



Cardinal John Henry Newman

Cardinal John Henry Newman was an innovative educator and pastor of the Church in 19th century England. Born in London on February 21, 1801, he began his academic career at the age of 15, at Trinity College of Oxford University, followed by a fellowship at Oriel, one of Oxford's most intellectually vibrant colleges. As a leader in the 1845 movement to restore Anglicanism back to its Catholic roots, he became drawn to Catholicism. Officially received into the Church on October 9, 1846, he was ordained a priest later that year.

In 1848, Newman introduced the idea of an oratory to England, establishing the prayer-study center of St. Philip Neri near Birmingham. Seven years later, he was appointed rector of the new Catholic University of Ireland, a ministry he anticipated in his famous treatise *The Idea of a University*. In this work, Newman introduced his ideas about Catholic education, many still bear relevance for today.

Cardinal Newman believed that knowledge was valuable in itself and that its primary end was the cultivation of the mind, rather than professional training for a profession: "A university... educates the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth and to grasp it..." (Newman 1854: 6). He maintained that classical literary and philosophical learning strengthens, refines, and enriches the mind for such expansive thinking (Pope 2007: 18).

Therefore, Newman contended that the university exists for the purposes of teaching. For him this did not mean excluding academic research and discovery, for indeed these efforts produce good teachers (Buckley 2006: 3). However, he proposed that the "academy" (our notion of graduate school), was the primary research institution (ibid: 17).

Newman also emphasized communal dimensions of learning. Two points are essential to his understanding of the common life at the university. First, he gave great importance to the relationship between teacher and student because by this interchange students would catch "the living presence" of information contained in their texts. Such animated learning was critical to the education of the whole person: concern for acquiring knowledge and forming character. This required attentiveness to the spiritual as well as intellectual development of students (ibid: 13) Newman proposed that the residential college, where faculty and students shared life and learning, was the ideal environment.

Secondly, Newman was troubled by the fragmentation or compartmentalization of learning at the university. He thought that it limited creative exchange among departments. The various fields of inquiry, he noted, should be united under the meta-discipline of philosophy, because of its universal method of exercising reason upon knowledge. In this way, philosophy has an unlimited horizon capable of fostering cooperation among diverse and complex truths (Dulles 2001: 3).

Newman viewed the life of the university as a stimulating collective of colleges, libraries, prayer centers, along with the needed buildings, fields, as a collaborative endeavor striving for a common purpose: expanding minds.

Another aspect of fragmentation for Newman was the secularization of higher learning. He argued for a unity of all truth and did not endorse a separation or contest between truth of revelation, reason, or science (ibid: 5). Crucial to his view was the need for laity to be well instructed, to know their "creed and be able to give account of it" in the public square. (Newman 1851: ix) In this way, he proposed a truly "catholic" learning, universal in its content and interiorly connected in its grasp of reality.

Throughout his lifetime, Newman was a prodigious writer, educator, and compassionate leader who recognized the need for the church to engage society. His motto "heart speaks to heart" describes his commitment to persons and community in his varied ministries. Even in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864), his classic work of spiritual autobiography, he continues to instruct and to guide "heart to heart."

Cardinal Newman died on August 11, 1890. He was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on September 10, 2010. Pope Benedict's homily for the beatification liturgy summarizes well the gift Cardinal John Henry Newman was for his time and for us today:

His gentle scholarship, deep human wisdom, and profound love of the Lord has born rich fruit, [and] is a sign of the abiding presence of the Holy spirit deep within the heart of God's people, bringing forth abundant gifts of holiness...(Pope Benedict XVI 2010: 2).

Marianne Farina CSC

Works Cited

Newman, John Henry. *Idea of a University*, 1854 Accessed June 16, 2011
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/newman/newman-university.html>

_____. *Present Position of Catholics in England*, 1851 Accessed June 16, 2011.
<http://www.newmanreader.org/works/england/index.html>

Buckley, Michael, "Newman and the Restoration of the Interpersonal in Higher Education," *Santa Clara Lecture Series*, Santa Clara University Vol. 13 November 14, 2006 See:
<http://www.scu.edu/ignatiancenter/events/lectures/archives/index.cfm>

Dulles, Avery, "Newman's Idea of a University and its Relevance to Catholic Higher Education"
<http://www.hccns.org/Docs/Nov10Address.pdf>

Pope, Stephen, "A Vocation for Catholic Higher Learning," *C21 Resources*, Spring 2007
<http://www.bc.edu/church21/publications/c21resources.html>

Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI. Beatification of Venerable Cardinal John Henry Newman,
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/