

**ON THE SCOPE &  
NATURE OF UNIVERSITY  
EDUCATION**

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On the scope & nature of university education by John Henry Newman

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**JOHN HENRY NEWMAN**

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*Brother Bonaventure*

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ESSAYS  
&  
BELLES-LETTRES

Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,  
In thy most need to go by thy side.



JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, born in London, 21st February 1801. Educated at Trinity College, Oxford. Ordained priest in the Church of England, 1825, and three years later appointed to the vicarage of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford. Initiated, with others, the Oxford Movement in 1833, and resigned the living of St Mary's in 1843. Received into the Catholic Church in 1845, he was ordained priest at Rome in the following year. Established the Oratory of St Philip Neri in England, 1847. Defendant in the Achilli libel action, 1852. Rector of the Catholic University, Dublin, 1854. Created cardinal, 1879. Died at Edgbaston (where he founded the Oratory School in 1859) and buried at Rednal in 1890.

CARDINAL JOHN HENRY NEWMAN  
ON THE SCOPE AND NATURE  
OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION BY  
WILFRID WARD

NEWMAN CLUB  
TRANSFERRED  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



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## INTRODUCTION

CARDINAL NEWMAN'S lectures on the 'Scope and Nature of University Education' have quite special interest as a turning-point in his mental history. At Oxford he was regarded as the head of the reactionaries, the unflinching opponent of all liberalism in theology. In later life he was called by many a liberal Catholic, and though he most strongly repudiated that epithet he did admit in 1866 his 'enthusiastic agreement' with the general line of thought of Montalembert and Lacordaire, who gloried in the title of liberal Catholic. Later on came a phenomenon yet more surprising on the surface. Such advocates of Modernism as Abbé Loisy and M. Leroy claimed Newman's philosophical thought as being in line with their own speculations. The fact is that labels and watchwords are constantly so inadequate as to be quite misleading. Not all opponents of liberalism have been illiberal. All Newman's earlier career emphasized his opposition to liberalism. His later years brought in evidence his true liberality. Newman was never a Modernist, but he was keenly alive to the changes of outlook wrought by the thought and research of modern days. One side of his thought was emphasized at Oxford, another was developed in his later Catholic life. And the change was brought about by the circumstances in which these lectures were written.

The inadequacy of popular watchwords explains in other cases also the gradual fusion of schools of thought which had been at first simply opposed to one another. While liberal thinkers have claimed as their ally a man whose opposition to liberalism was the very keynote of his mission at Oxford, we have seen a similar alliance in later times

between the descendants within the Church of England of the two opposite schools which divided Oxford in the forties. The High Church party which long carried on the traditions of Tractarianism startled the world in 1889 by a manifesto on behalf of breadth in theology—the famous *Lux Mundi*. The writers I allude to singled out especially the subject of biblical inspiration and the historical treatment of dogma, both of which had been exclusively associated in earlier years with those implacable foes of Tractarianism, the disciples of Dr Arnold. The old opposition in matters theological was between the High Church and the Broad Church, though the phrase ‘Broad Church’ was subsequent to Newman’s day. But *Lux Mundi*, whose authors all claimed to be High Churchmen, was as broad as it was high in its theology. It differed from Broad Church theology in retaining the idea of the Catholic Church, which the Oxford Movement had brought into evidence, as of paramount importance both in theology and in the philosophy of belief.

Newman never exhibited the highly speculative vein apparent in *Lux Mundi*. But throughout his opposition to unrestrained theological liberalism, a liberalism which threw overboard the idea of a corporate Church and the sacredness of tradition, he had been alive to the necessity of facing fearlessly the new outlook presented by advancing science and research. We can see this clearly in the first of the Oxford University Sermons, preached when he was only twenty-five years old. In the days of the Oxford Movement no doubt he was a party man and his party was in a sense reactionary. But to careful readers of the University Sermons and the Essay on Development the width of his outlook was quite apparent. His conception of the development of Christian doctrine as gradually bringing into view fresh aspects of truth really made room for the advancement of secular knowledge, its gradual

reconciliation with the essence of traditional Catholic truth, and the necessary modifications in the analysis of that truth. What changed with him was, as I have said, not so much his views as his party and his emphasis. He had opposite dangers to face in the earlier and the later period. At Oxford he feared that Christianity would be swept away by the tide of rationalistic liberalism which lost sight of the profound truths contained in the Christian tradition and derived from revelation. In later years his fear was exactly the opposite. He was alive to the danger lest theological narrowness might be an equally dangerous opponent to Christianity by bringing about an apparent alliance between orthodoxy and obscurantism. The lectures here published mark the point at which this change of emphasis began. They are one long plea for the compatibility of a complete culture of mind and all the frankness it entails with adherence to the Catholic faith. He was, as rector of a Catholic university, face to face with the necessity of marking out for sharp-witted young men an attitude towards science and theology which was entirely reasonable. The task before him was the formation in the undergraduate of a mentality which should be at once thoroughly educated and thoroughly religious. He declares in his own preface to these lectures that he does not regard a university as concerned with research, only with teaching and education. But when he began the duties of his office he saw that this hard and fast line could not be drawn. A thoughtful Catholic must take account of problems which every other thoughtful man was discussing. It was impossible in a time of constant scientific movement to disregard or be indifferent to the results of research.

The lectures on the Scope and Nature of University Education, therefore, led up to his great plea for intellectual liberty in a university. That plea is contained in the lecture on Christianity and Scientific Investigation which is