



# *Cor ad Cor loquitur*

HEART SPEAKS UNTO HEART

## THE CERTAINTY OF NEWMAN: CONSCIENCE AND REALITY

*Heart speaks  
unto Heart*



This work is a response to the invitation to all of us made by Pope Benedict XVI during his journey to Great Britain in 2010 to reflect on the figure of John Henry Newman. He made this invitation above all because Newman was “a modern man, who lived the whole problem of modernity”, and because of the opportunity he saw for all of us to learn from Newman’s three conversions. The three conversions can, in fact, be seen as three ‘conversions to reality’.

### *First conversion*

The first conversion is the discovery that God and the soul are real, and that the presence of God can be perceived with the same concreteness and certainty with which one perceives the outside world, everyday objects or the faces of friends. For the young Newman this is a Copernican revolution: he realizes that what truly counts in life is the clear presence of the person of God, so that all existence becomes a dialogue between the heart of man and the heart of God.

### *Second conversion*

The second conversion brings the realization that faith is not exhausted in an individualistic dialogue with God but becomes an awareness of the whole of reality. A faith that is not rooted in reality, that does not change the criteria with which we relate to the world, is an illusion and not a response to the deep desires of man. From here began Newman’s untiring battle against the dualism between ‘things’ and ‘words’ and his surprising discovery that a true dialogue between man and God opens up a dialogue with the hearts of other human beings.

### *Third conversion*

The final conversion is Newman’s conversion to Catholicism. It is the discovery that God decided to ‘interfere in human affairs’, creating a real place of His presence in the form of the Catholic Church. In this living body, the person of Christ becomes tangible; He is present in the communion between brothers of the faith, He shines in the sanctity of their lives, He lets Himself be touched in the sacraments. In the communion of the Church, the dialogue with the heart of God coincides with the dialogue between the hearts of men.

Our aim is to trace this journey of conversion by proposing a biographical and thematic path, from which it emerges that conscience was the driving force of Newman’s journey towards the certainty of truth (*ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*, ‘out of shadows and illusions into truth’). We also consider how such a journey characterized Newman as an educator.





# Cor ad Cor loquitur Newman

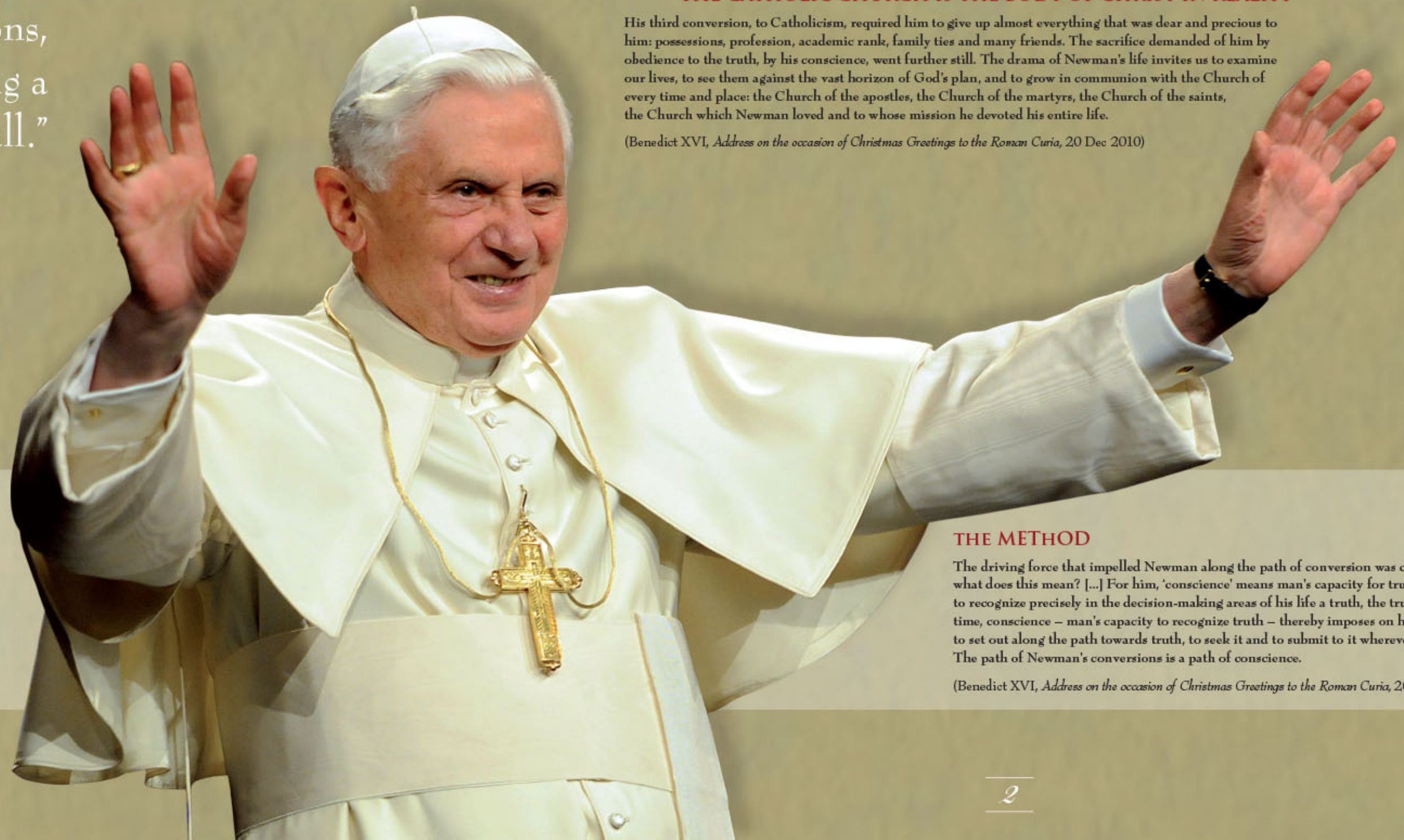
HEART SPEAKS UNTO HEART

## WE ARE ALL IN NEED OF SUCH A CONVERSION

“I should like to recall once more the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman. Why was he beatified? What does he have to say to us? We must learn from Newman’s three conversions, because they were steps along a spiritual path that concerns us all.”

*(Address of his holiness Benedict XVI on the occasion of Christmas greetings to the Roman Curia 20 December 2010)*

*Benedict XVI*



### 1 FIRST CONVERSION: TO GOD AS THE TRUE ESSENCE OF REALITY

The first conversion is to faith in the living God. Until that moment, Newman thought like the average men of today, who consider God as something uncertain, something with no essential role to play in their lives. The ‘real’ is what can be grasped, those things that can be calculated and taken in one’s hand. In his conversion, Newman recognized that it is exactly the other way round: that God and the soul, man’s spiritual identity, constitute what is genuinely real, what counts. These are much more real than objects that can be grasped. This conversion was a Copernican revolution. Where such a conversion takes place, it is not just a person’s theory that changes: the fundamental shape of life changes.

*(Benedict XVI, Address on the occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, 20 Dec 2010)*

### 2 SECOND CONVERSION: FAITH IS INTELLIGENCE OF REALITY

The second step in Newman’s lifelong journey of conversion was overcoming a subjective position. “True Christendom is shown... in obedience and not through a state of consciousness. Thus the whole duty and work of a Christian is made up of these two parts, Faith and Obedience; ‘looking unto Jesus’ (Heb. 2,9) [...] and acting according to His will [...] I conceive that we are in danger, in this day, of insisting on neither of these as we ought; regarding all true and careful consideration of the Object of faith, as barren orthodoxy, technical subtlety [...] and [...] making the test of our being religious, to consist in our having what is called a spiritual state of heart [...]”

*(Prayer vigil on the eve of the beatification of Card. John Henry Newman, 18 Sept 2010)*

### 3 THIRD CONVERSION: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST IN REALITY

His third conversion, to Catholicism, required him to give up almost everything that was dear and precious to him: possessions, profession, academic rank, family ties and many friends. The sacrifice demanded of him by obedience to the truth, by his conscience, went further still. The drama of Newman’s life invites us to examine our lives, to see them against the vast horizon of God’s plan, and to grow in communion with the Church of every time and place: the Church of the apostles, the Church of the martyrs, the Church of the saints, the Church which Newman loved and to whose mission he devoted his entire life.

*(Benedict XVI, Address on the occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, 20 Dec 2010)*

### THE METHOD

The driving force that impelled Newman along the path of conversion was conscience. But what does this mean? [...] For him, ‘conscience’ means man’s capacity for truth: the capacity to recognize precisely in the decision-making areas of his life a truth, the truth. At the same time, conscience – man’s capacity to recognize truth – thereby imposes on him the obligation to set out along the path towards truth, to seek it and to submit to it wherever he finds it. The path of Newman’s conversions is a path of conscience.

*(Benedict XVI, Address on the occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, 20 Dec 2010)*





John H Newman

# THE SEPARATION FROM ROME

*King Henry VIII's decision to declare himself the head of the Church in England marked the birth of the Anglican Church and resulted in the persecution of those who remained faithful to Rome*



The family of Henry VIII, 1545, Hampton Court Palace

From the time Christianity took root on its shores, England was a profoundly Catholic country, giving birth to saints and great men and women of faith such as Boniface, Bede, Julian of Norwich and Edward the Confessor. Catholic faith provided strong cultural and religious ties with the continent, acting against a certain tendency towards insularism by providing an awareness that England belonged to a greater unity than its natural boundaries, namely Christendom.

England remained a Roman Catholic country until 1534, when it officially separated from Rome during the reign of King Henry VIII. In response to the Pope's refusal to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Henry denied the Pope's authority over the English Church, made himself head of the Church in England, and dissolved the monasteries and religious orders in England.

Henry himself did not see the rupture as having any specific theological content. He acted mainly for political reasons. But he promoted to power those clergymen with Protestant sympathies who supported his break with Rome. As a result, the Anglican Church was characterized from the very beginning by a variety of theological positions, its unifying and most characteristic feature being the rejection of the authority of the Pope.

Failure to accept the break with Rome was regarded as treason and punished with death. In the years following the English Reformation, hundreds of recusant Catholics underwent martyrdom. These included Saint Thomas More, former Lord Chancellor, and Saint John Fisher, Chancellor of the University of Cambridge and former tutor of Henry. The 'Pilgrimage of Grace' of 1536 and 'Bigod's Rebellion' of 1537, which were risings in the North against the religious changes, were bloodily repressed. Catholics' civil rights were severely curtailed: among other restraints their right to own property or inherit land was severely limited; they were burdened with special taxes; they could not send their children abroad for a Catholic education; they could not vote, and they could not join English universities. Celebration of Mass was made illegal and priests were liable to imprisonment and execution.

## Henry VIII

England's subsequent wars with Catholic powers such as France and Spain, culminating in the attempted invasion by the Spanish Armada in 1588, supported nationalistic propaganda.

This propaganda equated Protestantism with loyalty to the monarchy and the country, making every Catholic a potential traitor, and treating Catholicism as an anti-patriotic force seen as irreconcilable with English national identity.







John H. Newman

# THE CATHOLIC CURCH IN THE XVII CENTURIES IN NEWMAN'S AGE

*In Newman's time Catholics were still treated with suspicion and hostility and were considered to owe their first allegiance to a superstitious tyrannical foreign power*

The break with Rome had a huge impact on the subsequent history of England. The most important political events in the following years are in fact connected, to a greater or lesser extent, with the religious problem. Religious tensions between a court with 'Papist' elements and a Parliament with Puritan sympathies were among the major factors behind the English Civil War (1642-1651), and this led to the establishment of a strongly anti-Catholic regime under Oliver Cromwell.

Similarly, the 'Glorious revolution' of 1688, which led to the expulsion of the king and the installation of a new constitutional monarchy, was triggered especially by King James' Catholic sympathies and his clear intent to work towards restoring the Church of England to the Catholic fold.

Official historiography and propaganda, through the popularity of works such as *The Book of Martyrs of Foxe* (1563), contributed forming in the public mind the idea of the Catholic religion as completely irreconcilable

with English cultural and national identity, and of the Church of Rome as a tyrannical foreign power. This national memory became profoundly embedded in the minds of the majority: it entered popular accounts and became a central part of English folklore.

The situation of Catholics gradually improved by the end of the eighteenth century and during Newman's lifetime, culminating in the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which gave Catholics almost equal civil rights, including the right to vote and to hold most public offices.

In spite of their practical re-acquisition of civil rights, Catholics were still highly unpopular in Newman's England. They were seen as spies and conspirators, at the beck and call of a corrupt foreign power aiming to lay its hands on England's people and wealth. They were accused of proselytism and sectarianism. Their worship was ridiculed as full of irrationality and superstition, and the Church of Rome was still thought of as the comprehensively corrupt institution of pre-Reformation times.

*Forty martyrs of England and Wales, 1970, Daphne Pollen*

## *The English Martyrs*







*John H Newman*

# THE BOY NEWMAN AND THE FIRST CONVERSION

*“When I was fifteen, a great change of thought took place in me. I fell under the influence of a definite creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which through God’s mercy, have never been effaced or obscured.”*

*(Apologia pro Vita Sua)*

John Henry Newman was born on 21 February 1801 in the City of London, the first child of a banker and of a descendent of French Huguenot refugees. He had two brothers and three sisters.

Newman was a strong-willed and very bright child. At boarding school he excelled at academic work, acted in Latin plays, won prizes for speeches, edited periodicals and loved playing the violin. Newman was also a very sensitive and naturally shy person, with a romantic or mystical side.

*“I wished the Arabian Tales were true: my imagination ran on unknown influences, on magical powers, and talismans... I thought life may be a dream, or I an Angel, and all this world a deception.”* (Apologia pro Vita Sua)

Newman was brought up in a typical Anglican environment of the time, which he was to later call “the national religion of England” or “Bible Religion”. It implied little more than formal adherence to Christianity. Newman’s father, in particular, was something of a skeptic and worried about any sort of religious enthusiasm in his children.

In 1816, because of a financial crisis in England, his father’s bank was forced to close, causing much trauma and upheaval in the family as well as loss of wealth and status.

During this period Newman fell ill. He later noted that he had three serious illnesses in his life and that each coincided with moments of conversion. He described this illness as the “first keen, terrible one, when I was a boy of 15, and it made me a Christian”. (Autobiographical Writings)

*“I believed that the inward conversion of which I was conscious [...], would last into the next life, and that I was elected to eternal glory. [...] I believe that it had some influence on my opinions, [...] in isolating me from the objects which surrounded me, in confirming me in my mistrust of the reality of material phenomena, and making me rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator.”* (Apologia pro Vita Sua)

*...myself  
and my  
Creator*



*The Great Ealing School, est. 1008*

*Newman’s Viola, Birmingham Oratory*

*Top: J. H. Newman in 1840, Maria Giberne*

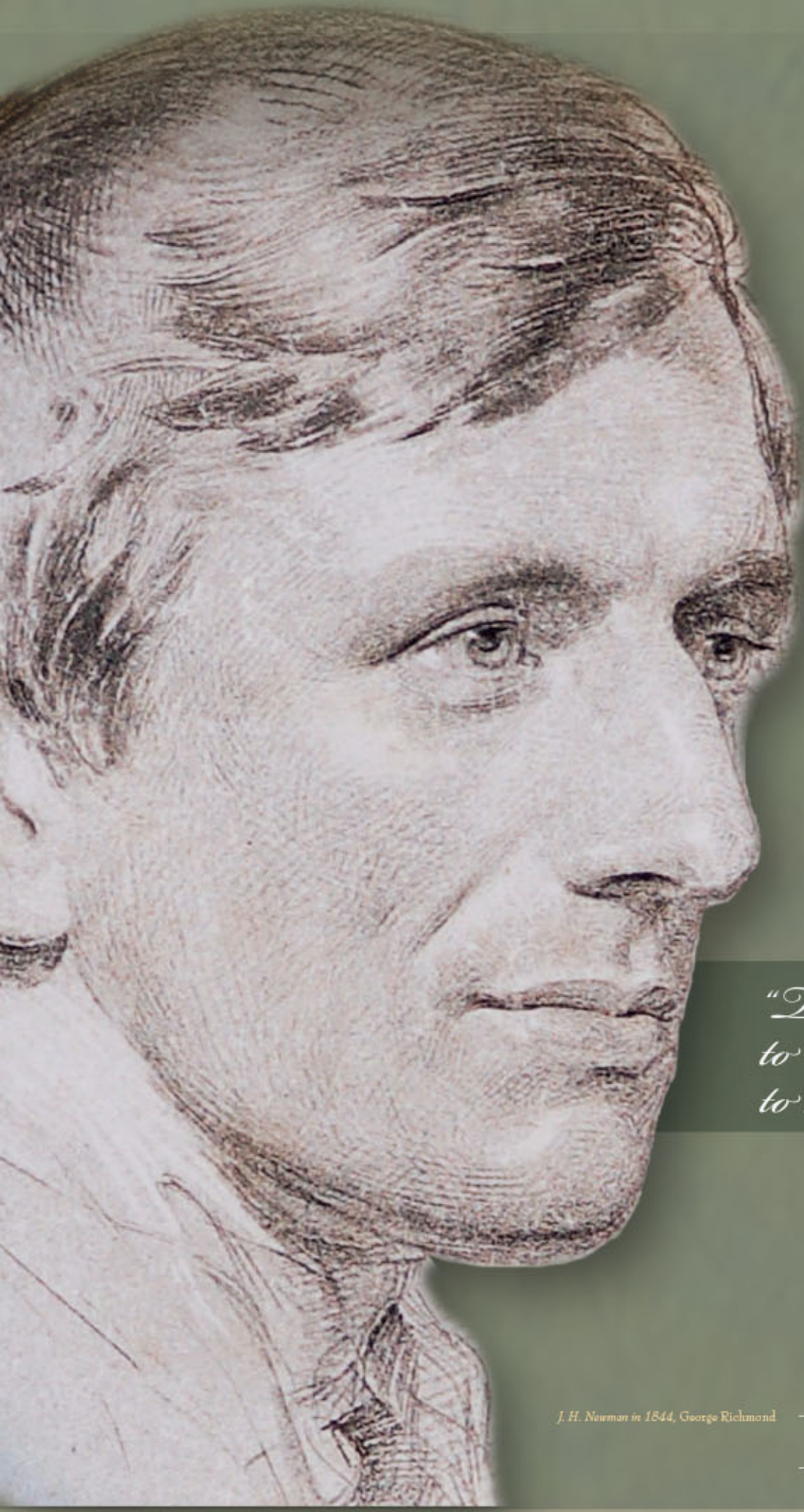




*John H Newman*

# FAITH IN THE LIVING GOD

*“Our great internal teacher of religion is our conscience. Conscience is a personal guide, and I use it because I must use myself. (...) Conscience is nearer to me than any other means of knowledge.”* (Grammar of Assent)



The personal relationship with God has primacy in Newman's life and is based on conscience.

*“Well,” (Callista) said, “I feel that God within my heart. I feel myself in His presence. He says to me, ‘Do this: don’t do that.’ You may tell me that this dictate is a mere law of my nature, as is to joy or to grieve. I cannot understand this. No, it is the echo of a person speaking to me. Nothing shall persuade me that it does not ultimately proceed from a person external to me. It carries with it its proof of its divine origin. My nature feels towards it as towards a person. An echo implies a voice; a voice a speaker. That speaker I love and I fear.”* (Callista)

Conscience is therefore the greatest weapon against atheism, which Newman, especially in the first period of his life, saw as growing strongly:

*“The system of physical causes is so much more tangible and satisfying than that of final, that unless there be a pre-existent and independent interest in the inquirer's mind, leading him to dwell on the phenomena which betoken an Intelligent Creator, he will certainly follow out those which terminate in the hypothesis of a settled order of nature and self-sustained laws. (...) The practical safeguard against Atheism in the case of scientific inquirers is the inward need and desire, the inward experience of that Power, existing in the mind before and independently of their examination of His material world.”* (University Sermons)

The whole path of Newman is a path of obedience to conscience, a path of obedience to that voice. The essence of Christian vocation is for Newman a personal relationship with Christ:

*“The one thing, which is all in all to us, is to live in Christ's presence, to hear His voice, to see His countenance”.* (Parochial and Plain Sermons)

With such a certainty of a deep relationship between him and God, in 1817 Newman moved to Oxford where he was accepted as a student at Trinity College at the age of 16.





*John H Newman*

# THE EARLY YEARS AT OXFORD

## *What is the best for me?*

*For Newman the most important thing was to understand and follow God's will.*

*"He felt himself to be God's creature, and responsible to Him—God's possession, not his own." (Loss and Gain)*

In his first years at Oxford Newman's faith struggled with a risk stemming from his shyness and 'mistrust for material phenomena', the subjectivism of his Evangelical background, and the liberal philosophy of the time. The risk for him was that of developing a dualism between faith and reason, i.e. between the human relation with God and the relation with reality.

The first way in which we see Newman's faith acquiring a firmer grasp of reality is his trust in God within the circumstances of life. A prayer from the later period expresses this very well.

*"Therefore I will trust Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life, He may shorten it; He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends, He may throw me among strangers, He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from me — still He knows what He is about."*  
(Meditations on Christian Doctrine)

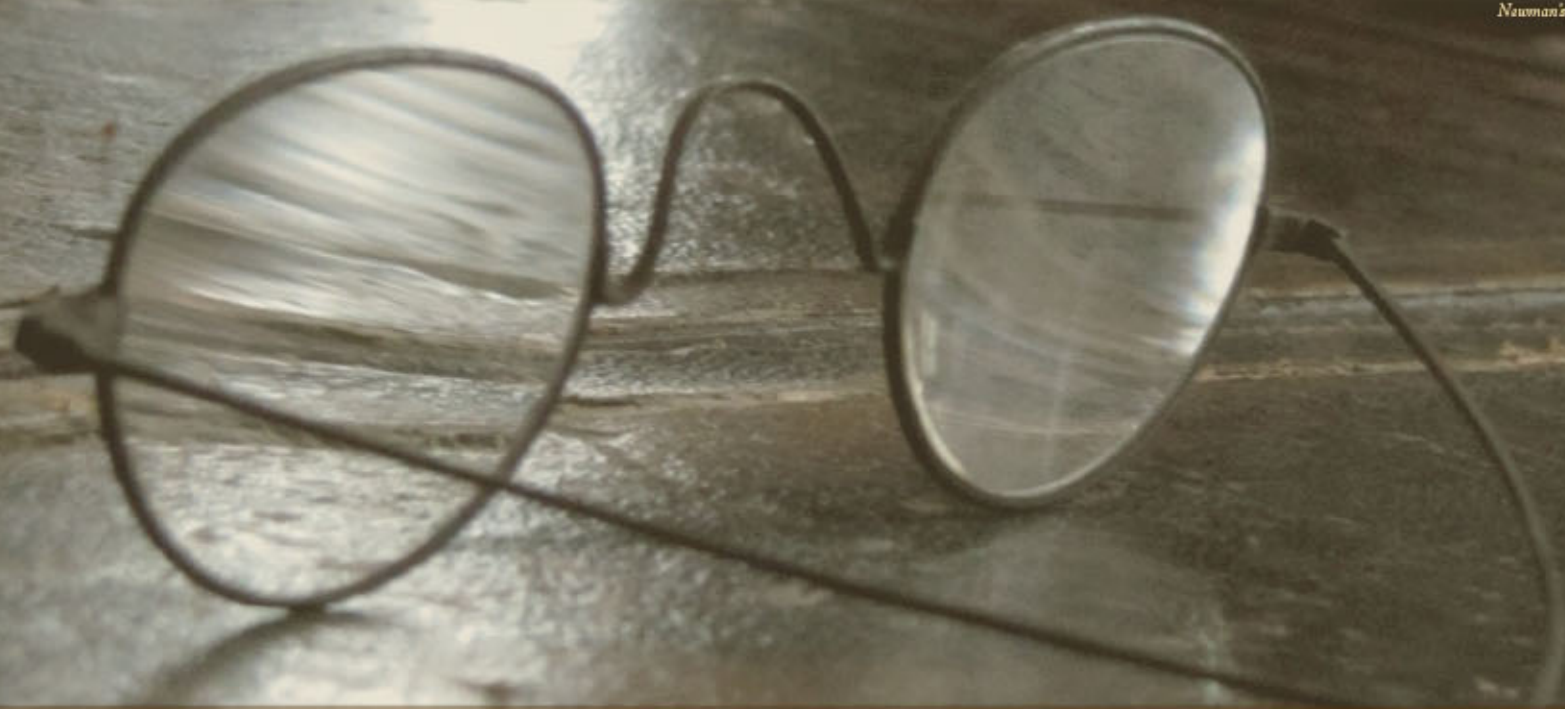
One of the most significant moments of Newman's first period in Oxford in which we see the overcoming of this dualism is his preparation for the final Schools examination. In a letter to his sister Jemima he writes:

*"I cannot think much of the schools without wishing much to distinguish myself in them [...] I am doing my part, but [...] God will be bestowing what is best for me. [...] I will not therefore ask for success, but for 'good'. [...] Do you therefore, dearest sister, wish for me to obtain that which is best for me [...]; for then, whether I succeed or fail, I shall have the comfort of feeling assured that I have obtained real advantage and not apparent."*  
(Letter to Jemima)

*I will not therefore ask for success, but for 'good'*



*Trinity College, Oxford  
Newman's glasses, Birmingham Oratory*







*John H Newman*

# THE LIMITS OF EVANGELICALISM

*Newman breaks away from Evangelicalism, seeking a faith in a real Christ which is capable of facing every aspect of life*

In 1824 Newman became a deacon and began his ministry at St. Clement's Parish in Oxford. He soon came to recognize there was something in evangelical doctrines which left him detached from the world. It seemed to him that Evangelicalism tended to reduce Christianity to subjective introspection and to make Christ unreal.

*"It is very much the fashion at present to regard the Saviour of the world in an irreverent and unreal way—as a mere idea or vision; to speak of Him so narrowly and unfruitfully. [...] (We need to) learn to do this, to leave off vague statements about His love, His willingness to receive the sinner, His imparting repentance and spiritual aid, and the like, and view Him in His particular and actual works. [...] it is very possible to speak in a vague way of His love towards us, and to use the name of Christ, yet not at all to realize that He is the Living Son of the Father, or to have any anchor for our faith within us, so as to be fortified against the risk of future defection."*  
(Parochial and Plain Sermons III)

The more Newman encountered the real lives of his parishioners - visiting them at their own homes, taking care of the sick and reawakening the faith of many - the more it seemed to him that evangelicalism did not work,

*"that it was unreal; [...] this I had actually found as a fact: Calvinism was not a key to the phenomena of human nature, as they occur in the world."*  
(Autobiographical Memoir)

This was a crucial moment for Newman because he began to search for a Christian faith that was not reducible to subjectivity and was capable of dealing with the full reality of human existence. In this search he was also influenced by the atmosphere at Oriel College, where he was elected fellow in 1822. Through discussions with his colleagues and the study of various Anglican theologians he changed his mind about some Evangelical theological doctrines and rediscovered the Fathers of the Church.

*...it was unreal;*



Giovanni Calvino, Titian



King James Bible, 1631, Robert Barker - John Bill, London, juxtapose/soopatzy, Flickr



Gutenberg Bible, NYC Wanders, Flickr



St. Clement's Parish Church, Oxford





*John H Newman*

# REJECTION OF LIBERALISM

*Newman rejects Liberalism as reducing faith to opinion*

*...all are matter  
of opinion*



*Sir Isaac Newton, E. Pochazi, 1995.  
London, Nickinexilio, Flickr*

*"[Most people desire] not to please God but to please self without displeasing God." (Parochial and Plain Sermons)*

As Newman realized the limits of evangelicalism, he found he began to drift in the direction of the liberalism of the day, whereby no one can believe what he does not understand.

However, a serious illness and the sudden death of his young sister Mary disturbed Newman and rendered him unsatisfied with liberal approaches. He refused a religion in which each man attempts to judge for himself, and Church creed is reduced to a subject of debate.

*"The elementary proposition of this new philosophy which is now so threatening is that [...] things are known and are to be received so far as they can be proved. [...] And the mode of proof is to advance from what we know to what we do not know, from sensible and tangible facts to sound conclusions. [...] Why should not that method which has done so much in physics, avail also as regards that higher knowledge which the world has believed it had gained through revelation?" (Faith and Prejudice)*

This position inevitably leads to what Newman calls 'liberalism' and what we might now call 'relativism':

*"Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another. [...] It is inconsistent with any recognition of any religion, as true. It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion. Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact, not miraculous; and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy." (Biglietto Speech)*

Newman did not deny the need for evidence, even for believers, but he realised that reason is more than 'proving' and that faith requires a certain disposition of heart.

*"The common and fatal error of the world [is] to think itself a judge of Religious Truth without preparation of heart. Gross eyes see not; heavy ears hear not. But in the schools of the world the ways towards Truth are considered high roads open to all men, however disposed, at all times. [...] Men consider that they have as full a right to discuss religious subjects, as if they were themselves religious. They will enter upon the most sacred points of Faith at the moment, at their pleasure, – if it so happen, in a careless frame of mind, in their hours of recreation, over the wine cup". (University Sermons)*





John H Newman

# PASTOR AND TUTOR

*Newman lived his priesthood and tutorship as a pastoral and educational mission*



*"May I engage in [my duties] in the strength of Christ, remembering I am a minister of God, and have a commission to preach the Gospel, remembering the worth of souls, and that I shall have to answer for the opportunities given me of benefitting those under my care." (Autobiographical Memoir)*

Newman was aware of his pastoral mission from the moment he was ordained a deacon when, struck by the definitive nature of the step he had taken, he commented :

*"For ever, words never to be recalled. I have the responsibility of souls on me to the day of my death ..."* (Personal Journal)

This responsibility was manifested in his work both as parish minister and as college tutor.

When he was appointed as curate of St Clement's, he immediately applied himself to his ministry. In the first 10 days he visited one third of his 2,000 parishioners, and the remaining two thirds within six weeks. People were pleasantly surprised to be visited by a clergyman and many came back to church. The same total commitment is witnessed by Newman's work as vicar of St Mary's, where his sermons were attended by parishioners and university scholars alike.

## *Responsibility of souls*



*Pulpit of St. Mary, Oxford.*



*Oriel College, Oxford*



*St. Mary's Hall, Oxford*

In the same period Newman was a tutor at Oriel College, having been awarded a prestigious fellowship, despite the poor results he had achieved for his degree. Newman saw his tutorial work as not just an academic undertaking, but part of his pastoral mission since

*"a man who is religious, is religious morning, noon, and night; his religion is a certain character, a mould in which his thoughts, words, and actions are cast, all forming parts of one and the same whole." (Parochial and Plain Sermons)*

One of his students, J. A. Froude, recalls:  
*"Newman [...] spoke to us (undergraduates) about subjects of the day, of literature, of public persons and incidents, of everything which was generally interesting. He seemed always to be better informed on common topics of conversation than anyone else [...]. Thus it was that we, who had never seen such another man, [...] came to regard Newman with the affection of pupils. [...] For hundreds of young men Credo in Newman was the genuine symbol of faith. (Short Studies on Great Subjects)*

*University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford*





John H Newman

# LEAD THOU ME ON. ONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME!

*During a trip to the Mediterranean, Newman visits Rome. After recovering from a grave illness in Sicily, he comes back home convinced that God has a great work for him to do*

By the end of 1832, Newman was exhausted from his labors and went on a Mediterranean cruise with his close friend H. Froude. They visited Greece, Malta, Naples, Rome and Sicily. It was the first time Newman had experienced the reality of Catholicism. He was particularly struck by Rome, the city of Martyrs and Apostles – “a wonderful place, of all cities the first” – even above his beloved Oxford. He was greatly impressed by the piety of the people and beauty of the churches, but he felt it was “a beautiful flower run to seed”, and his feelings were mingled with disgust for what he called the superstition of Catholics, such that he wrote:

*“Oh that Rome was not Rome; but I seem to see as clear as day that a union with her is impossible.” (Letter to Jemima)*

As he travelled, Newman also became increasingly troubled by events in England, where Parliament was interfering ever more in the life of the Church. He was struck by the parallel between the situation in England and Italy, where the church had had its property confiscated and was in a miserable state. Nevertheless, when Froude returned home, Newman decided to visit Sicily again. In Sicily Newman fell seriously ill with fever and nearly died. In his delirium two thoughts kept coming to him:

*“I shall not die, for I have not sinned against the light” (Apologia pro Vita Sua)*

*“I was sure that God had some work for me to do in England” (Autobiographical Writings)*

On his recovery he returned home, keeping in mind the good and the bad he had witnessed and aware that God was leading him to undertake a great task. Whilst sailing back to England he wrote the famous hymn “Lead Kindly Light.” Four days after he arrived in Oxford,

*“Mr Keble preached the Assize Sermons in the University Pulpit. It was published under the title ‘National Apostasy.’ I have ever considered and kept the day, as the start of the religious movement of 1833.” (Apologia pro Vita Sua)*

*...lead thou me on.*

PH: Temple, Agrigento, Michaleluconi, Flickr

*Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!  
The night is dark, and I am far from home;  
Lead Thou me on!  
Keep Thou my feet – I do not seek to see  
The distant scene; one step enough for me.  
Please not over thine, nor pray that Thou  
Shouldst lead me on;  
I long to choose, to see my path; – but now  
Lead Thou me on!  
By slow degrees, and with the guide of fear,  
Where neither I nor yet my fellow-wayers  
Are sure, Thy power has o’er us won;  
Will lead me on,  
O’er moor & fen, o’er wood & heath,  
The night is gone,  
And with the morn’ning comes angelic light,  
Which I have loved long since,  
and still I love;  
at sea, or on the shore,  
The Great Rhymer  
Jan 16, 1853*



Journey map





*John H Newman*

# THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

*Together with some friends, Newman founded the Oxford Movement as a response to the Liberalism and Evangelicalism of the time*

*"We feel our opinions are true; we are sure that, few tho' we be, we shall be able to propagate them by the force of the truth; we have no need, rather we cannot afford to dilute them."*  
(Letters and Diaries)

Newman felt that the Church of England had become complacent and secularized by Liberalism, and that the State, which was becoming hostile towards the Church, was starting to treat it like a government entity.

Together with Keble, Froude and other friends and colleagues, Newman decided to act, and started publishing a series of essays called 'Tracts for the Times', which were spread throughout the country in order to reawaken the Church of England and confront liberalism. In Tract 1 Newman stated:

*"Speak I must; for the times are very evil, yet no one speaks against them. [...] Do we not all confess the peril into which the Church is come, yet sit still each in his own retirement [...]. Therefore suffer me, while I try to draw you forth from those pleasant retreats, which it has been our blessedness hitherto to enjoy, to contemplate the condition and prospects of our Holy Mother in a practical way."*  
(Tract No. 1)

The Oxford or Tractarian Movement was animated by a true love for the Church and by the living bonds of affection between Newman and his friends. Newman rediscovered the Catholic theological and liturgical tradition and vigorously proposed the *Via Media*, seen as an intermediate path between the errors of Protestantism and those of Rome.

*"I had a supreme confidence in our cause; we were upholding that primitive Christianity which was delivered for all time by the early teachers of the Church, and which was registered and attested in the Anglican formularies and by the Anglican divines. That ancient religion had well-nigh faded away out of the land, through the political changes of the last 150 years, and it must be restored. It would be in fact a second Reformation:—a better reformation."*  
(Apologia pro Vita Sua)

However, Newman's leadership of the movement came to an end with the publication of Tract 90. This tract dealt with the 39 Articles of the Anglican Church, a collection of purportedly Protestant declarations. In Tract 90, Newman attempted to show that the Articles could be accepted in a Catholic sense. However, anti-Catholic feeling in the Church of England was an insurmountable obstacle and his view was condemned. In 1842 Newman left Oxford and his academic and Tractarian tasks and moved to a village nearby, Littlemore, to live a monastic life with a group of loyal friends.

*Via Media...  
a better reformation*

*J.H. Newman*

*J. Keble*

*E.B. Pusey*

*E.C. Grafton*

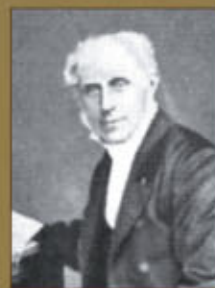
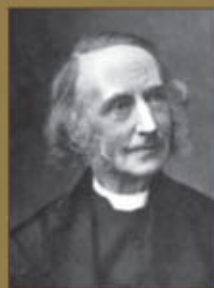
*R.W. Church*

*W.J. Copeland*

*R.A. Willesforce*

*R.H. Froude*

*G.M. Hopkins*



*Side: University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford  
Bottom: Tracts, jldradley, Flickr*

*Tracts*







*John H Newman*

# A MERE THEORY WILL NOR WORK

*Newman's need for reality did not find an answer in the Anglican Church*

*"A great experiment is going on, whether Anglocatholicism has a root, a foundation, a consistency ... or whether ... it be 'a sham'. I hold it to be quite impossible, unless it be real, that it can maintain its ground - it must fall into pieces - This is a day in which mere theories will not pass current. If it be a mere theory, it will not work..."*  
(Letter to W.C.A. Maclaurin)

*"The death of his dear father [...] was the first great grief poor Charles had ever had, and he felt it to be real. [...] He then understood the difference between what was real and what was not. All the doubts, inquiries, surmises, views, which had of late haunted him on theological subjects, seemed like so many shams, which fell from him, like the helpless December leaves, in the hour of his affliction."*  
(Loss and Gain)

Tract 90, published in 1841, was the first public manifestation of a process which had started two years previously in Newman's life and which related to his need for 'reality'.

From the summer of 1839 onwards, Newman started using the word 'unreality' in reference to the Anglican Church.

The opposition between reality and 'unreality' is a constant theme in Newman's thought and life: reality equates with truth, unreality with falsehood. Because he was a great thinker, theologian and controversialist, Newman was always disgusted by those who 'mistook words for things', and by their 'unreal way of talking'.

He began to doubt whether the Anglican Church had a reality in itself or was rather 'unreal'; that is, a mere human construction, a 'sham', a theory.

The novel 'Loss and Gain', which he wrote three years after his conversion to Catholicism, accurately describes the contrast between the reality of life, and of the human needs which demand a real object, and the 'unreality' of the theological debates that Newman found in Oxford.

Three events, three blows, shook his convictions: in Jerusalem the Anglican church had joined a union of 'protestants' to appoint a bishop; in Oxford his own bishops were attacking and censuring the Oxford movement; and lastly in his reading of the Fathers of the Church he noticed that the Early Church had never feared to take a radical position:

*"the truth lay, not with the Via Media, but with what was called 'the extreme party.'" (Apologia pro Vita Sua)*

*...unreality*







*John H. Newman*

# *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum*

*Newman understood that the Church is 'a Living Body', and therefore develops and may be corrupted, while, however, her divine nature gives her life and certainty*

*"My friend [...] pointed out the palmary words of St. Augustine. 'Securus iudicat orbis terrarum.' He repeated these words again and again, and, when he was gone, they kept ringing in my ears. [...] For a mere sentence, the words of St. Augustine, struck me with a power which I never had felt from any words before."*  
(Apologia pro Vita Sua)

Newman found the answer to these questions through understanding that the Church is a living body and her doctrine a living idea, by its very nature bound to continuously renew itself and open to corruption.

Securus iudicat orbis terrarum: the universal church judges with certainty. This certainty with which the Catholic Church, already at the beginning of her history, was able to take radical positions, struck Newman in a profound way. He understood that the certainty of the Church did not rely on her tradition, on the piety or coherence of her members, and not even on the correctness of her doctrine, but on the conviction of being the real, present, living body of Christ, 'the concrete representative of things invisible'.

*"The Church is emphatically a living body. When an idea [...] has life, [...] then it becomes an active principle within the minds, leading them to an ever-new contemplation of itself, to an application of it in various directions, and a propagation of it on every side."*  
(Essays Critical and Historical)

However, two strong objections remained. How was it possible that many practices which seemingly were not found in the gospel, such as the veneration of saints, were found in the contemporary Catholic Church? How could Newman explain the corruption of the Church, i.e. the sins of many of her members?

*"When ordinary human weaknesses are coupled with that intense absolute faith which Catholics have one finds acts of inconsistency, of superstition, violence etc. which are not to be looked external to the Catholic Church. [...] The corruption of the Church has existed from the time of Judas Iscariot and indeed is so bound up with the very idea of Christianity as to be almost a dogma."*  
(Letters and Diaries)

## *The certainty of the Church*



Piazza San Pietro e la città di Roma. broadpiratejff, Flickr





John H. Newman

# HOLINESS IS IRRESISTIBLE

*Sanctity is for Newman the great sign of the reality of the Catholic Church*

*Sanctity is for Newman the great sign of the reality of the Catholic Church "Rome must change first of all in her spirit. I must see more sanctity in her than I do at present. [...] If the Catholics want to convert England, let them go barefooted into our manufacturing towns [...] let them be pelted and trampled on. [...] The English never will be favourably inclined to a plotting intriguing party - but faith and holiness are irresistible."* (Letter to J.R. Bloxam)

Theological reflections were not enough for Newman, a man for whom, since he was 15, the Catholic Church had been the Antichrist: 'anti-popery' still had a great hold on him, like 'a stain upon his imagination'. However, as he began to understand the Catholic Church better, sanctity became for him the clearest proof of her authenticity, especially the unity among the saints, the greatest sign of the 'oneness' of the Church. The faith of Callista was based on this.

*"To her surprise, the more she thought over what she heard of Christianity, [...] the more it seemed to respond to all her needs and aspirations, [...] and the more it seemed to have an external reality. [...] But then again, if she had been asked, what was Christianity, she would have been puzzled: 'I believe what has been told me, as from heaven, by Chione, Agellius, and Cæcilius'. What the three told her in common was at once the measure of her creed and the ground of her acceptance of it. It was that wonderful unity of sentiment and belief in persons so dissimilar from each other, so distinct in their circumstances, so independent in their testimony, which recommended to her their doctrine."* (Callista)

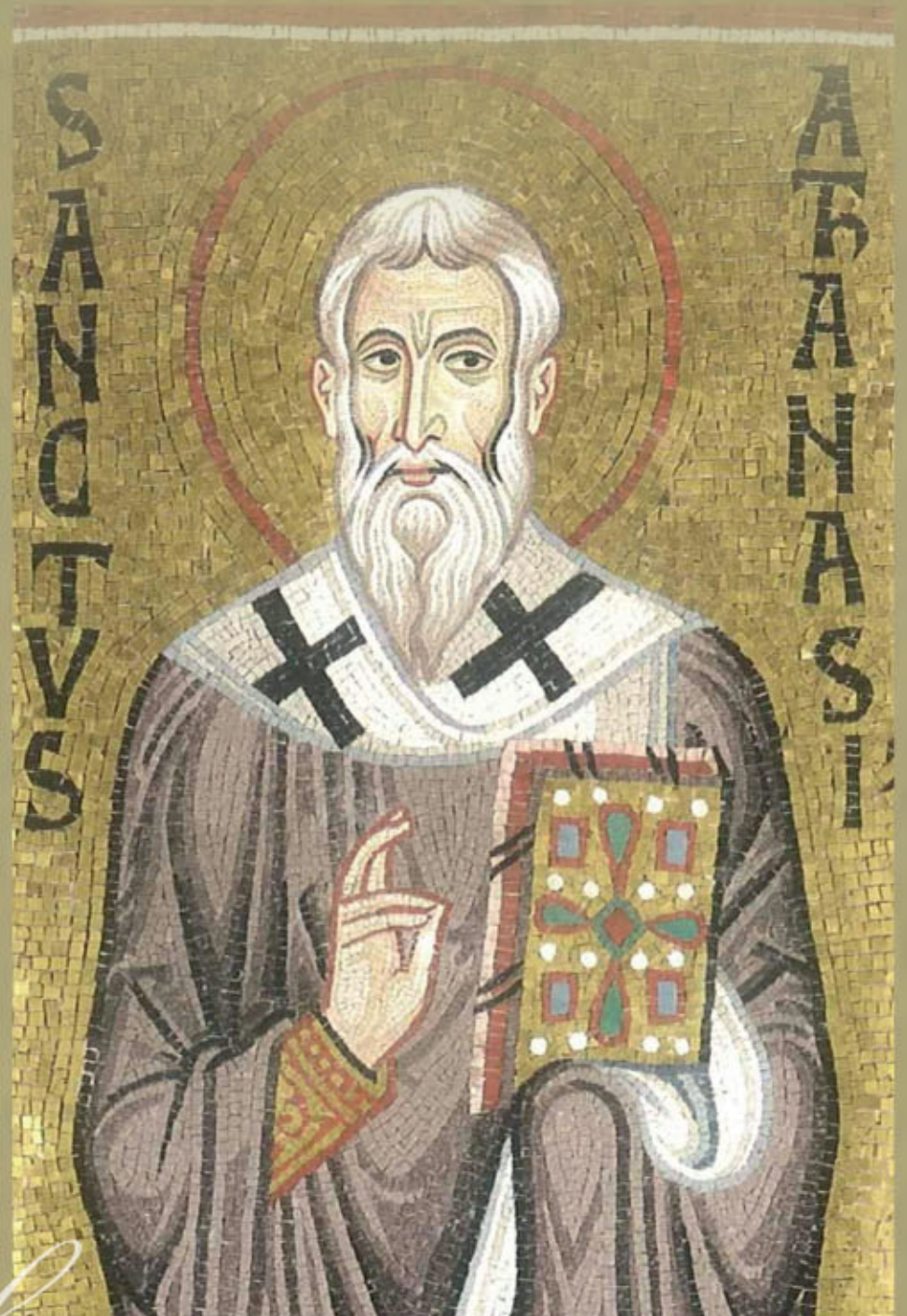
In the years at Littlemore, Newman read the lives of the Fathers, English saints and the great figures of the Counter-Reformation. What he found from all these sources, across different times and places, was this same 'oneness'.

*"[A]ll will agree so far as this, that [...] the Baptist and St. Paul are in their history and mode of life... in what is external and meets the eye [...] more like a Dominican preacher, or a Jesuit missionary, or a Carmelite friar ... than to any individuals... that can be found in other communions."* (An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine)

Among the saints of the contemporary Catholic Church, a key personality was a Passionist priest, Fr. Dominic Barberi, who had come to England from a peasant background in Viterbo, following a divine call.



Blessed Dominic Barberi



*...faith and holiness are irresistible*





*J. H. Newman*

# COMING INTO A PORT AFTER A ROUGH SEA

*Newman's conversion to Catholicism is a path of reason and affection, and a path of obedience to God, whom he felt speaking to him through reality*

*Newman's conversion to Catholicism is a path of reason and affection, and a path of obedience to God, whom he felt speaking to him through reality*

*"For myself, it was not logic then that carried me on; as well might one say that the quicksilver in the barometer changes the weather. It is the concrete being that reasons; pass a number of years, and I find my mind in a new place; how? the whole man moves; paper logic is but a record of it. All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I did."*

*(Apologia pro Vita Sua)*

The whole man had moved - his theological convictions had changed, as had his affection for the Catholic Church. He knew he had to act, despite knowing the consequences all too well.

*"The loss of friends what a great evil is this! the loss of position, of name, of esteem, - such a stultification of myself - such a triumph to others. It is no proud thing to unsay what I had said, to pull down what I have attempted to build up. And again, what quite pierces me, the disturbance of mind which a change of my part would cause to so many ... the temptation to which many would be exposed of scepticism, indifference, and even infidelity."*

*(Letter to J. Keble)*

But he was now certain that God willed his conversion, especially because in the preceding years he had not stopped asking for "light and guidance". Through reality, God had responded and now Newman had to trust in Him. He realized that God had never deserted him since his conversion when he was 15, least of all when he had nearly died in Sicily, but had 'led' him on step by step until he had reached his present situation.

On 7 October 1845, Newman wrote to a friend to inform him of his decision to ask Fr. Dominic Barberi to receive him into the Catholic Church. Father Dominic arrived in haste on the evening of 8 October after travelling for several hours on the upper deck of a stagecoach in driving rain.

While Fr. Dominic was standing in front of a blazing fire drying his clothes, Newman entered the room, knelt before him and asked him to hear his general confession prior to receiving him into the Catholic Church.

*The whole man  
moves*





John H. Newman

# ROMA AND BIRMINGHAM.

## THE ORATORY

*Newman joins the Oratory of St. Philip Neri and begins his work in Birmingham*

*"As a Protestant, I felt my religion dreary, but not my life - but, as a Catholic, my life dreary, not my religion." (Autobiographical writings)*

Newman's initial years as a Catholic were not easy: his conversion provoked a shock inside the Anglican Church and most of his friends and relatives broke relations with him.

He had to leave his beloved Oxford, probably for good, to mix with strangers and learn new and unfamiliar customs. The Catholic Church itself, while rejoicing in a spirit of triumphalism at the conversion of such an eminent personage, scarcely knew what to do with a man so brilliant and original, whose ideas were often out of step with the narrowness of Catholic thinking at the time.

*"How dreary was my first year at Maryvale ... when I was in the gaze of so many eyes at Oscott, as if some wild incomprehensible beast, caught by the hunter, and a spectacle for Dr. Wiseman to exhibit to strangers, as himself being the hunter who captured it." (Autobiographical Writings)*

Newman was sent to Rome to become a Catholic priest. There he met the fathers of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. He decided to join them, and founded the first community in England at Birmingham. The Oratory offered the advantages of flexibility - being made up of relatively small and fraternal communities independent of each other - and the possibility of combining intellectual and pastoral work. Moreover, St. Philip, considered by Newman as his father, had been a champion of the fight against a merely formal Christianity.

*...as St. Philip*

*Neri did*



Birmingham Oratory



St. Philip Neri



Birmingham in 1847, map of the city

*"Would that we were able to do a work such as his! [...] The desire of our hearts and our duty went together here. We have deliberately set ourselves down in a populous district, unknown to the great world, and have commenced, as St. Philip did, by ministering chiefly to the poor and lowly. We have gone where we could get no reward from society for our deeds, nor admiration from the acute or learned for our words. We have determined, through God's mercy, not to have the praise or the popularity that the world can give, but, according to our Father's own precept, 'to love to be unknown.'" (Sermons Preached on Various Occasions)*







*John H. Newman*

# AN IDEA OF EDUCATION: THE UNITY OF REALITY

*Newman's view of a true education is one of his most important achievements*

*...they have lost the idea of unity!*

*"I say that a cultivated intellect, because it is a good in itself, brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation which it undertakes, and enables us to be more useful, and to a greater number."*  
(The Idea of a University)

In 1851 Dr. Cullen, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, set in motion what would be one of Newman's greatest works, *The Idea of a University*. This is a combination of discourses, essays and lectures addressed to the subsequently established Catholic University in Dublin and published by Newman in 1873. Newman became the first Rector of the Catholic University.

Newman's central idea of education as opposed to instruction refers to the unity of all knowledge and the need for the mind to reflect this unity.

*"The practical error of the last twenty years... has been the error of distracting and enfeebling the mind by an unmeaning profusion of subjects; of implying that a smattering in a dozen branches of study is not shallowness, which it really is, but enlargement, which it is not. [...] The majestic vision of the Middle Age, which grew steadily to perfection in the course of centuries, the University of Paris, or Bologna, or Oxford, has almost gone out in the night. A philosophical comprehensiveness, an orderly expansiveness, an elastic constructiveness, men have lost them, and cannot make out why. This is why: because they have lost the idea of unity."*  
(The Idea of a University)

However, Newman never scorned any of the various specialized subjects. On the contrary, he recognized that each university subject is good in its field, but that none can give a complete picture of reality - of truth. This is why Newman endorsed a combination of subjects, placed in relation to one another, and this work of comparison is what Newman defines as a university education.

Essential to this concept was the conviction that universal learning cannot exclude in advance the consideration of that deepest aspect of knowledge itself which is to reach and perceive the mysterious nature of reality. For this reason Newman placed theology at the centre of university learning.

This unity of reality is also the reason why the Church "fears no knowledge". Science and religion cannot be in conflict:

*"Nature and Grace, Reason and Revelation, come from the same Divine Author, whose works cannot contradict each other."*  
(The Idea of a University)



*Study*

*Newman in his study  
at Birmingham Oratory, 1880*





John H Newman

# O BEDIENCE AND C ONSCIENCE

*The certainty of being part of the real Church sustains Newman in many disagreements with the Catholic hierarchy*

*"[Man] must have no willful determination to exercise a right of thinking, saying, doing just what he pleases, - the question of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, being simply discarded."* (Letter to the Duke of Norfolk)

In the following years, there were further tensions. Newman's positive attitude towards the laity was deeply opposed by the hierarchy. One of the bishops even denounced Newman to Rome as heretical and as *"the most dangerous man in England"*.

There was also the issue of the discussion on Papal infallibility, which initially worried Newman, who did not want the Church to take an authoritarian and defensive stance. Eventually Newman was, however, satisfied with the final version of the dogma.

Moreover, as Newman had understood on his path to conversion, the Church is the living body of Christ: by the Holy Spirit, God guarantees that revealed truth is preserved, interpreted and communicated to man in an infallible way by His Church in specific situations. The acknowledgment of the divine nature of the Church justifies the attitude of obedience towards and affection for her which Newman had throughout his life.

*"I say there is only one Oracle of God, the Holy Catholic Church and the Pope as her head. To her teaching I have ever desired all my thoughts, all my words to be conformed."* (Letter to the Duke of Norfolk)

On the other hand Newman strenuously defended the supremacy of conscience as the place of personal relationship with God:

*"Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts [...] I shall drink—to the Pope, if you please,—still, to conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards."*(Letter to the Duke of Norfolk)

*"the Church, the Pope, the Hierarchy are, in the Divine purpose, the supply of an urgent demand. [...] So indeed it is; did the Pope speak against Conscience in the true sense of the word, he would commit a suicidal act. He would be cutting the ground from under his feet."* (Letter to the Duke of Norfolk)

Cardinal Ratzinger comments in this way on this conception, for which Newman was to accept much personal suffering:

*"For us at that time, Newman's teaching on conscience became an important foundation for theological personalism, which was drawing us all in its sway. It was liberating and essential for us to know that the 'we' of the Church does not rest on a cancellation of conscience, but that, exactly the opposite, it can only develop from conscience."*  
(Newman Belongs to the Great Teachers of the Church)



*A toast... to the conscience first and the Pope afterwards*

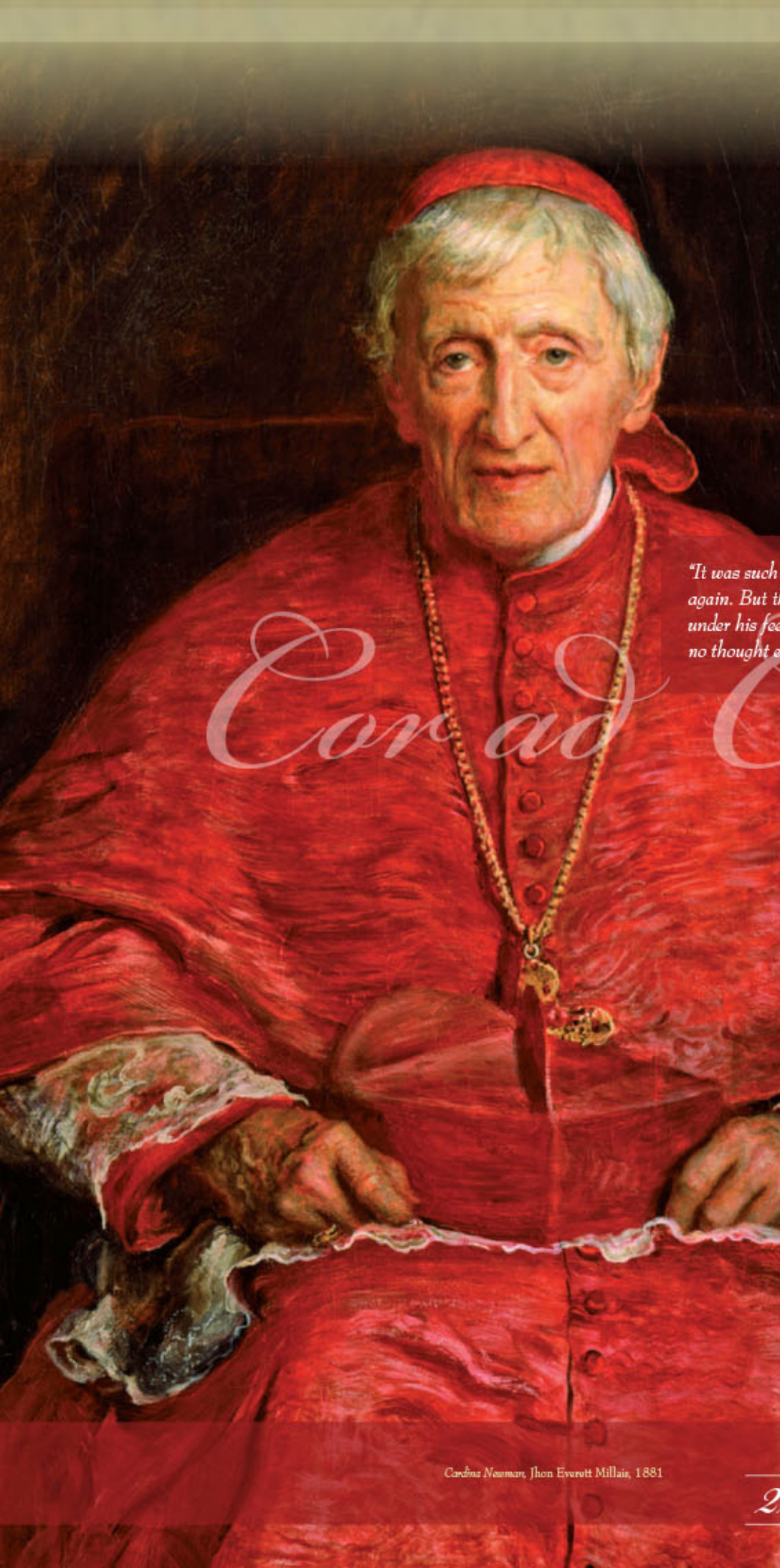




*John H. Newman*

# HEART SPEAKS UNTO HEART

*The final years of Newman's life were years of joy; much prejudice against him fell away and the Church looked on him as an example of faith.*



*"Those great and burning truths, which I learned when a boy ... I have found impressed upon my heart with fresh and ever increasing force by the Holy Roman Church [...]. That Church has added to [that] simple evangelicalism ... but it has obscured, diluted, enfeebled, nothing of it – on the contrary, I have found a power, a resource, a comfort, a consolation in our Lord's Real Presence, in communion in His Divine and Human Person, which all good Catholics indeed have." (Letter to G.T. Edwards)*

The personal relationship with God was the cornerstone of Newman's life and the reason for the choices he made. His conversion to the Catholic Church led him back to his first years.

*"It was such as to throw him back in memory on his earliest years, as if he were really beginning life again. But there was more than the happiness of childhood in his heart; he seemed to feel a rock under his feet; it was the soliditas Cathedrae Petri. ... [He was] so happy in the Present that he had no thought either for the Past or the Future." (Loss and Gain)*

*Cor ad Cor loquitur*

The last years of Newman's life were spent peacefully at the Oratory in Birmingham, where he assiduously sought to come to the aid of hundreds of poor families living in the environs of the Oratory and continued to correspond with a host of friends and enquirers for as long as his fingers were able to hold a pen.

At the end of his life his trust in God produced many fruits.

The first fruit had already appeared in 1864 when a renowned author (and Anglican clergyman) had attacked him, saying that for Newman "truth was not a virtue for its own sake". He replied with a religious autobiography, the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, which was to become his most celebrated book.

Many prejudices against Newman fell away, so that in 1878 his old college, Trinity, made him an honorary fellow; this meant that he could go back to his beloved Oxford, which he had not seen since 1845.

The following year, Newman received the highest mark of recognition: Pope Leo XIII elevated him to the College of Cardinals. He was 78 and, summarizing all of his life, he chose as his motto the phrase *Cor ad cor loquitur*; that is, "Heart speaks unto heart".





# *Cor ad Cor loquitur*

HEART SPEAKS UNTO HEART

## THE CERTAINTY OF NEWMAN: CONSCIENCE AND REALITY

### *Curators*

Giuseppe Pozzini, Samuele Busetto, Stefano Rebaggiani, Chris Morgan, Paul Hitchings

### *In collaboration with*

Marco Sinisi, Amos Lawless, Roger Sylvester, Anthony Errington, Noel Murphy, James Scoular, Elena Germanino, Chris Hack, Siobhan O'Shea, Alessandro Ventura, Tommaso Gabrieli, Riccardo Savini, Maria Martin, Paola Gotti, Marta Albertin, Tristan Alonge, Beniamino Arnone, Beatrice Banfi, Alberto Carignano, Chiara Corosa, Lucia Conconi, Irene Cooper, Dianino Di Florio, Cachi Gomez, Marco Govetto, Michael Hopwood, Silvia Imbetti, Gianluca Marcatò, Laura Marchionni, Joe Morgan, Manuel Oriol, Chiara Pancheri, Javier Prados, Miguel Ruiz de Zarate, Ana de Santiago, Valeria Sinisi, Simona Sylvester, Vincenzo Tudda, Stefano Utili

### *Pictures*

Birmingham Oratory

### *Credits by www.flickr.com:*

Catholic Church (England and Wales)'s photostream;  
chamber85's photostream; dreadpiratejoff's photostream;  
jbradley's photostream; juxtapose^esopatxuj's photostream;  
Micheloluconi's photostream; Nickinaxilio's photostream;  
NYC Wanderer's photostream

### *Graphic design*

Isabella Manucci

### *Video*

Federico Daniele  
Stephen Figoni  
Francesco Massi  
Silvia Merigi

### *Copyright*

Editoriale Jaca Book, Milano per i testi di Newman citati  
Libreria Editrice Vaticana per i testi  
di Sua Santità Benedetto XVI

### *Special thanks to*

Fr. Ian Ker, Fr. Richard Duffield  
and l'Oratorio di Birmingham

NEW YORK  
ENCOUNTER X

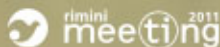
Con il contributo di



BOMBARDIER



ESSELUNGA



Mostra realizzata e organizzata per la XXXII edizione  
del Meeting per l'amidizia fra i popoli