, however, which would change the whole course of his life without long and deliberate study and prayer. For three years, he remained at Littlemore with a band of disciples, seeking light from above that they might chart their course aright. They lived under monastic conditions in great physical austerity and in an atmosphere of anxiety and suspense. To his disciples he assigned the task of writing the lives of the English saints, while he occupied himself with the completion of an essay on the development of doctrine, by which principle he sought to trace the growth of the mustard seed of Apostolic teaching into the mature doctrines of the Catholic Church. By more than a decade, he thus anticipated Darwin’s formulation of the principle of organic evolution which was to win him lasting fame in biology. Newman replaced the static principle hitherto prevailing in religious thought with a dynamic one — the principle of growth, development, evolution.

While Newman was at Littlemore, he received letters from a number of his friends urging him to take no step that he would regret later on. Among such pleas was one from his sister, Mrs. John Mozley, reminding him “of those many anxious minds waiting and watching your every motion, who would misunderstand your proceedings, and consider it a beginning of a formal disengaging of yourself from your own Church.” She also enclosed a letter from a lady who voiced the plea of many against being deprived of the guidance which they had come to rely upon from Newman. Its sad tone was well calculated to touch Newman’s heart.

“I have been thinking,” she wrote, “that among all the opinions and feelings your brother is called upon to sympathize with, perhaps he hears least and knows least of those who are, perhaps, the most numerous class of all — people living at a distance from him, and scattered over the country, with no means of communication with him as with one another, yet who all have been used to look up to him as a guide. These people have a claim upon him; he has witnessed to the world, and they have received his witness; he has taught, and they have striven to be obedient pupils. He has formed their minds, not accidentally; he has sought to do so, and he has succeeded. He has undertaken the charge, and cannot now shake them off. His words have been spoken in vain to many, but not to them. He has been the means, under Providence, of making them what they are. Each might have gone his separate way but for him. To them his voluntary resignation of ministerial duties

will be a severe blow. If he was silenced, the blame would rest with others; but giving them up of his own free will, they will have a sense of abandonment and desertion. There is something sad enough and discouraging enough in being shunned and eyed with distrust by neighbours, friends, and clergy; but whilst we have had someone to confide in, to receive instruction from, this has been borne easily. A sound from Littlemore and St. Mary's seems to reach us even here, and has given comfort on many a dreary day; but when the voice ceases, even the words it has already spoken, will lose some of their power; we shall have sad thoughts as we read them. Such was our guide, but he has left us to seek our own path; our champion has deserted us; our watchman, whose cry used to cheer us up, is heard no more." {*Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman*", Volume II, pages. 420, 421.}

When Newman finished reading this letter, tears came to his eyes. He suffered tortures from the consciousness of the sorrow he was thus involuntarily bringing to souls who trusted him. In his reply to his sister, his "Dearest Jemima," couched in as affectionate terms as ever, he begs her to trust the motives which direct his course. To his other sister, Mrs. Thomas Mozley, he writes: "I am so drawn to the Church of Rome, that I think it safer, as a matter of honesty, not to keep my living . . . I could not without hypocrisy profess myself any longer a "teacher" and a "champion" for our Church . . . My dear Harriet, you must learn patience, so must we all, and

resignation to the will of God.”

On September 25, 1843, he bade a tearful farewell to his Anglican congregation at Littlemore. The little church was adorned with flowers in honour of the seventh anniversary of its consecration in 1143. There, too, was the tomb of his mother, and on it the flowers were heaped high. As Newman ascended the pulpit an attitude of tension prevailed, the members sensing that an announcement fraught large with meaning for the future would be forthcoming. Taking as his theme, “The Parting of Friends,” he spoke slowly in a low voice, passing in review the scenes of separation depicted in the Bible, dwelling at some length upon that of David and Jonathan. His many pauses, the pathos in his voice, told of the anguish in his soul struggling for expression. He ended with the touching plea for the prayers of his people that he might know God’s will and do it.

“O my brethren,” he said, “O kind and affectionate hearts, O loving friends, should you know any one whose lot it has been, by writing or by word of mouth, in some degree to help you thus to act; if he has ever told you what you knew about yourselves, or what you did not know; has read to you your wants or feelings, and comforted you by the very reading; has made you feel that there was a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see; or encouraged you, or sobered you, or opened a way to the inquiring, or soothed the perplexed; if what he has said or done has ever made you take

interest in him, and feel well inclined toward him; remember such a one in time to come, though you hear him not, and pray for him, that in all things he may know God's will, and at all times he may be ready to fulfill it." {*"Sermons on Subjects of the Day"*, page 409.}

Tears were in the eyes of all. Descending the pulpit, Newman received Communion and withdrew. Pusey completed the services, struggling to suppress the tears that interrupted his reading. All left Littlemore with a clear feeling that the whole of a mighty past was definitely closed. "I am just returned, half broken-hearted," wrote Pusey, "from the commemoration at Littlemore; the sermon was like one of Newman's in which self was altogether repressed. . . . People sobbed visibly. . . . If our Bishops did but know what faithful hearts, devoted to our Lord and the service of His Church, they are breaking." {*"Life of Pusey"*, Volume II, page 374.}

The agitation aroused by Newman's farewell sermon was as great at Oxford as at Littlemore. Writing twenty-five years later, Principal Shairp still felt, after "an interval of twenty-five years, how vividly comes back the remembrance of the aching blank, the awful pause, which fell on Oxford, when that voice had ceased, and we knew that we should hear it no more. It was as when, to one kneeling by night, in the silence of some vast cathedral, the great bell tolling solemnly overhead has suddenly gone still." {*"Studies in Philosophy and Poetry"*, by Principal Shairp, page 255, 4th edition.}

There was a widespread feeling that his resignation was but the prelude to his secession, and everybody realized what a staggering blow this would be for the Church of England. “I stagger to and fro like a drunken man, and am at my wit’s end,” wrote Gladstone to Manning. Describing the impact of this news upon the intellectual world at Oxford, Stanley says: “No one asked about it in public, but everyone rushed to and fro to ask in private . . . . To anyone who has been accustomed to look upon [Thomas] Arnold and Newman as “the” two great men of the Church of England, the death of the one and the secession of the other could not but look ominous, like the rattle of departing chariots that was heard on the eve of the downfall of the Temple of Jerusalem.” {“*Life of Stanley*”, Volume I, page 332.}

While Newman had lost faith completely in the Apostolical character of the Anglican Church, he was not yet fully convinced that the Church of Rome was the true Church. He did not wish to act on mere probabilities but desired complete certainty. “My difficulty was this,” he wrote later: “I had been deceived greatly once; how could I be sure that I was not deceived a second time? . . . . What test had I, that I should not change again, after that I had become a Catholic? I had still apprehension of this, though I thought a time would come when it would depart.”

**NEWMAN DRAWS NEARER.**

For two years, Newman waited, praying and searching for the light, seeking to pass from probability to certainty. Some have been surprised at this long delay and have been critical of it. But they can be answered with Newman echoing the voice of St. Augustine: “Let those make use of severity who are not acquainted with the difficulties of distinguishing error from truth, and in finding the true way of life amidst the illusions of the world.” Newman’s habit of viewing both sides of a question, weighing the pros against the cons on the scales of logic, further slowed his reaching a definite conclusion. Since his decision would exercise such a profound influence upon those who looked to him for guidance, he felt it doubly necessary to exhaust all means of resistance before surrendering. Indeed nothing in Newman’s life throws into clearer relief the profound sincerity of the man, his unwillingness to act on mere sentiment, his painstaking solicitude for truth, than the protracted inquiry he conducted at Littlemore before taking the final step. Who can fail to admire the transparent honesty of this earnest soul, struggling to dissipate the darkness of uncertainty and to arrive not at the twilight of probability but at the bright light of certainty and truth before he would chart his course upon the troubled waters of the future?

On the one hand were the associations of a lifetime, the pleadings of his sisters, the esteem of his colleagues at Oxford, the reverent affection of the younger men, and the

promise of advancement in the Church of his birth. On the other hand was the alien communion of Rome, in which he had few acquaintances and scarcely any friends. His contact with the Catholic clergy had been practically nil. He knew the deep-seated prejudices of the British people against “Romanism,” and the social and intellectual ostracism which they tended from long custom to inflict upon its members. His concern, however, was not for a crown with the honours it would bring, but for the truth, even though it bring him a cross with shame and ignominy. His prayer was for light to see the truth and courage to follow wherever it might lead, even though it lead him through strange and lonely ways, where his feet never before had trod. Like St. Augustine, who after his conversion in the garden at Milan, remained at his retreat at Cassisiacum for almost a year, preparing himself by prayer and discipline for his baptism and Holy Communion, Newman remained at Littlemore, increasing his austerities and redoubling his prayers. “Lord, that I may see!” was his daily prayer.

Ward and some others had preceded him into the Church of Rome, but still Newman deliberated, awaiting the result of the working of his conscience and of his prayers for light. That he realized what the contemplated step would cost him is evident from a letter he wrote to his sister on March 15, 1845: “I have a good name with many: I am deliberately sacrificing it. I have a bad name with more: I am fulfilling all their worst wishes, and giving them their most coveted triumph. I am distressing

all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided. I am going to those whom I do not know, and of whom I expect very little. I am making myself an outcast, and that at my age — oh! what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this?” {“*Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman*”, Volume II, page 459.}

Meanwhile, Wiseman, puzzled at the long delay, decided to send Father Bernard Smith, a convert and an old friend of Newman’s, to Littlemore to note the lay of the land. Newman received him with marked coldness. But the vigilant eyes of Father Smith did not fail to note one telltale detail. Newman dined in gray trousers. To Father Smith, who knew Newman’s punctiliousness in the matter of dress, this was evidence that he no longer regarded himself as a clergyman. But the end was not yet. “There was a pause,” says Dean Church. “It was no secret what was coming. But men lingered. It was not till the summer that the first drops of the storm began to fall. Then through the autumn and the next year, friends whose names and forms were familiar in Oxford, one by one disappeared, and were lost to it. . . . We sat glumly at our breakfasts every morning, and then someone came in with news of something disagreeable — someone gone, someone sure to go.”

## **NEWMAN SURRENDERS!**

The community at Littlemore waited and waited for their leader to give the signal. At last the end of the long vigil of prayer and deliberation came — simply and quietly, without

pomp or melodrama. Newman learned that a Passionist priest would be passing through Oxford on the evening of October 8, 1845, and he sent John Dobree Dalgairns [who was later to be ordained as a Catholic priest and to gain some considerable notice as the author 'Father Dalgairns'] to meet him. "At that time," writes Father Dalgairns, "all of us except 'Ambrose St. John', though we did not doubt that Newman would become a Catholic, were anxious and ignorant of his intentions in detail. About three o'clock I went to take my hat and stick, and walk across the fields to the Oxford 'Angel', where the coach stopped. As I was taking my stick, Newman said to me in a very low and quiet tone: 'When you see your friend, will you tell him that I wish him to receive me into the Church of Christ?' I said: 'Yes', and no more. I told Father Dominic as he was dismounting from the top of the coach. He said: 'God be praised', and neither of us spoke again till we reached Littlemore." [Father Dominic is now honoured as Blessed Dominic Barberi of the Mother of God.]

On October 9, Newman made his profession of faith and received conditional baptism. The following morning, along with Dalgairns, Ambrose St. John, Stanton and Bowles, he received Holy Communion from the hands of Father Dominic.

The news of Newman's entry into the Catholic Church aroused intense excitement. "It is impossible," says Mark Pattison, "to describe the enormous effect produced in the academical and clerical world, I may say throughout England,

by one man's changing his religion." {*Memoirs of Mark Pattison*", page 212.}

Gladstone, the prime minister declared:

"I regard Newman's secession as an event as unexampled as an epoch." {Letter of December 10, 1845 (*Life of Bishop Wilberforce*", Volume I, page 328).}

Later Disraeli, another prime minister, declared "that this conversion had dealt a blow to England from which she yet reeled." Following in Newman's steps came Oakeley, Faber, and a long line of clergymen and Oxford graduates, numbering more than three hundred. "Nothing similar," says Thureau-Dangin, "had been seen since the Reformation." {P. Thureau-Dangin, *The English Catholic Revival in the Nineteenth Century*".} The procession, started by Newman, has never stopped. Continuing into our own day, it has brought more than fourteen hundred Anglican clergymen into the Catholic Church. The step cost Newman dearly — his position, his friends, even his family. Did he regret the step later on, as some writers have sought to imply? Twenty years later, at a time when he had reason to complain of the tactics used against him by some of his co-religionists, he openly testified to "the perfect peace and contentment that he had enjoyed since his conversion." He declared "that he had never had one doubt," and that "it was like coming into port after a rough sea; and my happiness on that score remains to this day

without interruption.”

## **II. The Church’s Renaissance in England.**

NEWMAN’S conversion divides a life of almost ninety years into equal parts, both filled with drama, struggle against odds, and achievement. In October, 1846, Newman went to Rome where he was ordained a priest and honoured by the Pope with the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Pope Pius IX approved his plan of establishing in England the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, a community of religious with simple vows, and in 1847, Newman set up the house at London, with Father Faber as superior, and later founded Oratories at Birmingham and Edgbaston. Here for almost forty years he remained as a recluse, going out occasionally for lectures, but spending most of his time in writing his matchless books, which have enriched all posterity with the genius of his thought.

His sermon, “The Second Spring”, delivered at the Synod of Oscott, is a masterpiece of rare and delicate beauty, which Macaulay learned by heart. His “Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England” abounds in passages of lively humour, rich imagination, and delicate beauty which held George Eliot in thrall. “When Newman made up his mind to join the Church of Rome,” observes R. H. Hutton, “his genius boomed out with a force and freedom such as it

never displayed in the Anglican community. . . . In irony, in humour, in eloquence, in imaginative force, the writings of the later, and as we may call it, the emancipated portion of his career far surpass the writings of his theological apprenticeship.”

In 1854, Newman went at the request of the Irish bishops to Dublin, as Rector of the newly-established Catholic university. Practical difficulties beset the undertaking and after four years, Newman retired. The most valuable outcome of this enterprise was his volume of lectures entitled “*Idea of a University*”, which has remained as the classic in this field from the day it first appeared. The following passage illustrates its graceful ease of diction and its pregnancy of thought:

“That training of the intellect, which is best for the individual himself, best enables him to discharge his duties to society. The Philosopher, indeed, and the man of the world differ in their very notion, but the methods, by which they are respectively formed, are pretty much the same. The Philosopher has the same command of matters of thought, which the true citizen and gentleman has of matters of business and conduct. If then a practical end must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society. Its art is the art of social life, and its end is fitness for the world.

“It neither confines its views to particular professions on the one hand, nor creates heroes or inspires genius on the other. Works indeed of genius fall under no art; heroic minds come under no rule; a University is not a birthplace of poets or of immortal authors, of founders of schools, leaders of colonies, or conquerors of nations. It does not promise a generation of Aristotles or Newtons, of Napoleons or Washingtons, of Raphaels or Shakespeares, though such miracles of nature it has before now contained within its precincts. Nor is it content on the other hand with forming the critic or the experimentalist, the economist or the engineer, though such too it includes within its scope. But a University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life.

“It is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein

of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant.”

## DUEL WITH KINGSLEY.

Since 1841 Newman had been under a cloud, “sub luce maligna”, [“under a malignant light”,] as far as concerned the great masses of cultivated Englishmen who never could bring themselves to understand how such a gifted mind could take the step he did. Conscious of the suspicion with which he was viewed, Newman had begun in 1842 to gather biographical and other memoranda waiting for the opportunity to vindicate his career. The occasion was offered him by Charles Kingsley, a novelist of note, who in reviewing Froude’s “*History of England*” in “*Macmillan’s Magazine*” for January, 1864, incidentally asserted:

“Truth for its own sake has never been a virtue with the Roman clergy. Father Newman informs us that it need not be, and on the whole ought not to be, that cunning is the weapon which Heaven has given to the Saints wherewith to withstand the brute male force of the world which marries and is given in marriage. Whether his notion is doctrinally correct or not, it is, at least, historically so.”

When Newman protested, Kingsley replied by referring to Newman’s sermon, “Wisdom and Innocence”, published in

1844, before Newman's conversion. "It was in consequence of this sermon," he wrote, "that I finally shook off the strong influence which your writings exerted on me, and for much of which I still owe you a deep debt of gratitude. I am most happy to hear from you that I mistook your meaning; and I shall be most happy, on showing me that I have wronged you, to retract any accusation as publicly as I have made it."

In response to a further letter Kingsley remarked that he liked the tone of Newman's letter, and in his proposed apology expressed his "heartly pleasure" at finding Newman "on the side of truth in this or any other matter." Newman objected to this as well as to the no less ambiguous remark that "no man knows the meaning of words better than Dr. Newman."

Kingsley refused to do more, maintaining that he had done as much as one English gentleman could expect from another. Exasperated beyond measure, Newman felt that the only manner in which he could secure redress was by publishing the correspondence, thus submitting the controversy to the fairness of the British public. The result was a masterpiece of controversial irony, unsurpassed in the English language for the vigour of its biting satire.

"Mr. Kingsley," Newman wrote, "begins by exclaiming: 'Oh, Oh, the chicanery, the wholesale fraud, the vile hypocrisy, the conscience-killing tyranny of Rome! We have not far to seek for evidence of it! There's Father Newman to wit; one living specimen is worth a hundred dead ones. He, a priest, writing

of priests, tells us that lying is never any harm.’ I interpose, ‘You are taking a most extraordinary liberty with my name. If I said this, tell me when and where.’ Mr. Kingsley replies: ‘You said it, reverend sir, in a sermon which you preached when a Protestant, as Vicar of St. Mary’s, and published in 1844, and I could read you a very salutary lecture on the effects which that sermon had at the time on my own opinion of you.’ I make answer: ‘Oh . . . “not”, it seems, as a priest speaking of priests; but let us have the passage.’

“Mr. Kingsley relaxes: ‘Do you know, I like your “tone.” From your “tone” I rejoice — greatly rejoice — to be able to believe that you did not mean what you said.’ I rejoin: ‘What? “Mean” it! I maintain I never “said” it, whether as a Protestant or as a Catholic!’ Mr. Kingsley replies: ‘I waive that point.’ I object: ‘Is it possible? What! Waive the main question? I either said it or I didn’t. You have made a monstrous charge against me — direct, distinct, public; you are bound to prove it as directly, as distinctly, as publicly, or to own you can’t!’ ‘Well’, says Mr. Kingsley, ‘if you are quite sure you did not say it, I’ll take your word for it — I really will.’ ‘What! “My word!” I am dumb. Somehow, I thought that it was my “word” that happened to be on trial. The “word” of a professor of lying that he does not lie!’ But Mr. Kingsley reassures me. ‘We are both gentlemen,’ he says. ‘I have done as much as one English gentleman can expect from another.’ I begin to see: he thought me a gentleman at the very time that he said I taught lying on system. After all it is not I, but it is Mr. Kingsley who did not

mean what he said.”

Kingsley would have done well to have escaped as quickly as possible from an untenable position. Newman was the last man in England who could be charged with insincerity. In his quest for truth, he had sacrificed more than any man in the Church of England and had received in return an obscure post in an alien communion. Uncompromising in his loyalty to the truth, he should have been the last man for Kingsley to choose for his cruel and unjust attack. “But Kingsley,” as Arnold Lunn well observes, “was as incapable of understanding Newman’s subtle and complex mind as a prize-fighter of grasping the Einstein theory.” Foolishly persisting in this attack, he wrote a pamphlet, “*What then does Dr. Newman mean?*” It was a rehash of all the familiar anti-Roman charges now worn threadbare. Again he gave Newman a splendid opportunity.

Newman seized it to vindicate not only his own career but his espoused faith, which was now assailed. The result was the “*Apologia*”, the simple confidential tone of which “revolutionized the popular estimate of its author.” Written as a series of fortnightly articles, it achieved an instant success. Newman appealed to the fairness of the British public to decide the merits of the controversy. And not in vain. For with all their ingrained prejudices against Romanism, the essential fairness of the English public and their fine sense of sportsmanship enabled them to appreciate the superior logic of

Newman's reasoning and the greater deftness of his controversial strokes. He gained a smashing victory among all classes.

They applauded the honesty and courage of a man who, splashed with slander and abuse by an opponent who then sought to withdraw, pursued him until his honour and truthfulness were vindicated beyond all cavil. The "*Apologia*" was written under the stress of great emotion and at a furious speed. Newman wrote sometimes for twenty hours at a stretch. In consequence, as literature it is uneven. But in spite of the speed with which it was ground out, it is permeated with a deep earnestness which echoes even between the lines, and is aglow with an irrepressible passion to vindicate the truth. In none of his other works do the character, personality and forthrightness of the author shine forth more luminously.

"No finer triumph of talent in the service of conscience," says William Barry, "has been put on record. From that day, the Catholic religion may date its re-entrance into the national literature. Instead of arid polemics and technical arguments, a living soul had revealed in its journey toward the old faith wherein lay the charm that drew it on. Reality became more fascinating than romance, the problem which staggered Protestants and modern minds — how to reconcile individual genius with tradition, private judgment with authority — was resolved in Newman's great example." The place of the "*Apologia*" among the great masterpieces of autobiographical

writing is secure.

## HIS WRITINGS.

Amidst the acclamations of Catholics and non-Catholics alike, Newman turned now to the formulation of the philosophy which would justify his action. He began "*The Grammar of Assent*", the most closely reasoned of all his works. In it, the author avoids abstractions and metaphysics and focuses attention upon the problem of concrete affirmation, its motives, and its relation to the personality of the individual. Hitherto interest had been centred on the objective grounds for assent, while the subjective or psychological steps leading to the affirmation remained largely unexplored. The author brought to the problem a penetrating insight into the workings of the human mind and heart, a rare capacity for subtle analysis, and a vast amount of experience in examining and analyzing the psychological factors which lead to a decision of the will. Without sacrificing the rights of pure logic, Newman restores the will to its rightful place and emphasizes the influence of the moral resonance of the individual's character in providing that proper disposition, that "pia credulitas", [pious belief,] which is a prerequisite to the act of faith. In short, assent is not a mere mechanical echo of the syllogism, but a distinct psychological act in which the will and the moral resonance and reason of the individual play vital and important parts.

In common with Kant, Newman considered the witness of conscience, “the categorical imperative,” among the supreme evidences of a Deity both immanent in the universe and yet transcending it. He states that it would be easier for him to doubt his own existence than the existence of “Him who lives as an All-seeing, All-judging Being in my conscience.” Conscience was to him, as Barry observes, the inward revelation of God, Catholicism was the external and objective one. He held that the reason by which men guide themselves is “implicit” rather than “explicit”, and stressed the need of varied and converging proofs. The work served as a sequel and a crown to the “*Development of Doctrine*” and completes the author’s philosophy. It was composed with painstaking care, some portions of it being written ten times, and it abounds in passages of psychological penetration, deft analysis, and logical power.

In “*Christianity and Scientific Investigation*”, Newman developed the thesis that theology was a deductive science, while physics and the other natural sciences were inductive. Hence, there could be no real collisions between these two bodies of knowledge. They moved in essentially different orbits, and the appearance of conflict only would occur from the scientist invading the domain of theology or the theologian trespassing upon the territory of science. He thus sought to provide a concordat which would prevent a recurrence of the Galileo imbroglio.

Some of the friends of Newman belong to a type known in history as “Liberal Catholics,” though the term has never found a hospitable welcome in the Church. In 1864, he wrote of Montalembert and Lacordaire: “In their general line of thought and conduct I enthusiastically concur and consider them to be before their age.” He speaks of “the unselfish aims, the thwarted projects, the unrequited toils, the grand and tender resignation of Lacordaire” — a description which might well be applied to himself. It will be recalled that on his death-bed Lacordaire said: “I die a repentant Christian but an unrepentant Liberal.”

In many of his lectures, Newman stressed the inadequacy of knowledge alone to provide the motive power for action in the face of passion and habit. “Carve the granite with a razor,” he wrote, “moor the vessel with a thread of silk, then you may hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passions and the pride of men.” Will-power, strength of character, and those driving forces which spring from deep religious convictions are necessary to hold to its charted course the human bark tossed about on the turbulent seas of angry passions.

In the midst of inner travail and suffering that came from the blighting of his cherished hopes, Newman was accustomed to turn to the writing of poetry in which he found relief. “The Dream of Gerontius” is the most beautiful of his poems, and is

indeed a masterpiece of nineteenth century English poetry. Unlike the composition of his philosophical works which occasioned always the pains of travail, the writing of his poetry was done with ease. Thus, he wrote “The Dream of Gerontius” with a facility which called for scarcely any erasures. When completed, he attached so little importance to it that he threw it into the waste-paper basket, where it would have been lost forever had not a friend chanced to come upon it and prevailed upon Newman to publish it anonymously. It met with instant success and has continued to grow in popularity. Later it was made the subject of an oratorio by a distinguished musician, Edward Elgar.

In this poem, the author seeks to penetrate the veil that cloaks the mystery of the soul’s adventuring immediately after death when it finds itself midway between time and eternity. He follows the soul into Purgatory and describes the scenes of the other world, peopled with angels and demons, with a grandeur of imagery that reminds one of Dante but is more detached from earthly influences and more wrapt in the contemplation of the spiritual. Newman was much touched when he learned toward the close of his life of the refreshment of spirit which Gordon had found in it when shut up at Khartoum and preparing to sacrifice his life for his country’s cause. He kept his heroic death vigil, reading this poem and scoring with pencil lines the passages which most appealed to him.

To Newman, poetry was not only an outlet for the emotions

but it was a means of disciplining and chastening them as well. To his sensitive soul, much of the ceremony and ritual, the processions, vestments and shrines of the Catholic Church were suffused with poetry. The one was poetry in action, the other was poetry crystallized in art.

“Poetry,” he said, “is a method of relieving the over-burdened mind; it is a channel through which emotion finds expression, and that a safe, regulated expression. Now what is the Catholic Church, viewed in her human aspect, but a discipline of the affections and passions? What are her ordinances and practices but the regulated expression of keen, or deep, or turbid feeling, and thus a “cleansing,” as Aristotle would word it, of the sick soul?

“She is the poet of her children; full of music to soothe the sad and control the wayward, — wonderful in story for the imagination of the romantic; rich in symbol and imagery, so that gentle and delicate feelings, which will not bear words, may in silence intimate their presence or commune with themselves. Her very being is poetry; every psalm, every petition, every collect, every versicle, the cross, the mitre, the thurible, is a fulfilment of some dream of childhood or aspiration of youth. Such poets as are born under her shadow, she takes into her service; she sets them to write hymns, or to compose chants, or to embellish shrines, or to determine ceremonies, or to marshal processions; nay, she can even make schoolmen of them, as she made St. Thomas, till logic

becomes poetical.” {“*Essays Critical and Historical*”, II, 442 and following.}

### NEWMAN’S DISCERNMENT.

It is part of the tragedy of Newman’s life that after having made so costly a sacrifice to follow the conviction of his conscience, he was looked at askance by so many of his former Anglican friends, and on the other side by many of the “old” Catholics. He regarded the tendency of certain other converts, such as Manning, now archbishop of Westminster, W. G. Ward, editor of “*The Dublin Review*”, and F. W. Faber, head of the Oratory at London, to overstress the papal claims as more calculated to antagonize the British public than to attract them. Many of the converts were strong papalists, with pronounced inclinations to overstate the papal authority in both temporal and spiritual matters.

Thus W. G. Ward would have relished immensely having a Papal Bull delivered each morning with “*The Times*”. He wanted the Pope to decide every question that arose, and seemed to look forward with impatience to the day when the Pope would be issuing Bulls on every subject. From such extremes, Newman’s delicate soul shrank in horror. While he respected the authority of the Pope and believed in his infallibility in matters of faith even before the dogma was formally proclaimed, he thought it wiser to stress the reasonableness of doctrine than merely to show its

authoritativeness.

In his "*Roman Converts*", Arnold Lunn [9 years before his own conversion] terms him a "minimizer," as Talbot did before him. [Talbot was himself converted in 1847, eventually to become a Monsignor. He frequently found himself opposing some of Newman's plans.] But this calling Newman a "minimizer" is scarcely accurate. A "realizer" would be a better term. For it was because of his keen realization of the temper and prejudices of the British mind of his day that he endeavoured to soften the needlessly harsh statement of certain Roman doctrines which Ward, Faber and others were frequently making. Understanding from his own experience as an Anglican divine how certain ultra-Romanizing tendencies were inclined to grate on British sensitivities, none too friendly even to the restrained statement of Roman claims, he sought to avoid any unnecessary waving of the red flag before the British bull.

An instance in point is the language used by Cardinal Wiseman in his Pastoral announcing the reestablishment of the regular hierarchy in England with himself as Primate. Writing from the Catholic atmosphere of Rome, the newly appointed Cardinal seems to have forgotten momentarily the anti-Roman prejudices of the British public, and addressing his letter from "without the Flaminian gate," declares: "Till such time as the Holy See shall think fit otherwise to provide, we shall govern and continue to govern the counties of Middlesex, Hertford

and Essex as ordinary therefore with the islands annexed as administrators with ordinary powers.”

A storm of indignant protest followed. “John Bull” snorted. He wrote to “*The Times*” explaining that he’d see Wiseman damned before Wiseman governed as ordinary or as extraordinary a yard of British soil.” Even the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, joined in the hue and cry. The “No popery” campaign was in full swing again. Why? Because of a needlessly arrogant and haughty manner of stating a simple fact, unobjectionable in itself. Because of a complete lack of delicacy in dealing with latent anti-Roman prejudices, which with a discerning and tactful statement would have remained dormant, but which were jolted into furious activity by the bombastic and domineering language used. Because Newman had a profound understanding of the British mind and knew its sensitive spots, he opposed all his life the needlessly harsh statement of doctrine, Roman claims and viewpoints which Manning, Talbot, Ward and others seemed bent on using.

Another illustration is the statement of the doctrine, “*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” — no salvation outside the Church. This has been stated at times with such harshness and brutality as to be positively repellent. But when the inner heart of the doctrine is reached, it is found to embody the simple and unobjectionable truth that every human being who acts in accordance with the light of his own conscience is within the soul of the Church and may enter into eternal life. Newman

did not believe anything was to be gained by the needlessly harsh and unpalatable statement of a doctrine. In the language of our day, he did not believe in rubbing the fur the wrong way — at least not needlessly. In a letter to Phillips de Lisle in 1848, he wrote: “It is no new thing with me to feel little sympathy with parties, or extreme opinions of any kind.” He did not approve of attenuating that which is true, but in setting down nothing in malice.

Manning thought he was transplanting the “Oxford tone into the Church,” while Ward used harsher language. But when the hue and cry broke out against the formal proclamation of the dogma of Papal Infallibility by the Vatican Council in 1870, it was Newman who came to its defence, and whose presentation more than any of the ultra-papalists, told with the British public. He had previously opposed the definition as untimely, but when Gladstone, the Prime Minister, accused the Catholic Church of having “equally repudiated modern thought and ancient history,” Newman sprang to her defence. In a letter nominally addressed to the Duke of Norfolk, he gave a masterly vindication of the rights of conscience and showed the harmonious roles which authority and reason play in the formulation of the verdict of the individual conscience. Probably no other writer in England or elsewhere has so stressed the important role which conscience plays in the spiritual life and no one has laid greater emphasis upon its finality as the court of last appeal. Passages concerning it abound in practically all his works.

“What is the main guide of the soul,” he asks, “given to the whole race of Adam, outside the true fold of Christ as well as within it, given from the first dawn of reason, given to it in spite of that grievous penalty of ignorance which is one of the chief miseries of our fallen state? It is the light of conscience, ‘the true Light’, as the Evangelist says, ‘which enlightens every man that comes into the world.’ Whether a man be born in pagan darkness, or in some corruption of revealed religion; whether he has heard the name of the Saviour of the world or not; whether he be the slave of some superstition, or is in possession of some portions of Scripture, in any case, he has within his breast a certain commanding dictate, not a mere sentiment, not a mere opinion, or impression, or view of things, but a law, an authoritative voice, bidding him do certain things and avoid others. It is more than a man’s self. The man himself has not power over it, or only with extreme difficulty; he did not make it, he cannot destroy it. He may silence it in particular cases or directions; he may distort its enunciations; but he cannot — or it is quite the exception if he can — he cannot emancipate himself from it. He can disobey it, he may refuse to use it; but it remains.

“This is Conscience; and, from the nature of the case, its very existence carries on our minds to a being exterior to ourselves; else, whence its strange, troublesome peremptoriness? I say its very existence throws us out of ourselves, and beyond ourselves, to go and seek for Him in the height and depth,

whose voice it is. As the sunshine implies that the sun is in the heavens, though we may see it not; as a knocking at our doors at night implies the presence of one outside in the dark who asks for admittance, so this Word within us necessarily raises our minds to the idea of a Teacher, an unseen Teacher.”

{“*Sermons on Various Occasions*”, page 64 and following.}

“(Conscience) holds of God, and not of man, as an Angel walking on the earth would be no citizen or dependent of the Civil Power. Conscience is not a long-sighted selfishness, nor a desire to be consistent with oneself! but it is a messenger from Him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by His representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas, and, even though the eternal priesthood throughout the Church should cease to be, in it the sacerdotal principle would remain and would have a sway.

{“*Difficulties of Anglicans*”, II, 248 and following.}

It was not only in his writings that Newman paid homage to the thin small voice within, but in his life as well. He not only preached obedience to that inner voice, he practiced it. He bore eloquent testimony to his uncompromising loyalty to its whispering when in tears he descended from the pulpit at Littlemore and turned his back upon his beloved Oxford. When later as a Catholic he found himself frequently put in an unfavourable light before the officials at Rome, he scorned the

slightest approximation to toadyism, engaging in no flattery or sycophancy, but relied solely upon the testimony of an approving conscience.

This trait in his character is illustrated in a reply he wrote to Monsignor Talbot. The younger son of Lord Talbot of Malahide, he had entered the Church in 1847, had become the Pope's chamberlain and the trusted agent of Manning in Rome. As such, he had used his strategic influence to thwart Newman in many ways. After the great success of "*Apologia*", however, he relented to the extent of inviting the Oratorian to Rome. He reminded him that he would "derive great benefit from revisiting Rome and showing himself to the Ecclesiastical authorities" and pointed out that as a preacher he would enjoy at Rome "a more educated audience of Protestants than could ever be the case in England." What a tempting opportunity to curry favour he was dangling before Newman's eyes.

Did Newman rush to accept? He sent the following reply:

"Dear Monsignor Talbot,  
I have received your letter inviting me to preach in your church at Rome to an audience of Protestants more educated than could ever be the case in England. However, Birmingham people have souls, and I have neither the taste nor the talent for the sort of work which you have cut out for me. And I beg to decline

your offer.

“I am, yours truly,

“JOHN H. NEWMAN.”

In this brief note the character of the Oratorian, devoid of obsequiousness and utterly lacking any tendency to buckle, stands plainly revealed. He might have saved himself many a jolt if he had stooped to curry favour, but it simply was not in his make-up. He was to learn from bitter experience that manly independence and a scorn for the arts of the sycophant offer no passport to preferment in a world where climbing and crawling are performed in much the same attitude. But he held to it to the bitter end. Then, strangely enough, when he least expected it, recognition, glorious, overwhelming, world wide, came to him.

It was this trait in Newman's character which compelled even Dean Inge, who wastes no affection upon the Catholic Church, to pay tribute. “Newman's confidence toward God,” he writes, “rested on an unclouded faith in the Divine guidance, and on a very just estimate of the worthlessness of contemporary praise and blame. There have been very few men who have been able to combine so strong a faith with a thorough distrust of both logic-chopping and emotional excitement, and who, while denying themselves these aids to conviction, have been able to say, calmly and without petulance, that with them it is a very

small thing to be judged of man's judgment.”

Newman was simply practicing what he had preached in one of his sermons. “What,” he asks, “can increase their peace who believe and trust in the Son of God? Shall we add a drop to the ocean, or grains to the sand of the sea? We pay indeed our superiors full reverence, and with cheerfulness as unto the Lord; and we honour eminent talents as deserving admiration and reward; and the more readily act we thus, because these are little things to pay.” {“*Parochial and Plain Sermons*”, VII, 73.}

Such unworldliness as this, observes R. H. Hutton in words singularly well chosen, “stands out in strange and almost majestic contrast to the eager turmoil of confused passions, hesitating ideals, tentative virtues, and groping philanthropies, amidst which it was lived.”

### **III. The Triumph of Failure.**

NEWMAN engaged in a number of projects of great promise, which because of circumstances over which he had no control, failed to materialize. We have already seen how his valiant effort to found a great National University in Ireland failed because of lack of organized support of the Irish Bishops. Another project which stirred his enthusiasm and seemed rich in promise was a new translation of the Bible which Cardinal

Wiseman had induced him to undertake. The Douay Bible, as revised by Challoner, while a great improvement on the Rheims, edition lacks the dignity and charm of the Authorized Version. No one realized this more painfully than Newman, whose ear was delicately attuned to its harmonies and whose style was so largely influenced by its chaste cadences. If there was any one man in the English-speaking world who was superbly gifted to turn out a masterpiece of simple beauty and dignity it was Newman.

Friends who heard about it were elated. Newman threw himself into the enterprise with unbounded energy. He enlisted contributors and was already at work, when alas, obstacles again appeared. Booksellers and publishers with a large stock of the Douay Bible launched vigorous protest. Wiseman yielded. And again, one of Newman's great undertakings died a-borning. What a priceless loss for the English-speaking world! Who can calculate the far-reaching influence of the inspired Word expressed in Newman's sentences of stately majesty and simple beauty, cadences which would live in the memory and keep ever fresh their precious cargoes of eternal truth? In many respects, this would appear to be one of the most tragic frustrations of all of Newman's great undertakings. To him may be applied the phrase which Horace wrote about Daedalus seeking to fly to the heights of heaven on the wings of Icarus:

“Si non tenuit, tamen magnis excidit ausis”. —

Even though he succeeded not, he failed in daring and noble attempts.

Another enterprise which augured much was his acceptance of the editorship of "*The Rambler*." This was a journal conducted by an able group of laymen, of whom Lord Acton, the historian, was one. Newman had been prevailed upon by Cardinal Wiseman to assume the editorship with a view of directing its policy. But the ill-fortune which attended his many other efforts to serve the Church of his adoption pursued him here. An article which he contributed, "*On Consulting the Laity in Matters of Doctrine*," was deleted to Rome by Bishop Brown of Newport, who denounced it as heretical. There was some talk of summoning Newman himself to Rome. That it stirred him deeply is evident from the following: "Call me to Rome — what does that mean? It means to sever an old man from his home, to subject him to intercourse with persons whose languages are strange to him — to food, and to fashions, which are almost starvation on one hand, and oblige him to dance attendance on Propaganda week after week, and month after month — it means death. This is the prospect which I cannot but feel probable, did I say anything, which one bishop in England chose to speak against and report. Others have been killed before me. [Frederick] Lucas went of his own accord indeed, but when he got there—oh! how much did he, as loyal a son of the Church and Holy See as ever was, what did he suffer because Dr. Cullen was against him? He wandered, as Dr. Cullen "said" in a letter he published in a

sort of triumph, he wandered from Church to Church without a friend, and hardly got an audience from the Pope. And I too should go from St. Philip to Our Lady, and to St. Peter and St. Paul, and to St. Laurence and to St. Cecilia, and if it happened to me, as to Lucas, should come back to die.”

[Most readers will be unacquainted with the Lucas case, so I will here reproduce what is said of it in the 1913 *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

“Returned to Parliament in 1852 as one of the members for Meath, he [Lucas] quickly won for himself a position in the House of Commons, and was recognized as one of the leading Catholic politicians. Questioning the sincerity of some of the Irish Nationalist members, he did not shrink from denouncing them, and before long, he became involved in a conflict with the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Cullen, who prohibited his priests from interference in politics. Lucas attacked this action of the archbishop in the "*Tablet*", and in 1854, he went to Rome to lay his case before the pope. Pius IX received him kindly, and requested him to draw up a memorial on Irish affairs and the differences between himself and the archbishop. Though in failing health, he set about this task, which occupied him through the winter. In May, 1855, he returned to England hoping after a few weeks to go back to Rome, but his health grew worse and he died on 22 October in the house of

his brother-in-law at Staines. His death was regarded as a public loss by Catholics both in England and Ireland.”]

Newman resigned from the editorship of “*The Rambler*.” This was in 1859, after a mere two months of incumbency.

Wilfrid Ward, his biographer, regards the following five years as the saddest in Newman’s life. The Oratorian chafed under the restraint placed upon him. He craved greater freedom to express himself without being pounced upon by the authorities. He contrasted sadly the present restraint with the magnificent freedom which characterized the great intellectual periods of the Church’s past — a freedom without which the highest scholarship cannot thrive. He thought wistfully of the liberty which [Saint] Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales, [Saint] Bonaventure and other intellectual giants of the Church enjoyed — the freedom to defend their theses in the open arena against all challengers, the freedom to clash and, with sturdy blows, to pound out on the anvil of controversy the nuggets of truth from the ore of speculation and theory.

In 1863, Newman wrote to Miss E. Bowles: “This age of the Church is peculiar. In former times, there was not the extreme centralization now in use. If a private theologian said anything free, another answered him. If the controversy grew, then it went to a bishop. . . . The Holy See was but the court of

ultimate appeal. ‘Now’ if I as a private priest put anything into print, Propaganda answers me at once. How can I fight with such a chain on my arm? It is like the Persians driven to fight under the lash. There was true private judgment in the primitive and mediaeval schools — there are no schools now, no private judgment (in the religious sense of the phrase), no freedom, that is, of opinion. That is, no exercise of the intellect. No, the system goes on by the tradition of the intellect of former times.”

In explanation of the conditions then prevailing, it should be recalled that the Church in England had been in a state of siege for several centuries. Since the time of Henry VIII her monasteries had been confiscated, her schools and churches seized, her hierarchy suppressed, her clergy scattered and the overwhelming portion of her children torn from her by violence. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Catholic population numbered only about 160,000, {P. Thureau-Dangin, “*The English Catholic Revival in the Nineteenth Century*”, Volume I} and they were anxious only to be let alone.

Neither priests nor people had any mood for controversy in the open arena. They were quite content to let sleeping dogs lie. Moreover, the scenes of horror and bloodshed ushered in by the French Revolution were still fresh in the Church’s memory, while the rumblings of the approaching storm in Italy, portending the seizure of the Papal States, were being heard

with an ominous frequency. The nerves of churchmen were jumpy and jittery. They had enough dangers to contend with, without inviting more from controversy on delicate and disturbing questions. Warfare, persecutions, states of siege, do not encourage speculative controversies and are not conducive to academic freedom. There have been few periods, either before or since, when the officials of the Church had such little relish for academic controversies as at Newman's time.

### **THE PROJECT AT OXFORD.**

During all his life Newman retained a deep love for Oxford, the Alma Mater which had nurtured him with her best and had honoured him with an outpouring of reverence and affection which she had given to few, if any, of her other children. Among the many sacrifices which he made in entering the Church of Rome, few exacted heavier toll in heart-throbs and in tears than the resulting exile from the institution where he had dreamed his dreams, seen his visions, and hurled his defiance at the worldliness without, with all the high idealism of youth. When about to take the momentous step, he felt instinctively that it would mean a long farewell to the place that was dearest to him in all England and to the scenes that would live hereafter only in his memory. His foreboding proved all too true. But once again in almost fifty years, and that in graying age, did he set foot in Oxford, though occasionally from a distance he saw its storied spires.

Something of the sentiments tugging at his heartstrings when about to leave his Alma Mater he reveals to us in “*Loss and Gain*”. Herein he describes how the convert, Charles Reding — the pseudonym for himself — about to leave Oxford, “passed through Bagley wood, and the spires and towers of the University came to his view, hallowed by how many tender associations, lost to him for two whole years, suddenly recovered — recovered to be lost for ever! There lay old Oxford before him, with its hills as gentle and its meadows as green as ever. At the first view of that beloved place, he stood still with folded arms, unable to proceed. Each college, each church, he counted them by their pinnacles and turrets. The silver Isis, the grey willows, the far-stretching plains, the dark groves, the distant range of Shotover, the pleasant village where he had lived with Carlton and Sheffield — wood, water, stone, all so calm, so bright, they might have been his, but his they were not. Whatever he was to gain by becoming a Catholic, this he had lost; whatever he was to gain higher and better, at least this and such as this, he never could have again. He could not have another Oxford, he could not have the friends of his boyhood and youth in the choice of his manhood.”

With such deep attachment to Oxford, it was only natural that Newman should think of establishing a house of the Oratory there. In 1864, he set himself to achieve this goal. This he did with no pretence at deciding the controversy concerning the attendance of Catholics at Oxford, but merely with the thought

that the students actually there should not be left without any of the ministrations of religion. This, he felt, was the surest way to lose them. But the opposition raised by Manning among the English bishops and among his friends at Rome thwarted the plan.

Newman's Bishop, Dr. Ullathorne, keenly regretted this failure. A pious and zealous man, who had worked as a missionary in Australia, he was anxious to utilize Newman's great talents for the cause of religion at Oxford. The hostility, tactless and unjust, directed against his ablest priest by high-placed ecclesiastics distressed him. In June, 1866, he re-opened the matter, petitioning the Propaganda to permit the establishment of an Oratory at Oxford. Six months later, he received a reply permitting the proposed foundation, but directing him to discountenance Dr. Newman's taking up residence there. The Bishop not wishing to hurt Newman by telling him of the restriction, and thinking that he could remove it by personal representations, simply informed Newman that the plan had been accepted. Newman was enthusiastic. It looked as though his dream of many years of returning to his old Alma Mater to champion the religion which he had embraced was at last to be realized.

He believed that truth is its own defence, and though its spokesman be outnumbered, the odds are with it still. He had long felt that the policy of isolation from the great intellectual centre of English life was calculated only to lessen the little

influence which Catholics were then exercising, and to render it even more negligible. They had the teachings of Christ, he reasoned, in their Apostolical purity. They had the great traditions of the Schoolmen. They had a masterly system of theology wrought out with marvellous consistency. Above all, they had the promise of the Holy Ghost to be with them all days. And while at certain times that Pentecostal fire seemed to be but smouldering, it never failed to blaze up ever and anon to manifest its undying character. Why not then go into this great stronghold of intellectual life, present her heritage of divine truth and welcome the fullest discussion from every quarter?

To Newman, it seemed almost to be lacking in faith to doubt the capacity of the truths of Christ and the Apostles to sustain themselves when placed fearlessly before the eyes and the minds of men. He opposed the policy of timid isolation. He scorned the shelter of the Ivory Tower. Like St. Paul going to the Acropolis to present the teaching of the Crucified to the scholars of Athens, Newman yearned to carry the Apostolic faith to the chief intellectual fortress of England, Oxford University. He was doubly elated at the prospect of returning under such circumstances to the campus upon which he had not set foot since the time he left it, as an outcast and an exile without kindred or abiding place, to join the alien communion of Rome more than a quarter of a century ago. With the permission of his Ordinary, Newman issued a circular, appealing for funds. The sum of £5,000 was quickly raised. A

site was purchased. Newman packed his trunk and, sunshine on his face, talked of the approaching fulfillment of his dream.

But then the opposition broke. Broke from a double quarter. On the one hand, his old colleagues of Tractarian days, Keble and Pusey, who had remained within the Anglican Church, grew alarmed at the prospect of an invasion of Oxford by such a formidable representative of Rome. The memory of the influence Newman had exercised among the faculty and with the students, whose creed was “Credo in Newmannum”, [‘I believe in Newman’] was still with them. What devastation might he not work now as the spokesman of Rome? They sounded the tocsin, and a cry of protest sprang up from Anglican leaders at Oxford. On the other side, Manning, equally alarmed, led the opposition from within the Church. Rallying a number of the bishops behind him, he made representations through his agent, Monsignor Talbot at Rome, that Newman’s presence would draw many Catholic students to Oxford and would further engender “a certain Anglo-Catholicism” in which the English national spirit would prevail over the Roman or Catholic one.

Fighting desperately to stave off another of the many defeats which crowned his efforts to serve the Church he loved, Newman sent his faithful disciple, Ambrose St. John, to Rome, with precise instructions as to the answers which were to be made to the objections raised. He was to point out that, even though there was a danger of increasing the attendance,

this would be more than counterbalanced by the advantage of an Oratory church, which would provide the ministrations of religion for students already there, who otherwise would be neglected. But all in vain. His fellow-convert, Manning, and, like himself, a former Oxford man, made his views prevail at Rome. The Propaganda directed Bishop Ullathorne to “take heed lest Dr. Newman should do anything which might favour in any way the presence of Catholics at the University.”

It was a great blow to Newman. It was all the more bitter because those who on the representations of his critics had decreed his exclusion, had never even taken the trouble to question him concerning his own views and plans. Still more was he cut to the quick when Cardinal Reisach, who came to collect information on the Oxford question, avoided an interview with him. What strange nemesis was dogging this man’s footsteps, mocking his high purposes, blighting his hopes, and dooming to ignominious failure his many valiant undertakings to serve the Church in as effective a manner as his intellect could devise? Strachey pictures him a forlorn figure, Manning and Talbot smiling in triumph, while Newman stands at the gate with his bag, packed all in vain, looking wistfully toward the spires of his beloved Oxford, from which he was bidden to remain an exile forever, weeping bitterly. Such would seem to be the usual verdict.

## **DID NEWMAN REALLY FAIL?**

But did he really fail? Go to Oxford today and see. The music of his voice has died but the melody of his dream lingers on. Yes, it lingers on in abiding stone, in the impressive foundations established by the great religious Orders of the Church, in Campion Hall of the Jesuits, in St. Benet's Hall of the Benedictines, in the House of the Salesians, in the Hall of the Franciscans, in the Hall of the Dominicans with the significant inscription over its portals, "After a long exile the sons of St. Dominic have returned!" Father Ronald Knox, the son of an Anglican bishop, ministers as Chaplain to the Catholic students. [1937.] Black-robed Jesuits, brown-robed Franciscans, and white-robed Dominicans are in the lecture halls, laboratories and libraries. Father M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., holds the chair of ethics. Newman's dream at long last has come true.

In the summer of 1925, the writer discussed with Cardinal Vaughan the work of the foundations at Oxford. A few years previous, there was some agitation for the establishment of a National Catholic university. The Cardinal along with other leaders of the Church opposed the project as unwise. "While I do not wish to speak about what is the best arrangement for other countries, where conditions are different," said His Eminence, "I am certain that for the Church in England the establishments we have at Oxford and Cambridge offer the best facilities for Catholic higher education. They are the two great historic centres of intellectual life in England, and our hope is to utilize them more and more. To cut ourselves off

from these two great universities, and to try to establish a university off by ourselves would be the height of folly, if not positively suicidal. The graduates of Oxford and Cambridge have the ear of the English public and are at least listened to with respect.”

“What effect does Oxford have upon the faith of the Catholic students?” inquired the writer. “Instead of weakening them,” replied the Cardinal, “we can say now on the basis of a long experience that with the provisions made for them, attendance at Oxford strengthens them. The graduates of Oxford are supplying the Church with a type of lay leadership which is of the highest to be found in any Catholic country in the world.” The remarkable growth which the Church in England has experienced in the last half century is attributable in no small degree to the sterling work of her lay apostolate, which has set an example for the Catholics of all other countries.”

How happy would be the Church in any country to claim three such able apologists as Fathers Ronald Knox, C. C. Martindale, S.J., and M. C. D’Arcy, S.J.? That brilliant conversationalist and controversialist, Arnold Lunn, clashed swords in debate with Father Knox, only to surrender his sword at last, and ask his erstwhile duelist to receive him into the Church which not long before had opened its hospitable arms to receive Knox himself. Well indeed might the old apologist for entering Oxford and using it for a divine purpose, instead of fleeing from it, Newman himself, have

smiled as he looked down from the eternal hills upon this latest corroboration of the wisdom of his plan.

In America the scores of Newman Halls at State and secular Universities carrying on his plan, bid fair to give his ideas a vaster range and a universal currency, and to keep his memory ever fresh and green. “Principles,” said Newman, “will develop themselves beyond the arbitrary points of which you are so fond, and by which hitherto they have been limited, like prisoners on parole.” The growth of the Newman Club movement in England, America and throughout the world testifies to the truth of his prophetic utterance. Newman was thwarted, but his idea has prevailed.

The frustration of his many noble undertakings calculated to try the soul of the strongest man, Newman bore with a patience that was nothing short of heroic. Shortly after the thwarting of his Oxford project, a correspondent in Rome made an anonymous attack upon Newman’s orthodoxy in “*The Weekly Register*”. This was the spark which kindled into a flame the long smouldering indignation of the Catholic laity at the many unjust attacks made upon one of the noblest and holiest souls in the Church in England. A mass meeting of the laity was called. A testimonial, signed by two hundred of the most distinguished English Catholics, was presented to him. In it, they served notice that “every blow that touched him inflicted a wound on the Catholic Church in England.” Newman was deeply touched. “The attacks of the opponents,”

he replied, “are never hard to bear when the person who is the subject of them is conscious in himself that they are undeserved; but in the present instance I have small cause indeed for pain or regret at their occurrence, since they have at once elicited in my behalf the warm feelings of so many dear friends who know me well, and of so many others whose good opinion is the more impartial for the very reason that I am not personally known to them. Of such men, whether friends or strangers to me, I would a hundred times rather receive the generous sympathy than have escaped the misrepresentations which are the occasion for showing it.” {“*Life of Manning*”, Volume II, pages 313, 314.}

### **A LONG ROAD TURNS.**

There comes at last an end to everything. And an end to the series of disappointments which had crowned Newman’s undertakings had come. Likewise an end to the suspicions under which he had laboured for almost thirty years. This ostracism of a saintly genius had been due chiefly to his former friends, Manning, Ward, and Talbot. In 1877, Newman was elected an honorary Fellow of Trinity College, and in February of the following year, after an absence of thirty-two years, he returned to the Oxford whose spires only he had seen from a distance in the intervening years. Appearing in his University robes as the guest of the President of Trinity College, he was warmly applauded by the students and faculty.

In the same month, Pope Pius IX died, and Leo XIII, who had also lived in exile from the Curia since 1846, and who had learned from experience the meaning of Vergil's phrase, "Haud ignora mali", [‘Not unknown is any evil’,] ascended the chair of Peter. The Duke of Norfolk and other Catholic peers approached Cardinal Manning about securing the honour of the cardinalate for Father Newman. Leo XIII had apparently already made up his mind to so honour Newman and readily acceded to their request. A letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State announced to Newman "that the Holy Father, highly appreciating the genius and erudition which distinguished him, his piety, the zeal which he displayed in the exercise of the holy ministry, his devotion and filial attachment to the Holy Apostolic See, and the signal services he had for long years rendered to religion, had decided on giving him a public and solemn proof of his esteem and good will," and that he would proclaim his elevation to the Sacred College in the next Consistory.

On May 12, 1879, he was created a Cardinal amidst the universal rejoicing of the British people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. The event was without a parallel in modern times, as no simple priest without duties in the Roman Curia had been raised to the cardinalate. Congratulations poured in upon him from such distant countries as Australia, New Zealand, as well as from all parts of America. Newman received the exalted honour with simple dignity and with a complete absence of personal vanity. "The cloud is lifted from

me forever,” he said to his brothers of the Oratory.

“The Roman Church has been less unpopular in England,” observes Dean Inge, “since Newman received from it the highest honour which it can bestow. Throughout his career, he was a steadfast witness against tepid and insincere professions of religion, and against any compromise with the shifting currents of popular opinion. All cultivated readers, who have formed their tastes on the masterpieces of good literature, are attracted, sometimes against their will, by the dignity and reserve of his style, qualities which belong to the man, and not only to the writer. Like Goethe, he disdains the facile arts which make the commonplace reader laugh and weep. ‘*Ach, die zärtlichen Herzen! ein Pfuscher vermag sie zu rühren.*’ [Oh, the tender Heart! A bungler they can move.] Like Wordsworth, he might say, ‘To stir the blood I have no cunning art.’ There are no cheap effects in any of Newman’s writings. . . . He was loved and honoured by men whose love is an honour, and he is admired by all who can appreciate a consistently unworldly life. . . . He has left an indelible mark upon two great religious bodies. He has stirred movements which still agitate the Church of England and the Church of Rome, and the end is not yet in sight.” {“*Outspoken Essays*”, William Ralph Inge, pages 202 and following.}

The remaining eleven years of his life the aging Cardinal spent in the quiet of the Oratory at Edgbaston, answering the many correspondents who solicited his guidance in matters of

conscience, re-editing his works, and in meditation and prayer. In 1886, Bishop Ullathorne dedicated to Cardinal Newman, his former priest and subject, his last spiritual work in commemoration of “forty years of a friendship and confidence which had much enriched his life.” Touched by the testimony of affection from the venerable prelate, who had stood bravely by Newman in his many trials, the Cardinal wrote the following note of thanks, which Dr. Ullathorne terms “a memorial and a treasure for all time”: “How good has God been to me in giving me such kind friends! It has been so all through my life. They have spared my mistakes, overlooked my defects, and found excuses for my faults. God reward you, my dear Lord, for your tenderness toward me, very conscious as I am of my great failings. You have ever been indulgent towards me; and now you show me an act of considerate charity, as great as you can, by placing my name at the beginning of the last work of your long life of service and sacrifice. It is a token of sympathy which, now in my extreme age, encourages me in the prospect of the awful journey which lies close before me.” {“*Letters of Archbishop Ullathorne*”, pages 481-483.}

In the following year, Dr. Ullathorne paid a visit to the aged Cardinal at Edgbaston and on returning narrated the following touching incident, which showed the humility and simplicity of Newman had not been impaired by the honour of the cardinalate: “I have been visiting Cardinal Newman today. He is much wasted, but very cheerful . . . . We had a long and cheery talk, but as I was rising to leave an action of his caused

a scene I shall never forget, for its sublime lesson to myself. He said in low and humble accents, ‘My dear Lord, will you do me a great favour?’ ‘What is it?’ I asked. He glided down to his knees, bent down his venerable head, and said, ‘Give me your blessing.’ {A general rule of the Church’s ritual ordains that the lower dignitary should kneel before the higher one.} What could I do with him before me in such a posture? I could not refuse without giving him great embarrassment. So I laid my hand on his head and said: ‘My dear Lord Cardinal, notwithstanding all laws to the contrary, I pray God to bless you, and that His Holy Spirit may be full in your heart.’ As I walked to the door, refusing to put on his biretta as he went with me, he said: ‘I have been indoors all my life, whilst you have battled for the Church in the world.’ I felt annihilated in his presence; there is a Saint in that man.” {“*Letters of Archbishop Ullathorne*”, page 512.}

No trace of the former suspicions and hostilities now remained. To an allusion to the party which had so long opposed him in England and in Rome, Newman replied: “Let bygones be bygones,” adding with a smile, “Besides, they have all come round to my side now.” His declining years were full of serenity and peace. By a happy reversal of fortune, the man who had gone through so many internal crises, had encountered such prolonged opposition from within the Church as well as from without, now found himself at peace with the world and with himself. All England had become proud of him, and the universal acclamation of his elevation to

the cardinalate became prolonged into a kind of apotheosis such as few men have experienced in their lifetime. In March, 1884, he writes: “For myself, now, at the end of a long life, I say from a full heart that God has never failed me, never disappointed me, has ever turned evil into good for me.”

{“*Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman*”, Volume II, page 482.}

The calm of a long evening was drawing to a close. Shortly before his death, he asked some of the brothers of the Oratory to sing him Faber’s hymn, “The Eternal Years.” ‘Many people,’ he said, ‘speak well of my “Lead, Kindly Light”, but this is far more beautiful. Mine is of a soul in darkness — this is of the eternal light.’ After a brief illness, he passed away peacefully on August 11, 1890, surrounded by his brethren of the Oratory. His body lies beside that of his faithful disciple, Ambrose St. John, in Rednall on the quiet Lychey Hills where he had so often gone to pray in silence and meditate, “alone with the Alone.” On his tomb is inscribed the epitaph written by himself, an epitaph that would tell, he thought, the story of his pilgrimage: “Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem”. — ‘From the shadows and the symbols into the truth’. With his passing, the race lost a soul distinguished alike for sanctity and for scholarship. Though dead, he still speaks to us from the pages of his mighty books, speaks of his vision of the truth which led him at times through strange and lonely waters, but brought him safely at eventide to the harbour of peace and security. Poor tired soul, he has passed at last from the tumult

of controversy into the silence of the beyond where the eternal truth speaks without the noise or confusion of words. May he find there the rest he craved — under the everlasting arms and in the light that shall not fail.

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