Nineteenth Century Liberalism and Newman's Idea of a University

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NINETEENTH CENTURY LIBERALISM AND NEWMAN'S
IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY

by

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LIFE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION ........................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions on the Idea of a University--Statement of the problem--Problem of Queen's colleges and mixed education--Newman relies on reason, not authority--Liberal Education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CONTEMPORARY EVENTS ..............................</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Bishops on Queen's colleges--The split, some Bishops seek cooperation, others refuse it--Dr. Cullen and Synod of Trurls--Newman's attitude on Queen's colleges--Newman's lack of support from the Irish Hierarchy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY ..................</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newman's views--University teaches universal Knowledge--Theology is knowledge--Others views--Use of Natural Theology to please Liberals--Definition of Theology--Appeal to history--Results in education if Theology is left out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. AIM OF A UNIVERSITY: LIBERAL EDUCATION ......</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity of Knowledge--Newman's Liberal Knowledge--Other views--Newman's goal for a University--Other views--Resurgence in favor of Liberal Education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SOURCES OF NEWMAN'S CONCEPT ....................</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Liberal Knowledge as the aim of a University--Oxford as a source--Others as a source.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Definition of a Gentleman--A pagan ideal--Condemned by Newman.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. VALUE OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION  

Philosophy of severance—Need of the Church for the integrity of a University—Newman not considering practical results in this work—The achievement of Liberally Educated men—A final distinction.

VII. CONCLUSION  

Summary—Lasting value of the Idea of a University.

BIBLIOGRAPHY  

64

74

76
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

John Henry Newman's *Idea of a University* has gained two very different reputations in the hundred years since it was written.¹ One reputation is that it is an impractical and theoretical work that is fine as an example of good prose but of little other value. Fr. Leddy, who has made a study of Newman his life's work, discovered the following attitude among modern non-Catholic educators:

I am ... informed by several educators whose views seem to be typical that Newman has nothing for us today, and that he represents an extreme and outmoded intellectualist position.²

Even some Catholics hold Newman suspect:

Some of this spirit has even appeared among Catholic writers who in consequence ignore Newman or display a surprisingly critical attitude and maintain that he was not sufficiently practical.³

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³ Ibid., 275-6.
But the Idea of a University has another and opposite reputation. We have authorities who hail it as a great contribution in the field of education that should be used as a guide today.

It is doubtful if during the last century there has been a greater development in any branch of activity than there has been in the sphere of popular education. . . . In spite of this, it is open to question whether anything that has been written since has superseded the treatment of University education which Newman enunciated in the Rotunda of 1852.4

With such varied opinions on the Idea we can at least be sure that it is a controversial work. The reason for this becomes obvious when we reflect upon the temper of the times in which Newman wrote and compare them briefly with our own.

The great errors of our day were just starting to grow in Newman's time. Although scientism, liberalism and scepticism were mere clouds on the horizon no bigger than a man's hand, Newman sensed the direction of coming events from the first and predicted the future development.

From his youth he constantly foretold the widespread indifference to religion. Today we see this indifference an accomplished fact and wonder why everyone did not see it coming. But his contemporaries did not accept his prophecies and looked

with extreme disfavor on his dark predictions of an age of infidelity and free thought.  

So, in our age, those who approve of the errors that have grown despite Newman's warning naturally disapprove of Newman. Those who recognize the worth of his warnings hail him as a champion. Hence the divergent views on his The Idea of a University.

Many interacting motives impelled Newman to compose the work. Besides a desire to clarify his own thoughts and instruct others, he also wished to oppose certain opinions on the subject of education which he rightly judged to be wrong and to be gaining strength.

First and foremost among the errors he wished to combat was his life-long arch-enemy, Liberalism. By the term Liberalism Newman meant something stronger than what we mean today. As he said in his Apologia:

[B]y liberalism I meant the anti-dogmatic principle and its developments.  

Now by Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thoughts cannot be brought to

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any successful issue, and, therefore, is out of place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind; and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of revelation. 7

Under Robert Peel, the great English Prime Minister of the first half of the nineteenth century, Liberalism had free reign. Free trade, free thought, and laissez-faire industrialism were turned free to bring their blessings on mankind. Unfortunately there was one group that was not being blessed, the Irish. And Daniel O'Connell was giving Peel some difficulty in Parliament over the Irish Question.

In 1843, Peel, whose ministry had once before been destroyed by O'Connell's tactics, decided to take advantage of a breach between O'Connell and the Young Irelenders and attempt to win the Catholics of Ireland by offering them concessions. These concessions may not seem like much today, but under the conditions they were considerable. Peel described his administrations of Ireland as "the problem of peaceably governing seven millions of people, and maintaining the Protestant Church Establishment for the religious instruction and consolation of one million." 8, 9

7 Ibid., 333-334.
Among the concessions offered the beleaguered and vociferous Irish, was the chance for an education. Prior to this Catholic young men could secure a university education only by an expensive trip to the colleges on the Continent. Trinity College and similar Protestant institutions in Ireland would not give degrees to Catholics. So Peel in the Peel Act of 1845 provided for the establishment of the Queen's Colleges in Ireland.

The Queen's Colleges were granted £100,000 to build and £6,000 annually to maintain their establishments. The Crown was the sole appointer of professors. The colleges were to be strictly non-sectarian. No religious tests were to be imposed for entrance or for degrees, no religious instruction was to be given except by religious groups at their own expense, no religious topics were to be introduced into the classroom, no religious considerations were to be considered in the appointing or dismissing of officials. They were, as Sir Robert Inglis, Member of Parliament from Oxford, said, "a gigantic scheme of godless education." Daniel O'Connell's opinion was the same, only louder. In defense of Peel all we can say is, "he meant well."


11 Ibid., 40.
The Irish hierarchy, of course, would not stand for such a thing to exist unchallenged in Ireland. Starting with a meeting on May 21, 1845, twelve days after the enactment of the bill, they roundly condemned what they called mixed education, in several ecclesiastical gatherings. Mixed education meant that religion must be taught either in air-tight compartments outside of the regular class hours or weakened till it offended no one and helped no one. The Irish hierarchy was in agreement in refusing to accept the "godless colleges" as they were offered although they were to become split over various compromises.

Peel's reply was as follows:

I admit that I think the system we propose inapplicable to England or Scotland; but, if we are to have academical institutions in Ireland, I see no other mode of securing that advantage but by the establishment of some such system as this.

In saying that the Irish at that time could not support colleges without English aid, Peel was correct. He was also saying that the English Government, wedded to the establishment, would never just give money to the Irish for Roman Catholic

12 By mixed education was meant not co-education, but education in a school for pupils of different religions. Up to this time, all schools had been avowedly Protestant and Catholics simply were not admitted. Most colleges required an oath agreeing to the Thirty-nine Articles.

13 Quoted by McGrath in Newman's University: Idea and Reality, 59.
colleges. The Bishops replied that they would rather go unlettered than accept that kind of education. And there the matter stood for a while. The English Government began to build at Galway and Cork colleges for the Irish which the Irish Bishops had forbidden the faithful to attend.

But the Catholic Bishops, on instigation from Rome, decided to take more positive action. They realized that they had destroyed the one opportunity of the young men of Ireland for a higher education in that particular condemnation of the Queen's Colleges. Accordingly, plans were laid to form a Catholic University in Dublin which was envisioned as a future Catholic University for the whole English speaking world. Dr. Cullen, Archbishop of Armagh and chairman of the University Committee, came to England and paid a visit to Newman at the Birmingham Oratory. He persuaded Newman to accept the Rectorship of the University. Since Newman's name as well as ability was needed to get the University under way, he accepted the Rectorship. He proposed to deliver in Dublin, a series of lectures outlining his own ideas on what a Catholic University should be.

In the people of Dublin, however, Newman was faced with

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products of the very mixed education he was to speak against. Many of the leading men of Dublin were men who had managed to go through English schools where religion was treated with indifference. They were infected with the spirit of Liberalism that Newman feared so much. Besides, many of his hearers saw in the Queen's Colleges, already being built, the only hope that their sons had for a higher education.

The eyes of the Liberal Free Thinkers of the English speaking world were also upon him, even more perhaps than those of the Dubliners. The Free Thinkers of the world would be anxious to leap upon a sign of "dogmatism" in Newman's approach. And the rising agnostics would be waiting for a sign of absolutism. So Newman was forced to condemn a college system that grew out of Liberalism and condemn it in the eyes of men already infected with that Liberalism.

He accepted the challenge, but was forced to select his weapons carefully since he was being forced to fight on the enemy's field; his audience was already predisposed not to believe him. He had to prove to his listeners and companions that religion was a necessary and intrinsic part of education; that any scheme, such as the Queen's Colleges, that excluded or ignored religion was no education at all.

Before we can conduct an investigation of John Henry Newman's explanation of a liberal education, we must consider
the methods of argument and line of thought that circumstances forced him to take. It was not the method he may have preferred, but the method he had to take that comes to our attention here. Circumstances forced Newman to make two major decisions.

The first was an obvious one. Because of the rising agnosticism, he emphasized the need of religion in education. In a more religious atmosphere, he could have touched upon this but lightly, leaving it to his listeners to fill in the rest. But in the mid-nineteenth century, he decided to devote the whole of four of the nine discourses to the relation of theology to secular knowledge. He takes a more positive approach than that of merely condemning mixed or godless education.

His second decision was brilliant and far from obvious at first glance. He decided to fight the Liberals on their own grounds. It would have been easy for him to fall back on the authority of the Church to prove that religion was absolutely necessary for secular education, but Newman declined this approach for he knew the Liberals would despise it. He was well acquainted with their main tenets which he summarized in his *Apologia*. Two of them are given here as examples of Liberalistic ideas that forced Newman to forego the authority of the Church:

I conclude this notice on Liberalism . . . with some propositions in detail, which . . . I earnestly denounced and abjured.

1. No religious tenet is important unless reason shows
it to be so.

3. No theological doctrine is anything more than an opinion which happens to be held by bodies of men. 15

Therefore, he decided to prove his view on the ground of pure reason, a field which the Liberals claimed was his greatest weakness and their greatest strength. He mentions the authority of the Church, shows his great respect for it, but passes it by.

And here I have an opportunity of recognizing once for all that higher view of approaching the subject of these Discourses, which, after this formal recognition, I mean to dispense with. Ecclesiastical authority, not argument, is the supreme rule and the appropriate guide for Catholics in matters of religion. It has always the right to interpose, and sometimes, in the conflict of parties and opinions, it is called on to exercise that right. . . . Its decisions must be heartily accepted and obeyed, and that the more, because the decision proceeds, not simply from the Bishops of Ireland, great as their authority is, but the highest authority on earth, from the Chair of St. Peter. 16

Thus Newman, wise to the particular circumstances under which he spoke, was forced to leave aside the powerful arm of authority and rely solely on reason.

But Newman was faced with another problem in Dublin. The Catholic Emancipation Act had been enacted only twenty years before. Hence, few Catholics had what could be called a

real university training. It is safe to say that most of the leading men of Dublin looked upon a university as a bigger and better professional school where a man was trained in the practical business of making a living. It was expected to produce efficient doctors or lawyers or government officials. The thought that it should give a cultural education, what Newman was to call a liberal education, was definitely in abeyance. The further idea that such a liberal education could really be useful was simply unthought of. It was presumed that there was some contradiction between culture and utility.

Newman moved into this struggle which was nothing less than to prove that a university was a place where one received "a discipline in accuracy of mind." 17 Newman knew that this was just what his audience needed. He described them all too well in the very lectures he was giving, and we can apply what he says even more today. "Boys are always more or less inaccurate and too many, or rather the majority, remain boys all their lives." 18

[For them] there must be a supply...of new and luminous theories on the subjects of religion, foreign politics, home politics, civil economy, finance, trade, agriculture, emigration, and the colonies. Slavery, the gold fields, German philosophy, the French Empire, Wellington, Peel, Ireland, must all be practised on, day after day, by what

18 Ibid.
are called original thinkers.19

Newman guessed correctly that just this sort of grown-up "boy" made up his audience and had to be convinced that education was a "discipline in accuracy of mind."

This is the most difficult point for Newman to deal with. In the work-a-day world it is difficult to see the value of many years of schooling for "accuracy of mind." In his proof, which we shall deal with in detail in a later chapter, Newman stresses the value of a wide curriculum and expounds the doctrine of knowledge as its own end and the supreme value of a liberal education.

Newman devotes the last five discourses to the discussion of what a liberal education is and proving that giving this type of an education is the primary function of a university. In this he was meeting squarely the rise of the devotion to a scientific education that looked merely to utility for making things or coining money. This cult of the strictly useful was brought out clearly in an attack on Oxford studies printed in the Edinburgh Review in 1808-1811 which Newman quotes in the Idea of a University.

These articles, written by several men, the greatest being Sidney Smith, attacked the classics on the ground that

19 Ibid., 13.
they were of no value in practical life. They were answered by two Oriel Fellows, who replied that the purpose of a University is to train the mind and that the classics are excellently suited for this. This series of attack and counter-attack epitomized the whole struggle between culture and utility that was raging then, and indeed still is.

Both of these big problems treated in the Idea of a University, the relation of religion to secular learning and the purpose of a university education, are in the forefront of the modern upheaval in education. The current struggle in the courts over "released time" in public schools for religious instruction testifies to the former and the Hutchins-Adler revolution at Chicago testifies to the latter.

In the second section of the Idea, Newman takes up two subjects that concern us in this thesis and obviously were written with a view for the times. I refer to Chapter V, A Form of Infidelity of the Day, 1854, and Chapter VII, Christianity and Scientific Investigation.

Chapter V is a direct attack on Rationalism and Liberalism which Newman felt to be so dangerous that he has included this fifth chapter to save his university from their encroachments. In Chapter VII Newman shows that religion has nothing to fear from science. This seems to have been inspired
because of Dr. Cullen. He "seemed to dread freedom for science" and Newman knew there could be no spirit of study in a university without freedom for science also.

There are several other issues that must be taken up, since Newman considered them important enough to take them into consideration.

There was the accusation that a liberal education is only for those who do not have to work for a living. The worthy burgers of Dublin did not wish their sons educated for a life of intellectual joy and financial destitution. So Newman develops the theme that a liberal education is preeminently useful even in everyday life.

Next there was a squabble over the meaning of the word University. Does it mean a place for a universality of students, or a place where every subject is taught? Newman uses the latter as his primary meaning, although actually he would like both, world-wide student body and universality of subjects.

All of these topics will be dealt with later in their proper place.

The main issue now is: what in particular were the events in Ireland that forced Newman to stress the relation of

Religion and Learning and just how did he do it?
CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS

The establishment of Queen's Colleges by Peel's Tory (Liberal) Party was looked upon, by the English government as a gesture of liberality and goodwill. The English thought, and correctly, that the Irish could use some well endowed colleges. The powerful Irish Bishops, however, were fearful of the new colleges because they were founded on a de jure non-religious basis, the first ever so established in the realm. The colleges were to ignore religious instruction, so students of any faith could attend without prejudice to their beliefs. Such an educational policy in the official opinion of the Irish Bishops was godless and they refused to co-operate with it. But there was an unofficial attitude which allowed for co-operation that was to split the Irish hierarchy.¹

Besides its "godless" foundation, the new non-religious colleges already had a dubious reputation in England and on the continent they had revealed themselves to be spawning grounds

for Liberalism.

The new secularist education was...suspect in the eyes of the Irish Bishops by reason of its results in England, and their suspicions were increased by the fact that in such countries as France and Belgium the undenominational universities were avowedly free-thinking.²

However, despite their fear of Queen's Colleges policy, many of the Irish Clergy, including some of its most outstanding members such as Bishop Murray and Bishop Russell, felt that cooperation with the new colleges was the best course under the circumstances. They realized the need of education in Ireland and thought that the famine-ridden nation was incapable of supporting its own educational institutions. This group thought that though Peel's measures were marred by serious defects, these defects were accidental not intrinsic and so was willing to give the Queen's Colleges a trial.³ The first clash came soon after the bill was introduced into Parliament on May 9, 1845.

On May 21, 1845, the Irish Bishops met at the pro-cathedral, Dublin, Archbishop Murray of Dublin presiding, and recommended the following radical changes in the plan.

That a fair proportion of the professors, and other office-

² Ibid., 309.
³ Hegarty, "Ireland's Debt to Newman," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, March, 1945, 152.
bearers in the new colleges should be members of the
Roman Catholic Church. . . . That all office-bearers in
those colleges should be appointed by a board of trustees,
of which the Roman Catholic prelates of the Provinces in
which. . . . those colleges should be erected, shall be
members. . . . Roman Catholic pupils should not attend
the lectures on logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy,
geology or astronomy. . . . unless a Roman Catholic profes­
sor will be appointed for each of these chairs. 4

Clearly, this plan is one of co-operation with great
reservations. Actually, it was also a plan of compromise. Arch­
bishop Murray and Bishop Crolly at the head of the minority were
inclined to waive objections and give the plan a trial, which
Bishop MacHale, at the head of the majority, wanted to avoid.
He favored a solution on denominational lines with some of the
colleges being turned over to the Catholics, and one to the
Presbyterians, for their exclusive use. 5 The plan that evolved
between the two parties of the bishops was a hodge-podge system
that tried to provide the good effects of education without ac­
cepting the evils of bad education under the circumstances. So,
although they recognized the dangers, to a certain extent, in
the secular Queen's Colleges, the Irish Bishops as a group sought
some kind of co-operation with the English Government's venture.

4 McGrath, S. J., Newman's University: Idea and
Reality, 45-6.

5 This latter was also Daniel O'Connell's plan which
he advocated in Parliament.
Meanwhile the Bill passed both houses of Parliament but slight modifications were made, which caused the matter to be brought up again at the regular meeting of the bishops at Maynooth on June 22, 1845. Bishops Murray and Croll wished to reopen the whole matter since they felt the changes introduced had modified the plan sufficiently to warrant new approaches to the question. But Bishop MacHale was now an open opponent of the colleges. He had accused Peel in an open letter of an attempt "to bribe Catholic youth into the abandonment of their religion." 6

Obviously there was a strong difference of opinion among the Irish Clergy. The matter was put to a vote and seventeen out of the twenty-five present sided with Bishop MacHale in refusing to accept the bill as it stood. But it should be noted that this does not mean that all seventeen were against the whole idea of the Queen's Colleges. Some would have been willing to accept the colleges if the plans were improved. Bishop MacHale never would accept them on principle.

The rupture of the Hierarchy over the dangers of mixed education became public because of actions of the Chamber of Commerce of Armagh. On August 11, 1845, the city fathers of

Armagh called a meeting in Market House of all religious denominations to support a petition that one of the Queen's Colleges be built at Armagh. Bishop Crolly was present, expressed himself satisfied with the bill and agreed to serve on the committee for the petition.

About six weeks after this episode the following proclamation appeared in the newspapers of Ireland signed by at least eighteen of the bishops, of whom Bishop Crolly was not one. It says:

Lest the faithful . . . should be apprehensive of any changes having been wrought in our minds relative to Queen's Colleges we . . . felt it a duty we owe to them . . . to reiterate our solemn conviction of their being dangerous to faith and morals.  

On November 18, 1845, the bishops met again. They were unable to agree on a united stand and resolved to send to Rome for a final decision on the matter. It was two years, years of famine, before they received an answer.

(An interesting and tragic sidelight of the economic status of Ireland at this time was the famine. In 1845-46 a blight fell on the potato crop, and it is estimated that three out of every four acres were ruined. The famine carried off hundreds of thousands that year, and the diseases that ravaged

7 quoted in McGrath, Newman's University, 61.
the undernourished population for the following five years were so widespread that in 1851 the census commissioners estimated the number of deaths due to the famine to be very nearly one million. The Great Famine was the worst single disaster in recorded Irish history. In 1850, five-sixths of the entire population of Ireland was housed in mud huts or cottages of a single room. This was the Ireland to which the scholarly, well-bred convert from Oxford was invited to found a great university.

On October 9, 1847, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda finally pronounced judgment on the Queen's Colleges. The text of the pronouncement showed that Rome was aware of the division among the Bishops.

We wish, first of all, to declare that it was never the belief of the Sacred Congregation that the Bishops who seemed to favour the establishment of the colleges proposed to do what they believed to be not entirely right; for their integrity has been proved by long experience, and it is clear that their decision was prompted solely by the hope of effecting greater good and promoting the cause of religion in Ireland. Nevertheless, the Sacred Congregation . . . having considered the matter maturely and in all its bearings, does not dare to hope for such results from the foundation of the colleges; on the contrary it fears that grave danger to the Catholic Faith may thence arise; in short, it believes that such institutions would be harmful to religion.

It therefore admonishes the Archbishops and bishops of Ireland to take no part in them. Indeed, it would have wished that those of the bishops who approached the

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Government with a view to obtaining some modification of the law concerning these colleges . . . should first have sought the opinion of the Holy See, and it has no doubt that these same bishops . . . will retract everything they may have done contrary to its wishes.

It seems incredible to us now that ecclesiastical authority should have to take such a strong stand on the question of mixed education, which in the Ireland of that day meant the separation of God from education. But we must remember that we see that separation now for what it is, and its ill effects. In the Ireland of the 1850's it was just the beginning and only a sharp mind could foresee the future and what mixed education would lead to.

The minority group among the bishops was still convinced that some cooperation with the Queen's Colleges was possible. In line with this, Bishop Murray sent a Bishop Nicholson, Titular Archbishop of Hieropolis, a man of influence in Rome, with suggested modifications in the plan for the colleges. He hoped to reopen the matter and obtain a more favorable attitude on the part of the Holy See.

Bishop MacHale got wind of all this, and went personally to Rome with Bishop O'Higgins of Armagh to protest. His attitude is best expressed in the closing lines of their formal

protest: "Most Holy Father, Time Anglos et dona ferentes."

This brought forth a second reply from Rome. The heart of it was that the Holy See was unable to mitigate the decision made previously on account of the grievous and intrinsic dangers of the colleges. It closed with a reference to the erection of a Catholic University in Ireland. It also urged the bishops to hold a National Synod to settle the matter among themselves.10

Accordingly a Synod at Thurles was decided upon for the June of 1850. As events transpired, this was formally convened in August. The synod in itself did not do much to unite the Irish Bishops. In general, when ever there was a vote on the colleges, it went sixteen against and fourteen in favor. But when the final decrees were presented concerning the colleges, six of them were accepted without opposition, only the third, fourth and fifth decrees being opposed. Bishop Murray and eleven other Bishops appealed to the Holy See against them.

The third and fourth decrees prohibited priests to take part in administering the colleges sub poena suspensionis ipso facto incursenda, . . . the fifth . . . declared that the Queen's Colleges were omni ratione . . . rejicienda et evitanda.11

10 McGrath, Newman's University, 67, 73.

11 Ibid., 76, and note.
In November a reply was received from Rome concerning the protest made by Bishop Murray. It declared that the matter was closed and urged Bishop Murray to encourage those who sided with him to enforce the Synodal Acts. Despite this external healing of the breach, however, many of the bishops still believed in the possibility of mixed education and presented a real problem for Newman to deal with. For neither at nor after the Synod was Bishop Cullen able to secure anything like unanimity among his colleagues. A substantial minority was, and remained hostile or at least apathetic... it was sufficiently large in numbers, sufficiently determined in character, and sufficiently strong in influence to foredoom Dr. Cullen's efforts to failure. 12

The laity of Ireland were even more deeply infected with the desire for mixed education than the Bishops. This was all the more serious since it was from the laity that students and money for any Catholic University would come. The Young Ireland Party supported the bill in its main tenets on the grounds that higher education was necessary for Ireland and that in uniting in education young men of different faiths greater national unity would be achieved. They hoped that safeguards against irreligion and that voluntary endowments for religious instruction would be provided.

The Young Irelander's approach to the question of mixed education was uncritical in many respects. They accepted with little reserve the growing popular belief of their age that undenominational education would prove a cure-all for political and religious differences. A century of experience has proved that undenominational education removes religious differences by removing religion; a lesson some people have learned only by experience. Fergal McGrath sums up the attitude of the Young Irelanders, who reflected much of the nation:

The Young Ireland party dismissed too lightly the fear of Catholics as to its [mixed education] weakening effects on religion. There is found in their writings no serious consideration of this fundamental issue. . . . It would indeed, appear that the Young Irelanders never clearly understood the Catholic case against mixed education, and believed that the objection was based solely on the grounds of possible misuses as a proselytizing agency.13

It was bad enough that many of the laity had incorrect views on mixed education, but when the time came to try to build and conduct the University, they were left out of the picture while those bishops who were interested managed the university without advice from the laity.

Newman himself admitted to the problem in his letters:

I suppose one initial mistake . . . has been not courting the laity. You recollect that when I wanted to form a merely honorary list of lay members, Propaganda (I suppose at Dr. Cullen's suggestion) stopped it. The Irish

13 McGrath, *Newman's University*, 56.
Bishops can command the poorer portion of the community, and through it the funds necessary; but they have little or no influence with the classes which furnish students and there is the hitch. They [the laymen] were treated like good little boys; were told to shut their eyes and open their mouths and take what we gave them and this they did not relish.

The Bishops conceived of education as something the clergy ran while the laity encouraged them. This was certainly the attitude of Archbishop Cullen who was appointed Apostolic Delegate and ordered to preside over the Synod of Thurls; all this only six months after he was consecrated bishop in Rome. He was appointed to the place of Bishop Cnelly who died in April, 1849. Cullen was to be in charge of the proposed university and it was he who invited Newman to be rector. He was forty-six years of age at the time of his consecration and he had lived in Rome since he was seventeen. He and Newman were destined to clash on much concerning the Catholic University and many of the ideas developed in the Idea of a University are directed against Cullen's views on education.

Archbishop Cullen entered the fray on mixed education with true fervor. For him the battle was to be won by ultra-conservatism and a thoroughgoing ecclesiastical supervision of the new Catholic University. He distrusted most modern thought

14 Ward, Life, 364.
15 Ibid., 381.
In Cullen's eyes the scheme was predominately ecclesiastical. And he desired the new institution to be entirely under his own control. The professors, in his view, should be priests, owing him strict obedience. . . . The undergraduates were to be amenable to a quasi-seminarist discipline, and were thus to be preserved unspotted from modern thought. . . . Theology was to have the control of the sciences as in the days of old. pointing to a lay seminary rather than a university.

Edward Butler who was on the staff of the Catholic University as professor of Mathematics from the beginning to the end of Newman's rectorship claimed that since Archbishop Cullen and the Irish Bishops themselves had never had a university education (outside of a seminary) they did not understand what it was. They did not want a university such as Newman had in mind but held the idea that it was to be a glorified seminary for the laity.

One of the clashes between Cullen and Newman was to be on just this issue: the degree of freedom that the laity and scientific studies were to have in the university.

Newman did not share Dr. Cullen's dread of the whole modern scientific and liberal movement. . . . The Queen's Colleges excluded theology. Dr. Cullen seemed to dread freedom for science. Newman planned a university in which

17 Ward, Life, 367.
theology and science alike should be free and flourishing [sic].

But in July, 1851, when Archbishop Cullen visited Newman in the Birmingham Oratory to invite him to be rector of the proposed university, Newman knew none of this. He was an "innocent," as he described himself.

But his innocence was quickly dashed by the cold showers of apathy and discouragement that greeted him. Newman's own notebook gives that picture more eloquently and clearly than anything else.

Feb. 24th-27th. The Bishop of Limerick very strong against the possibility of a university ... however, he has consented to have his name put down on the book on condition ... that he should not be supposed to prophesy anything but failure. 19

Hardly an enthusiastic reception. Nor was this an isolated case. It was the usual reception Newman received.

Feb. 8th. Called on Fr. Curtis, Jesuit Superior in Dublin who said (1) that class did not exist in Ireland who would come to the University ... (2) that there were not youths to fill evening classes in Dublin, unless I looked to the persons who frequented concerts etc., etc., men, women and children ... Fr. Curtis ended by saying: 'My advice to you is this: To go to the Archbishop and say: Don't attempt the University—give up the idea.' 20

18 Ibid., 311.
19 Quoted in Ward, Life, 334.
20 Ibid., 333-4, Italics Newman's.
Newman became aware, as he has stated himself, that the majority of Irish bishops did not recognize the importance of university education for the Irish Catholics. Few were really interested in trying to found a real going university. As it was bluntly and clearly put by Wilfrid Ward:

Here was the position gradually brought home to him. A Catholic University was wanted as a political and ecclesiastical weapon against mixed education. For this purpose his name was a valuable asset. But as a practical project, in the interest of education, hardly anyone took it seriously.21

This is a little overstated since many men saw that a university was a necessity for Ireland and was something that would come sooner or later. But the attitude Ward outlines is to a great extent the one Newman faced. Certainly no one was concerned with founding the Dublin University as a school where science and theology would join hand in their proper union, and defeat liberalism in an open battle. John Henry Newman, recent convert to the Church was the only champion of this already lost cause.

In summary, the situation Newman faced in Ireland was this: the guiding prelates of the University project were proceeding against a very determined minority of the episcopate agitating against them; the leading laymen of the professional

21 Ibid., 336.
and squire classes who should have become firm supports of the University had broken with Archbishop Cullen over his clericalism; the conditions in the famine-and plague-ridden country would demand a nearly impossible sacrifice; and Archbishop Cullen, the main support of the whole project, held widely different views from Newman on the place of science in education and feared that any "modern" thought was really liberalism.
CHAPTER III
THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY

Newman, although disappointed by the lack of co-operation he had received, pushed ahead his plans for the University. These plans must, of course, include theology. Since Dublin University was being founded in reply to the non-religious Queen's colleges, the inclusion of theology could be taken for granted. The first four discourses of the Idea of a University are devoted to the task of showing that theology is a necessary part of a university education. The interesting part of his argument is that he makes little appeal to the authority of the Church. The main weight of his argument rests upon reason.

Newman begins with his celebrated definition of a university from which flows his insistence of the inclusion of theology in the university's curriculum.

[A university] is a place of teaching universal knowledge. This implies that its object is on the one hand, intellectual not moral; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and the extension of knowledge rather than the advancement. 1

1 Newman, Idea, 3.
An objection is raised by some who say that by university is meant a universality of students, not necessarily of knowledge. But Newman shows that this comes to the same thing. For if all students are to be included, then all knowledge must be taught, because if certain sections of knowledge were excluded, then those seeking that section would be excluded also, and our university would lose its universality.

Certainly there are few who would quibble with this most general definition: A university teaches universal knowledge. The question raised about theology is, is it knowledge? Is theology truth, or mere myth and fancy?

This is a legitimate question, for if theology does not fit into the general body of truth, then it has no place in a university. "Truth," as Newman says, "is the object of Knowledge of whatever kind." All that truly exists is probed by the human mind and is found to form one large scheme which falls into several definite sections which, being part of the whole truth, have countless bearing one upon the other. If theology is no part of this truth, part of the scheme, it is absurd to include it in any serious investigations.

From the present almost total lack of theology courses in our modern universities it would seem that theology is not

2 Ibid., 62.
considered knowledge. As Newman reasons:

If . . . in an institution which professes all knowledge, nothing is professed, nothing is taught about the Supreme Being, it is fair to infer that every individual in the number of those who advocate that institution, supposing him consistent, distinctly holds that nothing is known for certain about the Supreme Being; nothing such, as to have any claim to be regarded as a material addition to the stock of general knowledge existing in the world.¹

Such, in fact, is the view of those who would exclude religion from education. They hold the opinion that religion is based on something mysterious from the other world and not upon reason. Since it cannot be trusted to reason, we cannot trust ourselves to include it in the field of knowledge. A single example, from Dr. V. T. Thayer for twenty years a leading New York educator, will suffice to show the modern distrust of Theology:

[T]hey [professors who advocate religion in education] mean something other-worldly, as they themselves say, that is identifiable only by means of distinctive methods and categories suitable to its distinctive nature and (as it follows of course) revealed to us by authority other than reason and judgment and the ordinary rules of evidence.⁴

In fine, religion, and theology with it, is looked upon not as knowledge, but as feeling or sentiment, something

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¹ Ibid., 42.

rather felt by the heart than embraced by the intellect.

If this be so, then theology has no place in education; but what if it is not so?

If on the other hand it turns out that something considerable is known about the Supreme Being, whether from Reason or Revelation, then the Institution in question professes every Science, and yet leaves out the foremost of them . . . such an institution cannot be what it professes, if there be a God. 3

Newman sets forth to show that there is a reasonable science of God, not a collection of myths revealed to us by an authority other than reason. He insists, in his definition that he is speaking of natural theology and not appealing to revelation. He is insisting that this science of God he speaks of is a science of reason and cannot be discounted as being other-worldly. He does this so that he may carry along with him non-Catholics and liberals who might scorn revelation. 6

However, we must digress here a moment for the sake of clarity on Newman's stand. He does not by his insistence on natural theology exclude revealed theology from his curriculum.

[How can any Catholic imagine that it is possible for him to cultivate Philosophy and Science with due attention to their ultimate end, which is Truth, supposing that system of revealed facts and principles, which constitutes the Catholic Faith, which goes so far beyond


nature, and which he knows to be most true, be omitted from among the subjects of his teaching?

The definition, then, of theology that Newman gives in his Idea of a University lays stress upon its reasonableness as a science. We give two of his descriptions here so that his mind on this matter may be most clear.

I speak of one Idea unfolded in its just proportions, carried out upon an intelligible method, and issuing in necessary and immutable results.

By Theology, I simply mean the science of God, or the truths we know about God put into a system just as we have a science of the stars, and call it astronomy; or of the crust of the earth, and call it geology.

Just as it would be false to deny that astronomy or geology is science—producing knowledge, so it would be false to urge the same of theology. This theology Newman has just defined has, he will show, a justified position in the field of knowledge and the scheme of a university.

Newman, of course, cannot enter into a long investigation of theology to show that it is a science and not a collection of emotions and myths. He indicates its position in any abstract consideration of the scope of knowledge, but his

7 Ibid., 84.
8 Ibid., 82.
9 Ibid., 77.
real demonstration rests in his appeal to history.

Theology, says Newman, has always had a place in the intellectual world. Indeed, at times, it was the predominant science among the sciences. Systems of religion most various have had well thought out theologies. Intellects of many different types have studied theology and added to its general store. It would be false to deny the existence of theology as an object of the intellect, when, as a fact, it has persisted through all the centuries of thought.

It [Theology] has had its place, if not possession, in the intellectual world from time immemorial; it has been received by minds the most various, and in systems of religion the most hostile to each other.

But, by fruits you shall know them. As Newman points out, the greatest proof for the necessity of theology in education is the terrible result that follows when theology is not considered.

The chaos in human thought resulting from a theological vacuum springs from the very nature of the human mind. Given the mind of man as it is, the results cannot be otherwise, says Newman. "The human mind cannot keep from speculating and systematizing; and if theology is not allowed to occupy its own territory . . . sciences quite foreign to theology, will

10 Ibid., 65.
11 Newman, Idea, 82.
If one science is left out of the grand scheme of thought, then other sciences seek to answer the question which the omitted sciences should have answered. But these other sciences have no right, indeed, have not the necessary faculties, to answer the questions of the missing science, simply because they are not that science. They are designed for one task; they have not the right to speak with any authority when they step out of the limits of that task. Hence, since they speak on a subject out of their bounds, they must fall into error since they apply the rules for a science in a field where those rules have no validity.

This is true if any important study is left out, how much more so of theology, the queen of the sciences. As one contemporary writer has said of theology:

Nobody can do without Theology, at least a concealed and unconscious Theology, and the best way of avoiding the inconveniences of an insinuated Theology is to deal with Theology that is consciously aware of itself.

As an example of what Maritain calls "unconscious Theology" i.e., of subordinate sciences working into Theology's

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12 Ibid., 111.
13 Ibid., 91-92.
place, I cite a passage from Professor Kandel, professor of education at Teachers' College, Columbia University.

An authoritarian world, we are told, began to be undermined by Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, and the process of destruction of authority was continued by the Darwins of yesterday and the Einsteins of today. Philosophizing about ultimates was replaced by faith in a scientific attitude that nothing is fixed and by insistence that values must also be subject to constant reconstruction.

As Newman warned, when one important subject is dropped out of the unity of knowledge, others will unjustly creep into its place. And now we have in place of theology "faith in a scientific attitude"; "philosophizing about ultimates" has been replaced by values that are "subject to constant reconstruction."

With the loss of Theology the whole direction of the intellectual world has been lost and subordinate sciences, usurping theology's proper domain, have attempted to give direction when they have none to give. It is a tragic example of the blind leading the blind.

Today, well educated men find that they have no basis for discussion. The very foundation for thought seems to have slipped away. Those of the Catholic tradition find that they no longer can even disagree with their adversaries because

their adversaries no longer speak the same language. Educated men hold so little in common that they can no longer agree with one another enough to argue.

All of this has resulted from the fact that theology has been forced out of the line of learning, and there is nothing to take its place.

It may be necessary--and often is--to know what the particular sciences can tell about men, but it is always necessary to know what is the end of man, to know for what purpose man is here on earth. You may conduct the business of life, you may even govern a state, without knowing a great deal about chemistry, but you cannot do these things properly if you do not know the end of human life, if you do not know the destiny of man.16

All of this was painfully obvious to Newman. He called attention to the danger of a non-theological education in his Idea. The fact that men still failed to recognize the danger was not because Newman poorly presented his case, but because men were poorly prepared to accept it. They are even less prepared today.

CHAPTER IV

AIM OF A UNIVERSITY LIBERAL EDUCATION

Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University* is the most complete exposition of the meaning of a liberal education ever written. It was almost the entire purpose of this work to explain and defend the liberal education. But before we enter upon Newman's exposition of the subject, what, historically, is the meaning of a liberal education?

The liberal arts have meant in past ages the formal training of man's highest powers, and the transmission with organic growth of great truths in the Graeco-Roman-Hebrew-Christian culture. Newman gives us the historical perspective.

And while we thus recur to Greece and Athens with pleasure and affection, and recognize in that famous land the source and school of intellectual culture, it would be strange indeed if we forgot to look southward also, and there to bow before a more glorious luminary, and a more sacred oracle of truth, and the source of another sort of knowledge, high and supernatural, which is seated in Palestine. Jerusalem is the fountain head of religious knowledge, as Athens is of secular...¹ Each leaves an heir and successor in the West, and that heir and succes-

So Cardinal Newman looks to the ancient seat of our world, Greece, as the "school of intellectual culture."

But what does Newman mean by "intellectual culture"? Does he mean a thorough command of Greek and Roman history with selected passages from Homer, Thucydides, Livy, and Cicero? He does not deny that these things may be present, but his concept of intellectual culture goes deeper into the nature of man than the mere recital of stirring facts. He speaks of the perfection of our nature as opposed to that of the beast.

[Whereas our nature, unlike that of the inferior creation, does not at once reach its perfection, but depends, in order to it, on a number of external aids and appliances; Knowledge, as one of the principal of these, is valuable for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of habit, even though it be turned to no further account, nor subserve any direct end.]

This knowledge, obviously gained by some kind of work, is further defined as "Liberal Knowledge." Oddly enough the best approach to a proper understanding of Newman's Liberal Knowledge is the negative approach. It is best to discover,

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3 Ibid., 122.
first, what such knowledge is not.

Newman tells us for one thing, that it is not a loading of the memory of the student with a mass of undigested knowledge. It is not an unmeaning profusion of subjects implying a smattering in a dozen branches of study; neither is it merely an acquaintance with the learned names of things and persons, nor attendance at eloquent lectures nor even seeing the world, entering into active life, going into society, travelling, coming into contact with the principles and modes of thought of various parties, interests, and races.  

Modern American Universities are plagued with the popular demand for an easy education as universities were in Newman's day. He comments sadly: "all things now are to be learned at once, not one well, but many badly. Learning is to be without exertion . . . without grounding, without advance, without finishing."  

Just as a surface acquaintance with science and literature do not constitute an education, in the same way, entertaining subjects and accomplishments do not come up to Newman's idea of a Liberal Education or Liberal Knowledge.

4 For the best exposition of Newman's concept of liberal knowledge, see Discourse V of the Idea.

All I say is, call things by their right names. . . .
You may as well call drawing and fencing education, as a general knowledge of botany. . . . Stuffing birds or playing stringed instruments is an elegant pasttime . . . but it is not education; it does not form or cultivate the intellect.

Still, Liberal Knowledge, is not acquired by mere instruction. Newman thinks of the word "instruction" as belonging to the manual trades, to training in the useful arts, in trade and in ways of business; for these are methods which have little or no effect, as far as Liberal Education, upon the mind.

To learn to be an engineer, carpenter, doctor, or skilled pilot is not to acquire Liberal Knowledge or a Liberal Education. It is merely to commit to memory certain rules, albeit most difficult, that bear upon an end external to themselves.

Instructions, lectures, school, state, or nationwide tests, ribbons, experiments, all may lead to factual knowledge. But "the end of a Liberal Education is not mere knowledge, or knowledge considered in its matter."7

And so, clearly placing himself at odds with those who claim that education must be practical, Newman declares

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6 Newman, Idea, 162.
7 Ibid., 149-150.
that mere utilitarian professional instruction is of no use for a liberal education. He recalls the classic distinction of Aristotle between liberal knowledge and servile knowledge. Newman says:

What is merely professional, though highly intellectual, may, though liberal in comparison of trade and manual labor, is not simply called Liberal, and mercantile occupations are not Liberal at all.

So we see that many of the things that are popularly considered as part of a liberal education, are not so at all, at least in Newman's mind. Graduating from a fine business school, a world tour, grand sport that it may be, making many influential friends, wealthy as they may be, all of these are not a liberal education.

I say here that a Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence.

So a liberal education aims at perfecting that part of man that makes a man a man, his intellect. It is not concerned with "training." A liberal education produces no doctors, lawyers, priests, or scientists. It produces men skilled in the use of their reason. These men may in turn be excellent doctors etc., but that is not the concern of a liberal education.

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8 Ibid., 126.
9 Ibid., 138.
Liberal education looks to nothing more than the "cultivation of the intellect." As Newman clearly states:

\[T\]hat alone is liberal knowledge which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be informed (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation.\[10\]

This definition is rather abstract. Just what, exactly is the effect of this liberal education on the person receiving it? In other words, after the student has acquired this intellectual culture, what does he look and act like? No one has described him better than Newman.

He [the liberally educated man] apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called "Liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what ... I have ventured to call a philosophical habit.

He has] a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant.\[12\]

\[10\] Ibid., 126.
\[11\] Ibid., 120.
\[12\] Ibid., 197.
Such is a person, in Newman's view, who has a liberal education. And this liberal education is what Newman proposes as the formal object of his university. The university may do other things, but to be a university it must give its students a liberal education. This is the work of a university.

A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life ... or what ... I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. This is the main purpose of a University in its treatment of its students.13

The proof that Cardinal Newman is speaking about the formal aim of a university appears most clearly in his careful comparisons of liberal knowledge to bodily health and to moral virtue.

It were well if the English, like the Greek language, possessed some definite word to express, simply and generally, intellectual proficiency or perfection, such as "health," as used with reference to the animal frame, and "virtue," with reference to our moral nature.14

The comparison is painstakingly followed out by Newman to show just what he means by the purpose of a university. The perfection of the body is physical health, of the will, moral virtue, and of the intellect, knowledge—i.e., the active power of judging, of discriminating between truth and falsehood, of seeing things whole, in all their relationship. This

13 Ibid., 120.
14 Ibid., 144.
is good health of mind, a perfection in itself, just as virtue
is perfection for the will and health for the body. Now a good
healthy body can be used to serve God in pursuits intellectual
or manual, in the Apostolic ministry or in legitimate recreation,
or it can be used to fight an unjust war, or lead criminals to
taller crimes.

The same is true of a gifted and trained mind. What
brilliant and original thinkers some hoodlums have been. Cer-
tainly some of the most wicked of the Nazis were the most intel-
ligent. Shrewd judgment serves the unjust as well as the just,
and a strong body can also serve both.

But still, these are perfections in their own field;
a healthy body is a healthy body, no matter whose it is. A
good mind is a good mind, whether it is behind a doctor's scal-
pel or an assassin's knife.

Now, Newman continues, as health is a good in itself,
so is knowledge. There is nothing that is evil in knowledge
as such. Knowledge, therefore, just as health, can be an end
in itself. In its own order it is the ultimate well being.
It is only in relation to a further use that evil appears, not
in health, not in knowledge, but in the will. Health and know-

15 Newman is using Knowledge in his own precisely
defined sense, i.e., philosophical or liberal knowledge.
ledge are ends in themselves, but they are not man's end. In relation to the whole man, health is a means of perfection, just as knowledge, in relation to the whole man, is a means to perfection. And so it follows that knowledge must be subjected, in the matter of Faith and morals, to the good of the whole man. But the university's job, properly speaking, is liberal knowledge.

I say, a University, taken in its bare idea, and before we view it as an instrument of the Church, has this object and this mission; it contemplates neither moral impression nor mechanical production; it professes to exercise the mind neither in art nor in duty; its function is intellectual culture; here it may leave its scholars, and it has done its work when it has done as much as this. It educates the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it.16

Such is the aim of Newman's university. Where he obtained his concept, we shall deal with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

I

SOURCE OF NEWMAN'S CONCEPT OF LIBERAL KNOWLEDGE AS THE AIM OF A UNIVERSITY

Newman, as we have seen above, has presented a clear idea of what he means by a Liberal Education as the aim of a University. The question now arises, where did he get such an idea? What influence did his own background and the events of his times have on his writing of the Idea?

Newman indicates that he draws his views from the traditions of Western Culture.

That idea [of Liberal Knowledge] must have substance in it, which has maintained its ground amid . . . conflicts and changes, which has ever served as a standard to measure things withal, which has passed from mind to mind unchanged, when there was so much to colour, so much to influence any notion or thought whatever, which was not founded in our very nature . . . but though its subjects vary with the age, it varies not itself. The Palaestra may seem a Liberal exercise to Lycurgus, and illiberal to Seneca; coach-driving and prize-fighting may be recognized in Elis, and be condemned in England; Music may be despicable in the eyes of certain moderns, and be in the highest place with Aristotle and Plato. . . .

1 Idea, 128.
Clearly, Newman thinks that his concept is rooted at the very heart of Western thought. The trappings of liberal knowledge may change, but the central idea does not.

However, Father Corcoran, S.J., late professor of education at University College, Dublin, urges the view that Newman's liberal knowledge comes from a much narrower field. Father Corcoran states that Newman was thinking only of Oxford when he proposed his concept of a university. He quotes from Newman's letters written before he was formally appointed to the rectorship.

In a few days I shall know what is decided on in Ireland, about the University. It is most daring in its attempt . . . Curious it be if Oxford is imported into Ireland, not in its members only, but in its principles, methods, ways, and arguments. The battle will be there what it was in Oxford twenty years ago. . . . While I found my tools breaking under me in Oxford . . . I shall be renewing the struggle in Dublin with the Catholic Church to support me. It is very wonderful: Keble, Pusey, Maurice, Sewell, who have been able to do so little against Liberalism in Oxford, will be renewing the fight, although not in their persons, in Ireland.2

As Father Corcoran points out, this shows that Newman was thinking of importing Oxford to Ireland and concludes that his ideas on Liberal Knowledge were just another reflection of Oxford. And Oxford, for Father Corcoran, was an abomination of desolation. He quotes the Report of the Royal Oxford Com-

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mission to show that Oxford education had fallen far below what it should have been. Under such headings as "Low Standards of work," and "Collapse of Professions Training," he sums up the worthlessness of Oxford.

In Oxford during 1816-1845 . . . there evidently was no adequate model, no representative source for a philosophy of education, a theory of Liberal Knowledge . . . an Idea of a University that could even faintly exemplify European traditions of culture and services. 

In fact, what Father Corcoran accuses Newman of doing is trying to make a heap look like a cathedral. He said that Newman

set himself . . . to formulate a philosophy of education that would afford justification of the actual plight of the Oxford of his own day, a vindication of its work and aims as being not merely tolerable amid deficiencies and perversions, abuses and inefficiencies, but as being in itself an exemplar of academic perfection, a model of Liberal Education, and of the principles on which it must be conducted.  

This is a serious charge. For if Newman's Idea of liberal knowledge came only from a sympathetic desire to defend his tottering alma mater, it cannot be a very sound idea.

Harrold, a man in sympathy with Newman at almost every step, seems to support this view to some extent--i.e., that excessive devotion to Oxford led to his defense of the liberal

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3 Corcoran, Newman, xxx.

4 Ibid., xxiv.
education. Harrold concludes his analysis with:

Newman's purpose . . . was not merely to define University education for his Irish audience but also to sum up the conservative point of view of Liberal Education at the time when political liberalism seemed, from Newman's point of view, to threaten with destruction all that Philosophy of Humanism which Oxford . . . had so successfully evolved. 5

To the eyes of Corcoran, and, in a much lesser degree, of Harrold, Newman's Liberal Education begins to look like the swan song of a dying, if colorful, age at an old and once respected University.

It is certainly true that Newman respected the power of Oxford and felt a strong emotional attachment to it for all that it had done for him. The foundations for his excellent education had been laid at Oxford. He knew what strength of mind the liberal arts had given him and was anxious to pass that heritage on to others. Moreover, he also wanted to fight Liberalism which he recognized as one of the greatest foes of the Church. Oxford University had not been equal to the contest; Newman hoped Dublin University would be.

But to say these things is not to say that Newman was following a narrow provincial pattern of a University. He knew that "some persons may be tempted to complain that I have servilely followed the English idea of a university." 6 True,

6 Idea, 1.
his ideas were much like Oxford, not because he was blindly devoted to Oxford, but because Oxford was much like any university that trained men properly in the liberal arts. As he himself vigorously urged, he was interested in providing leaders for the Church.

Just as a commander wishes to have tall and well-formed and vigorous soldiers, not from any abstract devotion to the military standard of height or age, but for the purpose of war, and no one thinks it anything but natural and praiseworthy in him . . . so, in like manner, when the Church founds a University, she is not cherishing talent, genius, or knowledge for their own sake, but for the sake of her children . . . with the object of training them to fill their respective posts in life better, and of making them more intelligent, capable, active members of society.

"Intelligent, capable, active members of society"—these were what the Church wanted, and these were what Newman wanted his university to provide. That his university would look much like Oxford is true; that it derived many of its concepts from Oxford is equally true. But Father Corcoran's conclusion that the ideas were false because Oxford was their only source, is misleading. For Newman's ideas were drawn from schools that ante-dated Oxford by whole civilizations.

Newman wanted Catholic youth to have the opportunities to gain that unique liberal education that proved such a powerful weapon in producing the English greats. In a celebrated

7 Ibid., 5.
passage Newman shows at once the great weakness and great strength of the English schools:

But so far is certain, that the Universities and scholastic establishments, to which I refer . . . at least . . . can boast of a succession of heroes and statesmen, of literary men and philosophers, of men conspicuous for great natural virtues, for habits of business, for knowledge of life, for practical judgment, for cultivated tastes, for accomplishments, who have made England what it is,—able to subdue the earth, able to domineer over Catholics.

Would that Catholic youth had had such an education. And Newman would have provided them with such an education. But still, the terrible and true observation that the English schools produced men "able to subdue the earth, able to domineer over Catholics," must have driven like a shaft into the good Irish heart of Father Corcoran. He knew the evil that those subduers of the earth had done to Ireland and he wanted no part of the education that produced them.

Father Corcoran, in condemning the English Universities answers his own charge that Newman's Liberal concept came from Oxford. He states himself that the idea first arose in Athens from the Greek civilization.

The notion of the term Liberal . . . was developed in a slave state system i.e., Athens where a small governing caste, exploiting the physical energy and even the artistic skill of a vast subject population, sought to preserve its monopolies not only by military and economic, but by vocational and intellectual defences and weapons. In varying
forms this caste use of the term Liberal has emerged ever since, where the social order has been developed . . . on the same lines analogous to those of Ancient Greece. Such a caste system unquestionably is traceable in . . . the landed gentry of England.\(^9\)

So Father Corcoran shows that Newman's idea of liberal is rooted deeply in Western Society and cannot be blamed on Oxford. However, in this passage he raises a further charge, i.e., that the whole idea of liberal education presumes a ruling or privileged class which alone can enjoy this liberal education. The rest of men are relegated to a serf or slave class to help the leisure group. (Possibly Father Corcoran thought Newman was trying to turn the Irish into serfs for the English ruling class. There were Englishmen who tried to do this, but Newman was hardly one. He was trying to save the Irish from such a fate.)

This charge will be taken up now as we consider the source of Newman's idea of a gentleman which plays such an important part in his work.

II

**SOURCES OF NEWMAN'S CONCEPT**

**OF A GENTLEMAN**

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The "definition of a gentleman" has become one of the best known selections of The Idea of a University. It is quoted in numerous anthologies and copied by many schoolboys both for its English style and thought content. Unfortunately, taken out of its context in the Idea, its thought content takes on a new coloring that Newman never intended. Many people labor under the erroneous impression that Newman proposed "the gentleman" as an ideal for the university. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

In defining his "gentleman" Newman looked about Victorian England and described what he saw. As Newman was writing the Idea, the Victorian ideal of the gentleman was just evolving into its final form.

Naturally, the new gentleman would have to look very much like the members of the then powerful ruling class. He must also reflect the secularization of thought that had been taking place for the last several centuries. As Harrold sums the matter up:

The newly powerful middle class aspired to the manners of the well born, and refused to be enslaved by their commercial prosperity. They determined to keep alive that eighteenth century tradition which Newman knew so well; that aristocracy of morals and manners, that cult of self-possession and self respect, which Shaftesbury had represented. They added . . . the strengthening ingredients of middle class piety, frugality, self-control, patriotism, and puritan devotion to work. . . . The Victorian Gentleman might be a merchant, but he endlessly sought to immunize himself from modern, overcrowded, mechanized civili-
nation. He set up his 'gentlemanly' ideals as a counterpoise to the industrial revolution which had brought him into being. . . . And his final aim was to live a life of a man of good ancestry, good manners, good fortune, and leisurely accomplishments.¹⁰

Such was the Victorian "Gentleman." He was, as Father Corcoran suggests the member of a ruling class. Was this also Newman's concept of "The Gentleman" as painted in the Idea? Yes, it was. But did he approve of this ideal? Hardly. He did much more to condemn the Victorian Gentleman than any other during or since his time.

We shall go over Newman's celebrated definition of a Gentleman and show how it completely reflected the ideas of Victorian times. Then, by comparing sections of Newman's definition with other sections of the Idea, we can see that Newman never intended this "paragon" to be the ideal of his University.

In his definition he portrays the cold passionless ideal of the Victorian. The Victorians thought of themselves as the Great Undisturbed Ones. The heat of battle left their generals unshaken; while empires fell, they sipped their tea. While their very religion fell about them, they chatted in quiet repose about the Cathedral of St. Paul's. Or so they

¹⁰ Harrold, Newman, 117.
thought.

It was this type of quiet, almost unassuming pride, that Newman put into his "Definition of a Gentleman." He certainly took his definition from what he saw about him. In fact, his definition follows a thoroughgoing analysis of the ideal gentleman as set up by Lord Shaftesbury that the Victorians seemed to follow. So it would seem that the charge made by Father Corcoran is true at last and Newman is a victim of his time. Harrold seems to agree with Father Corcoran as he says:

In thinking of University education in terms of 'the Gentleman' Newman no doubt had in mind an actual social type, the young gentlemen at Oxford when he was a tutor there.11

But, does Newman say anywhere in the Idea that this "Gentleman" he describes is the ideal of a Catholic University? Was he "thinking of University education in terms of 'the Gentleman'"?12 If he was, he contradicts himself within the very work. In his preface Newman states that

when the Church founds a University [she has] the object of training them [the students] to fill their respective posts in life better, and of making them more intelligent, capable, active members of society.13

12 Ibid.
13 Idea, Preface, 5.
How they can be "active members of society" and yet "carefully avoid whatever may cause a jar or jolt in the minds of those with whom they are cast;—all clashing of opinion," or "concur with movements rather than take the initiative," is a contradiction that Newman never bothered to explain. When he states that "Liberal Knowledge" enabled the English to "become lords of the earth, to domineer over Catholics" he obviously expected Catholics to use this knowledge, this ability to get out from under this domination. But how could they conduct such a political and intellectual revolution and still "be a friend of religious toleration" and "avoid . . . the initiative." The answer is simply that Newman never intended his "gentleman" to be the ideal product of his University.

Discourse VIII, which contains the definition of a Gentleman, is the last of the series that deals with what a university is and will become without religion. In these eight discourses Newman shows the great power of liberal knowledge, shows it to be the end of a university, but also clearly shows the dangers of a purely secular education. His definition of a Gentleman, placed at the climax of his investigations is meant to show just how evil Liberal Knowledge can become without

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14 The quotations in this paragraph are selected from the definition of a gentleman, Newman, Idea, 227-228.
moral guidance and yet what power it has. As he says in the sentence directly following the definition. "Such are some of the lineaments of the ethical character which the cultivated intellect will form, apart from religious principle." 15

And the cultivation of the intellect "apart from religious principle" would have filled Newman with horror. He planned his university, in theory as well as practice, to have the active guidance of the Catholic Church, as he vigorously says in his ninth Discourse.

If the Catholic Faith is true, a University cannot exist externally to the Catholic pale, for it cannot teach Universal Knowledge if it does not teach Catholic Theology. This is certain, but still, though it had ever so many Theological chairs, that would not suffice to make it a Catholic University; for Theology would be included in its teaching only as a branch of Knowledge, only as one out of many constituent portions, however important a one, of what I have called Philosophy. Hence, a direct and active jurisdiction of the Church over it and in it is necessary, lest it should become the rival of the Church with the community at large in those Theological matters which to the Church are exclusively committed. . . . 16

In fact, in the same Discourse where the Definition is found, Newman shows that liberal knowledge, unguided by the light of the Church, will lead to evil. But with the Church’s guiding wisdom, liberal knowledge becomes a weapon for good. He states:

15 Idea, 229, Italics added.
16 Ibid., 235-6.
Under the shadow indeed of the Church ... Philosophy [i.e., Liberal Knowledge] does service in the cause of morality; but, when it is strong enough to have a will of its own, and is lifted up with an idea of its own importance ... and undertakes the moral education of the man, then it does but abet evils to which at first it seemed instinctively opposed.

So Newman was well aware that his Gentleman equipped with only liberal knowledge, had certain real dangers. He was well aware of the need for the guidance of the Church.

I have quoted extensively from the text of the Idea itself to show that Newman's Gentleman was far from the ideal he had in mind for his University.

It must have been a sad day for Newman when he saw The Idea of a University attacked because it was offering a pagan ideal. Newman knew his "Gentleman" was a pagan, but he also knew that pagan or not, the Gentleman was powerful. So in outlining his university system, he carefully laid plans that such a pagan power could never be passed on to Catholic youth. This possibility of evil was overcome by the "shadow of the Church" which would have "direct and active jurisdiction" in his Catholic University. He wished to use his University to give Catholic youth the power of the liberal education without the evil that could come of it when it was left unguided. Then

17 Idea, 221.
these youth could defeat the modern pagans on their own ground and with the weapons they used so effectively. In this sense he wished his University to do battle with Liberalism which he recognized as a great enemy of the Church in his time.

In the Preface of the Idea, Newman did his best to show in brief form what he wanted from his University. These words were written after the Discourses were composed. They show that Newman saw his Idea might be misinterpreted. He declares that he does not want his students formed "on any narrow or fantastic type, as, for instance, that of an English Gentleman,"16 which is an "antiquated variety of human nature and remnant of feudalism."19

The following section from his Preface should be learned by English, Irish and American Catholic school boys rather than the "Definition of a Gentleman":

Robbed, oppressed, and thrust aside, Catholics in these islands have not been in a condition for centuries to attempt the sort of education which is necessary for the man of the world, the statesman, the landholder, or the opulent gentleman. Their legitimate stations, duties, employments, have been taken from them, and the qualifications withal, social and intellectual, which are necessary both for reversing the forfeiture and for availing themselves of the reversal. The time is come when this moral disability must be removed. Our desideratum is, not the manners and habits of gentlemen;—these can be,

18 Idea, Preface, 5.
19 Ibid., 4.
and are, acquired in various other ways, by good society, by foreign travel, by the innate grace and dignity of the Catholic mind;—but the force, the steadiness, the comprehensiveness and the versatility of intellect, the command over our own powers, the instinctive just estimate of things as they pass before us, which sometimes indeed is a natural gift, but commonly is not gained without much effort and the exercise of years.
CHAPTER VI

VALUE OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION

We have seen what Newman's liberal knowledge is, the source of its conception and considered the major misconception concerning the Definition of a Gentleman. Now we must consider the question, is this a good education?

First we shall consider the argument of those who think Liberal Knowledge is not a good educational goal.

The first and perhaps the most important objection to Newman's liberal knowledge as the object of a University stems from what has come to be called, the philosophy of Severance. This philosophy of Severance as established by Newman was the observation that intellectual cultivation was distinct from moral cultivation. In Newman's own words:

\[\text{Cultivation of the intellect} \text{ is an object as intelligible} \]
\[\text{... as the cultivation of virtues, while, at the same} \]
\[\text{time, it is absolutely distinct from it.}\]

Newman was insistent upon this real distinction between training in the moral sphere and training in the intellec-

1 Harrold, Newman, 138.
utual sphere. And it was this insistence that "made Newman's conception of University education a stumbling block to many Irish listeners."  

These Irish listeners felt that Newman by his insistence that intellectual culture was the end of a university as such was rejecting moral virtue as an end of a university. Again, Father Corcoran is the champion who best expresses the dangers inherent in such a separation.

Superbly suasive by its structural skill, resourceful alike and rigorous in its organizational appeal, is this tense and sustained attempt to sever, by ethical cleavage, by metaphysical chasm, the intellectual and static from the moral and active . . . elements which constitute the one process of education.  

Evil must result from a cleavage between the intellectual and the religious life. A man might be a Catholic and a scholar without being a Catholic scholar.  

Newman admits this, nay, even claims it can often be the case.

Universities and scholastic establishments, to which I refer [the public schools and colleges of England] . . . with miserable deformities on the side of morals with virtual unbelief, and a hollow profession of Christianity, and a heathen code of ethics,—I say at least they can boast of a succession of heroes and statesmen. . . .

2 Ibid., 108.
3 Corcoran, Newman, lxix.
4 Ibid., lxxxv.
5 Newman, Idea, 163.
So Newman was aware that his Liberal Knowledge could be had with "miserable diffiformities on the side of morals" but still he claimed "Knowledge is one thing, Virtue another" and the purpose of a university is liberal knowledge, not virtue. How can these be reconciled?

The misconception that Newman severs virtue from a university education lies in the use of the term "purpose of a University" or "Education." Father Corcoran and those who attack Newman's philosophy of severance (a term never used by Newman) are using these terms in a much wider sense than Newman did. Note the following section from Father Corcoran in his chapter concerning this point.

Any true education . . . is . . . expressly directed to moral and religious, social uses, no less than to intellectual ends. . . . The philosophical compatibility, or rather the natural trend towards full inter-action and natural aid, of all these various ends in education, needs no demonstration here.

It is true, when we speak of a man's education we think of his moral and religious training as well as his mental training. This is what Father Corcoran means by the term "any true education." But in The Idea of a University, this is not what Newman means. He speaks of education in the sense of mental culture. Religious training is the office of the Church.

6 Corcoran, Newman, lxxvi.
He denies, however, that a university can, in its pursuit of liberal knowledge, ignore the Church. He denies any rejection by a university of the Church’s work. A section from the Preface delineates his line of approach very clearly.

The view taken of a University in these Discourses is the following:—that it is a place of teaching universal knowledge. This implies that its object is . . . intellectual not moral. . . . Such is a University in its essence, and independently of its relation to the Church. But, practically speaking, it cannot fulfil its object duly . . . without the Church’s assistance; or, to use the theological term, the Church is necessary for its integrity.

So Newman is considering education only on the intellectual plane. He does not deny the moral level, he does not claim that a university, taken in its full sense, it its integrity, should give moral training. He merely says that the business of a university is intellectual culture. "It is not a convent, it is not a seminary." In fact, Newman, says, if its purpose is "religious training, I do not see how it can be the seat of Literature and Science."9

We have seen how Newman condemned as pagan and evil the results of liberal knowledge without religious training in "The Gentleman." He insisted that the Church be present, and

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8 Ibid., 251.
9 Ibid., 3.
actively present, in his University to guide and give theology its true place. But in his first eight discourses Newman is not speaking of a University in its integrity but in its essence. And in its essence, it does not include moral training. In the Ninth Discourse, which most people never seem to get to, Newman treats of the place of the Church in his University. He begins by saying that

What I have been attempting has been of a preliminary nature not contemplating the duties of the Church towards a University, nor the characteristics of a University which is Catholic, but inquiring what a University is, what is its aim, what its nature, what its bearings.  

Considering these things, Newman continues "a direct and active jurisdiction of the Church over it and in it is necessary." It is hardly the same thing to say a man has cut the Church out of his considerations and to say he has excluded the Church from his University. Newman, in his first eight Discourses was simply not considering the Church, not excluding it.

Many philosophy books consider man as a rational animal, with his free will and his ability to draw conclusions, but never treat of his moral nature. By this, they do not deny he has a moral nature. So with Newman in his consideration.

11 Ibid., 236.
It is especially hard to see the misunderstanding when in the Ninth Discourse Newman specifically declares that the Church must be present in a University to guard the moral formation of its students.

In passing I must remark that it has always been curious to me that those who attack Newman's university as lacking moral training have never discussed the section called, "University Preaching."

Another problem with Newman's liberal knowledge that even its champions have difficulty explaining is that liberal knowledge seems to have no practical value. Their attitude seems to be: "We know it is a great thing to be liberally educated but the liberally educated man belongs to a by-gone day."

Professor Harrold is forced to admit this to himself:

Doubtless, Newman's view is somewhat rigid and narrow, designed for a culture in which the man of leisure was the crowning product. Our highly mechanized world, with its need of professional men and experts, could hardly sustain itself for long on Newman's educational pattern.12

So we have the problem that, fine as it is, liberal knowledge simply has no place in the world today.

There are two ways of answering this problem. A liberal education does not exclude professional skill. In his

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university Newman wished to establish courses leading to a medical degree, and to degrees in the other professions. He claimed such professions would be better practised by men with the broad and deep liberal education he desired.

Nor is a liberal education lost simply because a man chooses to turn the trained speculative powers of his mind to practical subjects, such as government or business. As Father Corcoran points out: "... neither is there any loss of liberal ness by its being applied to national service or individual welfare." Of course Father Corcoran is attacking liberal education in these words but his observation is no less true for that. In his argument he contends that Newman's university merely trains in liberal knowledge, an end in itself, and produces no practical results. But the answer is, as Father Corcoran says, such training can be and was turned to great practical effects. It enabled the English to produce men that met challenges of the most varied kind the world over, not the least of which was the subduing of Ireland so completely that even its national language, if not its religion, was lost. This is a brutal example of what a liberal mind can perform over one that is ill formed, but it was this education that made the English governing class the power they were. And, for good and bad,

13 Corcoran, Newman, lxxvii.
the world must reckon with this practical result of a liberal education.

Newman, in his writing of Liberal Knowledge is not concerned with the practical results. They simply do not come into the scope of his work. Once, however, he does allude to it. The social purpose of liberal knowledge, he tells us

aims at raising ... the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind ... at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspirations, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power. ... 14

To supply true principles and facilitate the exercise of political power are certainly very practical results. We can feel sorry that Newman did not enlarge on this topic in some other work. But the liberally educated men of the "leisure class" from Oxford and the other English schools have enlarged on it by providing rulers, governors and generals that many nations of the world will not shortly forget.

Another charge that seems to bother many is that Newman's liberal knowledge taken as the purpose of a University is a new theory devoted to modern times and devoid of any historical basis. This would come as a surprise to Newman who mentions in his preface the fact that "there is nothing novel

or singular in the argument which I have been pursuing. "15 Newman openly said, and has been heavily attacked for saying it, that he obtained his idea of Liberal Knowledge from Oxford and the other English schools which were built ultimately upon the Greek ideal of education as conducted in Athens. The Golden Age of Athens should be far enough back in history to be called past time, at least not modern times.

The difficulty arises from the fact that Newman dealt only with the topic of what was the form or essence of a university, as distinct from professional training, which can be given outside of a university. When other authors dealt with this topic they usually lumped both together and also considered the practical results of a university education. Newman's approach looked like a new idea.

Cardinal Newman just cannot seem to win. With some he is an iron bound conservative with medieval ideas, with others he is a modern radical with no roots in the past.

Newman, in his commentary on the Apostolic Letter, Optime Noscatis, concerning the Catholic University of Ireland, reveals his feelings and thoughts about education in general, in the wide sense.

15 Corcoran, Newman, lxxxv.
Omnès disciplinae are to go forward in the most strict league with religion; that is, with the assumption of Catholic Doctrine in their intrinsic treatment, and the Professors are directly to mould, to\( \text{totis viribus} \), the youth to piety and virtue, and to guard them in literature and science, in conformity with the Church's teaching. I wrote on a different idea my Discourses on University Education in 1852. 16

The fact that Newman was writing on the essence of a University and not on its totality or integrity is what has caused much of the confusion. This, the essence of a University, is the "different idea" he speaks of.

A man walking around as a skeleton would look odd. Few would recognize him except perhaps the family doctor. But put his flesh back on and he will be seen as an old familiar friend. Still, just the fact that we do not recognize him in his bones does not mean the bones are not necessary. So it is with Newman's Idea of a University as he strips it down to its bare bones. We may not recognize it as our old proven friend, but a closer inspection should show that we were mistaken and are now receiving a "new" view of the essence of a University.

16 Corcoran, Newman, lxxxv.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Newman, when he was called to Dublin, found, as we have shown, that his old foe, liberalism, was already strongly established upon the scene. The issue of the Queen's colleges and mixed education had split the Catholic hierarchy with a large minority in favor of co-operation with the Liberal's efforts. Those in control wished to use Newman as rector of the proposed university at Dublin as a counter attack against the Liberal movement which was against religion and for utilitarian science. They felt this was the best method to defeat Liberalism. A real university at Dublin was seriously considered by only a few.

The very situation forced him to deal with the problem of religion in education and the movement for a pure scientific education. But he refused to be tied down by the pettiness of the local situation. He went to the very core of the problem. He taught that theology was an essential part of education because it was part of knowledge. He further concludes that the Church is necessary for the integrity of a university. This
was his argument for religion in education and it transgresses all appeals to emotion, sentiment, or authority.

Against utilitarianism he argued that the purpose of education is to train the most distinctive part of man, his intellect. He demonstrated that this liberal education has most practical results.

That his treatment rose above the local circumstances and times is attested to by one fact. Who now remembers the Queen's colleges and the issue of mixed education? Yet Newman's *Idea of a University* is still read and is still influencing society.

The prestige of the *Idea of a University* is still great and it seems to have a firm place in the list of English classics. We can be thankful that, although Newman failed as a Rector to found the university he wished, yet he succeeded as a scholar in producing a great English classic.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Fred M. Henley, S. J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

January, 1956

Date

Signature of Adviser