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JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AND A CATHOLIC PRESENCE AT OXFORD

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In the mid-1860s, John Henry Newman was concerned with the possibility of establishing a Catholic preserve in Oxford to cater for the moral and spiritual needs of Catholic students. Several possibilities were considered: to found a Catholic university or college (about which Newman was ambivalent), to establish an Oratory which would act as a focal point for Catholic thought and a centre for Catholic youth, or to take over the Catholic mission at Oxford. Newman's motives for being involved in the Oxford proposals are discussed as are the nature and reasons for the campaign that was waged against his involvement.

John Henry Newman was born in February, 1801 in the city of London, the son of a banker. His early formal education was at a private boarding school in Ealing, where he was exposed to Church of England evangelicalism, thus beginning an association with spiritual matters and an introduction to controversy which were to form the pattern of the rest of his long and productive life.

Cardinal Newman's reputation as a divine is widely acknowledged. Assessments of his role as an educator have, so far, tended to be based almost entirely on his Dublin experiences out of which came *The idea of a university*, a book that was acclaimed on publication and has continued to be regarded as the ultimate statement of the liberal tradition in higher education. It is difficult to imagine any worthwhile discussion of the nature and purpose of university education which does not take cognisance of the ideas contained in it. It also established Newman's reputation as an educational theorist, but he was more than that. Newman was involved in two schemes to put his ideas into practice. One was to found a public school for Catholic boys, which he did in 1859; the school was established in conjunction with the Birmingham Oratory, and Newman was closely associated with it right up to the time of his death in 1890. Since that time, the school has moved from its cramped Birmingham quarters but continues to flourish. The second of the two schemes was one to provide care and guidance for young Catholic men at Oxford. It took the initial form of a Catholic college, but eventually became subsumed under the general project of an Oxford mission before that noble project, too, was killed by determined opponents from within the Catholic Church.

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NEWMAN, THE PERSON

To put the Oxford mission in context, it is necessary to consider Newman's spirituality, his position as the leading Catholic intellectual of his time in England, his love for and relationship to Oxford University, his alma mater, and his concern for the moral, spiritual, and academic well-being of young people.

Newman's own spirituality so pervades his existence that a knowledge of it is central to an understanding of any project in which he was involved. It is, above all, Newman's spirituality that ultimately explains the enormous personal influence he exerted, and why parents brought their sons to him to be educated. The major reason for Newman's success as a formative influence on young people was that he was not only a theologian and a scholar, but was also one of the 19th century's most successful preachers (his sermons at the University Church were both fully attended and long remembered), a pastor who fully realized the importance of individuals building their lives on foundations which had been given to God. The result of Newman's work was that many people in England, including, no doubt, some who were not consciously aware that their lives had been touched by him, began to lead spiritual lives.

An important part of Newman's influence derived from his position as the 19th century's single most important convert to Catholicism in England. Newman's own comment on this ultimate step was that 'it was like coming into port after a rough sea.' For a man of his intellectual prominence, the sea was very rough indeed. For Newman, effecting conversions was not his major work, though he did realise that the 19th century Catholic Church in England needed to change itself in order to accommodate the growing number of educated, intelligent, and literate men and women who were drawn to it.

There are two major aspects of Newman's spirituality which are relevant to the Oxford mission. The first relates to his personal characteristics of integrity, loyalty, fidelity, and intellectual consistency. These are the qualities that singled him out to be the leader of the English converts. The other is a sense of responsibility to the young people of his time. His purpose was to ensure that they had the opportunity to fulfil themselves spiritually just as he had done. When Newman was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1824, he declared 'I have the responsibility of souls on me to the day of my death.' With other men this might be dismissed as mere rhetoric; with Newman it provides the key to his subsequent history. Given his own intellectual background and the direction in which his life would lead him, it is not surprising that Newman should devote so much of his effort to an intellectual defence of what he perceived to be revealed religion — and that at a time of rising unbelief as the masses, crowded

into the rapidly expanding industrial towns, lost touch with the Church and the sources of their spiritual lives His whole commitment to the Oxford mission derives from this purpose

There are many examples of Newman's intellectual pre-eminence from the time of his own early schooling Virtually the whole of his adult life until his conversion in 1845 had been spent at Oxford University, which he entered in 1817 He was confidently expected to get a First, but broke down under the pressure of examination and did poorly Nonetheless it was recognized that he was a man of considerable intelligence and he was awarded a Fellowship at Oriel College where he was highly successful, becoming a tutor in 1826 Two years later, after his ordination as a priest of the Church of England, he was given one of the most prestigious livings in the country, that of St Mary the Virgin, the University church That appointment in itself was an indication of the high regard in which his intellectual gifts were held

While at St Mary s, which included the parish of Littlemore outside Oxford, Newman gained a reputation for his sermons Not only were they carefully prepared and delivered but the quality of their arguments was accepted by one of the most intellectually demanding congregations in the world This was an achievement which Newman was able to sustain over a period of 15 years and was only terminated by his retirement to Littlemore and subsequent reception into the Catholic Church During his Oxford years, in addition to his purely pastoral duties on which he placed great importance, Newman edited and wrote some of the *Tracts for the Times* (1833-1841) wrote *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833) and the acclaimed *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) He also published no fewer than six volumes of sermons (1833-42) That, however was just the beginning of a literary career that was to produce some of the most significant and intellectually demanding writing of the century, including the article 'On consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine' (1849), *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864), *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated* (1852), and two successful novels In view of such achievements, and given his acknowledged personal qualities of morality, loyalty, and dedication, it is hardly surprising that parents sought Newman out and persuaded him to open a school to which they could send their sons His intellectual and personal gifts brought many young people into his congregation at St Mary s

THE OXFORD MISSION

The 19th century was a difficult time for Catholics in England who had intellectual inclinations On the one hand, discoveries in science, in history, and

in philosophy caused an almost panic reaction in which the papacy resolutely set its face against toleration and liberalism in defence of its authority and centralism. At the same time, the vast demographic changes that were taking place uprooted the faithful from their places of origin, challenging the traditional pastoral role of the priest and unsettling minds that had believed in the Bible as true history. The reputation of the Church as the dispenser of truth was in jeopardy and the chastening impact of the French Revolution was still, in the 1820s and 1830s, disquietingly real. On the other hand, the growing population and successive waves of Irish immigrants filled the mostly tiny Catholic chapels to overflowing and created a wave of optimism that was shared even by Newman and is illustrated by his sermon (not his best though still good) 'The second spring.' This situation meant, for Newman, that he must redouble his efforts to make Christian life real by making it work and be seen to work. It meant, above all, that the 'Roman Catholic Church must be deterred from disappearing into an intellectual ghetto' (Chadwick, 1983, p.3). Furthermore, it meant that the Church must be encouraged to embrace the intellectual challenges, that the connection of faith and philosophy must be made stronger, and that the intellect should be free. Newman realized, as few of his contemporary influential Catholics did, that for the Church to be seen to stifle the spirit of inquiry would be to sound its own death knell.

Newman's relationship with Oxford was a strange mixture of sadness, love, loss, and ultimate reconciliation. His experiences there shaped his perception of the role of education. It was at Oxford that Newman had been taught to think and it was at Oxford that Newman taught. He realized that an education directed towards providing only for immediate needs and which ignored universal truths and values was not an education at all. It was these same experiences that refined his vision of the university as a community of scholars and people who were interested in learning. For Newman, a university, every university and certainly Oxford University, 'is, according to the moral designation, an Alma Mater, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill' (Newman, 1968, p.109).

It was an ideal and a love that withstood the abrupt rupture in his relationship with the institution on his conversion to the Catholic faith. Newman loved Oxford University and it was a source of inexpressible pain to him that he was obliged to leave it. For Newman, conversion signalled the start of a journey

> away from his beloved Oxford, it meant the parting of dear friends.... Certainly [it was] not for him a passage from the turbulence of the Church of England to the peaceful haven of Catholic unity! Conflict in abundance was there to greet him. (Cornwell, 1989)

Perhaps that made the ultimate reconciliation the more poignant In the 1860s, Newman recognized that for him, personally, the time was not right for a return to Oxford, and yet, his concern for the spiritual well-being and the academic education of young Catholic men at Oxford was a call he would not refuse There can be no doubt that Newman was uniquely fitted to discharge his obligation

In 1864 Newman did not want to return to Oxford even after 20 eventful years full of pain and bitterness and controversy, the memories of his life there and the record of his own spiritual progress were still too vivid As he wrote, in a letter to E B Pusey on November 22, 1864,

> My late declaration of principles is a sufficient pledge, to all who are anxious on the point, that I have no hostile feelings towards the Anglican Communion — and nothing but love for Oxford even to see Oxford, would be to me inexpressibly painful, as the coming to life again of men who have been apparently drowned (*The letters and diaries*, 1971, p 303)

The only reasons he undertook the Oxford mission were because he felt called to do so and because he was genuinely concerned for the moral and spiritual well-being of the young men who were in attendance there

After the publication of his *Apologia*, — ironically, also in 1864, the year that saw the genesis of the Oxford scheme, — Newman's authority, which had been tainted by the Achilli and Rambler affairs[1], was restored The Catholic population of England, now bolstered by many well-educated converts, had never been attracted in large numbers to the Catholic university in Dublin Educated at the ancient universities themselves, they would accept nothing less for their children

Newman recognized that Catholics must be educated if they were ever to take their proper place in Church and State As an Oxford man, he was well aware that the tone of life there was fraught with spiritual and moral temptations He was neither alone, nor prudish in expressing such concerns Jeremy Bentham (1843), who had gone up to Oxford in 1760, has left a vivid account of the debauchery and drunkenness that were prevalent there It is, perhaps, worth noting that young men typically went up to Oxford at an age several years

1 In 1851 Newman delivered a series of Lectures on the present position of Catholics' in Birmingham The fifth of these contained a denunciation of Giacinto Achilli a renegade ex-Dominican priest Achilli sued and won In 1859 Newman attempted to save the *Rambler* a Catholic journal run by laymen by writing an article for it For his pains, Newman was delated to Rome for suspected heresy

younger than is now the case: some of them were little more than boys. One proposal to address this problem was to found a Catholic college. Newman maintained an ambivalent position on this. He argued that in a large group (in this case an 'open' college) one has the opportunity to choose one's company and also that a strong Catholic presence at Oxford in the form of an oratory/mission was desirable in order to serve alongside the existing Protestant colleges of which Catholic youths would be members. He explained in 1865,

> What I alone took part in was the establishment of an Oratory there to protect Catholic youths residing in Protestant Colleges.... I would rather have Catholic youths in Protestant Colleges at Oxford with a strong Catholic Mission in the place, than a Catholic College (cited in Ward, 1913, p.555).

Newman hoped that the existence of an Oratory in Oxford would act as a focal point for Catholic thought and a centre for Catholic youth while his presence there, albeit reluctantly, would help to ensure a 'safe' environment in which Catholic youth would partake of the finest education available in England. He was not aiming at conversions — indeed it was this that caused much opposition to him as Manning (later Cardinal), his principal foe, thought that he should be. He stated his case as wanting to

> erect a great centre of Catholicism in Oxford, which may last and grow more important as time goes on. What I aim at, is not immediate conversions, but to influence, as far as an old man can, the tone of thought in the place with a view to a distant time when I shall no longer be there (cited in Trevor, 1985, p.211).

At the time (1864), Newman was only 63 years old and in good health, with a further 26 years of active life ahead of him! But, the point is well taken. As if to emphasize his purpose, Newman wrote to Pusey, his former comrade in the Oxford Movement, at the height of the controversy created by the mission proposal, that he [Newman]

> should come to Oxford for the sake of the Catholic youth there, who are likely to be, in the future, more numerous than they are now, and my first object after that would be to soften prejudice against Catholicism (cited in Dessain, 1980, p.131).

The actual progress of events is comparatively straightforward, though a telling of the details does not necessarily convey the difficulties in which Newman frequently found himself, mainly for financial reasons. The ground for the oratory/university/mission/college, whatever it was decided it would be, cost £8,000, no mean sum in 1864 and one which was raised personally by Newman. He purchased the land and any financial loss would have been his alone. He was

dependent on private subscriptions from friends and supporters, it was a matter of considerable anxiety to him and no mean source of embarrassment that he had to beg of other people His correspondence at that time (1864/1865) is a litany of financial worries and appeals

The events as they took place over approximately a four-year period are as follows In 1864, a Catholic in Oxford purchased five acres of land and offered it at a slightly increased price to Newman as the site of a Catholic mission of some sort The exact form of the mission was yet to be decided, and certainly Newman had no fixed plans for one In August of that same year, Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham, within whose diocese Oxford was situated and who was anxious to establish a secure Catholic presence there, offered the care of his proposed mission to Newman Newman's initial position was somewhat ambiguous There were three alternatives to establish a Catholic university, to build a Catholic college within the existing university, or to establish an Oratory and Mission which would care for Catholic men who were resident in existing Protestant colleges Newman appears, initially, to have favoured establishing a Catholic college In a Memorandum he drafted on 27th November, 1864, after a visit from Bishop Ullathorne he wrote

> I said that I would not, for the world commit him - but on the other hand I must have, and state, my reason for going to Oxford - that, if Catholics were not allowed to go there [by their bishops] I should have no reason for going I still referred him to my letter but he did not recollect it I said that it ran under heads, 1 2 3 4 5 thus 1 The residence of Catholic youth in Protestant colleges is dangerous 2 in a Catholic college not dangerous 3 the former is the existing state of things 4 I wish to meet an existing evil 5 I should have no call to go there, did it not exist etc (*The letters and diaries,* 1971, p 318)

In a revealing note which was to prove of considerable importance in the light of later developments, Newman added

> N B I see clearly that the real root of the difficulty is myself There are those who cannot endure the thought that I should have the forming of the young Catholic mind at Oxford This is the one point of battle It is I, or not I

This early flirtation with the idea of a separate Catholic college did not last long In a lengthy letter to Lord Howard of Glossop, Newman stated

> Certainly, the more I think of it, the less I am satisfied with the proposal of establishing a Catholic College in our Universities, and I suppose the idea of a Catholic University, pure and simple, is altogether out of the question (*A packet of letters,* 1983, pp 189-192)

He went on to specify his reasons: that such a college would lack the prestige of the existing, historic colleges; that a Catholic college would preclude its members from standing for scholarships at other colleges; that it would lack discipline and be socially confining; and that the timing (post-Vatican I) was not right. In short, 'a Catholic College is a new patch on an old garment. The existing (Protestant) College discipline is in possession, and you are not answerable for it. It may be lax, but it works.'

When Newman accepted Ullathorne's invitation, it was with the intention of establishing an Oxford Oratory. At this point Newman first encountered the opposition that was ultimately to destroy the project. The ultramontanes, in their ascendancy, powerful in Rome and headed in England by Manning (never known for his partiality towards Newman), decided that Oxford in any form was dangerous, and with Newman there would be even more so. Manning, with the support of Wiseman, engineered the intervention of the powerful Roman Congregation of Propaganda which recommended a meeting of the English bishops to discuss the idea of higher education for Catholic youth. Perhaps it is not entirely surprising that the meeting turned down the idea of a separate Catholic college at Oxford and, indeed, recommended that Catholic parents should be actively discouraged from sending their sons to that university at all. A lay petition, signed by all Catholic members of the House of Commons and by most of the Catholic peers, in favour of the Oxford scheme was similarly ineffectual. Newman, pressed for money and seriously discouraged by these events, sold the site to Oxford University. After all, he had no need of it: if there were to be no Catholics at Oxford there was, equally, no need for an Oratory to serve their spiritual needs. Newman did, however, purchase some property opposite Trinity College - just in case! The early part of 1865 thus witnessed what seemed to be the end of Newman's scheme for the spiritual care of English Catholics at Oxford through the means of an Oratory.

Later that same year, however, Bishop Ullathorne again invited Newman to take over the Catholic mission at Oxford, an invitation he renewed yet again in the spring of 1866. That there was a pressing need for a more appropriate Catholic presence in Oxford was hardly in doubt: all that they had was a tiny back-street chapel that was totally inadequate. Newman correctly saw the Oxford Mission as a definite call from his lawful superior to undertake a work of great importance, but both of them underestimated the strength of Manning's determination to prevent Newman from returning to Oxford in any capacity whatsoever. In the light of his previous experience, Newman was reluctant to proceed without the approval of Cardinal Barnabò, head of the Congregation of Propaganda, since he feared committing funds to a project only to have the rug pulled out from beneath his feet once again. Ullathorne's inept handling of

this situation (in particular his references to Newman's intention to take part in educational work at Oxford — the dreaded 'mixed education') only served to heighten the ultramontane hostility towards Newman so that when, finally, the approval of Barnabo was received toward the end of 1866 it contained a 'secret' clause — not made known to Newman — prohibiting Newman personally from residing in Oxford This secret clause was only revealed, and then in a roundabout way, to Newman the following year and his discovery led immediately to his withdrawal from the scheme, since he rightly regarded such an injunction to be impertinent and unacceptable So ended the second attempt to found an Oxford Oratory and with it the chance of enhancing the quality of university education of Catholics in England The campaign against Newman, however, continued and intensified, both in England and in Rome Newman was effectively isolated by his enemies and was obliged to send his friend from the Birmingham Oratory, Ambrose St John, to Rome to defend himself against the scurrilous accusations and false charges made against him there

In July 1867, Barnabo declared that the Oxford matter was closed and the ban on Newman going there (imposed because of the fear that his presence would attract young Catholics) remained in effect, as did the bishops' ban on Catholics attending not only Oxford but also all non-Catholic universities This latter prohibition was only lifted three years after Manning's death By then, incalculable damage had been done On 18th August 1867, Newman wrote the following letter to Bishop Ullathorne

> My dear Lord,
>
> I do not think you will feel any surprise, if I at length act on the resolve which I formed on the very day that I heard of the restriction placed on my presence in Oxford, which I have cherished ever since, and only not carried out because of the dissuasion of friends here and elsewhere
>
> That dissuasion has now ceased, and accordingly I now ask your permission to withdraw from my engagement to undertake the Mission of Oxford, on the ground that I am not allowed by Propaganda the freedom to discharge its duties and effect
>
> Thanking you for all your kindness, and with much regret for the trouble I have caused you, I am,
>
> My dear Lord, Your Lordship's obt and affte Servt in Xt
>
> John H Newman of the Oratory
>
> (*The letters and diaries*, 1973, p 312)

FORCES AND COUNTER-FORCES

The reason for detailing the long and complicated business of the Oxford Mission is to provide the setting for, and bring to the fore, a number of other matters of significance. The issues resolve into three questions. First, what was Newman's real motive for being involved in the Oxford proposals? Second, what are the nature of, and reasons for, opposition to Newman? And third, what was the nature of the anti-Newman campaign and why was it mounted?

I believe that the key to Newman's involvement lies in his character, particularly in his spiritual and emotional make-up. Like most intelligent and complex individuals he was a strange mixture of different and frequently contrasting elements. In the preface to *John Henry Newman,* Ker (1988) writes of Newman's 'sensitive' nature and of his belief that his humour and irony never failed him, even in the darkest of hours. Ker also makes a valuable point when he writes of Newman's sensitivity as being a strength not a weakness. When this sensitivity is taken in conjunction with his other character traits one begins to see why Newman would not shirk what he perceived to be his duty in serving in this venture. His self-evident intellectual consistency and integrity apart, Newman was no shrinking violet when it came to being firm when the occasion required him to be. One of the most notable of such occasions was his icily polite and firm refusal of an invitation from George Talbot to preach in his church in Rome. Talbot, never a friend of Newman, was an aristocrat and former Anglican priest who became successively a Catholic, a Canon of St Peter's, and a Papal Chamberlain. The letter he received from Newman read:

> Dear Monsignor Talbot,
>
> I have received your letter, inviting me to preach next Lent in your Church at Rome, to 'an audience of Protestants more educated than could ever be the case in England.'
>
> However, Birmingham people have souls; and I have neither taste nor talent for the sort of work which you cut out for me: and I beg to decline your offer. (*A packet of letters,* 1983, p.152)

Reference was made earlier to Newman's spirituality and to his love for Oxford. It is no coincidence that the connection between spirituality, Oxford, Newman, and education is a close one. Newman's passion for the education of young people, arising out of his own consideration of the benefits he derived from it and the place where he received it, has been well established. Newman had a natural affinity with young people. There can have been few times when he derived more genuine joy than in his times with young people. And they reciprocated. His work in setting up the Catholic University could not have taken

place but for two things one was his measured consideration of the nature, scope, and purpose of university education which he displayed at that time and which is recorded for us in the magnificent *Idea of a University* The other was his love and concern for young people he established the Oratory School in 1859 and continued to be intimately connected with it, teaching, supervising, administering right up to the time of his death in 1890 It is obvious from his correspondence that despite the tribulations that went with the school, Newman derived tremendous joy and satisfaction from that association and his students loved him in return These considerations lead to the conclusion that Newman's reasons for wanting the Oxford Mission to prosper were exactly what he said they were he wanted Catholic young men to share in the great benefits of being educated at one of the world's greatest universities and he wanted this experience to strengthen, not destroy, their faith

Newman was well aware of his intellectual eminence within English Catholicism, and when his authority was enhanced following the success of the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, he felt, at last, in a position to do something to ensure that Catholic youth would be qualified to take their proper places in their church and their country Newman did not look forward to a return to Oxford at that time — that promised to evoke only painful memories — only a belief that it was God's will made it acceptable He stated his early position quite succinctly in a letter to Bishop Ullathorne in September, 1864

> 1 I think that there is considerable danger to the souls of Catholic youth who go to the Protestant Colleges in Oxford
> 4 When I thought of our going to Oxford, it was with a view of meeting this actually existing danger
> 5 If the danger ceased, I should not feel any special reason for our going there (*The letters and diaries* 1971, p 234)

Newman s reasons for taking this position were varied 'It is a duty to give them, at their dangerous age, the spiritual superintendence, necessary for them' (*The letters and diaries* 1971, p 276) And, as he declared to his critics in Rome, 'all places are dangerous, — the world is dangerous I do not believe that Oxford is more dangerous than Woolwich, than the army, than London, — and I think you cannot keep young men under glass cases' (cited in Dessain, 1980, p 130) And the number of such young men was bound to increase The case was clear despite the bishops' ban, Catholic young men would continue to go to Oxford 'The important point was to look after the Catholics who were already at the existing colleges, and who would presumably continue to go there (Ker, 1988, p 564) Now that the possibility of a Catholic university in England was dead

and the idea of a Catholic college at Oxford rejected, the need for an augmented Catholic presence in Oxford became even more urgent.

The nature of, and the reasons for, the opposition to Newman are complex. I believe it does not overstate the case to call this a campaign against him. It was a campaign conducted on two grounds, one of which was stated: Catholic youths should not go to Oxford because their faith, morals, and souls were in danger there — the bishops said so. The other bases are more important and were, for a time, more powerful. They stem from deep-seated but unfounded doubts about Newman's fidelity and orthodoxy: he was, after all, a convert from the Church of England who continued to be dangerously chummy with influential people within it. Manning, for example, was offended by Newman's continuing close association:

> Manning, pale and intense, was consecrated bishop ... by Ullathorne ... Newman was present among the secular clergy. He was staying with Rogers and went home on the same train as Church ... This fraternizing with Anglicans sealed his fate with Manning. (Trevor, 1985, p.213)

So, Oxford was out. Unfortunately for Newman, Manning had powerful friends in a high place. It is from doubts about his orthodoxy that the other reasons for opposing Newman derive. Most are personal. The 'secret' clause had been inserted to prevent Newman from going to Oxford not to seal the fate of the Oxford mission, though the result was the same. At the time Newman wrote to his bishop,

> I am obliged to say at once I cannot accept the mission with that condition. Nor am I likely to change my mind on this point. If I am missioner at Oxford, I claim to be there, as much or as little as I please ....No compromise is possible here. (*The letters and diaries,* 1973, p.131)

An article that appeared in the *Weekly Register* in March 1867 attacked Newman's orthodoxy and accused him of heresy, proclaiming that 'only an ultramontane without a taint in his fidelity could enter such an arena as Oxford' (cited in Dessain, 1980, p.130).

Even Oxford's reputation was impugned. Barnabò accused Newman of disobedience to the Pope by preparing boys at the Oratory School to go on to Oxford:

> The recent unhappy perversion of a number of Catholic youths in that University has deeply saddened the Holy Father .... But now, ... information has reached this Sacred Congregation that your Paternity is actively engaged in preparing a number of youths for admission before long to the University of Oxford (*The letters and diaries,* 1973, pp.90-91).

This ended the Oxford proposal. There was, in addition, a campaign to discredit Newman at Rome which was painful to Newman because it was difficult to

counteract innuendo At the same time it brought from Newman one of his best guarded responses in a letter to Ambrose St John, then in Rome specifically to defend Newman against the falsehoods that were being circulated

> Mgr Talbot has put about that the Pope wished to see me at Rome and that I refused, — twice refused, I think Never did I do a thing more heartily than refuse Mgr Talbot — never did I rejoice more than that the Pope did not send for me But fancy my being introduced [to the Pope] by Talbot I should have said 'Santo Padre, questo Monsignor é un pazzo and [sic] un pomposo, e sa niente di fatto e crede che sa bene noltissimi affari (*The letters and diaries,* 1973, p 3)

The anti-Newman feeling in Rome, Ambrose St John discovered, was occasioned by the publication in the *Rambler*, a Catholic periodical, of Newman's article 'On consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine ' That article had appeared seven years before at which time Newman had been asked to explain certain passages in it The list of passages had been sent to Wiseman for onward transmission to Newman This Wiseman failed to do, giving Rome the impression that Newman had refused to comply

> The outcome, predictable, was Newman's declaration that
> In consequence of the Letter in the W R [*Weekly Registrar*] have retired from the Mission and I shall not have anything to do with Oxford, unless on three conditions
> 1 That Propaganda authoritatively disavow the letter in the W R
> 2 That it allows me freely, at my own will, to be here or at Oxford
> 3 That it engages to give no secret instructions
> I shall not get these granted me — so I don t expect to go (*The letters and diaries* 1973, p 141)

The ban on Catholics going to Oxford was lifted in 1895 — but by then the damage had been done Kensington College, Manning's rival institution, was a failure For Newman, however, the future was to be good In 1878, he was made the first Honorary Fellow of Trinity College and so returned to Oxford for the first time in over 30 years In 1879, he became the first Cardinal created by the newly elected Pope Leo XIII John Henry Newman died on 11 August, 1890 In a recent sermon, Father Peter Cornwell commented that

> In the mellow sombreness of autumn lies the stirring of new life Perhaps that is hard to see in the life of John Henry — maybe a few touches of light in his latter days, a new sympathy evoked by the *Apologia*, the Cardinal's hat, the return to Oxford to be honoured by his old college, Trinity But humanly speaking you could say that there was more disappointment than fulfilment (Cornwell 1989)

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