

shed, rapine and fear, and consuming selfishness. They are our hope. Though unnoticed, though unsung, they will make a difference in their attempting to go beyond mere labels to the radical core of their Christianity. With them striving, plugging away, suffering in the manner of the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount, whatever happens in the future to us as a people, they will make a difference to that future.

You too will make a difference, certainly, whatever you do, whatever you will be after today. I only pray it will be the kind that those little people I spoke of represent — the kind that will enlarge our hope. From these rites, then, from our ritual questions and our ritual answers, we pass on from symbol to reality. In that reality, let us make — hope.

*EX UMBRIS ET IMAGINIBUS:* \*  
THE CONVERSION OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

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I

When the Catholics of London decided to have a memorial service for Cardinal Newman a few days after his death, they invited the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Edward Manning, to preach the eulogy. Manning was then an old man. He had been a great archbishop in many respects. He was particularly good to the poor. But there was in his character a streak of pettiness caused perhaps by envy of the great Newman. And so, he had not been Newman's friend. Indeed, he had been Newman's antagonist. He had tried to block Newman's progress, and in some cases had even conspired to try to destroy him. It is therefore all the more remarkable that when Newman died, Manning ended his eulogy of Newman in the following words:

We lost our greatest witness to the Faith and we are all poorer and lower by the loss. . . . He had committed the hitherto unpardonable sin in England. He had become Catholic as our fathers were. And yet for no one in our memory has such a heartfelt and loving veneration been poured out. Of this one proof is enough. Someone has said, whether Rome canonizes him or not, he will be canonized in the thoughts of pious people of many creeds in England.

The history of our land will hereafter record the name of John Henry Newman among the greatest of her people, as a confessor of the Faith, a great teacher of men, a preacher of justice, of piety, and of compassion. May we all

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follow him in life, and may our own end be painless and gentle like his. — (Apud Moody, *Newman*, p. 339)

John Henry Newman was born in 1801 and died in 1890 at the age of 89. Had he lived another decade, his life would have coincided exactly with the 19th century — that century which is the subject of these Haggerty Hall lectures of which this is the closing one. His life was divided into three well-defined periods. The first period comprised the first 45 years of his life prior to his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. They were spent mostly at Oxford.

The second period comprised the 34 years — three decades and a half — from his conversion at age 45 to his becoming a Cardinal at age 79. During that period he was a Catholic priest who used his extraordinary talents in various ways for the advancement of the Catholic Faith. Those were fruitful years, full of great achievements; but they were also painful years, when the great Newman was subjected to the harassments inflicted by petty men, many of them his own converts, and some of whom occupied high ecclesiastical positions. Which goes to show that high positions are not always occupied by great men.

The third period of his life were the last ten years, when, as an old man and a Cardinal, he lived a life of serenity and graciousness. When he died, he asked that his epitaph should read: *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*: From darkness and shadowy images into the light of truth.

Because of our limited time, we shall not speak of the second or the third period of his life. Let us hope that another occasion might present itself for that. Let us confine ourselves to the first period, when, as an Anglican priest at Oxford, Newman lighted a great blaze which was seen by many in many lands, which started a revolution within the Anglican communion, and which brought many Anglicans into the Roman Catholic Church.

II

John Henry Newman was born into a well-to-do London family that later suffered financial reverses. Despite those reverses, he managed to obtain an excellent education, first at Ealing, later at Trinity College, Oxford. Although he was conspicuously brilliant, he failed (to every one's surprise) to win honors in the final examination. He made up for that by taking a competitive examination, as a result of which he was elected Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. And there he would have remained, a Fellow of Oriel all his life, had he not been forced to resign his fellowship because of his conversion to the Catholic Faith. He loved Oxford, and leaving Oxford was part of the enormous price he had to pay in order to become a Roman Catholic.

As an Oriel fellow, Newman did some tutoring of students for a few years, but he

soon had to give that up and to devote himself more thoroughly to his pastoral ministry as a preacher. He had been ordained an Anglican priest, and had been appointed vicar of St. Mary's, which was the Anglican parish church for Oxford University. Sunday after Sunday, year after year, for thirteen years, he preached a sermon in the evenings at St. Mary's, and many in Oxford went to hear him. This weekly preaching was the principal instrument by which he was able to exercise a very wide and profound influence on the lives and the thinking of many persons.

What did he preach about? He preached the Christian Faith as he himself lived it and as he perceived it: and there was considerable development in that perception. He had been born into a Protestant family. His mother was a Calvinist, descended from the Huguenots. In his early manhood he experienced a psychological crisis which he considered a turning point in his life and which he described as a conversion; it had two permanent results: first, he had an abiding awareness of the presence of God; second, he made a decision to live a life of celibacy. We Catholics might perhaps call it a vow of chastity.

Brought up as a Protestant, his outlook gradually became less and less Protestant and more and more Catholic, due to his contacts and his reading. In particular, his thinking was influenced by his study of the Fathers of the early Church. Gradually he came to realize several things that are essential to the Catholic Faith. He realized that Christ's teaching is transmitted through a Church: the Apostles taught their disciples; those disciples taught theirs; and so on down the ages. We call this Tradition.

In this living Tradition – that is to say, in transmitting the message of Christ – the Church cannot err. Individual bishops might err. Large segments of Christians might err. But the Universal Church itself throughout the world cannot make a mistake: *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*: the whole world (that is, the whole Christian world) is safe in its judgments.

But the outstanding witnesses to the genuine Christian tradition were those who were closest to the source, namely the Fathers of the Church in the early centuries of Christianity. That was why Newman took up the study of the Greek Fathers and wrote books concerning the Arian and the Donatist controversies.

Furthermore, as Newman came gradually to realize, the Church does not only teach; it also sanctifies through preaching and the sacraments. This is made possible through the sacrament of orders, which again is handed down through the ages from the Apostles. The bishops of today get their powers from the Apostles. This is the doctrine of Apostolic Succession.

But which is the true Christian Church? Which Church has this apostolic succession? Certainly, the Eastern Orthodox churches have it; certainly, also, the Roman Catholic Church; certainly not the Protestants who do not believe in apostolic succession to begin with; and certainly not the Liberals, who apparently do not believe in anything. But the Romanists (or Papists as the British call us) have (in Newman's thinking) introduced corruptions into the true Christian teaching. Newman had been brought up to

look on the Pope as the whore of Babylon. The "excessive" powers claimed by the Bishop of Rome; the doctrine of Purgatory; the excessive, even "idolatrour," veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints: these and other things (thought Newman) were Roman corruptions of the true Christian Faith.

What then about the Anglican Church, the Church of England? To Newman that Church was a branch of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Church of England, he thought, was the *via media* – the middle way – between the defects of Protestantism on the one hand and the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church on the other.

The Church of England, however, had two enemies. Many Protestants and Anglicans would say that the real enemy was the Roman Catholic Church. Not Newman. For him, the Church of Rome was to be respected, if also to be pitied. For Newman, the danger to the Church of England came rather from the Protestants who did not believe in Catholic teaching, and from the Liberals to whom one religion was as good as another: all religions are useful; none of them is true.

In the concrete, as Newman saw it, the real peril for the Church of England came from the fact that it was not independent but was a creature of the State. The King or Queen was its head. The Prime Minister was its real ruler. He appointed the bishops and parish priests. Parliament was the lawmaking body of the Church – and Parliament was composed of persons of many faiths, and some of no faith at all. When bishops and priests were being appointed who did not believe in baptismal regeneration or other tenets of the Catholic Faith, the Church of England was in danger of becoming non-Catholic or even non-Christian. This, to Newman and to many others who thought like him, was the real danger.

### III

In 1832, Newman took a few months off for a much needed vacation. He joined a friend, Hurrell Froude and Froude's father, and went on a grand tour of the Continent. They went through France to many parts of Italy, ending up in Sicily where they parted company. Hurrell Froude believed himself a Catholic even though an Anglican. The constant conversation with Froude and the personal contact with Catholic Europe crystallized Newman's thinking. It was during this trip that he conceived the ideas that were soon to be embodied in the series of pamphlets which he was to call *Tracts for the Times*. These pamphlets were part of, and in great part were the cause of, what was to be called the Oxford Movement.

In Sicily, Newman fell seriously ill. Delirious and near death, he was heard to say, "I have not sinned against the light." When he recovered, he was in a hurry to get back to England. He felt he had urgent work to do there. Therefore, instead of going overland through Italy and France, he went by sea, direct for England. On board the ship he wrote that hymn, /"Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom./ The night is dark and I am

far from home . . . / I do not ask to see the distant scene:/ One step enough for me."

When he arrived back in England — refreshed from his vacation and fully recovered from his illness — he was ready for a fight: ready, that is, to fight for the Catholic Faith of the Church of England, against the non-Christian tendencies of the Liberalism of the day.

There were already several men who thought like himself. Newman mentions their names in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. One of them was Keble, another was Pusey; there were others, some at Oxford, some at Cambridge, some in various countries and cities of England. Some of them wished to form a committee. But, as Newman remarks in the *Apologia*, no great movement has ever come out of committees. All great movements have begun with individuals.

Four days after Newman's return to Oxford, Pusey preached a sermon from the pulpit of St. Mary's, at Newman's invitation. The sermon made a profound impression. He entitled it "On National Apostasy." The Church of England, by being a mere creature of the British government, was in danger of apostasy from the Christian Faith.

Newman at once started his campaign as a follow-up on that sermon. The objective was to bring the Church of England back to the Faith of the Fathers and of the great Anglican divines of the 17th century. Newman began to publish one pamphlet a week, which he called "Tracts for the Times". That was why the Oxford Movement which resulted from that campaign came also to be called the Tractarian Movement.

What were these tracts? Some of them were brief. Others were long. At least 26 were written by Newman himself, the rest were written by others but edited and published by him. Week after week for ninety weeks — six weeks short of eighty years — the pamphlets issued from the press and were immediately brought up and read. They were best-sellers. They occasioned an enormous amount of controversy. Many were in favor of them; others were against; some were glad; others were angry — but they all read and discussed the pamphlets. Tract number 90 created an uproar: so great an uproar that Newman was censured by the heads of houses of Oxford and condemned by twenty-four Anglican bishops. That condemnation ended the tracts. It also brought about wholesale conversions from the Church of England to the Roman Catholic Church — including, eventually, Newman's own conversion. We shall return to Tract 90 presently.

#### IV

Some of the participants of the Oxford Movement later on wrote memoirs in which they described Newman's role in the Movement. Looking back, it was Newman's preaching, as well as his writing, that exerted so widespread and so profound an influence.

Here is what a well-known poet and scholar, Matthew Arnold, wrote about Newman's preaching:

The name of Cardinal Newman is a great name to the imagination still; his genius and style are still things of power. Forty years ago he was in the prime of life; he was close at hand to us at Oxford; he was preaching in St. Mary's pulpit every Sunday; he seemed about to transform and to renew what was for us the most national and natural institution in the world, the Church of England. Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising in the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music — subtle, sweet and mournful? — (Quoted by Moody, *Newman*, p. 57)

And here is what another wrote about the Oxford Movement who, during the days of that Movement, had been antagonistic to it:

The movement when at its height extended its influence far beyond the circle of those who directly adopted its views. It raised the average morality in Oxford to a level which perhaps it had never reached before .... If such was the general aspect of Oxford society at that time, where was the center and soul from which so mighty a power emanated? It lay, and had for some years lain, mainly in one man, a man in many ways the most remarkable that England has seen in this century — John Henry Newman. The influence he had gained, without apparently setting himself to seek it, was something altogether unlike anything else in our time. A mysterious veneration had by degrees gathered round him, till now it was almost as though some Ambrose or Augustine of older ages had reappeared .... In Oriel Lane light-hearted undergraduates would drop their voices and whisper, 'There's Newman,' as with head thrust forward and gaze fixed as though at some vision seen only by himself, with swift noiseless step he glided by. As we fell on them for a moment almost as if it had been some apparition that had passed..... — (Principal Shairp of St. Andrew's, "Essay on Keble" quoted by Moody, *Newman*, pp. 54-55)

The same writer added an explanation of Newman's enormous influence:

What were the qualities that inspired these feelings? There was, of course, learning and refinement. There was genius, not indeed of a philosopher, but of a subtle and original thinker, an unequalled edge of dialectic, and these all glorified by the imagination of a poet. Then, there was the utter unworldliness, the setting aside of all things which men most prize, the timelessness of soul which was ready to essay the impossible. Men felt that here was "One of that small transfigured band which the world cannot tame."

—(Shairp, "Essay on Keble" quoted by Moody, *Newman*, p. 54)

As for his style of preaching and the subject-matter of his sermons, here is what the same writer says:

The center from which his power went forth was the pulpit of St. Mary's, with those wonderful afternoon sermons. Sunday after Sunday, year after year, they went on, each continuing and deepening the impression produced by the last. What there was of High Church teaching was implied rather than enforced. The local, the temporary and the modern were ennobled by the presence of the Catholic truth belonging to all ages that pervaded the whole. His power showed itself chiefly in the new and unlooked for ways in which he touched into life old truths, moral and spiritual, which all Christians acknowledge but most have ceased to feel — when he spoke of Unreal Words, of the Individuality of the Soul, of the Invisible World, of Ventures of Faith, of the Cross of Christ the Measure of the World....As he spoke, how the old truth became new; how it came home with a meaning never felt before! He laid his finger, how gently, yet how powerfully, on some inner place in the hearer's heart, and told him things about himself he had never known till then. Subtlest truths, which it would have taken philosophers pages of circumlocution and big words to state, were dropped by the way in a sentence or two of the most transparent Saxon. What delicacy of style, yet what strength! How simple, yet how suggestive! How homely, yet how refined! How penetrating, yet how tender hearted! — (Shairp "Essay on Keble" quoted by Moody, *Newman*, pp. 55-56)

One of his biographies sums up the attitude of the sermons as follows:

There is never any bitterness in his discourses, even when he dwells on men's weak-besses. His indignation does at times seem to overwhelm him as he criticizes the indifferentism and lukewarmness which seems everywhere to prevail, both within and outside the Church. But instead of sending his hearers to equip themselves for the trials of life, such as suffering, persecution, and even martyrdom if necessary, through *sanctity* — personal sanctity and holiness. He urges them to acquire "that inward witness to the truth lodged in our hearts," which can only be felt through holiness of spirit. In one of his sermons he says, "Let us turn from shadows of all kinds — shadows of sense, or shadows of argument and disputation, or shadows addressed to our imagination and tastes. Let us attempt, through God's grace, to advance and sanctify the inward man." — (John Moody *Newman*, p. 57)

Newman was a man of many talents. Essentially a scholar, he also had other interests. As a young man, he rowed in the river, like most Oxford students. He played the violin. He was given to long walks, occasionally walking as far as 17 miles to visit friends. He is said to seek his relaxation solving mathematical problems. But even before his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, he was a man of prayer. Even as an Anglican

he introduced several Catholic practices, like the reciting of the divine office and the practice of confession. When about to be ordained an Anglican priest, he prepared for his ordination by prayer and fasting. He looked upon that ordination as a total dedication of himself to God. One of his painful experiences must have been the realization that Anglican ordination was invalid. He had to be re-ordained a priest in Rome after his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church.

What did Newman look like? Here is one description:

His appearance was striking. He was above the middle height, slight and spare. His hands were large, his face remarkably like that of Julius Caesar. . . . I have often thought of the resemblances, and believed that it extended to the temperament.... Both were formed by nature to command others, both had the faculty of attracting to themselves the passionate devotion of friends and followers," — (James Anthony Froude, apud Moody, *Newman*, p. 57)

One writer sums up Newman's influence simply: "That great man's extraordinary genius drew all those within his sphere like a magnet, to attach themselves to him and to his doctrines." — (Sir Francis Doyle, apud Moody, *Newman*, p. 53)

## V

Let us go back to Tract 90. Why did it create such an uproar? Why was it condemned? Why was Newman — the great preacher and writer of the Church of England — repudiated by the officers of his own University and condemned by the bishops of his own Church?

Tract 90 was an attempt by Newman to show that the 39 Articles of the Church of England could be understood in a Catholic sense. This was too much for the Anglicans. "Newman has gone too far," they said; The 39 Articles had been adopted in the time of Queen Elizabeth I, precisely in order to make the Church of England Protestant: and here was Newman, claiming that they could and should be interpreted in a Catholic sense!

In those days no Catholic could be admitted to Oxford or Cambridge. Nobody could graduate unless he subscribed to the 39 Articles. If Newman was right in his interpretation of those Articles, then the day might come when Catholics — even Roman Catholics — could enter Oxford! What a horrible thought! What a dreadful catastrophe that would be for England!

So they condemned him. All the heads of the Oxford colleges censured him. Twenty-four Anglican bishops condemned him.

Their condemnation was a bitter pill for Newman to swallow, but it served to open his eyes to what everyone else saw except himself. It began to dawn on him that the Church of England was really not Catholic at all; that his campaign to bring it back to Catholic doctrine was a hopeless campaign. Why prove that the bishops had apostolic succession if the bishops themselves did not believe in apostolic succession?

In our day the Church of England has become increasingly Catholic. Many Anglicans believe in the same doctrines as we do; many have adopted our liturgy. So close is the Anglican Communion to us Roman Catholics that meetings and conversations have been held to determine the doctrinal position of each Church to see if there is a way of achieving union. All that is a development of the 20th century, and much of it is due precisely to Newman and the Oxford Movement of the 19th century.

But this delayed result of that Movement had not yet taken place in Newman's time. In the 19th Century the Anglican Church was largely governed by bishops and others whose thinking was far from Catholic. The Church of England was in fact Protestant, not Catholic. If anyone desired to be a Catholic, he could do so only by joining the one true Catholic and Apostolic Church, namely the Church of Rome.

Faced with that situation, Newman resigned his "living" as vicar of St. Mary's Church. He went back to lay communion, as he called it, and he now lived in a cottage which he had built near Oxford, in a village called Littlemore. There several persons joined him, and they lived a simple, prayerful monastic kind of life, without rules or superior, but which some visitors found to be "shockingly cheerful." Meantime, many of Newman's followers left the Church of England and joined the Roman Catholic Church.

## VI

There was still one obstacle that prevented Newman himself from entering the Catholic Church at once. It was his belief — or rather his prejudice — that the Roman Catholic Church had introduced corruptions into the Christian Faith.

It was to clarify his own mind on that point that Newman embarked on a book, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. He began to examine the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, and he discovered that they were really not corruptions or distortions but logical and psychological developments of the original deposit of faith. Doctrines develop the way a tree develops from a seed, or an adult person from a baby. There is little resemblance between the tall and spreading tree and the small seed, yet it is the same tree. There is little resemblance between the adult person and the baby, yet it is the same individual. Development is a sign of life: if there is no development, the seed is dead.

This concept of development — accepted by all theologians today — was revolutionary in Newman's day. He was the first to propose it. For instance, in the early Church there were no novenas, no altars to Mary. But the early Christians recognized

Mary as the Mother of Christ. The Council of Ephesus recognized her as the Mother of God. Our present devotion to Mary is an inevitable logical development of that doctrine.

Similarly, the Eucharist. The early Church had no tabernacles, no benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, no processions of Corpus Christi. But they believe that the bread became Christ's Body; the wine became His blood. Our modern devotions are logical developments of that Faith. And so with other tenets of the Catholic Church.

When Newman saw that, even before he finished the book, he asked to be received into the Catholic Church. In doing so he was saying goodbye to his friends, to Oxford, and to all things that he held most dear. Even to his family, for they never forgave him for becoming a Catholic. It was part of the price he had to pay, for leaving the shadows and the shadowy images, to go into the light of truth: *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*.

## VII

Let me conclude by quoting a well-known passage from one of Newman's sermons, delivered at Oxford in 1834, one year after the start of the Oxford Movement. This passage is brief, but it will give an example of Newman's style: he was one of the best prose writers in the English language. The passage will also give an example of his deeply spiritual vision, as one who looked upon this life as a preparation for the life to come. Here is the passage:

May He support us all the day long, till the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, in His mercy, may He grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last.