NEWMAN'S VISION OF A UNIVERSITY: THEN AND NOW

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Catholic universities face many challenges today. Increasing secularization, faculty salaries, external funding, Catholic identity, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy are among the most prominent. This essay examines the contributions of John Henry Newman to Catholic higher education and argues for their relevance today.

INTRODUCTION

Is it possible to go from one period of history, one that started over 150 years ago, and make valid connections with the present times? Higher education, which in the United States in 1900 enrolled only 1% of the population, has undergone nothing less than a revolution over the last 100 years. And given the genteel liberal arts tradition of Oxford in 1850, a tradition that shaped John Henry Newman's vision of education profoundly, it is more than likely that Newman's views about education, especially for people in the so-called developed world of the 21st century, will seem to be coming from not just another century and another country, but from another world as well. This article seeks to pay careful attention to the times—Newman's and our own—and then argues that, indeed, some of what was then in education ought also to be now. We begin with a description of Newman's life and times.

NEWMAN AND HIS TIMES

Born into an Anglican family of bankers in London in 1801, John Henry Newman underwent his first conversion at the age of 15 (later in his life he referred to three conversions), one that left him for a while a devout evangelical. He enrolled at Oxford, was ordained an Anglican priest in 1825, and 3 years later was appointed the chaplain of St. Mary the Virgin Church in Oxford. He held that position until 1843 when, as a consequence of his studies of the first 5 centuries of Christianity, his doubts about the Church of

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England led him to convert to the Roman Catholic Church on October 9, 1845. After studying for a year in Rome, he was ordained a Catholic priest in 1847 and returned to England to found an oratory in Birmingham. For most of his adult life, he was trusted neither by most Anglicans when, as a leader of the Oxford movement in the 1830s, he was one of them, nor by most Catholics after he became one of them. Historian Turner (1996) states that during his Anglican years, Newman

> had been the chief disruptive academic personality in Oxford. In point of fact, John Henry Newman had been the kind of faculty member whom every university administrator dreads, trustees deplore and fail to understand, and more staid alumni find embarrassing, but whom students and the young among the faculty and alumni cheer toward further extravagances. (p. 285)

All his life, he remained a gifted controversialist who, in the words of theologian Lash (1979), sought "to prove by persuasion rather than to persuade by proof" (p. 12). In all, Newman seemed too Catholic for the Anglicans, and not sufficiently scholastic for most Catholics.

Pope Leo XIII made him a cardinal in 1879, despite the objection of Newman's own archbishop and cardinal, Henry Manning, who himself privately thought Newman to be a heretic. According to Newman, the reception of the red hat lifted forever a cloud that had been hanging over him (Gilley, 1991). He continued to write, mainly revising and polishing a number of his 40 books, and died at the age of 89 on August 11, 1890. In 1975, Pope Paul VI told the participants in a Newman symposium that

> Many of the problems which he treated with wisdom—although he himself was frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted in his own time—were the subjects of the discussion and study of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, as for example the questions of ecumenism, the relationship between Christianity and the world, the emphasis on the role of the laity in the Church and the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions. (as cited in Ford, 2005, p. 68)

On January 22, 1991, Pope John Paul II recognized Newman for his heroic virtues and named him venerable. In 2001, Pope John Paul expressed the hope that Newman, a "sure and eloquent guide in our perplexity" (p. 2), might soon be declared "blessed," the step before finally being canonized a saint. The pope remarked that Newman had come eventually to "a remarkable synthesis of faith and reason," a synthesis that helped him avoid both rationalism which rejected "authority and transcendence," and fideism which turns away from "the challenges of history and the tasks of this world" and

towards a "distorted dependence upon authority and the supernatural" (p. 2).

In the years since his death in 1890, Newman has not always been held in such high regard. In fact, at the beginning of the last century, many of his writings were associated with various so-called "modernist" writers who, concerned with bringing the Church into a closer relationship with the modern age, were sharply rebuked with the encyclical, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, by Pope Pius X (1907/1981). Newman's writings on consulting the laity, his attention to religious psychology in working out the process by which a person makes an act of faith, and his conviction that doctrine develops over history made him suspect. In fact, there are still today, even though Newman has enjoyed a sort of renaissance since Vatican II, scholars who for various reasons not only disagree with some of his key ideas, but also actively oppose his canonization. For example, Fitzpatrick (1991) believes that Newman depreciated reason to make faith more acceptable, and because he saw little rational power in humanity, relied too much on papal authority.

The focus of this article is the writings of Newman on higher education and their possible relevance to our own time and situation. These writings were, on the whole, not as suspect as some of his other writings. In fact, his major lectures on university education, collected in a volume entitled *The Idea of a University* (1852/1976), went relatively unnoticed at the time they were first published in the 1850s. In the United States, from the 1920s to the 1960s, a period the historian of Catholic higher education in the United States, Gleason (1999), recently referred to as the "Golden Age of Newman's *Idea*," Newman was often quoted by leaders of Catholic education, as well as by the reforming president of the University of Chicago, Robert M. Hutchins. But it is difficult to determine how influential his classic, *The Idea of a University*, has in fact actually been. That the book has been highly praised is not to be disputed. Pelikan (1992), for example, distinguished Lutheran and then Orthodox historian of Christian doctrine and dean of the graduate school at Yale, said that Newman's *Idea* is "the most important treatise on the idea of the university ever written in any language" (p. 9).

But can such an estimate of Newman's description of a university education, even one given by so eminent a scholar as Pelikan, actually stand? Was not the world in which Newman lived so different from our own as to make any application of his ideas impossible? J. M. Roberts, who served as the vice chancellor of the University of Southampton and then the warden of Merton College at Oxford, wrote a little more than a decade ago that

> again and again...Newman's assumptions reveal themselves to be so different from ours, the background against which he writes is so utterly removed from our own, the universities of his day are so unlike ours, either in their business

> or their ethos, that we cannot expect him to speak to our specific needs. (as cited in Schiefen, 1995, p. 44)

To bring to light some of the specifics that characterized Newman's time, we need to remember that at that time only the elite were educated, all of whom were males. Women's colleges were founded at Cambridge in 1869 and 1870, and at Oxford in 1879. The research university with its intimate tie to industry and commitment to professional and utilitarian education had yet to establish its dominance, an elective system with majors and minors did not exist, nor did the social sciences as we know them today. Moreover, Newman assumed that every student should study the liberal arts before undertaking any professional education.

Concentrating by contrast on problems that face an administrator of a university today, historian Turner (1996), thinks Newman's challenges were simpler because he did not have a faculty that was unionized, a board of trustees, a large and powerful alumni group, government regulations, or big-time college athletics. And if all these specific historical differences were not enough to render irrelevant any transfer of Newman's thoughts about education to our own situation, the recently retired president of the University of Rochester, O'Brien (1998), tells us that Newman's *Idea*, "a favorite text for commencement genuflections to ideals," enjoyed "no institutional realization" (p. 8). For O'Brien, the fundamental issues of who makes what decisions are hardly touched upon in Newman's work. The president of an actual university, continues O'Brien, "proclaiming reform needs to persuade a suspicious faculty, a restive alumni body, a bottom-line board of trustees, and a transient population of adolescents" (p. 8). In the face of all these judgments, will we have to conclude that Newman's *Idea of a University* never amounted to much simply because the university he was called upon to found and lead was a failure, and that he realized after a few years that he needed to resign as its president? Will the ill-fated Catholic University of Ireland then be remembered, as Ker (1976) suggests, "only because of the book to which it gave birth" (p. xxix), a book unable to inspire and sustain the university it launched?

THE CHALLENGES NEWMAN FACED

Many things in higher education have changed since Newman's time. In the United States, and somewhat later in England itself, a great diversification of educational institutions took place. In 1862, the United States government established land grant institutions, and by the turn of the century, several research universities had been established. More recently, community colleges have been established and for-profit institutions, like the University of

Phoenix, have enrolled thousands of students. Not only has there been a huge increase in the number of post-secondary students, but they are a much more diverse group, no longer a small group of males from elite backgrounds. In effect, the last 150 years has deregulated the monopoly a few universities enjoyed in Newman's time (Heft, 2003).

Nevertheless, with a better understanding of some of the challenges that Newman faced when invited to found a Catholic university in Dublin, we will see more clearly that they were every bit as formidable as dealing with a board of trustees, protecting the academic freedom of professors, dealing with increased competition, and persuading a skeptical public of the value of a Catholic university education. Without a clearer understanding of what Newman was up against, people today may be tempted to think of his idea of a university as a sort of an untested ideal, a pure and but unrealizable conceptualization as far removed from reality now as it was then. But if we become more aware of the practical issues he faced, the difficult obstacles he had to overcome, we can more quickly see that he indeed has an important legacy for us, one that is even more pragmatic and more challenging than the idea of today's secular research university. We turn now to a description of some of the historical context in which Newman wrote the *Idea of a University*, after which we will then delineate three difficult issues that we face in higher education in our own time. Finally, the continuing importance of Newman's vision of the university should, by then, be apparent.

Up till the middle of the 19th century, Ireland could boast of only one College, Trinity, established in 1591. A statute of 1637 required all students to attend worship services and partake in communion according to the Anglican practice, and that "an oath against Popery (*Pontificia Religio*)....be taken by all the Fellows" (Livingstone, 2000, p. 188). Two centuries later, after ignoring the plight of the Irish people during their devastating potato famine, the British government, under the leadership of Sir Robert Peel, decided in 1845 to establish three Queen's Colleges, located in Belfast, Cork, and Galway. These were to be non-sectarian colleges, that is, colleges that, in the language of the day, offered "mixed education," where Catholic and Protestant students would mix with each other. Since no theology would be taught, both Catholics and Protestants could attend these colleges, the government thought, without compromising their religious convictions. There would be no religious tests for matriculation, nor religious requirements for graduation. Shortly after the announcement of this government plan, the Catholic bishops of Ireland met to decide how to react to the government initiative, "pregnant," they thought, "with danger to faith and morals" (O'Connell, 2004, p. 61). Within 2 years, the pope supported them in their opposition to mixed education and instructed the Irish bishops to condemn

the entire initiative. Actually, not all the bishops agreed, though in public they kept a united front (O'Connell, 2004).

In 1851, Archbishop Cullen, recently returned from 30 years in Rome where he had served as the rector of the Irish College, invited Newman to come to Dublin to present several lectures against mixed education. Cullen also invited him to be the first rector of a Catholic college to be established in Dublin. After some reflection, Newman accepted these invitations, and presented five public lectures in the spring of 1852. The challenges he faced were many and complex. First of all, he was not an Irishman, but an Englishman, and though he shared the language with the Irish, he did not share their culture. Second, he was a recent convert, even though a quite famous one. Third, he had to speak to several different audiences, some of whom disagreed with the others. For example, some bishops favored the mixed education scheme, thinking that it was, under the circumstances, the best they could do, while others wanted a seminary for laymen rather than a university. Newman wanted to establish a university, a place where different ideas would be debated and people would be free to pursue their thinking and research—and all this in a nation where the Catholic Church was firmly established. Many of the most prosperous Irish businessmen preferred to send their sons abroad to be educated, while most of the others, having fresh in their memories the suffering and starvation caused by the potato famine, at its worst from 1845-1848, did not have as their top educational priority liberal education. Finally, Newman all along believed that he was founding a university for English-speaking Catholics, not just Irish Catholics, a conviction not shared by most of his Irish audience. As one commentator put it, "the Irish were too Irish to desire an education that should turn out an Irish replica of the 'English gentleman'" (Harrold, 1947, p. xv). Archbishop Cullen often refused to answer Newman's requests while rector, and even criticized his administration to Rome. And if all of these challenges in Ireland were not enough, Newman was also facing, since August of 1851, a criminal action for libel. In brief, a certain Giacinto Achilli, an ex-Dominican priest, had been sentenced to imprisonment by the Roman Inquisition for sexual immorality, including assault. Achilli escaped Italy, converted to Protestantism and was going around England attacking the Catholic Church. Newman attacked Achilli in print, relying on statements by his own bishop, who subsequently was unable to verify his sources. Consequently, Newman was found guilty of libel, but fined only a small amount in lieu of some time in prison. Public sympathy sided with Newman, but the personal toll upon him was great (Ker, 1990).

It was when all this was going on that he delivered many of the lectures in Dublin on a Catholic university. Given the challenges he faced in Ireland,

plus the additional emotional drain of a protracted process of the libel suit against him, it is not surprising that he found the writing of his lectures the most difficult task he had ever undertaken. Even though his lectures seemed to be well received in Dublin, he said that they "have oppressed me more than anything else of the kind in my life....I am out on the ocean with them, out of sight of land, with nothing but the stars," and again, "the most painful of all" the books he wrote (as cited in Ker, 1976, pp. xvi-xvii). In the 1859 preface to the book version of his lectures, he, in the third person, wrote: "They [the lectures] belong to a time, when he was tried both by sorrow and anxiety, and by indisposition also, and required a greater effort to write, and gave him less satisfaction when written, than any of his Volumes" (as cited in Ker, 1976, p. xxxvii).

In summary then, while the specific challenges that Newman faced in the 1850s are not all the same as the challenges that face someone leading an institution of higher education today, they are nonetheless formidable. Furthermore, by drawing attention to a number of these challenges, we should be able to appreciate more why he developed in the way that he did his main ideas about university education. But to ask whether any of those ideas constitute a legacy that we should seek to keep alive and hand on today requires one step more: namely, a brief description of three of the major challenges faced by Catholic higher education in our own time.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

First, what is the appropriate degree of independence a university should have from national political and economic priorities? Second and intimately related to answering the first challenge, what is the importance of liberal education? And third, how should academic freedom be understood, especially for a Catholic university? These are, of course, great issues that continue to engage our energies and our intellects. While there is no possibility of answering these questions with finality, we can still look to Newman for educational insights that will strengthen our own universities today.

As long as a university education was reserved mostly to a few of the elite males of society, it could focus, as it did, mainly on the classics, at least as the proper preparation for one of the professions, the skills for which were typically acquired on the job as an apprentice, but not as a part of one's university education. Moreover, at most of these schools, moral education was an integral part of campus life, especially in the small colleges, until at least the middle of the 19th century. From the start of the 20th century in the United States, and especially during the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Cold War, the government directed more and more federal money to universities willing to undertake research that would serve the needs of the

state and the military. Many of the country's leading research universities now rely heavily on such federal funding. While nearly all Catholic universities have not followed the country's major research universities in the amount of government money they receive for research, a number of them receive enough to require a serious examination of the extent to which they have a strong enough sense of distinctive mission that would allow themselves to be more than instruments of national and social priorities. Put in other terms, just how independent is the modern university, and for that matter Catholic universities, from the political and economic priorities of the nation?

Another way to understand how deeply such priorities have influenced the shape of the modern academy is to examine its salary policies. Annual statistics now exist about the differences in salaries of various professors. According to Hollinger (2000), we find in salary policies "compelling evidence that the gap is closing between what universities value and what is valued in the commercial marketplace" (p. 173). At its worst, what has been happening across the country, especially in major research universities, is the shaping of academic careers primarily by economic factors outside the academy. We see this growing disparity of salaries, continues Hollinger,

> in the fields of economics, business administration, law, biotechnology, and computer science. At the same time, those faculty whose careers are the most fully centered in universities, and who have the least opportunity to generate private income through consulting and other outside activities, are the ones to whom universities pay the least. (p. 173)

One of the consequences of these economic disparities is that it becomes more and more difficult for faculty at a single university to agree on a common mission for their institution, a mission that is not fragmented and balkanized by market forces and funding sources outside the university. In other words, we might ask whether it is possible, given such powerful economic pressures, for a faculty to come together and agree upon a mission of the university that goes beyond the priorities of the economy and the federal government. To do so successfully presupposes that the faculty possesses a degree of autonomy in the face of the forces external to the academy.

A second challenge for the modern university is sustaining a vibrant form of liberal education. Even liberal arts colleges, as distinct from universities, are increasingly pressured to prepare their graduates for the professions and the working world. And in those universities which offer a required general education program, many of the faculty and most students think of those courses as ones they need to "get out of the way" in order to get on to their major, which will prepare them for acquiring a job upon graduation.

And it need not be added that were courses in philosophy and theology not required, few students would register for them. If a university can address the challenge of creating a central place for the liberal arts, it will also have gone some distance in liberating the university from being determined by economic and political needs. But expecting a modern faculty, pluralistic in outlook and preoccupied with their own careers and the specialized demands of their own disciplines, to agree on liberal education as central to the purpose of a university education may be too much to ask.

Finally, the third challenge, much in Catholic news, can be stated briefly as that of retaining autonomy and a robust academic freedom while functioning as a faithful Catholic university.

NEWMAN'S LEGACY

The first thing to note about Newman is that in his lectures he offers a comprehensive understanding of the purpose of a university education. To provide a coherent and compelling vision for the academy is no small feat. In that undertaking, Newman has been followed in our own time by only a few educational leaders, such as Robert Hutchins and Derek Bok. But it seems that few people leading major universities today actually articulate an integrated vision of what a university education should be—that is, a vision other than one whose primary purpose is to prepare a person to succeed in today's economy. In this way, as in a number of others, the corporatization of the academy is a growing concern.

As suggested earlier in this analysis, by the middle of the 19th century the shape of the university had begun to change dramatically in this country, with more and more attention being given to the commercial and industrial needs of society. This emphasis has reappeared in recent years as the University of Phoenix, along with a number of commercial colleges, has taken as its sole mission preparing people for entry into the job market. Newman's vision of a university education privileged liberal education. He opposed pragmatists who believed that the only worthwhile education was that which directly benefited the economic and industrial needs of society. At the outset, it is important to make clear what he did not mean by a liberal education. Numerous commentators have misunderstood Newman's vision as excluding professional education from the university. In fact, Newman was proud of the School of Medicine at his newly founded Catholic university, but he was careful to explain that educating people for the professions did not constitute the core of a university education. He wrote:

> If then I am arguing, and shall argue, against Professional or Scientific knowledge as the sufficient end of a University Education, let me not be supposed...to

> be disrespectful towards particular studies, or arts, or vocations, and those who are engaged in them. In saying that Law or Medicine is not the end of a University course, I do not mean to imply that the University does not teach Law or Medicine. What indeed can it teach at all, if it does not teach something particular? It teaches *all* knowledge by teaching all *branches* of knowledge, and in no other way. (1976, p. 145)

If a professor of medicine or geology were to teach outside of a university, he or she would be, according to Newman, nothing more than a professor of medicine or geology. Inside a university, such a professor should, in Newman's view, know where his or her subject stands in relation to all the other subjects, and from that understanding will have gained from those other subjects "a special illumination and largeness of mind and freedom and self-possession" (Newman, 1976, p. 146).

Nor was a liberal education only a superficial knowledge about a lot of things. Intellectual dilettantes, in Newman's estimation, were capable only of "viewiness," a state that enfeebled the mind. He commented that "an intellectual man, as the world now conceives of him, is one who is full of 'views' on all subjects...of the day. It is almost thought a disgrace not to have a view at a moment's notice on any question" (1976, p. 13). Rather, real knowledge for Newman is a certain formation of the mind, a capacity to "do philosophy," which means the ability to put things in order and relate them as they should be related. Again, Newman writing about the purpose of a university education:

> The result is a formation of mind, that is, a habit of order and system, a habit of referring every accession of knowledge to what we already know, and of adjusting the one with the other; and, moreover, as such a habit implies, the actual acceptance and use of certain principles as centres of thought, around which our knowledge grows and is located. Where this critical faculty exists, history is no longer a mere story-book, or biography a romance; orators and publications of the day are no longer infallible authorities; eloquent diction is no longer a substitute for matter, nor bold statements, or lively descriptions, substitute for proof. (1976, p. 404)

At the heart of Newman's vision of a liberally educated person is the capacity to think critically. Again, in his own words:

> It [a university education] gives a man 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. It prepares him to fill any post with cred-

it, and to master any subject with facility. (1976, p. 154)

A university that commits itself to a strong liberal arts core, to close curricular collaboration between the College of Arts and Sciences and the professional schools, and to preparing its graduates not only for their professions but even more for living their lives in service and leadership—a university with a faculty that embraces these commitments will provide an education that goes beyond meeting goals determined only by national politics and that does more than create curricula shaped only by the economy. It would be naïve to think that agreement about the importance of liberal education will by itself radically alter salary policies set by the market. It should, however, help universities come to a deeper sense of their distinctive purpose, a purpose that cannot be described in market terms only.

The third challenge is that of academic freedom. Our focus in this essay is academic freedom in a Catholic university. How does a university go about both protecting a robust form of academic freedom and also functioning as a faithful Catholic university? If the first challenge requires that the university retain an appropriate autonomy in the face of external political and economic pressures and the second that it defend the centrality of a liberal education, this challenge requires that the Catholic university retain a relationship with the Church that is likewise appropriately autonomous. Perhaps in this area of academic freedom some of Newman's statements seem extreme. Sometimes, he so emphasizes the authority of the pope that it would seem that a Catholic is bound in conscience to accept any official teaching; he has little to say about the authority of bishops or their importance in the formulation of papal teaching. At other times, as Kerr (1991) points out, he seems to limit, as he does in his *Vatican Decrees*, the official teachings of the Church to doctrines that determine what a Catholic is to think, but that, Newman claims, will have nothing to do with behavior—a position that would not make sense in the light of *Humanae Vitae* (Paul VI, 1968), the encyclical that condemned artificial contraception, unless one wishes simply to say that this teaching is not infallible and therefore can be ignored. To defend on the basis of such reasoning a dismissal of the 1968 teaching would also defend a dismissal of teaching against racism and abortion, neither of which has been formally defined infallibly. Obviously, more thinking needs to be done on this matter. And finally, Newman also writes, at times passionately, about the importance of giving theologians room to question and explore, without the immediate intervention of the hierarchy. In the midst of these different emphases, it is important to recall that Newman is a controversialist and a rhetorician, and that he seldom wrote without having received "a call," that is, without being invited to respond to a specific

issue—such as establishing a university or rebutting false interpretations of papal infallibility.

Having pointed out the contrasting if not contradictory character of some of Newman's positions on the teaching authority of the Church and academic freedom, one may wonder whether Newman can offer us some helpful insight into this complex topic of academic freedom. One of Newman's most interesting and original treatments of Church authority can be found in his preface to the third edition of his 1877 *Via Media of the Anglican Church*, where he describes how the Church is at one and the same time prophetic, priestly, and regal:

> Christianity, then, is at once a philosophy, a political power, and a religious rite: as a religion, it is Holy; as a philosophy, it is Apostolic; as a political power, it is imperial, that is, One and Catholic. As a religion, its special centre of action is pastor and flock; as a philosophy, the Schools; as a rule, the Papacy and its Curia. (1978, p. xl)

For Newman, the priestly function operates in parishes and among laity; the prophetic is exercised by theologians; and the regal is the pope and the curia. And while occasionally a bishop might be a great teacher, in the ordinary life of the Church sustaining the truth of the Gospel calls for an ongoing interaction, indeed a tension, among all three offices. The faith of the Church, largely the laity, the writings of theologians and the oversight exercised by bishops and the pope interact, sometimes collide, but ultimately correct each other's excesses. In a recent article, Dulles (2005) finds Newman's division of offices problematic for today's Church:

> The laity are far more educated and more critical than the simple believers Newman has in mind. Theologians, many of whom are laypeople, do not constitute anything like the medieval schola theologorum. We do not commonly think of theologians as judges of orthodoxy, as was common in the late Middle Ages, but rather as explorers whose hypotheses need to be critically assessed by the hierarchical magisterium. As for the Pope and the bishops, we expect them to be guardians of revealed truth and not to yield to considerations of expediency. We connect the priestly office with the public liturgy rather than, as Newman did, with private devotions. (p. 17)

Dulles notes that in *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican Council II, 1965, §21), the three offices are located in an "eminent and visible way" in the bishops. In a similar way, Dulles (1985) locates years before the so-called "Protestant Principle" (a commitment to purification) within the "Catholic Substance" (a commitment to preservation) so that Catholicism retains within itself the

capacity for self-correction. When the hierarchy functions in an ideal way and when Catholicism as a whole is capable of correcting itself through its own internal sources, Dulles' syntheses of functions in the bishops and in the Catholic Church make good sense. However, the historical experience of the Church also indicates that many times challenges that come from outside the Catholic Church move it to re-examine its own rich tradition for important insights that have remained dormant and overlooked. For example, certain themes of Enlightenment thinkers actually helped the Church affirm at Vatican II its own doctrine of "religious freedom" and the separation of Church and state, just as the prophetic activity of early 19th century Protestants protesting slavery helped the Church formally condemn slavery many years later; that the Protestant emphasis on the importance of the normative character of the Word of God led the Church at Vatican II to state clearly that the pope in his teaching is under that Word and not above it; and finally, that increasing influential roles of the laity resulted in the fuller elaboration at Vatican II of the role of the *sensus fidelium* as the rule of faith for the entire Church.

These examples would suggest that Dulles' conclusion that Newman's division of roles can be problematic, but nonetheless does have some validity, especially when we consider how in the light of its own history Church teaching has developed. Newman himself knew that all three offices tend, apart from their relationship with the other two, to become one-sided. Concerning theology he states that it

> cannot always have its own way; it is too hard, too intellectual, too exact, to be always equitable, or to be always compassionate; and it sometimes has a conflict or overthrow, or has to consent to a truce or a compromise, in consequence of the rival force of religious sentiment or ecclesiastical interests; and that, sometimes in great matters, sometimes in unimportant. (as cited in Misner, 1976, p. 170)

Newman also argues that one of the important roles for dogmas and papal infallibility in the life of the Church is their ability, for the believing Catholic, to check, as it were, the "restless energy" of the intellect. He describes the relationship between Church authority and theologians as—remember, Newman is a rhetorician—a "never-dying duel…necessary for the very life of religion" (as cited by Ker, 1994, p. 10). Newman's striking rhetoric is hardly meant to be a systematic treatment of how theologians and Church authorities should interact; rather, Newman suggests that it is an ongoing process that over time takes many forms. Of course, some theologians today see their only role as defending the teachings of the magisterium, while other theologians dedicate themselves not only to their defense,

but also to an on-going critique of them. That theologians need to work at the faithful appropriation of the tradition and that bishops need to welcome thoughtful criticism of official teachings approximates the balance that Dulles affirms, but that in the actual life of the Church is not always typical. Newman lives that tension between defense and critique, and offers us not only his personal example, but also his writings as testimony to the pursuit of that balance.

But what about the relationship of the university to the teaching authority of the Church? In his ninth discourse, "Duties of the Church Toward Knowledge," Newman wrote what today would seem to be, at first hearing, the capitulation of any autonomy of the university to the Church. He wrote:

> 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—acting as the representative of the intellect, as the Church is the representative of the religious principle. (Newman, 1976, p. 184)

This lengthy quotation requires a longer commentary than can be offered here. Newman insisted that a university should teach universal knowledge; a "non-sectarian" university is not, according to Newman, a real university, since it excludes an ancient and highly developed field of knowledge, namely theology. And for a Catholic university, Catholic theology has a special place because of its roots in the history and life of the Church itself. Two things, however, need to be emphasized for our purposes, first a number of qualifications made by Newman that support a genuine academic freedom and autonomy for a Catholic university, and second, the way in which the most recent developments in Catholic higher education, particularly with the publication of John Paul II's 1990 apostolic constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, do the same in a new context (Heft, 2006).

Newman frequently emphasized that as knowledge developed, insight was increased and wisdom finally acquired through conflict and challenge. He defended room for scholars, including theologians, to disagree without the immediate intervention of the Church, especially after he became a Catholic. In speaking of scientific research, he wrote that

> it is the very law of the human mind in its inquiry...to make its advances by a process which...is circuitous. There are no shortcuts to knowledge....In scientific researches error may be said, without paradox, to be in some instances the way to truth, and the only way. (Newman, 1976, p. 382)

And again, in describing the inner life of a university as a diverse and disputatious community, he wrote:

> It is a place to which a thousand schools make contribution; in which the intellect may safely range and speculate, sure to find its equal in some antagonist activity, and its judge in the tribunal of truth. It is a place where inquiry is pushed forwards, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. (Newman, 2001, p. 16)

And then, one of Newman's most famous statements about how a true academic thinks:

> If he has one cardinal maxim in his philosophy, it is, that truth cannot be contrary to truth; if he has a second, it is, that truth often *seems* contrary to truth; and, if a third, it is the practical conclusion, that we must be patient with such appearances, and not be hasty to pronounce them to be really of a more formidable character. (Newman, 1976, p. 372)

And finally, the scholar's "watchword is, Live and let live. He takes things as they are; he submits to them all, as far as they go" (Newman, 1976, p. 372). Newman often counseled both professor and bishop to have greater confidence in the power of the academy over time to sort out truth from error. A little over a decade after giving these addresses, Newman (1973) expressed clearly that the bishops would do best to leave the university to itself, to its own self-governance, because "till it is able to act as a free being, it will be but a sickly child" (p. 46).

How might Newman help us in our own times? After considerable debate and dialogue between bishops and the leaders of Catholic colleges and universities, the 1990 Vatican document on higher education called upon bishops to help protect the university's autonomy versus the state even as it called upon them to leave the internal governance of Catholic universities to lay boards of trustees. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* includes two sentences of special relevance here. The first addresses the university's autonomy with regard to the state, and reads: "Bishops have a particular responsibility to promote Catholic universities, and especially to promote and assist in the preservation and strengthening of their Catholic identity, including the protection of their

Catholic identity in relation to civil authorities" (John Paul II, 1990, §28). The Catholic identity referred to here includes more than simply theology; it includes the commitment to draw out and reflect upon the ethical and moral dimensions of all the disciplines, a far reaching and largely unaccomplished project. The second relevant sentence addresses the autonomy of the Catholic university in relationship to the bishop, and reads: "Even when they [bishops] do not enter directly into the internal governance of the university, bishops 'should be seen not as external agents but as participants in the life of the Catholic university'" (John Paul II, 1990, §28). The "even when" qualification might give pause until it is realized that the bishops in the United States, in their implementation of *Ex Corde*, have renounced any direct authority in the governance of a Catholic university, even in the case of a Catholic theologian to whose writings and teaching they may object. This statement welcomes the bishop's influence, but not his control. It recognizes his right to make judgments about the soundness of Catholic teaching, but not the right to control hiring or firing of any faculty, including Catholic theologians.

Newman would be quite pleased with this arrangement. He constantly pushed for a well-educated laity, and wanted them to be fully involved in the running of the university. The gifts of an educated laity have not always been welcomed by members of the hierarchy. Bishop Talbot, a great opponent of Newman, once famously asked, "What is the role of province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain? These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all" (as cited in Coulson, 1961, pp. 41-42). Newman also met resistance among the Irish bishops when he proposed that lay people share in the governance of the university the bishops asked him to found (O'Connell, 2004). And in 1907 in Pius X's condemnation of modernism, we read, "Note venerable brethren (bishops) the appearance already of that most pernicious doctrine which would make of the laity a factor of progress in the Church" (Pius X, 1907/1981, p. 83). We can be thankful to Newman and to Vatican Council II, among others, for a greater recognition of the important role of the laity in the life of the Church. Perhaps nowhere else in the Church today is the close collaboration of intelligent and well-educated laity, religious and clergy, dedicated to thinking about the Catholic faith and its traditions, to be found evident and vital except in Catholic universities. Again, Newman saw this with great clarity over 130 years ago when, in an 1873 letter to an officer of the university he wrote:

> You will be doing the greatest possible benefit to the Catholic cause all over the world, if you succeed in making the University a middle station at which clergy and laity can meet, so as to learn to understand and to yield to each other—and from which, as from a common ground, they may act in union upon an age, which is running headlong into infidelity. (as cited by Morgan, 2004, p. 33)

In our own day, the university should welcome the counsel and advice of its bishop, and continue to draw freely and fully from Catholic intellectual traditions, and yet itself, with the support of the bishops, remain autonomous and its scholars, mostly lay people, free in the conduct of their teaching and research. To achieve this balance, conversations and collaboration are necessary. If Catholic universities are to welcome episcopal advice, then they should structure regular conversations with their bishops, conversations that take place all too rarely at present. The preoccupations of academics and diocesan pastors need not be mutually exclusive any more than the concerns of academics and those in campus ministry within the university.

CONCLUSION

It is nearly impossible to grasp adequately the significance of the changes that have taken place in our English, American, and Catholic educational institutions since the 1850s. Nevertheless, elements of Newman's vision of a university education continue to be relevant today, not least his emphasis on liberal education at the core of a university education. Universities must contribute to the success of their graduates or they are useless. But liberal education cannot be the cultural frosting on the cake of professional competence—it has to be critical of the very structures we are teaching students to succeed in, unless we fool ourselves into thinking our social order is already ideal. And once we begin to raise questions about the structures of society, we will also challenge conventional caricatures of morality. We will be forced also to ask who is exploited so that we might continue to enjoy cheap food and clothing.

When we focus our attention on what it means to be human, to be free and responsible and loving and generous, we will be forced to examine all those personal ways and societal structures that fall short of those ideals. And the university is a privileged place to carry on that exploration, a place that must sustain the intimate relation between intellectual and moral formation, and protect its academic freedom and its autonomy.

Recent Vatican documents have gone some distance in clarifying the university's academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Unlike Newman arguing for a real university in mid-19th century Ireland where the Catholic Church was established, we live in a country that both accepts the separation of Church and state and affirms religious freedom as a right. Our challenge today is less a matter of seeking freedom from the Church, as it is seeking appropriate ways for a Catholic university to draw deeply from the life and culture of Catholicism, all the while doing so as a university community that can benefit from a much greater diversity among its faculty and students than Newman ever knew or desired.

In both the Church and the academy, we still have a long way to go to learn how to disagree, without turning to rancor, how to seek the truth through welcoming a vigorous but civil give and take of ideas, and how to draw deeply from the life and wisdom of the Church even as we employ the canons of criticism and verification that may cause tensions with the larger community of believers. In facing these challenges, key elements of Newman's vision of higher education remain relevant. For these reasons, Newman's vision of a university needs to be retrieved, critiqued, and embodied in today's universities.

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