

Beatification of Cardinal Newman

POPE BENEDICT XVI beatified John Henry Newman (1801-1890) at Cofton Park, Rednal, Birmingham, today, Sunday 19th September, 2010.

The Pope signed the authorization on 3rd July, 2009. Earlier on, he had declared that all beatifications would be by a legate. However, Queen Elizabeth II invited him to England and he decided to perform Newman's beatification ceremony himself. He has a special devotion to this holy scholar and to his teaching on conscience, which he has said is often misunderstood.

From 1974, the Cardinal Newman Catechist Centre, now become Faith Resources Inc and Catechist Consultants, took Newman's name, inspiration and patronage for their teaching true Christian doctrine.

Newman was brought up in the Church of England. When he was ordained an Anglican deacon in 1821, he said, "The care of souls is mine forever." Working in a parish, he quickly discovered that mankind did not divide neatly into the saints and the damned. Real people were somewhere in-between. Many, or at least some, were progressing, with the help of God's Church, from the latter to the former.

In 1824, he was ordained Anglican priest and combined pastoral work with tutoring at Oxford university.

ENGLAND in 1832-1833

THE REFORM ACT of 1832 occasioned much fear in the Church of England. Newman's biographer, Father Louis Bouyer, said it seemed that the British Government would use its secular power to treat the established Church as just another government department. It would do away with its creeds, impose drastic liturgical reforms and a host of other ideas.

Of this, another biographer, Meriol Trevor, said:-

It was Newman who started the fashion of dating the beginning of the Oxford Movement from the delivery of Keble's sermon on National Apostasy, 1833, ...but the sermon itself was no call to action and would not have started anything... although he lamented 'fashionable liberality'. But Froude and Newman had come home [from an extended tour of Europe] burning for action and soon found like-minded men... There were some hurried meetings and plans for associations, petitions and so on. Newman had a profound suspicion of such methods: he thought energy got frittered away in talk and argument. Froude went to the initial conference, Newman did not. Instead, he sat down and addressed the [Anglican] clergy A Tract for the Times which really did begin the Oxford Movement.

Newman's Tract of 1833, and subsequent Tracts till Tract 90 in 1841, inspired Father Tierney's Tracts for the Times dating from 1971. **Doctrinal orthodoxy was the common thread**, that is, the truths revealed by Christ to His Apostles and handed down with the apostolic succession of Bishops, Priests and Deacons to us. See the ten pages of Fr Tierney's True Doctrine in this Handouts series.

Both series of Tracts included other authors.

ATHANATIUS CONTRA MUNDUM...

"Athanatius against the world [of the Arian heresy]"

Newman wrote several Tracts straight off in 1833 in simple and straightforward language.

Meriol Trevor said incendiary pamphlets would be a better description, e.g. Tract 1, **CHOOSE YOUR SIDE:-**

I am but one of yourselves, a Presbyter, and therefore I conceal my name, lest I should take too much on myself by speaking in my own person. Yet speak I must, for the times are very evil, yet no one speaks against them... Christ has not left His Church without claim of its own upon the attention of men. Surely not. Hard Master He cannot be, to bid us oppose the world, yet give us no credentials for so doing. **There are some who rest their divine mission on their own unsupported assertions; others who rest it on their popularity; others on their successes; and others on their temporal distinctions.** This last case has perhaps been too often our own; **I fear we have neglected the real ground on which our authority is built — our APOSTOLICAL DESCENT.**

In Tract 2, Newman wished the [Anglican] Bishops: - ...the spoiling of their goods and martyrdom...

At the same time as he proclaimed:-

Exalt our holy Fathers the Bishops, as the Representatives of the Apostles and the Angels of the Churches.

Finding that he had offended some, he explained: -

...our object is to get together immediately as large a body as we can in defence of the substance of our spiritual rights and privileges, our creeds etc—but we wish to avoid technicalities and minutenesses as much as possible. The posture of affairs will not admit of delay. We wish to unite the clergy and create channels of correspondence among them.

He advised caution :-

Recollect we are supporting the Bishops: enlarge on the unfairness of leaving them to bear (he brunt of the battle.

Meriol Trevor continued:-

It is perhaps not surprising that the [Anglican] Bishops did not quite know what to make of their new reinforcements; one spent hours trying to decide whether or not he believed himself to be a successor of the Apostles. Martyrdom was no aspiration of theirs; it was revolution they feared... The mob identified the Bishops, not with the Apostles, but with the Tory Government — so did most of the Bishops.

CONVERT TO CATHOLICISM

GOD led Newman by his prayer, meditation and the reading of the great fathers and doctors of the early Church, both Western and Eastern, through many vicissitudes, into the Catholic Church in 1845.

Gradually he became convinced that the apostolic Church of the first century continued in its fulness only in the Catholic Church and the Pope. He expressed this in *Development of Christian Doctrine*, that the doctrines of the faith do not change, rather develop.

In this he was rejecting his Anglican compromise of the later 1830s. He had called it *Via Media*, "

middle way", claiming the Church of England was the real form of ancient Catholic Christianity in England, and that it held the correct balance in doctrine and devotion between the corruptions of Roman Catholic Christianity and the Protestant churches started by Luther and Calvin. Later, this led others to the "branch theory", that the Catholic Church of the Apostles' Creed had three branches: Anglican, Roman and Eastern Orthodox.

CARDINAL NEWMAN

LEO XIII became Pope in 1879 and was asked about his papal policy. He replied, "You will see when I make my first cardinal."

His first cardinal was Father Newman — in those days cardinals did not have to be made bishops.

After his conversion, Newman had suffered grievously for living a Godly life in Christ Jesus. His many projects were thwarted — the Oxford chaplaincy, the Irish University, a new translation of the Bible...

An outstanding theme of his priestly ministry was the **intellectual formation of the laity** and the lay apostolate. He was grievously misunderstood by many good churchmen including his fellow convert Cardinal Manning, and viewed with deep suspicions of holding false doctrinal ideas. An attempt was made to put all Newman's writings on the Index of Prohibited Books!

Newman's "Amen" to Leo XIII was, "**The cloud is lifted from me forever!**"

The new cardinal declared the great unifying theme of his life was combatting "**liberalism in religion**":-

...to one great mischief I have from the first opposed myself. For thirty, forty, fifty years [i.e. back in his Anglican days] I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of Liberalism in religion. Never did Holy Church need champions against it more sorely than now, when alas, it is an error overspreading, as a snare, the whole earth... **Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion but that one creed is as good as another... It is inconsistent with any recognition of any religion as true.** It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for **all are matters of opinion.** Revealed religion is not a truth but a sentiment and a taste and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy...

Years before he had written of himself:-

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

Apologia pro Vita Sua p. 31 Everyman's Library

From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion: I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion; religion, as a mere sentiment, is to me a dream and a mockery. As well can there be filial love without the fact of a father, as devotion without the fact of a Supreme Being.

The Mind of Cardinal Newman by C.S. Dessain, p. 33 CTS.

These passages parallel Pope Benedict XVI's continuing denunciations of that relativism which has put European civilization and Christianity into full decline, and for which he has set up a new Pontifical Council.

Newman's Writings

a selection — with something for everyone

DEVOTIONAL

Hymns

- *Lead, kindly light* 1833.
- *Firmly I believe and truly* (from Gerontius)
- *Praise to the Holiest in the height* (from Gerontius)
- *The Dream of Gerontius* 1865 (poem meditation on Death, Judgement and Purgatory, which includes the two hymns above; which became an oratorio arranged by Edward Elgar)
- *Meditations and Devotions* (1893 posthumous collection)

Sermons and Letters

many volumes of both: see internet listings with Google.

APOLOGETICS

- *The Arians of the Fourth Century* 1834 on St Athanasius.
- *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* 1845: his Act of Faith at his conversion.: 320 pp
- *The Church of the Fathers* 1857 St Basil, St Augustine etc 361 pp.
- *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* 1864: defence of his sincerity, the priesthood and Church against slanders of Charles Kingsley, 326 pp.

EDUCATION and THEOLOGY

- *The Idea of a University* (collected lectures of 1852) cf. Catholic liberal arts colleges like Campion College: 477 pp.
- *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent (1870)* on the nature of faith as a real not a notional assent.: 396pp.

RELIGIOUS FICTION

- *Loss and Gain* *The Story of a Convert* 1847 246pp.
- *Callista* *A Tale of the Third Century* (a martyrdom) 1855 382pp.

BIOGRAPHIES

- *Newman His Life and spirituality* by Louis Bouyer 1957 (French Father of the Oratory and ex-Lutheran) 391 pp.
- *Newman* 1962 by Meriol Trevor (an ex-agnostic) in two vol. *The Pillar of the Cloud* 649 pp. and *Light in Winter* 659 pp.
- *Snapdragon, the story of John Henry Newman* 1964 by Joyce Sugg: 192 pp.

FAITH AND PIETY

BLESSED John Henry Newman's idea of the lay apostolate was like that of St Pius X (1903-1914):-

What is most necessary at the present time is to have in each parish a group of laymen at the same time virtuous, enlightened, determined and really apostolic.

See context in *Handouts* n. 70

Newman was a model of a real Catholic scholar. Unlike some others acclaimed as Catholic scholars, his learning worked to **built up the faith and piety** in his readers and listeners. We need his earthly example and Heavenly help.

God has created me to do Him some definite service...

I am a link in a chain,

a bond of connection between persons.

J.H. Newman, *Meditations and Devotions* (posthumous 1893) p. 217

In 1890 tens of thousands lined the route of his funeral.

England wept, for he was acclaimed as having enkindled far kindlier attitudes of Protestants to Catholics.

Blessed John Henry Newman, pray for us