

being foolish and unlike him nor cave in completely and surrender his own principles. Instead he will bide his time and try to understand what they are saying, isolate the truth and dismiss the error.

Of course these problems are not met on intellectual grounds alone. Besides instruction we must give religious formation; but the practice of prayer and the observance of the commandments is another consideration and one which we must take for granted for the moment. At the same time we may not forget that there are no such things as intellectual grounds alone. Any intellectual training we give our children will take a moral quality from our own intellects. If our minds are humble and reverent and aware of God then so will be the knowledge we pass on, and the intellectual discipline we impart will share the same quality. Perhaps this is one of the most powerful weapons a teacher possesses. Without ever mentioning a word of God or virtue or morality he can be continually schooling his pupils in intellectual humility by a disciplined devotion to truth. Very often more than either he or the children know, habits are being formed of surrendering the mind to facts, of contemplating creatures without wishing to seize them for oneself, and of seeking for a pattern and unity in things. These things are all turning the mind and the heart towards God. Granted that faith is presupposed, and a disciplined life of prayer and virtue, then here we have a religious instruction which is at once forming and informing the mind and ultimately the whole man.



## NEWMAN'S SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE\*

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**M**Y dear Fathers and Brothers, we have met here to discuss the relevance of Newman to the modern age, and we have prided ourselves, not without reason, that we have come to understand him better than many in the past. We have, however, been in some danger of forgetting what the

\* A Sermon preached at the International Newman Conference, Luxembourg, July 27th, 1956, by the Superior of the Birmingham Oratory.

essential aim of his life was, and what the fundamental lesson it teaches us. Yet these matters were thoroughly understood from the first, and clearly stated at the time of Newman's death, by two writers especially, neither of whom were Catholics.

The first biography to appear after Cardinal Newman died was that of R. H. Hutton, of *The Spectator*. It hailed him as the champion of revealed religion, and showed how this gave his life the wonderful unity which characterized it. Amid the many changes of his career, his one object, to which from the age of sixteen he was entirely devoted, was the promotion of faith in the Christian revelation. Certainly Hutton was right. During his evangelical period Newman tried to convert his family and friends, and had plans for becoming a missionary. As a fellow of Oriel he became involved in a quarrel with the Provost because he insisted on regarding his tutorship as a pastoral office. He threw his whole energy into the Tractarian Movement because it was nothing more nor less than a battle for revealed religion. He was led on to become a Catholic because he realized that the full acceptance of the Christian revelation required it: he must enter 'the one Church of the Redeemer'. After his conversion he might have rested from the fray, but immediately his problem was: where could he be most useful to that Church? He introduced the Oratory into England, and preached and wrote. He went over to Dublin, at the wish of the Pope, to strike a blow for revealed religion. When the University failed, he seized other opportunities, he opened his School, he undertook the editorship of *The Rambler*. As is so often the case, it was through the one passionate devotion of his life that his purifying cross came, the inaction which was forced on him, so that he was unable to use his great powers in the cause which mattered above all.

From the time of his first conversion, Newman was an utterly convinced follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. He rested in the thought of two and two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings, himself and his Creator, but he also grasped that his Creator had made himself known, and become Man. He was never one of those mystics who dispense with the Incarnation and all that flows from it. He gave himself completely to the cause of our Lord as revealed in history, in his Church. He would spend his life in entire devotion to God, and God's revelation, and God's Church. There lies the unity of his life, and the lesson

for our imitation.

The other writer to whom I referred just now was Dean Church. In *The Guardian*, two days after Newman's death, he paid his tribute to his friend. The long life was closed, and by all was felt to have been a uniform and consistent one. Church differs somewhat from Hutton in the way he explains this unity. Newman had given his heart to the ideal of holiness that is portrayed in the Gospel, and could not satisfy himself that the Church of England with its comfortable parsonages and married clergy and air of respectability, presented that ideal. It had exchanged religion for civilization and seemed to have betrayed its trust. Dean Church continues: 'Devotion and sacrifice, prayer and self-denying charity are at once on the surface of the New Testament and interwoven with its substance. Newman recoiled from a representation of the New Testament which to his eyes was without them. He turned to where, in spite of every other disadvantage, he thought he found them.' That led him to San Filippo Neri. 'He could find no San Filippo, so modern and yet so scriptural, when he sought at home!' So far Dean Church. This explanation must not be pressed, as though Newman were not seeking primarily in the Catholic Church the fulness of revealed truth. It would be more accurate to say that, being the man he was, he could not be devoted to the cause of the Christian revelation without also aiming whole-heartedly at the sanctity which is the purpose of that revelation. The text of the first sermon in Volume One of *Parochial Sermons* is 'Holiness without which no man shall see God', and as Newman delved deeper into the sources, Holy Scripture and the Fathers, he discovered and was able to describe the full Christian ideal. He has drawn it out most wonderfully in the later *Parochial Sermons*. There are to be found eloquent passages about the Christian privileges, the possession of God, the indwelling of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the soul, the truth which is the very climax of the Christian revelation. But with this appreciation of the presence of God through union with Christ, which holiness involved, went the clear setting forth of the price to be paid. Newman had a horror of unreal words or any lack of reverence in treating the most sacred of all subjects. Thus we find a sermon in the volume already mentioned with the title, 'Self-denial the Test of Religious Earnestness'. For great privileges a great price has to be paid.

If the pursuit of the holiness of the Gospel gave unity to Newman's life, then it must be shown that he paid the price. There were the mortifications of Oxford and the austerities of Littlemore, but more than that, Newman lived *detached*. In success and in failure it was only God he sought. I like to think of him during the Oxford Movement, at the height of his powers, the leader of a brilliant party, with no position to which he could not aspire, referred to as *ho megas*, and described by Anthony Froude as looking like Julius Caesar. Yet all the while he was completely detached, and had at heart only the cause of revealed religion. Dr Routh of Magdalen, who was a judge of men, remarked of Newman at this time 'he is not looking to get on in life'. And then after 1845, everyone was astonished at his humility and docility in accepting all the Catholic ways. He even went too far (as he later confessed), and tried to make his own, extravagant expressions he found in continental books about our Lady. That he soon corrected, and remained always most devout to her. He had spoken of the Immaculate Conception in an Anglican sermon, and dedicated the church of his Oratory to our Lady under that title, before the definition of the dogma—a definition which his own teaching on Development had facilitated.

There are the lessons Newman must teach us. We so easily forget that the aim of all our work should be the spread of God's Kingdom on earth, through his Church; and when we study Newman's philosophy we sometimes forget too that this was the motive underlying every part of his activity. He was led on to embrace the Christian revelation in its entirety, including Christian holiness and the unbelievably wonderful presence of the Blessed Trinity in which it consists. He paid the price for union with God, and made it his life's aim to spread the Christian truth and the Christian privilege. May we do the same!