



The Saint John Henry Newman Annual Symposium 2022: **Newman and the Religion of the Future.**

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In partnership



The Annual St John Henry Newman Lecture

Established in 2020 as a joint initiative of both the Australian Catholic University (ACU) and the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA), the annual St John Henry Newman Lecture has as its sole aim a focus on the contribution of Catholic education to wider society both in Australia and globally.

Each year, on or near the Feast of St John Henry Newman (9th October), Australia's two Catholic universities alternate in hosting this event, which draws together leading scholars and practitioners in Catholic education from Australia and around the world inspired by the wisdom and writings of this remarkable Saint and his contribution to the Catholic intellectual life and the mission of Catholic education.

Newman and the Religion of the Future

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Magnificent Rector of the Pontifical University of St Thomas in Rome
Fr Thomas Joseph White OP, ACU
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UNDA Vice-Chancellor Francis Campbell,
Campion College President Paul Morrissey,
senators, trustees and chapter members,
deputy vice-chancellors, deans, professors,
staff and students; My Lords Bishop
Richard Umbers and Danny Meagher,
Vicars-General and clergy, representatives
of religious congregations, Catholic
education and other major Church
agencies, distinguished guests, ladies and
gentlemen:

1. INTRODUCTION: NEWMAN'S NIGHTMARE FOR THE CHURCH¹

It's a pleasure to deliver the first annual St John Henry Newman lecture for the Australian Catholic University and the University of Notre Dame Australia. I applaud this initiative, honouring this great Anglican divine, historian, poet, Catholic convert (1845), priest (1846), educationalist and cardinal (1879).² Under-appreciated in his own day (1801-90),³ Newman "the invisible peritus" a century later at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and canonised by Pope Francis in 2019.⁴ He has much to offer on many subjects, some of which I've lectured on before.⁵ This evening I will explore how his teachings might help us navigate the religion of the future, and what this might mean for the mission of the Catholic university.

Newman's prescience was hauntingly demonstrated in a sermon delivered 150 years ago this coming year at the launch of the new seminary in Birmingham. Entitled, *The Infidelity of the Future* (1873),⁶ Newman bleakly prophesied that

The trials which lie before us are such as would appal and make dizzy even such courageous hearts as St Athanasius, St Gregory I, or St Gregory VII. And they would confess that, dark as the prospect of their own day was to them severally, ours has a darkness different in kind from any that has been before it.⁷

How different? Well, much current thinking is allergic to religion, dismissing mystery as obfuscation, narrowing reason within materialist parameters, appealing to cultural influencers and demanding loyalty to reigning ideology. In predicting much of this, Newman preceded Charles Taylor and others on modernity's 'disenchantment'.⁸ He feared that "the educated world, scientific, literary, political, professional [and] artistic" would increasingly be not merely agnostic but anti-God and carry much of the population with them.⁹ This put Christianity in 'unchartered territory', competing for souls not with other religions but with anti-religion.¹⁰

What's more, Newman thought Catholics could no longer presume others will share much of their faith and morals. Where others were once "of great service to us in shielding and sheltering us from the assaults of those who believed less than themselves or nothing at all", Catholics of the future would no longer be camouflaged by Protestant orthodoxy, protected by public institutions, or carried by the culture.¹¹ Indeed, a rise in anti-

Catholic and anti-Christian sentiment might be expected.¹² Newman would be unsurprised that a top businessman was sacked this week as CEO of a football club and demonised by that state's Premier for belonging to an Anglican church which takes traditional positions on life and sexuality issues. Rather than being judged on his own record as CEO of a major bank and his own statements, he was 'cancelled' because a pastor of his church had used inflammatory rhetoric a decade before.¹³ Christianity is fast becoming the faith that dare not speak its name.

Thirdly, prophetic about the coming sexual abuse crisis, Newman observed that "no large body can be free from scandals from the misconduct of its members". Media and state scrutiny mean the reputation of the Church will be "at the mercy of even one unworthy member". He predicted allegations—both real and imagined—regarding transgressions of Church members would intensify and with them disillusionment and hostility toward the Church.¹⁴

Lastly, while higher levels of literacy and greater ease of communication have many benefits, Newman foretold a proliferation of half-truths, 'fake news' and ill-informed opinion, as well as a lack of patience with nuanced answers. Catholics would not be immune to this disinformation revolution and some would abandon the apostolic tradition as a result.¹⁵

While Newman's diagnosis of "a world irreligious" is challenging, he was not without hope. The best response, he said, was the cultivation of an "ecclesiastical spirit" or what we call today a more intentional discipleship.¹⁶

Every Christian must recognise their baptismal vocation as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" and be ready, as St Peter said, to give reasons for the hope that is in them.¹⁷ Theirs must

be an intelligent faith, marked by "a spirit of seriousness or recollection" and aware of God's ever-watchful eye.¹⁸ The clergy especially, but others also, need "a sound, accurate, complete knowledge of Catholic theology" which readies them for conversation, disputation and mission in our age.¹⁹

A first reason for Catholic institutions of higher education, therefore, is to provide a sympathetic environment where spiritual matters can be explored with openness, patience and nuance, and where an intelligent, recollected discipleship can be cultivated. Faith will in the future be intelligent or not at all.

2. NEWMAN'S CONFIDENCE IN THE SURVIVAL OF THE CHURCH

Declining affiliation and practice; families, schools and parishes less effective in transmitting faith; disillusionment with the criminal behaviour of some church and debate. The religion of the future will testify to Christian resilience against the forces of secularity, to an ecclesial sensibility amongst its adherents, and to the apostolic tradition humbly but confidently proposed anew in every age.

3. NEWMAN ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

Newman's memorial epitaph is *Ex umbris et imag/in/ibus in veritatem*—from shadows and images into truth.²⁰ For him that truth was something 'living' and knowledge a process of uncovering through this life into the next. His famous adage that "To be alive is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often" captured both his own progress and how he thought humanity advances, including Christian doctrine.²¹

The Church, as Newman taught and Pope Francis has often emphasised, is not a museum for ancient artefacts and ideas. Its faith and practice have developed

down the centuries and, if it is faithful to the Spirit, such development continues. “No one doctrine can be named which starts complete at first, and gains nothing afterwards from the investigations of faith.” Yet Christianity is also, as G.K. Chesterton observed, the democracy of the dead:²² it gives tradition the fullest respect, so that the dead have a say in the faith of the living; ours, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, is a hermeneutic of continuity rather than of rupture.²³ How do we reconcile these competing claims?

Since revelation is first and foremost an encounter not with creeds but with the person of Jesus Christ, it is essentially dynamic. This is not to say that truth is born from history and fashioned according to culture and milieu. Newman was no relativist.²⁴ At a Newman symposium in 2010, Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Newman’s lifelong search for truth; his insistence on its objective reality and the mind’s proper subjection to it; his surrendering his own interiority to “the objective truth of a personal and living God”; and his determination faithfully to live that truth once recognised.²⁵ He laboured upon the relationship between truth’s transcendental character and its communication in history through living individuals and communities. This understanding played a crucial role in his famous essay *On the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845). Newman made the point that true doctrinal development is not simply accepting whatever idea is en vogue, nor being victim to irresistible historical forces, but rather adhering to the very conditions of revealed truth²⁶ and faithfully expressing the apostolic tradition.²⁷

Comparing the development of a doctrine with the organic development of an acorn into an adult plant or an embryo into an animal, Newman famously offered seven ‘notes’ for distinguishing true development from false:

1. species—it maintains type, even as outward appearance changes
2. continuity—it is rooted in faith and dogma, scripture and theology, asceticism and holiness
3. assimilation—it consumes surrounding ideas and integrates them
4. durability—it is sustained over time
5. anticipation—what was there at the beginning already alludes to the future course
6. coherence—what is there in the middle is the logical unfolding of what was implicit at planting
7. conservation—what is there at the end safeguards and builds upon the earlier stages of development.

Corruptions, on the other hand, involve revolutionary rather than evolutionary changes, reverse or contradict earlier developments, involve contamination and loss of identity, are incoherent or disintegrative.²⁸

Applying such criteria is not straightforward: important questions remain for those steeped in hermeneutics, history and theology, who are faithful to the magisterium. So, a third purpose of Catholic institutions of higher learning is to enable healthy development of doctrine, and to test putative developments for their fidelity to revelation. Here faithful and informed scholars respond to the signs of the times through the lens of the Gospel and assist the magisterium in its role as authentic interpreter of the doctrinal tradition. By producing scholars and students with a holistic and robust understanding of Christian teaching, the academy helps ensure that the Church is, in St Paul’s words, “the pillar and bulwark of truth”.²⁹ The religion of the future will know developments of doctrine, morals and customs we do not yet fully foresee, but which are faithful to Christ and all he revealed.

4. NEWMAN ON THE GROWING ROLE OF THE LAITY

William Ullathorne OSB (1806-89) had been leader or deputy of the Church in Australia, before returning to England, ultimately to assume the see of Birmingham (1850-88).³⁰ When the Oxford converts' magazine, *The Rambler*, started treating theological subjects, identifying clerical shortcomings and recommending bishops take lay advice—all of which outraged the *London Tablet*—Ullathorne was expected to fix things. He tapped Newman to assume the editorship and in his first editorial he “acknowledged most fully the prerogatives of the episcopate” and apologised for any apparent disrespect. But Newman also asserted that “their Lordships really desire to know the opinion of the laity on subjects in which the laity are especially concerned” and for good reason, as sometimes in history the laity were more solid in matters of faith or more prudent in matters of policy than the pastors!

Newman's editing of *The Rambler* lasted only two months, but before departing he published anonymously what has come down to us as *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (1859).³¹ As a true Catholic, he thought “the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of [the] tradition resides solely with the *Ecclesia docens*”—the pope and the bishops. Twenty years later and freshly returned from being created cardinal (1879), Newman visited Ullathorne in retirement. The latter recorded that at their parting Newman fell to his knees seeking the episcopal blessing. Ullathorne was embarrassed but

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.’ ...refusing to put on his biretta as he went with me [to the door], he said, ‘I have been [comfortable]

indoors all my life, whilst you have battled for the Church in the [cold] world.’ I felt annihilated in his presence. There is a Saint in that man.³²

So, without doubt, Newman was episcopalian. Still, following the Fathers, he thought the relationship between pastors and faithful must be more than superiors and subordinates: it must be a conspiratio, “put together, as one twofold testimony, illustrating each other, and never to be divided.”³³ In the background was the Jesuit theologian Giovanni Perrone—a teacher also of Sydney's third archbishop, Cardinal Moran (1830-1911).³⁴ Newman now offered 22 instances of the *consensus fidelium* being more responsible for the preservation of orthodoxy than the *consensus clericorum*, including during the Arian crisis of the fourth century, about which he was an acknowledged authority.³⁵ He also quoted Ullathorne on how, at the definition of the Immaculate Conception (1854), the faithful ‘mirrored’ the pastors, reflecting and confirming each other's faith.

Newman was delated for these radical views to Rome, where his enemies contrived to deny him a hearing. His nemesis, Monsignor Talbot, warned Cardinal Manning that the laity

are beginning to show the cloven foot... putting into practice the doctrine taught by Dr. Newman... What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters they understand, but to meddle in ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all... Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England.

As the dispute dragged on, Ullathorne wondered publicly “Who are the laity and what have they to do with the Church?”, about which Newman famously quipped “The Church would look rather foolish without them”.³⁶ Ullathorne had no use for a theologically literate laity and feared it

would be divisive. But Newman understood that the apostolic deposit is expressed sometimes by the mouth of the episcopacy, sometimes the doctors, sometimes by the people, sometimes by the liturgies, rites, ceremonies, and customs, by events, disputes, movements, and all those other phenomena which are comprised under the name history.³⁷

Newman's claims were endorsed by the Second Vatican Council,³⁸ and increasing numbers of lay faithful now belong to international and local Church bodies, run chanceries, schools, universities, hospitals and other agencies, lead ecclesial movements and charities, and man (or more often woman) various ministries. Today's synodality movement echoes some of Newman's thought. He would, like Pope Francis, encourage real listening, dialogue and joint witness; he would also, like Pope Francis, repudiate any parliamentary or opinion poll model of how the Church identifies the truth. If the laity are to contribute to the "two-fold testimony", they must be informed by the spirit that stirred the faithful at the time of Nicaea, built upon baptismal vocation and apostolic faith.

To this end, Catholic institutions of higher learning play a fourth indispensable role: as centres for forming and expressing lay leadership; cultivating excellent minds and courageous wills to fertilise Church and society; eschewing any 'parallel magisterium' and instead collaborating in giving joint witness. Though the principal field for the lay apostolate is always the world beyond the Church, the religion of the future will also include an enlarged role for the laity within.

5. NEWMAN ON AN EDUCATED FAITH AND CONSCIENCE

Newman's "intelligent, well-instructed laity" would obviously require an appropriate education. In a journal entry

from 1863, Newman wrote that "from first to last, education...has been my line."³⁹ Though his conversion cut short his time as an Oxford don, his influence in the realm of higher learning continued with the invitation to establish a Catholic University in Dublin.⁴⁰ This gave rise to lectures including those that contributed to *The Idea of a University (1852)*, described by Jaroslav Pelikan as the "most important treatise on the idea of a university ever written in any language."⁴¹ Here we get Newman's trademark advocacy for a "liberal education", the chief aim of which being "the real cultivation of the mind."

But what did he mean? In modernity scholarship is divided into multiple distinct disciplines and degrees, increasingly narrow teaching units and research tasks. For all the talk of being cross- or inter-disciplinary, most academics stick to their corners and many universities have abandoned or ideologised the humanities. Certain skills are privileged in the market for 'job-ready' graduates.

Newman, on the other hand, proposed an education offering breadth and depth, vision and virtues. His scholars would be characterised by an appreciation for 'the whole' of reality, for possessing a 'philosophic habit of mind' and an interest in many disciplines, and for bringing such an integrated mind to the rest of life.⁴² All this requires comprehension of spiritual matters, and so—contrary to the self-consciously 'secular' institutions being established in his day, such as my own alma mater, the University of Sydney—Newman was convinced that 'divinity' had a rightful place not just in the seminary but the university. As the divine logos permeates all of creation, our rational faculties, while truly natural and human, rely upon the divine mind.

One area where the faith-reason relationship plays out is in formation of conscience, a topic Newman addressed

most famously in his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk (1875).⁴³ Unlike modern readings of conscience as subjectivist sincerity or relativist tribalism, Newman insists that “Conscience is... a messenger from Him, Who, both in nature and grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by His representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.”⁴⁴

Newman foresaw that the tradition on conscience was being “superseded by a counterfeit, which the eighteen centuries prior to it never heard of, and could not have mistaken for it... It is the right of self-will... an Englishman’s prerogative to be his own master in all things.”⁴⁵ Revelation, tradition, community, even reason itself, were increasingly deplored as rivals of free agency. But just as the value of memory is in remembering accurately, so the value of conscience is in yielding right judgment and action: only for this reason do we take it so seriously. Left to its own devices, “though it tells truly at first, [conscience] soon becomes wavering, ambiguous, and false; it needs good teachers and good examples to keep it up to the mark and the line of duty; and the misery is, that these external helps, teachers and examples, are in many instances wanting.”⁴⁶

What’s more, the ‘seeds’ of faith and morals that natural conscience plants in the soul point toward the Gospel. With the gift of Christian faith, this natural voice is transformed into the Christian sense of responsibility before God. “Conscience has its rights because it has its duties”⁴⁷—duties to self, fellows, God. But

The sense of right and wrong is so delicate, so fitful, so easily puzzled, obscured, perverted, so subtle in its argumentative methods, so impressible by education, so biased by pride and passion, so unsteady in its course, that, in the struggle for existence amid the various exercises and triumphs of the human intellect, this sense is at once

the highest of all teachers, yet the least luminous; and the Church, the Pope, the Hierarchy are, in the Divine purpose, the supply of an urgent demand.⁴⁸

On Newman’s account, a truly liberal education, including some theology, is essential for formation of sound Christian consciences.

A fifth reason for Catholic universities, then, is to prepare intelligent, well-instructed people to act well in this life and so serve the betterment of self and society. This requires a more expansive and holistic conception of education than is offered in highly specialised and job-focused programmes, one that addresses character and ethics. The religion of the future will require the faithful to be better and more roundly educated in spiritual and moral matters.

6. NEWMAN ON CATHOLICISM VERSES THE ZEITGEIST

Not all Church-sponsored institutions of higher learning will serve Newman’s goals and so the religion of the future. Some subscribe to ideologies incompatible with Christianity or are led and staffed by people more comfortable with the secular gods of ‘diversity’, ‘equity’ and ‘inclusion’ than with the much richer Catholic intellectual tradition. Some reimagine Christianity as little more than feel-good slogans, social causes and pastoral care. These colleges turn out graduates inoculated with dead or weakened strains of Christianity against the kind of ‘full-on’ faith that might carry them through life and convert others.

In his sermon *The Religion of the Day* (1839) Newman bemoaned the reduction of Christianity to a consoling belief system, requiring no Scripture or Tradition, making no moral or ascetical demands, not even eschewing sin and its disastrous effects.⁴⁹ This ‘lukewarm’ Christianity’, dubbed in recent times ‘Moralistic

Therapeutic Deism,⁵⁰ does not oppose Christianity so much as fasten on to

one or other of its characteristics, professing to embody this in its practice; while by neglecting the other parts of the holy doctrine, it has, in fact, distorted and corrupted even that portion of it which it has exclusively put forward... He who cultivates only one precept of the Gospel to the exclusion of the rest, in reality attends to no part at all... Half the truth is often the most gross and mischievous of falsehoods.⁵¹

Thus Christianity is reduced to a hybrid of Gospel kindness and human justice that we might call 'Catholic-woke'.⁵² Conscience is dulled, fear of hell eliminated, loyalty to the Church reduced, "religion is pleasant and easy; benevolence is the chief virtue; intolerance, bigotry, excess of zeal, are the first of sins [and] austerity is an absurdity."⁵³

Some proponents of Catholic-woke have claimed Newman as one of their own, latching onto statements about development, conscience or the laity. Newman biographer Ian Ker thinks he would be horrified to see his words hijacked in this way.⁵⁴ In his *Biglietto Speech* (1879), given on the occasion of his being created cardinal, Newman said that

to one great mischief I have from the first opposed myself. For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of liberalism in religion. Never did Holy Church need champions against it more sorely than now, when, alas! it is an error overspreading, as a snare, the whole earth.⁵⁵

Renewing his protest against the idea that revealed religion "is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact, not miraculous; and [that] it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy," Newman argued

that this puts religion beyond rational critique, encourages the privatisation and bracketing of belief, and at best generates tolerance but never devotion or evangelisation.⁵⁶

Newman predicted that Christian societies and polities would increasingly forget their roots and "throw off" faith in what he called "the great apostasia".⁵⁷ But what would then underpin law and order was unclear. He speculated that the first step would be to substitute "a universal and thoroughly secular education, calculated to bring home to every individual that to be orderly, industrious, and sober, is his personal interest". There would be moves to deChristianise institutions, to exclude faith (as divisive) from the public square, and to win "great numbers of able, earnest, virtuous men" to secularity. Finally, religion would be relegated to the class of "private luxury, which a man may have if he will; but which of course he must pay for, and which he must not obtrude upon others, or indulge in to their annoyance."⁵⁸

Newman's response was to call on intelligent Catholics to rediscover the "dogmatical principle":

That there is a truth... one truth... that [error] is to be dreaded... that the mind is below truth, not above it, and is bound, not to descant upon it, but to venerate it; that truth and falsehood are set before us for the trial of our hearts; that our choice is an awful giving forth of lots on which salvation or rejection is inscribed; that "before all things it is necessary to hold the Catholic faith".⁵⁹

So, a sixth role for the Catholic academy is humbly and intelligently to critique truncated views of reason in liberal thought and of religion in 'lukewarm Christianity', offering a more animating version of each worthy of minds and hearts. Reclaiming a central place for the reality, pursuit and attainability of

truth; providing a 'safe space' for people to explore faith intelligently and intelligence faithfully; exploring and proclaiming all of faith and reason, not avoiding the hard bits—Catholic institutes can out-narrate prevailing worldviews and their emaciated epistemologies and anthropologies. That, too, will be a gift to the future, as religion recovers its intelligence and confidence.

7. NEWMAN ON CATHOLICISM'S MISSIONARY IMPULSE

Newman concluded his *Biglietto* Speech by regretting liberal modernity's abandonment of Christianity, as it would be the ruin of many souls. But, he insisted, we should not despair as it cannot really

do aught of serious harm to the Word of God, to Holy Church, to our Almighty King... or to His Vicar on earth. Christianity has been too often in what seemed deadly peril, that we should fear for it any new trial... What is commonly a great surprise, when it is witnessed, is the particular mode by which, in the event, Providence rescues and saves His elect inheritance. Sometimes our enemy is turned into a friend; sometimes he is despoiled of that special virulence of evil which was so threatening; sometimes he falls to pieces of himself; sometimes he does just so much as is beneficial, and then is removed. Commonly the Church has nothing more to do than to go on in her own proper duties, in confidence and peace; to stand still and to see the salvation of God.⁶⁰

Newman knew that the Church had been through many highs and lows through history and proven remarkably resilient. Each time the death of God had been proclaimed or the end of Christianity predicted, a major revival was just around the corner. In his own life-time the forces of the French revolution and the Napoleonic empire sought to wipe out Catholicism, closing churches, convents

and schools, confiscating property and imprisoning two popes. Yet Newman witnessed how this released spiritual and missionary energies unseen in centuries. Within decades new religious orders were evangelising the global south and building social infrastructure from which Australians still benefit today.

Cardinal Francis George of Chicago once provocatively predicted that he would die in his bed, his successor as Archbishop die in prison, and his successor die a martyr in the public square.⁶¹ On this account, since my pre-decessor died in his bed, and my predecessor spent a substantial time in prison, I can only expect that I will come to a very sticky end indeed! But what is often forgotten is what Cardinal George said next: "His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilisation, as the Church has done so often in human history." So, pruning is not the end of the ecclesial vine; it is often the prelude to an extraordinary harvest.

Thus, while Newman could be rather bleak about the direction of the culture, he remained confident in the power of the Gospel. Christianity had encountered superstition and false religion of many kinds down the centuries, but never before encountered the radical unbelief it does today. But some there are always who are faithful, and Newman recalls the comfort it was to Elijah to be

told from heaven that even in that time of idolatrous apostasy, there were seven thousand men who had not bowed their knees to Baal. Much more it may be expected now, when our Lord has come and the Gospel been preached to the whole world, that there will be a remnant who belong to the soul of the Church.⁶²

With this in mind, in his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851), Newman called for an educated and

mobilized laity to help defend and promote the Catholic faith:

I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well instructed laity...⁶³

To the missionary mandate given by Christ to of Church is attached the promise that He would be with us always. So, if we faithfully proclaim the kerygma and offer the witness of our lives, we can be confident about the religion of the future. A seventh reason to persevere with Catholic tertiary institutions, therefore, is to serve the mission of the Church to the members of the university and the wider community they influence, and to provide an alternative wisdom to that 'of this world', the wisdom of Christ crucified and risen. The religion of the future will be the fruit of such persuasion of minds, conversion of hearts and commitment of souls to Christ.

8. CONCLUSION: NEWMAN'S DREAM FOR THE CHURCH

Years ago, I was asked by the great Australian commentator B.A. Santamaria why I remained so optimistic. I said it was partly a matter of temperament, partly how I read the evidence, and partly theological hope. He responded that his temperament was dissimilar, that he read the evidence very differently and, as for theological hope, all that promised was that things would be alright in the end: in the meantime, they could get very bad indeed!

At times Newman sounded rather Santamarian. He began his sermon to the clergy of Westminster, known as *The Second Spring* (1852), with a poetic reflection upon "the perpetual renovation

of the material world"—not home renovations a la contemporary Australia, but the unceasing renewal in the natural order.⁶⁴ In the human world, however, he thought that what starts beautiful and full of noble hope, most often ends in failure, moroseness and selfishness;⁶⁵ so, too, human works of genius, conquests, doctrines, civilisations and dynasties all end in dissolution. "Man and all his works are mortal; they die, and they have no power of renovation... Babylon was great, and Tyre, and Egypt, and Nineveh, and shall never be great again."⁶⁶

Thus, the pre-Reformation Catholic Church in England had its missionaries, saints and martyrs, hierarchs and faithful, cathedrals and monasteries, universities and arts, wealth and honour—and almost in the blink of an eye, it was gone.⁶⁷ All that remained three centuries after Henry were "a few adherents of the Old Religion, moving silently and sorrowfully about, as memorials of what had been." So contemptible were Catholic doctrines and believers to 'enlightened' Englishmen, that their return in any numbers seemed preposterous.⁶⁸ But now, all of a sudden, Catholicism was experiencing "a Second Spring" in England:

For grace can, where nature cannot. The world grows old, but the Church is ever young. She can, in any time, at her Lord's will, 'inherit the Gentiles, and inhabit the desolate cities'... [So] Arise, Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee... Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For the winter is now past, and the... flowers have appeared in our land... Arise, Mary [Mother of God], and go forth in thy strength, into that north country which once was thine own, and take possession... and with thy thrilling voice, speak!⁶⁹

If there was excitement in the air, Newman knew rebuilding the Church in England would not be easy. “Trial and trouble” were inevitable, and though Spring had sprung, Winter was not quite over. But he trusted the new faithful and pastors would stand strong, and the English saints were powerfully interceding for them.

If the Church today is to experience a Second Spring, we too can expect it will not be easy. It will require an intelligent faith ready to give witness amidst secularity, and an ecclesial sensibility willing to present the apostolic faith with humility and grace. It will greet developments of doctrine, morals and customs, and an enlarged role for the laity, with a deeper spiritual and moral formation. As we recover our intellectual underpinnings and spiritual confidence, we will also be renewed in our missionary vocation. And we know that grace can where nature cannot.

The Church today looks to its institutions of higher learning to be a sympathetic environment where faith and reason are revered and integrated, where spiritual matters are explored with openness, patience and nuance, and where an educated missionary discipleship

is cultivated. Such academies will be concrete expressions of the Church’s continuing mission in the world, of the continuing relevance of Christian faith to human lives, and of the application of the best minds to the highest questions. An expansive and holistic education will instil intellectual and moral character, and prepare people for a life of service to Church and society. It will facilitate genuine development of doctrine and form lay faithful to collaborate with the hierarchy in giving ‘the two-fold testimony’. It will correct truncated views of faith and reason and offer modernity a more “full cream Catholicism”. And it will serve the evangelical mission of the Church, providing an alternative to the wisdom of this world—the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, crucified and risen, our pattern and salvation.

The prospect is exciting and daunting. So, we ask John Henry Newman to intercede for our Church and its institutions of higher learning that they might fulfil their mission with courage and grace. For the future of the academy and the religion of the future: St John Henry Newman, pray for us.

Endnotes

- 1 Newman’s works are collected by the National Institute for Newman Studies at <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/index.html>.
- 2 Newman’s biographers and commentators include: Frederick Aquino and Benjamin King, *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (OUP, 2018); Louis Bouyer, *Newman: His Life and Spirituality* (Ignatius Press, 2011); Austin Cooper, *John Henry Newman: A Developing Spirituality* (Sydney: St Paul’s, 2012); John Cornwell, *Newman’s Unquiet Grave: The Reluctant Saint* (Continuum, 2010); John Crosby et al., *The Personalism of John Henry Newman* (Catholic University of America Press, 2014); Eamon Duffy, *John Henry Newman: A Very Brief History* (SPCK, 2019); Avery Dulles, *Newman* (Continuum, 2009); Reinhard

Hütter, *John Henry Newman on Truth and its Counterfeits: A Guide for Our Times* (Catholic University of America Press, 2020); Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (OUP, 2009); Ian Ker and Alan Gill (eds.), *Newman After a Hundred Years* (OUP, 1990); Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* (CUP, 2009); Philippe Lefebvre & Colin Mason (eds), *John Henry Newman: Doctor of the Church* (Oxford: Family Publications, 2007); Gerard Skinner, *Newman the Priest: A Father of Souls* (Gracewing, 2010); Roderick Strange, *John Henry Newman: A Mind Alive* (Darton, Longman, Todd, 2008) and *Newman 101: An Introduction to the Life and Philosophy of John Cardinal Newman* (Ave Maria Press, 2008); Joyce Sugg, *John Henry Newman: Snapdragon in the Wall* (Gracewing, 2001); Frank Turner, *John Henry Newman: The*

- Challenge to Evangelical Religion (Yale UP, 2001); Juan Velez, *Passion for Truth: The Life of John Henry Newman* (Tan, 2012) and *Holiness in a Secular Age: The Witness of Cardinal Newman* (Scepter Publications, 2017).
- 3 Bernard Dupuy ("Newman's Influence in France," in John Coulson and A.M. Allchin (eds), *The Rediscovery of Newman: An Oxford Symposium* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1966), p. 170) and Louis Bouyer (*Newman's Vision of Faith: A Theology for Times of General Apostasy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 9) both suggested that that Newman was misjudged in his own day in part because he often spoke of a future not yet visible to the perceptively challenged and intentionally incredulous. If they are right, we are in some ways better situated to appreciate his insights today than were his contemporaries.
 - 4 Lawrence Cross, "John Henry Newman: A Father of the Church?" in *Newman Studies Journal* 3(1) (2006) 5-11 at p. 5; Ian Ker, "Newman, the Councils, and Vatican II," *Communio* 28 (Winter 2001), 708-28 and "John Henry Newman and the aftermath of Vatican II," *Venerabile* (Rome, 2009); and Newman on Vatican II (OUP, 2014); Jean Rencki, "Newman and Vatican II," in Lefebvre & Mason, *JHN: Doctor*, 188-203.
 - 5 Anthony Fisher, "Conscience, relativism and truth: The witness of Newman" at the Conference on Newman the Prophet: A Saint for Our Times, Pontifical University of St Thomas (Angelicum), Rome, 12 October 2019, and at the Conference on Theological Anthropology at the beginning of the Third Millennium, University of Notre Dame Australia, St. Benedict's Broadway Campus, 14 February 2020, since published as "Conscience, relativism, and truth," *Nova et Vetera* 18(2) (Spring 2020), 337-53; and "Ex Corde Veritatis: Newman's influence on Ex Corde Ecclesiae," at the Webinar on the Influence of Ex Corde Ecclesiae and St John Henry Newman on Catholic Education Today, University of Notre Dame, 9 October 2020.
 - 6 John Henry Newman, "The infidelity of the future," *Nine Sermons*, Sermon 9 (2 October 1873), <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/ninesermons/sermon9.html>, 113-28. Commentators on Infidelity include: Ker, *JHN: A Biography*, pp. 676-7; Ryan Marr, "Newman contra Liberalism: Conscience, authority, and The Infidelity of the Future," *Public Discourse* 22 July 2019 <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/07/54164/>; Francis Phillips, "Newman's warning about the future of the Church," *Catholic Herald* 29 October 2019 <https://catholicherald.co.uk/newmans-warning-about-the-future-of-the-church/>; Peter Stravinskias, "The model priest for a Church in crisis," *Crisis* (11 October 2019).
 - 7 Newman, *Infidelity*, p. 116-17.
 - 8 Today there is a whole literature on secularity and secularism, of which the classic text is Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007). See also: Hunter Baker, *The End of Secularism* (Crossway, 2009); Joseph Baker and Buster Smith, *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems* (NYU Press, 2015); Peter L. Berger, "Secularization falsified," *First Things* February 2008; Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan Van Antwerpen (eds), *Rethinking Secularism* (OUP, 2011); Andrew Copson, *Secularism: Politics, Religion and Freedom* (OUP Very Short Introductions, 2017); Terence Cuneo (ed), *Religion in the Liberal Polity* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Michael Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 2008); Collin Hansen, *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor* (Gospel Coalition, 2017); Thomas Howard, *Chance of Dance? A Critique of Modern Secularism* (2nd edn., Ignatius, 2018); Peter Kurti, *The Tyranny of Tolerance: Threats to Religious Liberty in Australia* (Connor Court, 2017); Pierre Manent and Ralph Hancock, *Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge* (St Augustine's Press, 2016); David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Ashgate, 2005); Graeme Smith, *A Short History of Secularism* (London: Tauris, 2008); James Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Eerdmans, 2014); Rodney Stark, "Secularization R.I.P.," in William Swatos & Daniel Olson (eds.), *The Secularization Debate* (Rowan & Littlefield, 2000), 41-66, and *The Triumph of Faith: Why the World is More Religious than Ever* (ISI Books, 2015); Michael Warner and Jonathan Van Antwerpen (eds), *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2013).
 - 9 Newman, *Infidelity*, p. 126.
 - 10 Newman, *Infidelity*, p. 122-25.
 - 11 Newman, *Infidelity*, p. 117-18.
 - 12 Newman, *Infidelity*, p. 119.
 - 13 Andrew Thorburn, "My faith is central to who I am," *Herald Sun* 5 October 2022; Andrew Bolt, "Woke tolerance runs out when Jesus begins," *Daily Telegraph* 6 October 2022; Mark Durie, "Counting the

- cost of being a public Christian,” *Spectator* 7 October 2022; Kylar Loussikian, “My faith is not tolerated or permitted: Essendon boss Andrew Thorburn quits,” *The Australian* 5 October 2022; Kurt Mahlberg, “Christians need not apply: On the woke ousting of Essendon CEO,” *Mercatornet* 6 October 2022.
- 14 Newman, *Infidelity*, p. 121: “If there ever was a time when one priest will be a spectacle to men and angels, it is in the age now opening upon us.”
- 15 Newman, *Infidelity*, p. 121-22.
- 16 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World* (2013); Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (2nd edn, *Our Sunday Visitor*, 2022); and other books by Weddell, Robert Barron and James Mallon.
- 17 1Pet 2:9; 3:15.
- 18 Newman thinks priests especially need this, if they are to avoid over-familiarity, imprudence, let alone more serious misbehaviour.
- 19 Newman, *Infidelity*, pp. 126-28.
- 20 Forte, “*Historia Veritatis*,” p. 83. Ian Ker offers the translation “Out of unreality into reality.”
- 21 Newman, *Development*, p. 40.
- 22 G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908), ch. 4: “If we attach great importance to the opinion of ordinary men in great unanimity when we are dealing with daily matters, there is no reason why we should disregard it when we are dealing with history or fable. Tradition may be defined as an extension of the franchise. Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death. Democracy tells us not to neglect a good man’s opinion, even if he is our groom; tradition asks us not to neglect a good man’s opinion, even if he is our father. I, at any rate, cannot separate the two ideas of democracy and tradition; it seems evident to me that they are the same idea. We will have the dead at our councils. The ancient Greeks voted by stones; these shall vote by tombstones. It is all quite regular and official, for most tombstones, like most ballot papers, are marked with a cross.”
- 23 Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas Address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2005.
- 24 Newman, *Development*, p. 364: “That truth and falsehood in religion are but matter of opinion; that one doctrine is as good as another; that the Governor of the world does not intend that we should gain the truth; that there is no truth; that we are not more acceptable to God by believing this than by believing that; that no one is answerable for his opinions; that they are a matter of necessity or accident; that this is enough if we sincerely hold what we profess; that our merit lies in seeking, not in possessing; that it is a duty to follow what seems true; that it may be a gain to succeed, and can be no harm to fail; that we may take up and lay down opinions at pleasure; that belief belongs to the mere intellect, not to the heart; that we may safely trust ourselves in matters of faith, and need do other guide—this is the principle of philosophies and heresies, which is very weakness.” See also *Via Media* xli, as referenced in Przywara S.J., *The Heart of Newman*, p. 161 “truth is the guiding principle of theology and theological inquiries; devotion and edification, of worship; and of government expedience. The instrument of theology is reasoning; of worship, our emotional nature; of rule, command and coercion.”
- 25 Benedict XVI, Message to the Symposium of the International Centre of Friends of Newman (2010). See also Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Presentation on the Occasion of the First Centenary of the Death of Cardinal Newman (1990). See also St Paul VI, Address to the Cardinal Newman Academic Symposium (1975), “faithful throughout his life, with all his heart devoted to the light of truth.”
- 26 Newman, *Development*, p. 324.
- 27 Newman, *Development*, p. 40. See McCarren, “*Development*”, p. 121.
- 28 Newman, *Development*, pp. 169-206; on which see International Theological Commission, *The Interpretation of Dogma* (1989) 5.
- 29 1Tim 3:15.
- 30 Ullathorne was Vicar-General of the vicar-apostolic of Mauritius, before his mentor John Bede Polding was appointed bishop, and he became his deputy. He refused, however, five proposed appointments as a bishop in Australia and returned England to play a major role in the (re-)establishment of the Catholic hierarchy there as in Australia, and to assume the see of Birmingham. H. N. Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, 2 vols (London: Herbert Daniel, 1911);

- Judith Champ, "Ullathorne, William (1806-1889), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27985>; Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1992); Timothy Suttor, "Ullathorne, William Bernard (1806-1889)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography* 2 (1967).
- 31 John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (1859) <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/rambler/consulting.html>. Commentators on Consulting the Faithful include: Cooper, JHN: *A Developing Spirituality*, pp. 154-58; Cornwell, *Newman's Unquiet Grave*, pp. 138-53; John Coulson, "Introduction" in the Sheed & Ward edition; Dulles, Newman, pp. 105-07; Hermann Geissler, "The witness of the faithful in matters of doctrine according to John Henry Newman," *International Centre of Newman Friends* <http://www.newmanfriendsinternational.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/on-consulting-english1.pdf>; Ker, JHN: *A Biography*, pp. 480-8, 604-9; Edward Miller, "Newman's teaching on the Sense of the Faithful," in Lefebvre & Mason, JHN: *Doctor*, 145-62; Richard Penaskovic, "Newman, the laity, and the reception of doctrine," in Lefebvre & Mason, JHN: *Doctor*, 163-172; Fäinche Ryan, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine: From Newman to the Second Vatican Council and Beyond" in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 106 (423) (2017) 340-58 at p. 340; Michael Sharkey, "Newman on the laity," *Gregorianum* 68(1) (1987) 339-46; Strange, *A Mind Alive*, pp. 88-9.
- 32 Sugg, JHN: *Snapdragon*, p. 176.
- 33 Newman, *Consulting the Faithful*, pp. 25, 33-34, 71-72. Cf. Drew Christiansen, "A conspiracy of bishops and faithful: Reading Newman's 'On consulting the faithful' today," *America* 27 September 2010.
- 34 Newman frequently corresponded with Perrone about the nature and history of the *sensus fidelium*: Strange, *Mind Alive*, p. 91.
- 35 Newman, *Consulting the Faithful*, pp. 75-7. "It is not a little remarkable, that, though, historically speaking, the fourth century is the age of doctors, illustrated, as it was, by the saints Athanasius, Hilary, the two Gregories, Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, and all of these saints bishops also, except one, nevertheless in that very day the divine tradition committed to the infallible Church was proclaimed and maintained far more by the faithful than by the Episcopate." See also John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833) <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/arians/index.html>. Commentators include: Cooper, JHN: *A Developing Spirituality*, pp. 154-58.
- 36 John Ford, "Who are the laity?" I answered that the Church would look foolish without them," *Newman Studies Journal* 3(2) (Fall 2006) 3-5.
- 37 Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, p. 63.
- 38 Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 12: "The whole body of the faithful who have anointing that comes from the Holy One (cf. 1Jn 2:20, 27) cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith of the whole people (*supernaturali sensu fidei totius populi*), when, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful' (Augustine, *De Praed. Sanct.* 14, 27), they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals (*universalem suum consensum de rebus fidei et morum*). By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*Magisterium*), and obeying it, receives not the mere word of men, but truly the word of God (cf. 1Thess 2:13), the faith once for all delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3). The People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life."
- 39 Ian Ker, *The Achievement of John Henry Newman* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 2.
- 40 David Begg, "John Henry Newman and the Idea of a University," in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 109 (433) (2020) 41-47 at p. 42.
- 41 John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (1852, 1858, 1873) <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/index.html>. Commentators on *Idea* include: Begg, JHN and the *Idea*; Cornwell, *Newman's Unquiet Grave*, pp. 122-37; Dulles, Newman, pp. 102-9, 134-47; Ker, JHN: *A Biography*, pp. 206-12, 376-96, 461-2; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of a University: A Reexamination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) (quote is from p. 9).
- 42 Newman, *Idea*, pp. 70 and 127.
- 43 John Henry Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on the Occasion of Mr Gladstone's Recent Expostulation* (1875) <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/anglicans/volume2/gladstone/index.html>. Commentators on *Duke of Norfolk* include: Anthony Fisher, "Conscience, relativism, and truth," *Nova et Vetera* 18(2) (Spring 2020),

- 337-53, and sources therein, especially Ratzinger; Ker, JHN: A Biography, pp. 680-94; Luke Terlinden, "Newman and conscience," in Lefebvre & Mason, JHN: Doctor, 207-20.
- 44 Newman, Duke of Norfolk, p. 248. This is quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1778. Cf. Gerard Magill, Religious Morality in John Henry Newman: Hermeneutics of the Imagination (Springer, 2015), p. 129.
- 45 Newman, Duke of Norfolk, p. 130. Furthermore, at p. 250: "When men [today] advocate the rights of conscience, they in no sense mean the rights of the Creator, nor the duty to Him... but the right of thinking, speaking, writing, and acting, according to their judgment or their humour, without any thought of God at all. They do not even pretend to go by any moral rule, but they demand... for each to be his own master in all things, and to profess what he pleases, asking no one's leave, and accounting priest or preacher, speaker or writer, unutterably impertinent, who dares to say a word against his going to perdition, if he like it, in his own way... Conscience has rights because it has duties; but in this age, with a large portion of the public, it is the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a Lawgiver and Judge, to be independent of unseen obligations."
- 46 John Henry Newman, "Saintliness the standard of Christian principle," Discourses to Mixed Congregations, Discourse 5 <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/discourses/discourse5.html>, p. 83.
- 47 John Paul II, Letter on the First Centenary, 4, quoting Newman, Duke of Norfolk, p. 250.
- 48 Newman, Duke of Norfolk, p. 132.
- 49 John Henry Newman, "The religion of the day," Parochial and Plain Sermons, vol. 1, Sermon 24, pp. 309-24 <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume1/sermon24.html>. Commentators on Religion of the Day and on the Biglietto Speech include: Robert Barron, "A great mischief: Newman on liberalism in religion," in Lefebvre & Mason, JHN: Doctor, 99-114; Dulles, Newman, pp. 14, 72, 151; Robert Pattison, The Great Dissent: John Henry Newman and the Liberal Heresy (OUP, 1991); Edward Short, "Holding liberalism to account: The prescience of John Henry Newman," Mercatornet 11 October 2019.
- 50 Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers (xxx, 2005).
- 51 Newman, "Religion of the day," pp. 310.
- 52 Newman, "Religion of the day," p. 311: "manners are courteous; we avoid giving pain or offence; our words become correct; our relative duties are carefully performed".
- 53 Newman, "Religion of the day," pp. 311-14.
- 54 Ker, "Newman, the Councils, and Vatican II."
- 55 John Henry Newman, Response to the Announcement of his Cardinalate (The Biglietto Speech), 12 May 1879, The Times 13 May 1879 and L'Osservatore Romano 13 May 1879, <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/addresses/file2.html>. Newman expressed himself surprised to receive that honour, as he lacked the perfections of the saints, and could only say of himself that there was "an honest intention, an absence of private ends, a temper of obedience, a willingness to be corrected, a dread of error, a desire to serve Holy Church, and, through Divine mercy, a fair measure of success."
- 56 And, since for modernity "religion is so personal a peculiarity and so private a possession, we must of necessity ignore it in the intercourse of man with man. If a man puts on a new religion every morning, what is that to you? It is as impertinent to think about a man's religion as about his sources of income or his management of his family. Religion is in no sense the bond of society." (Newman, Biglietto Speech)
- 57 John Griffin, "The meaning of 'national apostasy': A note on Newman's Apologia," Faith & Reason 2(1) (Spring 1976), 1-8.
- 58 Newman, Biglietto Speech. In Development, p 357-58 Newman warned that modernity will then be wedded to views like: "That truth and falsehood in religion are but matter of opinion; that one doctrine is as good as another; that the Governor of the world does not intend that we should gain the truth; that there is no truth... that no one is answerable for his opinions... that it is enough if we sincerely hold what we profess; that our merit lies in seeking, not in possessing; that it is a duty to follow what seems to us true, without a fear lest it should not be true... that we may take up and lay down opinions at pleasure... that we may safely trust to ourselves in matters of Faith, and need no other guide"
- 59 Newman, Development, p 357.
- 60 Newman, Biglietto Speech.
- 61 Tim Drake, "Cardinal George: The myth and reality of 'I'll die in my bed,'" National Catholic Register blog 24 October 2012 <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/tim-drake/the-myth-and-the-reality-of-ill-die-in-my-bed>

- 62 Newman, *Infidelity*, pp. 125-26.
- 63 John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851) <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/england/index.html>, pp. 390-1. Commentators on *Present Position* include: Dulles, Newman, pp. 9, 55, 109, 117; Ker, *JHN: A Biography*, pp. 361-72, 413-16.
- 64 John Henry Newman, "The Second Spring" (1852), *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, Sermon 10 <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/occasions/sermon10.html>, p. 164: "We mourn over the blossoms of May, because they are to wither; but we know, withal, that May is one day to have its revenge upon November, by the revolution of that solemn circle which never stops—which teaches us in our height of hope, ever to be sober, and in our depth of desolation, never to despair." Commentators on *Second Spring* include: Ker, *JHN: A Biography*, pp. 381-2.
- 65 Newman, *Second Spring*, pp. 165-66: "that which ought to come to nought, endures; that which promises a future, disappoints and is no more... Man rises to fall: he tends to dissolution from the moment he begins to be... How beautiful is the human heart, when it puts forth its first leaves... fairer far, in its green foliage and bright blossoms, is natural virtue. It blooms in the young, like some rich flower, so delicate, so fragrant, and so dazzling. Generosity and lightness of heart and amiableness, the confiding spirit, the gentle temper, the elastic cheerfulness, the open hand, the pure affection, the noble aspiration, the heroic resolve, the romantic pursuit, the love in which self has no part... and yet, as night follows upon day, as decrepitude follows upon health, so surely are failure, and overthrow, and annihilation, the issue of this natural virtue, if time only be allowed to it to run its course... moroseness, and misanthropy, and selfishness, is the ordinary winter of that spring."
- 66 Newman, *Second Spring*, p. 167.
- 67 Newman, *Second Spring*, p. 170. At p. 171: "Oh, that miserable day, centuries before we were born! What a martyrdom to live in it and see the fair form of Truth, moral and material, hacked piecemeal, and every limb and organ carried off, and burned in the fire, or cast into the deep! But at last the work was done. Truth was disposed of, and shovelled away, and there was a calm, a silence, a sort of peace;—and such was about the state of things when we were born into this weary world."
- 68 Newman, *Second Spring*, p. 174.
- 69 Newman, *Second Spring*, p. 177.





New Tasks for Universities: The Catholic Tradition, Contemporary Universities, and Intellectual Universality

**Rev. Thomas Joseph White op
Rector magnificus
Pontifical University of
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Dear friends, I would like to thank the presidents of Australian Catholic University and Notre Dame University for their kind invitation. It is a genuine and unmerited honor for me to respond to my senior Dominican confrere, Archbishop Anthony Fisher whose discourse that we just heard was typically insightful, appropriately challenging, and culturally pertinent.

I have three remarks that are meant to compliment his presentation, each in regard to the university, Catholic intellectual and spiritual life, and the spirit of John Henry Newman.

First, then, a remark about the changing nature of universities in our world and the incumbent challenges on Catholic universities. Let us recall that the western university system as we know it today has its remote historical origins in 12th and 13th century cathedral schools of cities like Padua, Oxford, and Paris, where scholars and clerics sought to correlate the findings of the diverse disciplines of the arts, mathematics, observational sciences, philosophical subjects, and theological study of revelation, so as to coordinate these into a unified and differentiated form of learning.¹ This task was made more imperative and challenging by the discovery of the Aristotelian corpus,

with its diverse methods for distinct philosophical disciplines, but this challenge had as its effect, so I would argue, the bringing about of a deep renewal of Catholic learning, in which natural reason was to be respected, while being understood always in relation to a Theocentric understanding of all of reality, seen in light of the Trinity, and of Jesus Christ as the God-man, that is to say, as a human being who is also the eternal Word or Reason of God, made human.²

This proposed harmony of faith and reason presupposed not only that Christian faith in divine revelation is *not* irrational, which clearly is correct, but also that natural reason is somehow open natively to the question of God, as a genuine philosophical and rationally motivated question.³ John Henry Newman saw this well in his *Idea of the University*, because he claims there that the discipline that most actively unites the various academic disciplines intellectually and culturally on a university campus, is philosophy, insofar as it falls within the purview of natural reason to unite the activities of natural reason toward a common goal of understanding. However, he also notes that philosophical reasoning about God and the human person is the 'place' from which one can argue reasonably for the warrant of engagement in religious practice and theological investigation of revelation.⁴

I note all this because this particular idea of a Theocentric conception of learning, found in thinkers like Aquinas and Newman, is far from antiquated. When

universities lose a Theocentric or religious *philosophical* orientation, they frequently become alienated from religious traditions altogether academically, and thus of course from the serious intellectual consideration of Christian truth claims. In turn, they also typically become subject to internal academic fracturing and balkanization, wherein the disciplines and their methods merely become specialties without clear relation to one another, and the overview of why the university exists becomes a novel problem without clear solution. Those looking for practical answers as to why universities now exist readily fall back on one of two solutions: either they exist to be technocratic formations centers for high practical sciences, like law medicine and engineering, what Newman called “Servile Arts,” however, noble, or they exist for political purposes, as the humanities and sciences are weaponized ideologically to obtain cultural political transformation, to incite social change and inform electoral outcomes, through pressure movements formed by a new university activist culture.⁵

In fact, as Alasdair MacIntyre has noted, the universality of the university depends on a form of inquiry that is open to the widest possible spectrum of causal explanation, and that seeks to know the truth for its own sake, not in view of a mere utility however significant.⁶ But this means that genuine universality depends upon some form of genuine rational inquiry into the problem and mystery of God, conceived of philosophically and metaphysically as well as theologically, as a truth that may be engaged with in public intellectual culture.⁷ If it does not open to the possibility of religious horizons, universal reason is endangered in its own best realizations.⁸

And by way of contrast, if the study of God is freely undertaken in a modern Catholic intellectual environment, one that is cosmopolitan and non-defensive, open to a

multitude of questions and objections, then it can only serve to help society at large and universities more generally to avoid a narrow and restricted form of reasoning, of the type Archbishop Fisher refers to.

Second, we live in a culturally global age we have not yet begun as Catholics to appreciate and engage with sufficiently, on an intellectual level. Most of the discourse on university campuses today about diversity, equity, and inclusion- or about exclusion in the classic western canon- is part of an internal debate within the western European intellectual tradition that is self-referential in some fundamental sense. It pertains to a form of methodological skepticism about the value of classical figures and ideas, as a potential prelude to new forms of openness or more likely to new forms of imposed narrowness of intellectual ideas that all must consent to. Catholic Christians need not be defensively committed a priori to a modern western canon of post-enlightenment academic literature. They can and should be committed however to a preservation of their own classical intellectual patrimony as well as a principled engagement with the great figures of alternative traditions from the past European debates of the renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment periods.⁹ Understanding Hume’s objections to religion is clearly a part of Catholic intellectual life, just as is the study of Dante. Catholic universities need to maintain a principled and creative commitment to our own best intellectual traditions, those represented by the learned and theologically informed study of the Old and New Testaments, as well as figures like Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Newman, as well as Shakespeare, Michelangelo and a host of others. But today we must also engage more deeply and more expertly with the great intellectual traditions of the majority worlds of India and China, including in the various philosophical and

religious traditions of these cultures, both classical and modern.¹⁰ Here we must also mention the world of Islamic religious, philosophical, legal, and artistic culture. This work has hardly begun but it cannot begin or be conducted responsibly if we do not also first have a deep understanding of our own traditions. These two ideas go together rather than standing in opposition. Catholic means universal, and Christ is at the center of that Catholicity. His light does not destroy anything that is good, but rather elevates and purifies our regard on its deeper significance.¹¹

My final thought is brief and pertains to the place of love in any healthy university culture. John Henry Newman was especially inspired by St. Philip Neri, the founder of the Oratory and the official heavenly patron of Rome. St. Philip was a learned man, and he insisted on study for those under his spiritual direction, many of whom contributed to the reform of the Catholic Church in the early modern period. But he was also a person of expansive mystical love, a person deeply moved from within by a contemplative life in which he sought continuously to be a prayerful, inward disciple of the Holy Spirit.¹² Newman

understood from St. Philip that in times of challenge, the Church is renewed through societies of common friendship joined by religious devotion, the love of God, and the contemplation of Christ, joined with the love of learning, and the desire for intellectual evangelization. Catholic culture must be preserved, including on university campuses, by a shared chapel of the heart, as well as the mind, where friends seek to love God together, to contemplate his mystery, to live in a state of grace, and so seek to preserve an attitude of living reverence for the presence of God. Renewal of Catholic university life in a modern, secularized culture, requires that one study the mystery of God, philosophically and theologically, in conversation with the various other academic disciplines and alternative secular and religious traditions. But it also requires that one seek to find God spiritually, like St. Philip and John Henry Newman, in common devotion to God, in a shared friendship of intellectual seeking, and contemplative life. This is a thing Newman cultivated in 19th secular Birmingham, in holiness and to great public effect, and it is something we also can and should seek to cultivate in our own age.

Endnotes

- 1 See on this point Ulrich G. Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, trans. M. Miller (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 120–81. See also Ralph McInerny, “Beyond the Liberal Arts,” in *Being and Predication* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 25–47.
- 2 Aquinas takes this approach in his treatment of theology as an ultimate science and *as sacra doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1. See also his important reflection on the distinction and unity of the sciences in his *Commentary on Boethius’ De Trinitate*, translated in two volumes as *Faith, Reason and Theology*, trans. A. Maurer (Toronto: PIMS, 1987); *The Division and Methods of the Sciences: Questions V and VI of his*

Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius, trans. A. Maurer (Toronto: PIMS, 1986).

- 3 Medieval theologians of the 12th–14th centuries posited distinct and sometimes incompatible notions of the ways that natural philosophical reason might be open to faith and inclined to it. Richard of St. Victor, for example, argued that the Christian philosopher can prove the necessary existence of personal communion in God by appeal to the notion of perfect love in God. Aquinas disavowed the philosophical rationality of this argument but did affirm that the intellect has a natural desire to know God essentially and immediately, which is philosophically demonstrable. Duns Scotus argued, meanwhile, that philosophical arguments for the existence of a distinct of Trinitarian persons in God may be derived

- from the consideration of God's perfect nature as intellectual and volitional. The modern magisterium has tended to affirm the more modest route of Aquinas, by underscoring that the mystery of the Trinity cannot be known by natural reason, but that natural reason is open to the possibility of divine revelation and that inward divine revelation of the mystery of God's inner life as Trinity, provided by grace alone, is accompanied by "external" public signs of credibility (like miracles) that confirm to natural reason the rationality of belief in the Catholic faith. See in this regard the First Vatican Council document, *Dei Filius*, as well as by John Paul II, in his famous 1999 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. [Official English translations of these documents of the magisterium may be found at www.vatican.va.] On Richard, Aquinas and Scotus, see my *The Trinity, On the Nature and Mystery of the One God* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022), chapter 21-22.
- 4 See John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University, Defined and Illustrated* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), part I, discourse 2, "Theology as a Branch of Knowledge."
 - 5 See Reinhard Huetter, "God, the University, and the Missing Link- Wisdom: Reflections on Two Untimely Books," *The Thomist*, 73 (2009): 241-77; "University education, the unity of knowledge, and (natural) theology: John Henry Newman's prophetic provocation," *Acta Philosophica*, vol. 22, (2013): 235-56.
 - 6 Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011).
 - 7 See the pertinent reflections on this claim by Pope Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections" (Regensburg Address), September 12, 2006. Bernhard Lonergan thematizes in his own distinctive and wide-ranging way this aspiration toward the universal and toward knowledge of God present at the heart of human rationality in his *Insight*, vol. 3 of the *Collected Works* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), especially chapters 16 and 19.
 - 8 I explore the relations of this idea to the universal outreach of the will to the good and the freedom of religious transitions toward the transcendent mystery of God in "The Right to Religious Freedom: Thomistic Principles of Nature and Grace," *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2015): 1149-1184.
 - 9 See the suggestive recent work of Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions and Responsible Knowledge* (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2015); *Incomprehensible Certainty: Metaphysics and Hermeneutics of the Image* (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2022), and Carlos Eire, *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450-1650* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016).
 - 10 See the suggestive recent works Martin Ganeri, *Indian Thought and Western Theism: The Vedanta of Ramanuja* (London: Routledge, 2015), and of James Dominic Rooney, *Material Objects in Confucian and Aristotelian Metaphysics: The Inevitability of Hylomorphism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).
 - 11 See the treatment of elements of grace and truth in the document of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith from the year 2000, *Dominus Jesus On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church as a relecture* of the 1965 document *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council. [www.vatican.va.] Although the *Dominus Jesus* document was a subject of controversy due to its clear affirmation of the unique plenary truth of Christianity and the exclusive mediation of all salvation by the Savior Jesus Christ, it also contains unambiguous affirmations regarding the presence of the grace of Christ present in universal history, suggesting that this grace may possibly be present or may be communicated at times in elements of non-Christian religious traditions.
 - 12 See Edoardo Aldo Cerrato, *Saint Philip Neri. His Work and His Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: Cluny Media, 2021).

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